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The Greek–Turkish Rivalry over Kasos in July 2024

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In July 2024, seabed surveys associated with the Great Sea Interconnector, a planned electricity link between Greece and Cyprus, triggered a naval and diplomatic confrontation between Greece and Türkiye near Kasos and Karpathos. This paper examines the incident through a qualitative, document-based case study of the two governments' public statements and the responses of Greek political parties, drawing on parliamentary interventions and contemporary reporting where relevant. Although both governments reported that the Italian-flagged research vessel Ievoli Relume completed its scheduled survey work, they offered conflicting interpretations of the coordination that preceded its completion. Türkiye presented the episode as an instance of enforcing its asserted maritime jurisdiction and granting permission for the vessel to proceed, whereas Greece denied requesting Turkish permission or recognizing Turkish maritime claims. Greek political parties subsequently interpreted the incident in different ways, including allegations that the government had retreated under Turkish pressure. The analysis distinguishes the reported operational outcome from competing official narratives and partisan evaluations. It finds that claims of political concession or operational withdrawal must be assessed separately: completion of the reported survey does not, by itself, resolve questions about diplomatic concessions, while criticism of the government does not establish that the survey was abandoned. The paper concludes that the public record supports a comparison of the two governments' narratives and the evidential basis of party claims, but does not establish the precise content of confidential diplomatic exchanges or resolve the underlying maritime dispute.

Keywords: *Greek–Turkish relations; Kaso's incident; Great Sea Interconnector; Eastern Mediterranean; maritime jurisdiction; seabed surveys; Greek political parties; diplomatic crisis; energy infrastructure; official statements*

Introduction

In July 2024, seabed surveys associated with the Great Sea Interconnector, the planned electricity connection between Greece and Cyprus, developed into a naval and diplomatic confrontation between Greece and Türkiye in the waters between Kasos and Karpathos.[1] The Italian-flagged research vessel *Ievoli Relume* was conducting survey work for the project when Turkish naval vessels intervened and Greek naval vessels were deployed in the area. The incident brought competing Greek and Turkish maritime claims into direct confrontation and raised questions

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[1]In Papanikos (2017), I examined in detail the energy issue in the Eastern Mediterranean and in Papanikos (2026) the dynamics of security in the area.

about the conduct of the survey, the management of bilateral tensions, and the political interpretation of the outcome.

The dispute took place against the background of competing claims concerning maritime jurisdiction in the Eastern Mediterranean. Greece relies, among other considerations, on its maritime delimitation agreement with Egypt, signed in 2020, while Türkiye asserts claims to continental-shelf areas in the region and invokes its 2019 memorandum with Libya. The present paper does not seek to adjudicate the legal merits of these competing positions. Instead, it examines how the two governments publicly represented the events of July 2024 and how Greek political parties subsequently interpreted the incident.

The official accounts converge on one important point: **the survey vessel completed its scheduled work in the area**. They diverge, however, over the circumstances under which that work proceeded and the significance of the diplomatic coordination that accompanied it. In a statement issued on 25 July 2024, sources attributed to the Turkish Ministry of National Defense maintained that the vessel had been prevented from entering areas claimed by Türkiye and that permission to work at specified coordinates had subsequently been granted following coordination. The statement also thanked the Greek and Italian authorities for what Türkiye described as their respect for Turkish maritime jurisdiction and their cooperation. The Greek government, by contrast, maintained that the survey had been completed according to schedule, denied that Turkish permission had been requested, and rejected the interpretation that Greece had recognized Turkish maritime claims.

These competing accounts matter because the same operational outcome can be presented as evidence of different political and diplomatic achievements. Türkiye portrayed the episode as an assertion of its claimed maritime rights, whereas the Greek government presented the completion of the survey as evidence that its position had been maintained without accepting Turkish jurisdiction. The publicly available statements do not, however, establish precisely what was discussed in confidential diplomatic contacts or whether any understandings beyond those publicly acknowledged were reached. Consequently, the analysis distinguishes between documented events, statements made by the governments, and interpretations that cannot be independently verified from the available public record.

A further question concerns the reactions of Greek political parties. Some parties criticized the government's handling of the incident, but their arguments differed in both substance and severity. PASOK criticized the government's response while acknowledging that the works had been carried out. SYRIZA presented the episode as a kind of a retreat under Turkish pressure and argued that the government had abandoned the exercise of Greek rights. All parties of the right-populist, nationalist and ultra far right adopted more confrontational interpretations. On the other hand, the Communist Party of Greece (KKE) situated the incident within its broader opposition to the interconnector and the geopolitical framework surrounding it. These positions should not be treated as interchangeable. In particular, an allegation that the government made a political or diplomatic concession is not equivalent to a claim that the vessel failed to complete its survey.

Neither proposition follows automatically from the fact that the operation was accompanied by a naval confrontation.

The paper therefore has three objectives. First, it reconstructs the principal events surrounding the July 2024 incident using the available public record. Second, it compares the official Greek and Turkish accounts, identifying both their points of agreement and their conflicting interpretations. Third, it examines the positions of Greek political parties and assesses the extent to which their claims about retreat, withdrawal, or the protection of national rights are supported by the evidence presented. The analysis focuses on public statements rather than attempting to reconstruct confidential negotiations or determine the legal status of disputed maritime areas.

The analysis is based on a qualitative, document-based case study of official government statements, parliamentary interventions, and political-party announcements. It combines a reconstruction of the publicly reported events with the author's critical evaluation of the claims and interpretations advanced by the actors concerned. The purpose is not to establish facts that cannot be verified from the available documentary record, but to assess the consistency of the statements, distinguish reported outcomes from political allegations, and evaluate the extent to which the claims made by the different actors are supported by the evidence examined.

The incident also belongs to a broader context of maritime tensions surrounding undersea infrastructure in the Eastern Mediterranean. The separate *Teliri* telecommunications-cable operation in June and July 2024 provides relevant background, while the *Ievoli Relume*'s return to the waters south of Kasos and Karpathos in August 2024 demonstrates that survey activities associated with the interconnector continued after the July confrontation. These episodes provide context for the dispute but should not be conflated with one another or taken, by themselves, as evidence that the underlying disagreement was resolved.

The paper proceeds as follows. Section 2 presents a chronology of the Kasos incident and its relevant operational context. Section 3 compares the official statements issued by Greece and Türkiye. Section 4 examines the positions of Greek political parties. Section 5 discusses the findings and draws conclusions, emphasizing the distinction between the reported operational outcome, the governments' competing interpretations, and the political judgments made by domestic actors.

Chronology of Events: The Kasos Incident, July 2024

On 7 June 2024, the Greek authorities authorized seabed surveys requested by the Independent Power Transmission Operator (ADMIE/IPTO). The surveys formed part of the preparations for the electricity interconnection between Crete and Cyprus, a project supported by the European Union. The work was undertaken by the Italian-flagged research vessel *Ievoli Relume*, operated by NextGeo on behalf of Nexans, the French company responsible for the cable project (Nedos 2024).

The vessel began conducting surveys in the contested maritime area on 17 July 2024. On 18 and 19 July, the Turkish frigate *Gökova* approached the research vessel while it was operating in the southeastern Aegean. The vessel subsequently continued its survey activities south of Kasos and Karpathos (Nedos 2024).

On 22 July, the situation escalated as the *Ievoli Relume* conducted surveys in the sea passage between Kasos and Karpathos. The Italian vessel was accompanied by the Greek gunboat *Aittitos*. Turkish naval vessels, including the frigates *Gökova* and *Gökçü* and the corvette *Beykoz*, were also present in the area. Greece subsequently deployed the frigate *Nikiforos Fokas*, while additional Turkish naval vessels arrived. The presence of naval forces from both countries transformed a seabed-survey operation into a serious maritime and diplomatic incident (Nedos 2024).

On 22 and 23 July, diplomatic contacts took place between Greek and Turkish officials as efforts were made to manage the developing situation. The Greek and Turkish foreign ministers, George Gerapetritis and Hakan Fidan, communicated repeatedly, while other diplomatic contacts also took place. Following these efforts, the situation began to de-escalate late on 23 July. The research vessel was permitted to resume its survey activities at approximately 22:55 that evening. A Turkish NAVTEX, numbered 0702/24, was issued referring to survey activities by the *Ievoli Relume* during the night of 23–24 July and asserting that the designated area lay on the Turkish continental shelf (Nedos 2024).

In the early hours of 24 July, the vessel **completed** its scheduled survey work in the area. ADMIE announced that the *Ievoli Relume* had completed its work in the international waters between Kasos and Karpathos in accordance with the programme. The vessel then departed the area, escorted by the Greek gunboat *Aittitos*, and returned towards Crete. Naval vessels gradually withdrew, bringing the immediate confrontation to an end (ADMIE 2024, Nedos 2024).

The July incident occurred against a broader background of maritime disputes involving undersea infrastructure in the Eastern Mediterranean. In June and July 2024, the Italian cable-laying vessel *Teliri* was engaged in a separate operation to install a telecommunications cable connecting Cyprus, Greece and Italy. Turkish authorities issued NAVTEX notices asserting claims over parts of the operational area, while Greek authorities also issued navigational notices for the cable-laying activities. This earlier episode provides relevant context for understanding the competing maritime claims that subsequently became prominent during the *Ievoli Relume* incident (Nedos 2024).

The incident did not mark the end of the seabed-survey activities associated with the electricity interconnector. On 19–20 August 2024, the *Ievoli Relume* returned to the waters south of Kasos and Karpathos for a further round of surveys. On this occasion, the vessel operated with Greek naval escort, including a frigate and a gunboat. Although a Turkish frigate was observed in the area, the operation proceeded without a comparable escalation (Bourdaras 2024, Cyprus Mail 2024).

The events of July 2024, culminating in the completion of the scheduled survey work on 24 July, illustrate how a technical operation associated with a major regional energy project developed into a maritime and diplomatic incident between Greece and Türkiye. The subsequent return of the research vessel in August demonstrates that the survey programme continued after the immediate confrontation had subsided. The earlier *Teliri* operation further indicates that the dispute over maritime activities associated with undersea infrastructure extended beyond the electricity interconnector itself. To understand how the Kasos incident developed and why it became a subject of bilateral contention, the following section examines

the official statements issued by the Greek and Turkish authorities. These statements provide the documentary basis for comparing the two governments' accounts of the events and their respective positions.

Official Statements by Greece and Türkiye

The Turkish Government's Statement

On 25 July 2024, sources at the Turkish Ministry of National defense (*Millî Savunma Bakanlığı*) commented on reports of tensions involving an Italian-flagged vessel operating in the southern Aegean. The statement presented the incident as an attempt by the vessel to enter maritime areas claimed by Türkiye and described the subsequent events as follows (Ceylan 2024, author's translation):

> "On 21 July, Greece issued navigational notices concerning the activities to be conducted by the Italian-flagged cable-laying vessel R/V *Ievoli Relume*, some of which extended into our maritime jurisdiction areas. We immediately issued counter-notices and stated that permission from the authorities of the Republic of Türkiye was required for work to be conducted in areas falling within our maritime jurisdiction. On 22 July, the vessel was warned not to enter our maritime jurisdiction areas and was prevented from doing so by our ships. Following subsequent coordination, **permission was granted** for work to be carried out at the specified coordinates, and the vessel **completed** its activities under the escort of ships belonging to our Naval Forces before departing our continental shelf. The activities of the vessel in question are being closely monitored by our Naval Forces units in the area**. We thank the Greek and Italian authorities for respecting our maritime jurisdiction areas and cooperating with us**."[2] (**emphasis added**)

The statement established the principal elements of the Turkish government's public account of the incident. It asserted that some of the Greek navigational notices covered areas under Turkish maritime jurisdiction, that the vessel had been warned and prevented from proceeding on 22 July 2024, and that its subsequent survey activities were permitted following coordination and completed under Turkish naval escort. It concluded by thanking the Greek and Italian authorities for what Türkiye characterized as respect for its maritime jurisdiction and cooperation.

[2]Original Turkish statement, attributed to sources at the Turkish Ministry of National Defence (*Millî Savunma Bakanlığı*), as reported in the Turkish press: "Yunanistan tarafından 21 Temmuz'da İtalyan bayraklı R/V IEVOLI RELLUME kablo döşeme gemisinin icra edeceği faaliyetlere ilişkin bir kısmı deniz yetki alanlarımıza giren seyir duyuruları yayınlanmıştır. Konuyla ilgili olarak tarafımızdan derhal itiraz nitelikli seyir duyuruları yayınlanmış ve deniz yetki alanlarımıza giren bölgelerde çalışma yapılabilmesi için Türkiye Cumhuriyeti makamlarından izin alınması gerektiği bildirilmiştir. 22 Temmuz'da söz konusu gemi deniz yetki alanımıza girmemesi konusunda uyarılmış ve gemilerimiz tarafından engellenmiştir. Daha sonra yapılan koordinasyon neticesinde belirtilen koordinatlarda çalışma yapılmasına izin verilmiş ve Deniz Kuvvetlerimize ait gemiler refakatinde faaliyetini tamamlayarak kıta sahanlığımızdan ayrılmıştır. Bahse konu geminin faaliyetleri bölgede bulunan Deniz Kuvvetleri unsurlarımızca yakından takip edilmektedir. Deniz yetki alanlarımıza saygı duyan ve işbirliği yapan Yunan ve İtalyan makamlarına teşekkür ediyoruz."

This is a very clear and concise account of what happened according to Turkish authorities. What remains unclear is who requested the permission and whether there is a record — written or oral — of that request. This was answered by the Turkish Minister of National Defense examined next.

Yaşar Güler's Statement to the Turkish Parliament, 26-27 November 2024

The Turkish government returned to the *Ievoli Relume* incident in November 2024, when the Minister of National Defense Yaşar Güler addressed the Turkish Grand National Assembly's Planning and Budget Committee during discussions of the Ministry of National Defence's 2025 budget (Türkiye Büyük Millet Meclisi 2024a, 2024b).

Güler situated the July incident within Türkiye's broader disputes with Greece and the Republic of Cyprus over maritime jurisdiction in the Eastern Mediterranean. He referred to Türkiye's maritime delimitation agreements with the "Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus" in 2011 and Libya in 2019, as well as the continental shelf claims communicated to the United Nations on 18 March 2020. He presented these measures as evidence of Türkiye's determination to protect its claimed maritime rights through diplomatic initiatives and action at sea.

Regarding the *Ievoli Relume* incident, Güler stated that the vessel's planned survey activities had been thwarted by the deterrent posture of Turkish forces operating in the area (Türkiye Büyük Millet Meclisi (2024b, November 27, p. 82):

> "Our country is pursuing various initiatives—both on the ground and through diplomatic channels—to safeguard its rights, interests, and concerns in the Eastern Mediterranean. By concluding maritime jurisdiction agreements with the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC) in 2011 and with Libya in 2019, and by declaring our continental shelf to the United Nations on March 18, 2020, we have demonstrated our firm stance as a key actor in the Eastern Mediterranean. We further reinforce this resolute position on the ground by preventing unauthorized activities within our continental shelf. Most recently, in July of this year, an attempt by the Italian vessel "Ievoli Relume" to conduct research for cable-laying purposes within our continental shelf was thwarted by the firm intervention of our assets in the region. **Ultimately, the Italian vessel was only able to proceed with its operations after acknowledging our jurisdiction, effectively asking, "I recognize your area of responsibility; may I have your permission?"** In doing so, we have made it clear that no project or activity can take place in the Eastern Mediterranean without our country's consent."[3] (**emphasis added**).

[3]Original Turkish: Ülkemiz, Doğu Akdeniz'deki hak, alaka ve menfaatleri korumak maksadıyla hem sahada hem de diplomatik olarak çeşitli girişimler yürütmektedir. KKTC'yle 2011 yılında, Libya'yla 2019 yılında yaptığımız deniz yetki alanları anlaşmaları ve 18 Mart 2020 tarihinde Birleşmiş Milletlere deklare ettiğimiz kıta sahanlığımızla Doğu Akdeniz'deki en önemli aktörlerden biri olduğumuza ilişkin kararlı duruşumuzu gösterdik. Bu kararlı duruşumuzu kıta sahanlığımıza yönelen izinsiz faaliyetleri engelleyerek sahada da gösteriyoruz. En son, bu temmuz ayında İtalyan IEVOLİ RELUME gemisiyle kıta sahanlığımıza yapılmak istenen kablo döşeme maksatlı araştırma faaliyeti bölgedeki unsurlarımızın duruşuyla bertaraf edilmiştir ve sonunda İtalyan gemisi "Evet, sizin sorumluluk alanınızı kabul ediyorum; bana müsaade eder misiniz?" dedikten sonra faaliyetlerini

A further point is that the words placed in quotation marks suggest that they represent the Italian vessel's actual wording: "I recognize your area of responsibility; may I have your permission?"

The July statement described the outcome in terms of coordination, permission to conduct work at specified coordinates, and the vessel's completion of its activities before leaving Türkiye's claimed continental shelf. Güler's November account went further by attributing to the vessel an explicit acknowledgment of Türkiye's asserted authority. His remarks therefore did more than recount the operational sequence: they presented the incident as evidence of Türkiye's capacity to enforce its maritime claims and influence the implementation of major energy infrastructure projects.

The statement is best understood as part of the Turkish government's public presentation of the incident. Its claims can be assessed alongside the July statement and the corresponding official statements issued by Greece.

Greek Official Statements During and Immediately after the Incident

The Greek government's contemporaneous position can be reconstructed from official briefings, statements attributed to diplomatic and defense sources, and the announcement by IPTO that the survey work had been completed. These sources indicate that the Greek authorities emphasized the continuation of the survey according to schedule, the use of diplomatic communication to de-escalate the incident, and the rejection of any interpretation that Greece had recognized Turkish maritime jurisdiction. The distinction between formal government statements and comments attributed to unnamed official sources is important, since the latter do not necessarily constitute formally issued announcements.

Pavlos Marinakis's Statement on the Kasos Incident, 24 July 2024

The Greek government's public account of the Kasos incident was presented by government spokesperson Pavlos Marinakis on 24 July 2024, in an interview with ERT's *Proto Program*. Marinakis stated that the Italian research vessel *Ievoli Relume* had completed its survey activities during the early hours of that day. According to his account, the work began at approximately 11 p.m. and was completed at around 3:40 a.m., after which the vessel departed for Heraklion to refuel and change crew, in accordance with the established procedure. He stressed that the research had not been disrupted and that the operation had been completed without further consequences (Grafakou, 2024).

Marinakis attributed the outcome to the combination of Greece's preventive measures, including the presence of Greek naval vessels, and diplomatic communication between the two countries. He argued that the episode demonstrated that the communication channels established within the framework of Greek–Turkish dialogue had functioned effectively. His account thus presented the completion of the survey as evidence that Greece had maintained its position while avoiding a further escalation of the incident.

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yürütebilmiştir. Bununla birlikte Doğu Akdeniz'de ülkemizin izni olmadan hiçbir proje ve faaliyetin yaşayamayacağını göstermiş olduk.

Marinakis also placed the episode within the broader context of Greek–Turkish relations. He defended the continuation of bilateral dialogue, arguing that it was more beneficial to Greece than the alternatives. At the same time, he reiterated two qualifications central to the Greek government's position: issues of sovereignty were not open to negotiation, and dialogue did not necessarily imply agreement. He maintained that Greece regarded the delimitation of the exclusive economic zone (EEZ) and continental shelf as the sole bilateral dispute requiring resolution through this process, without suggesting that dialogue would eliminate the wider disagreements between the two countries (Grafakou 2024).

The Greek and Turkish accounts therefore differ in their interpretation of the incident's outcome. The Greek government emphasized the uninterrupted completion of the survey, the effectiveness of diplomatic communication, and the preservation of its stated national positions. The Turkish Ministry of National Defense, by contrast, emphasized its naval presence, the coordination that preceded the vessel's continued activities, and the need for permission in areas claimed by Türkiye.

These accounts should be compared as official representations of the same episode rather than treated as independent confirmation of the legal claims advanced by either government. The fact that the vessel completed its work is a reported operational outcome; it does not, by itself, establish acceptance of either side's interpretation of maritime jurisdiction. The central analytical question is therefore how the two governments used the same sequence of events to communicate different understandings of maritime rights, deterrence, diplomacy, and the limits of bilateral dialogue.

George Gerapetritis's Statement to the Press, 1 August 2024

A more detailed presentation of the Greek government's position was provided by Minister of Foreign Affairs George Gerapetritis in a televised interview on SKAI's *Proini Enimerosi* on 1 August 2024. The interview, subsequently published on the official website of the Greek Ministry of Foreign Affairs, addressed both the immediate circumstances of the Kasos incident and its implications for Greek–Turkish relations (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Hellenic Republic 2024).

Gerapetritis rejected the interpretation that the Italian research vessel had been forced to terminate its activities or leave the area prematurely because of the presence of Turkish naval forces. He stated that the vessel had completed its survey in accordance with its schedule and had covered the area for longer than originally planned. He also argued that diplomatic communication between Greece and Türkiye had operated from the beginning of the incident, helping to reduce tensions, facilitate the withdrawal of Turkish vessels, and allow the research to be completed.

The Foreign Minister was particularly explicit in rejecting the Turkish interpretation of the episode. He denied that Greece or Italy had requested permission from Türkiye to conduct the survey and maintained that no direct or indirect recognition of Turkish maritime claims had occurred. He further argued that, under international law, Turkish permission was not required for the activities in question. These statements directly contradicted the Turkish Ministry of National Defence's account, which referred to the vessel's warning, subsequent coordination,

permission to operate at specified coordinates, and departure from Türkiye's claimed continental shelf.

Gerapetritis also set out the Greek government's legal interpretation of the maritime dispute. He stated that part of the survey had taken place outside Greek territorial waters, in an area that Greece considers to fall within its exclusive economic zone under the Greek–Egyptian agreement of 2020, but which is also claimed by Türkiye on the basis of the 2019 Türkiye–Libya memorandum. He characterized the Greek–Egyptian agreement as valid and the Türkiye–Libya memorandum as invalid. These characterizations represent the Greek government's legal position; they should not be presented as a neutral or universally accepted determination of the competing claims.

The interview also placed the incident within the Greek government's broader policy of maintaining dialogue with Türkiye. Gerapetritis argued that communication was necessary to prevent tensions from developing into crises, while emphasizing that dialogue did not require either country to abandon its fundamental positions. He maintained that a durable settlement of Greek–Turkish maritime disagreements would require the delimitation of the exclusive economic zone and continental shelf, which he identified as the issues Greece was prepared to submit to international adjudication. He also acknowledged that the Kasos incident arose in the context of the absence of an agreed delimitation between the two countries in the area.

Gerapetritis's intervention is significant for the comparative analysis because it explicitly addresses the central points raised in the Turkish account. Whereas the Turkish Ministry of National Defense presented the episode as an example of effective enforcement of Türkiye's asserted maritime rights, the Greek Foreign Minister presented it as a successful completion of the survey without Turkish permission or recognition of Turkish claims. Both accounts invoked coordination and the eventual completion of the vessel's activities, but they attached different legal and political meanings to these events.

The disagreement is therefore not simply about whether the survey took place or whether the vessel completed its work. It concerns the interpretation of the diplomatic coordination that accompanied the operation and whether that coordination could be understood as implying acceptance of Türkiye's claimed maritime jurisdiction. Gerapetritis expressly rejected such an interpretation. His interview, read alongside the Turkish Ministry's July statement and Yaşar Güler's subsequent parliamentary remarks, provides a useful basis for examining how each government framed the incident in support of its own maritime and diplomatic position.

Greek Political Parties and the Kasos Incident[4]

This section examines the positions of Greek political parties on the Kasos incident of July 2024. I include extensive quotations in the original Greek to avoid any misunderstanding arising from my translation into English.

PASOK

PASOK adopted a critical position towards the government's handling of the Kasos incident, but it did not dispute that the works had been completed, or, in its words, "carried out" (διενεργήθηκαν). This distinguishes PASOK from all the other parties whose positions are examined in the following subsections.

In a statement issued on 25 July 2024 (PASOK 2024a), PASOK said:

> "Particularly given that **the works were carried out** within the limits of the territorial sea and, in any event, within Greece's exclusive economic zone, as officially delimited between Greece and Egypt, and always in accordance with international law and the law of the sea." (**emphasis added**).[5]

It nevertheless called on the government to explain its response and sought European intervention over what it regarded as Turkish violations of Greece's sovereign rights. PASOK's published criticism focused primarily on Türkiye's actions and the Greek government's diplomatic and political response (PASOK 2024a, 2024b). The announcement which appeared on PASOK's official website under the following title is characteristic of this party's interpretation of the incident (PASOK 2024a):

> "Ankara's **attempt** to impose on the ground the illegal, null and void, and non-existent Turkish–Libyan memorandum" (emphasis added).[6]

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[4]This paper does not examine the positions of Turkish political parties. In an earlier study, Papanikos (2021) examined Türkiye's ambitions to become a regional and global power, arguing that its international ambitions exceed its strategic capabilities, thereby contributing to regional isolation and diplomatic failures. The study concluded that Türkiye should align its foreign policy more closely with its Western allies and recognize the limits of its power. This broader strategic context provides a useful framework for understanding Türkiye's position in the Kasos incident, although a fuller analysis of this context lies beyond the scope of the present paper. An anonymous referee made two useful suggestions. First, the referee suggested comparing the 1996 Imia/Kardak incident with the 2024 Kasos incident. This comparative analysis is left for future research. Second, the referee suggested examining how military spending in Greece and Türkiye evolved following each incident. Regarding the second suggestion, I examined military spending in the two countries in Papanikos (2025). The findings do not suggest any discernible increase in military spending as a percentage of GDP following the incidents. On the contrary, this ratio declined. Other factors contributed to this trend, particularly the Great Recession, which hit Greece particularly hard.

[5]Original Greek: Ιδίως με δεδομένο ότι οι εργασίες διενεργήθηκαν εντός του εύρους των χωρικών υδάτων και, σε κάθε περίπτωση, εντός της ελληνικής αποκλειστικής οικονομικής ζώνης, όπως αυτή έχει επισήμως οριοθετηθεί μεταξύ Ελλάδας και Αιγύπτου, και πάντα σύμφωνα με το διεθνές δίκαιο και το δίκαιο της θάλασσας.

[6]Original Greek: Απόπειρα της Άγκυρας να επιβάλει επί του πεδίου το παράνομο, άκυρο και ανυπόστατο τουρκολιβυκό μνημόνιο

The word "attempt" may imply that Türkiye tried but failed to achieve its objective. PASOK therefore does not dispute that the works were carried out; rather, it calls on the government to explain what action it took and to raise the incident with NATO and the EU. The statement also notes that the party's MEPs (PASOK 2024a):

> "… sent a letter to the High Representative of the EU for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, J. Borrell, requesting that Ankara's actions be condemned and that the sovereignty and sovereign rights of Greece, as an EU member state, be protected."

The response by the given by High Representative/Vice-President Borrell i Fontelles on behalf of the European Commission was the following (Borrell Fontelles 2024):

> "In this context, the EU continues to expect Türkiye to unequivocally commit to and promote good neighbourly relations and the peaceful settlement of disputes, having recourse, if necessary, to the International Court of Justice, and to respect the sovereignty and the sovereign rights of all EU Member States, in accordance with international law, including the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (Unclos)."

In sum, PASOK neither disputes the Greek government's announcement that the works were completed nor endorses the Turkish claim that permission was requested and granted. In this respect, PASOK's position differs from those of all the other political parties examined in the following subsections.

My interpretation of PASOK's position is that it broadly supports the government's objectives while criticizing their execution, and that it encourages the government to be more effective in promoting the Greek stance in international fora and in condemning Türkiye.

A similar message came from the PASOK president, Nikos Androulakis, during his visit to Kasos on 29 June 2026. Most importantly, he made clear that he does not question the intention of anyone, whichever party they belong to, to defend the national interest, but that it must be done effectively. His remarks concern the Greece–Cyprus electricity cable project as a whole, not the 2024 survey (PASOK 2026):

> The Prime Minister advertised the cable as a project of vital strategic importance. It is. But do you start such a project with Cyprus without having ensured its completion? And, what is more, when its non-completion means that Erdogan's bluster has prevailed? These are dangerous amateurisms, which show that some people are doing more **communication than strategic work to effectively defend our national interests**. I cannot say that anyone, from whichever party they come, does not defend our national interests, but it is one thing to defend them for show, and another to defend them **effectively**. (**emphasis added**).[7]

[7]Ο Πρωθυπουργός διαφήμισε το καλώδιο ως ένα έργο ζωτικής στρατηγικής σημασίας. Είναι. Ξεκινάς, όμως, ένα τέτοιο έργο με την Κύπρο, χωρίς να έχεις διασφαλίσει την ολοκλήρωση του; Και μάλιστα, όταν η μη ολοκλήρωση του σημαίνει ότι πέρασε ο τσαμπουκάς του Ερντογάν; Αυτοί είναι επικίνδυνοι ερασιτεχνισμοί, που δείχνουν ότι κάποιοι κάνουν περισσότερο επικοινωνία παρά εργάζονται στρατηγικά για να υπερασπιστούν αποτελεσματικά τα εθνικά μας

Overall, PASOK's statements show an opposition that is critical of the government but measured in its criticism. The party demanded explanations of the government's response, called for the incident to be raised with NATO and the EU, and wrote to the High Representative asking for Ankara's actions to be condemned. At the same time, it did not dispute that the works were carried out, it did not claim that they had been halted, and it did not endorse the Turkish claim that permission had been requested. Its 2026 remarks in Kasos follow the same logic: Androulakis criticized the government's effectiveness but stressed that defending the national interest is a goal shared across the political spectrum. In this sense, PASOK positioned itself as a critic that holds the government accountable through institutional and diplomatic channels, rather than competing with the nationalist parties examined in the following subsections for the most uncompromising rhetoric.

SYRIZA–Progressive Alliance

SYRIZA adopted a strongly critical position towards the Greek government's handling of the Kasos incident. On 2 August 2024, fifteen SYRIZA MPs, led by parliamentary group president Sokratis Famellos and acting on the initiative of foreign affairs spokesperson Rena Dourou, submitted a parliamentary question asking whether Greece **had conceded sovereign rights to Türkiye**.

They demanded clarification of the diplomatic communications exchanged during the vessel's voyage and questioned the government's response to the Turkish counter-NAVTEX and its broader strategy for addressing Turkish challenges to Greek maritime claims.

This criticism should be distinguished from the separate claim that the survey itself was not completed: questioning whether the government yielded to Turkish pressure does not, in itself, establish that the *Ievoli Relume* failed to complete its survey activities

In sum, SYRIZA's criticism is directed at the government's political conduct rather than at the outcome of the survey. Its central charge is that the government yielded to Turkish pressure and, in doing so, failed to uphold Greece's right to conduct surveys and lay cables in its territorial waters. However, SYRIZA did not claim that the vessel had abandoned the area or failed to complete the survey. One possible interpretation of SYRIZA's position is that the vessel could complete its work with the permission of the Turkish authorities, which is, in fact, consistent with one reading of the party's stance.

This gap is what most clearly separates SYRIZA from PASOK. PASOK also criticized the government, but it focused on Türkiye's actions and on the effectiveness of the government's response, accepted that the works were carried out, and did not question that the government had conceded sovereign rights as SYRIZA did. SYRIZA's charge is therefore the more severe, since it implies a surrender of sovereignty, but it is also the less substantiated, because it rests on inference rather than on evidence of what was conceded or agreed. Without such

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συμφέροντα. Εγώ δεν μπορώ να πω ότι κάποιος -από όποιο κόμμα κι αν προέρχεται- δεν υπερασπίζεται τα εθνικά μας συμφέροντα, αλλά άλλο να τα υπερασπίζεσαι επικοινωνιακά και άλλο αποτελεσματικά.

evidence, the claim reads as a political judgement about the government's resolve, not as a demonstrated finding.

The Communist Party of Greece (KKE)

The Communist Party of Greece (KKE) adopted a position combining criticism of Turkish intervention with opposition to the Great Sea Interconnector and the broader geopolitical strategy within which the project was situated. Its position is documented in several official party statements and parliamentary interventions, although the sources differ in their proximity to the July 2024 incident.

In a statement issued on 9 September 2024 concerning US pressure on Cyprus over the electricity interconnection, the KKE criticized what it described as direct US intervention, supported by the Greek government and the European Union, to secure acceptance of the Greece–Cyprus interconnector as part of the wider Greece–Cyprus–Israel project. The party argued that the project was connected to broader Euro-Atlantic geopolitical planning and warned that Greece and Cyprus would bear the costs amid intensifying international competition. It also criticized what it regarded as insufficient attention to escalating Turkish threats against Cyprus. This statement documents the KKE's opposition to the project's geopolitical context (KKE 2024). However, it makes no mention of the Kasos incident, and I could not find any other KKE statement on Kasos in 2024.

The KKE subsequently addressed the Kasos incident directly in parliamentary debate. On 16 October 2025, General Secretary Dimitris Koutsoumbas asked the government what had happened during the July 2024 surveys near Kasos and Karpathos and what would happen to the money spent on the interconnector. He did not say whether the survey had been completed. Instead, he situated the incident within his party's broader criticism of Greek–Turkish dialogue conducted under NATO auspices and American supervision, which he argued risked leading to joint management or exploitation of maritime resources. His intervention demonstrates that the KKE treated the Kasos incident as evidence of the geopolitical risks associated with the project and the government's foreign policy (Koutsoumbas 2025).

The party's position was stated more explicitly in a speech by Koutsoumbas on 12 October 2026. He asserted that Türkiye had **blocked** surveys in the Kasos–Karpathos area since July 2024 and that the presence of five Turkish warships, together with warning messages directed at the Italian vessel, had led to its departure. He further argued that Türkiye had used the Türkiye–Libya memorandum to assert maritime claims that disregarded Greece's position concerning the Greece–Egypt maritime delimitation agreement and the maritime rights of Greek islands. Koutsoumbas also rejected the interconnector on economic and geopolitical grounds, arguing that it served major business interests, imposed costs on the Greek public, and implicated Greece in wider international rivalries.

This speech provides clear evidence of the KKE's retrospective interpretation of the incident. Because I found no KKE statement from July 2024, it cannot be compared with a contemporaneous account. Its assertion that Turkish pressure caused the vessel's departure should also be treated as the party's interpretation rather than independent evidence that the survey was not completed (Koutsoumbas 2026).

Populist, Nationalist and Ultra Right-Wing Opposition: Elliniki Lysi, NIKI, and the Spartans

The Kasos incident also drew strong criticism from right-wing populist, nationalist and ultra far-right opposition parties, particularly Elliniki Lysi, NIKI, and the Spartans. Their statements portrayed the government's handling of the incident as a failure to defend Greece's maritime rights and national interests, although they differed in emphasis and timing.

Elliniki Lysi

Elliniki Lysi leader Kyriakos Velopoulos issued a statement on 23 July 2024 condemning the government's response to the presence of Turkish warships near Kasos. He accused the government of failing to confront the Turkish naval vessels, which he described as harassing Greece in its maritime zone. In his words, the government:

> "It does not dare to **destroy** the Turkish ships that are harassing, in Greek territorial waters, our own exclusive economic zone." (**emphasis added**) (Elliniki Lysi 2024a, July 23).[8]

In a second statement on 29 July, he alleged that the government had surrendered national sovereign rights, **ordered Greek vessels to withdraw**, and effectively recognized the Turkish-Libyan memorandum. These statements framed the incident as evidence of governmental weakness in the face of Turkish pressure (Elliniki Lysi 2024b). In parliament on 26 September 2024, Elliniki Lysi stated (Hellenic Parliament 2024b, p. 21300):

> We, as Elliniki Lysi, have full confidence in and believe in our Armed Forces. Will you let them drive away the Turkish frigate, or will we **back down** again, as we did at Kasos? (**emphasis added**)[9]

Here it is clearly stated that Greece retreated, and the message is equally clear that the armed forces should be used to resolve the dispute.

NIKI

NIKI adopted a similarly critical position, but it began as a question (Hellenic Parliament 2024a, p. 20066):

> So that we understand, then: which channels were activated when the five Turkish warships appeared? What did you say to each other? What was the point of contention

[8]Original Greek: Δεν τολμά να καταστρέψει τα τουρκικά πλοία, τα οποία παρενοχλούν, στα ελληνικά χωρικά ύδατα, την δική μας αποκλειστική οικονομική ζώνη.
[9]Original Greek: Εμείς ως Ελληνική Λύση έχουμε πλήρη εμπιστοσύνη και πιστεύουμε στις Ένοπλες Δυνάμεις μας. Θα τις αφήσετε να διώξουν την τουρκική φρεγάτα ή θα υπαναχωρήσουμε πάλι, όπως κάναμε στην Κάσο;

> in the dispute? Did you disengage the fleets, did you manage to protect the Greek EEZ? Will the research vessel be able to proceed further east, or has it been prohibited?[10]

On 9 September 2024, NIKI submitted a parliamentary question concerning what the party characterized as the government's **retreat** at Kasos (Roudas 2024).

NIKI interpreted the incident as raising serious questions about the exercise of Greek sovereign rights and the government's response to Turkish maritime claims. In a later statement published on 28 September 2026, the party again invoked the Kasos incident, arguing that Türkiye had attempted to impose its claims through naval pressure and warning that any subsequent alteration of the cable route to avoid a Turkish reaction would constitute a further retreat. The later statement is relevant to the evolution of the party's position but should be distinguished from its reaction in 2024 (NIKI 2024, 2026).

The Spartans

The Spartans, a ultra far-right party, also criticized the government. In a parliamentary speech on 31 July 2024, party leader Vasilis Stigkas portrayed the government's response to the Turkish naval presence as a retreat and connected the incident to his broader criticism of the government's approach to Greek-Turkish relations (Hellenic Parliament 2024a, p. 20066):[11]

> We know very well that as soon as the Turkish ships arrived, **our people left**. They gave the ship an order, and they got up and left from there, from the survey area … What is Mr. Mitsotakis saying now? That the Turks harassed us and we found everything fine, **running away like hares** from the point of contact, from our sovereign rights, from our homeland, from our interests? How is that possible? Does the appeasing Mr. Mitsotakis see everything as fine? Mr. Mitsotakis and his crew cannot humiliate an entire nation. Because all these things, which are demeaning for us Greeks, are confirmed by the reports in the Turkish press, which are triumphant and focus on the fact that the Kasos events and the shameful flight of the Greek side amount to an acceptance of the Turkish-Libyan memorandum. It is not enough that we ran off; the Turks are mocking us on top of that.

[10]Original Greek: Για να καταλάβουμε, δηλαδή, ποια κανάλια λειτούργησαν, όταν εμφανίστηκαν τα πέντε πολεμικά τουρκικά πλοία; Τι είπατε μεταξύ σας; Ποιο ήταν το επίμαχο της διενέξεως; Απεμπλοκή των στόλων κάνατε, την προστασία της ελληνικής ΑΟΖ την πετύχατε; Το ερευνητικό πλοίο θα μπορέσει να προχωρήσει προς τα ανατολικότερα ή έχει απαγορευθεί;

[11]Original in Greek: Γνωρίζουμε πολύ καλά ότι μόλις πήγαν τα τουρκικά πλοία, οι δικοί μας έφυγαν. Έδωσαν εντολή στο πλοίο και σηκώθηκαν κι έφυγαν από εκεί, από την περιοχή των ερευνών … Τι λέει τώρα ο κ. Μητσοτάκης; Ότι μας ταλαιπώρησαν οι Τούρκοι και τα βρήκαμε όλα καλά, φεύγοντας σαν λαγοί από το σημείο επαφής, από τα κυριαρχικά μας δικαιώματα, από την πατρίδα μας, από τα συμφέροντα μας; Πώς γίνεται αυτό; Όλα καλά τα βλέπει ο ενδοτικός ο κ. Μητσοτάκης; Δεν μπορεί ο κ. Μητσοτάκης και η παρέα του να εξευτελίζουν ένα ολόκληρο έθνος. Διότι όλα αυτά τα μειωτικά για εμάς τους Έλληνες, τα επιβεβαιώνουν τα δημοσιεύματα του τουρκικού Τύπου που είναι διθυραμβικά και επικεντρώνονται στο γεγονός ότι τα γεγονότα της Κάσου και η ντροπιαστική φυγή της ελληνικής πλευράς, συνιστά αποδοχή του τουρκολιβυκού μνημονίου. Δεν φτάνει που το σκάσαμε, μας κοροϊδεύουν και οι Τούρκοι από πάνω.

A few months later, it seems that they have changed their narrative of what happened. Now they blame the Italian ship that informed the Turkish authorities. In their own words (Hellenic Parliament 2024c, p. 3322): [12]

> The most important question, therefore, is what they are trying to tell us, why everyone is hiding, and what ultimately happened in the Kasos affair, because everything is being concealed, yet everything eventually comes to light. The Italian vessel chartered by Greece to conduct the surveys informed Turkiye of the coordinates at which the surveys had been carried out within Greek territory. What business did Turkiye have knowing this information, and why are you continuing to cooperate with this company? Responsibility lies not only with the relevant officials but also with the political leadership. The Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mr. Gerapetritis, **who failed to safeguard national sovereignty, should have resigned yesterday**. Is this your secret diplomacy? Are we to surrender territory without resistance? The same applies to those who failed to demand an apology from the Italian company and hold it accountable. They should be removed from their positions immediately. Those who betray their country cannot be rewarded. I therefore call for the immediate termination of the contract with the Italian company and the initiation of legal proceedings against it for **espionage**. (**emphasis added**).

On 31 July, "they knew very well," but on 28 November 2024, "everything is being concealed." Now the story is that the Italian vessel informed Türkiye about the survey, which is quite possible. So the Italian vessel did not leave and presumably carried out the survey as planned, with, according to the Turkish authorities, their permission. Now the Greek government is accused of secret diplomacy, while in July it was accused of running away.

It should be noted that the Spartans were the only party to claim so explicitly that the survey vessel and the Greek naval ships escorting it left the area. In other words, they portrayed it as a retreat. No other political party claimed that the survey vessel retreated.

In response to these criticisms, the Minister for Foreign Affairs submitted a written statement, which was included in the Parliament minutes, stating that (Hellenic Parliament 2024a, p. 20105-6):

> There is clear disinformation about Kasos. There was a scheduled survey by an Italian vessel. The programme was completed in full. There was absolutely no retreat

[12]Original Greek: Το κυριότερο, λοιπόν, είναι τι θέλουν να μας πουν, γιατί κρύβονται όλοι και τι έγινε τελικά με την υπόθεση της Κάσου, γιατί όλα κρύβονται, αλλά όλα βγαίνουν και στο φως. Το ιταλικό πλοίο, λοιπόν, που η Ελλάδα είχε μισθώσει για τις έρευνες ενημέρωσε την Τουρκία για τις συντεταγμένες που έγιναν οι έρευνες εντός ελληνικής περιοχής. Τι δουλειά είχε η Τουρκία να γνωρίζει και εξακολουθείτε να συνεργάζεστε με τη συγκεκριμένη εταιρεία; Οι ευθύνες δεν είναι μόνο υπηρεσιακές, είναι και πολιτικές. Ο Υπουργός Εξωτερικών, ο κ. Γεραπετρίτης, που δεν διασφάλισε την εθνική κυριαρχία να παραιτηθεί χθες. Αυτή είναι η μυστική σας διπλωματία; Να παραδώσουμε εδάφη χωρίς αντίσταση; Το ίδιο ισχύει και για όσους δεν απαίτησαν από την ιταλική εταιρεία συγγνώμη να λογοδοτήσει. Να καρατομηθούν άμεσα. Δεν μπορεί να επιβραβεύονται όσοι προδίδουν την πατρίδα. Ζητώ, λοιπόν, την άμεση καταγγελία της σύμβασης με την ιταλική εταιρεία και την έναρξη δικαστικών διαδικασιών εναντίον της για κατασκοπεία

> whatsoever. It carried out its survey in Greece's maritime EEZ. No permission was ever requested from Türkiye, nor was there any recognition of Türkiye's sovereign rights.[13]

Taken together, the Spartans' statements show a position that shifted with circumstances rather than one built on a consistent reading of events. In July 2024, the party presented the episode as a retreat and a humiliation, claiming that the survey vessel and its naval escort fled "like hares." By November, the same party had moved to a different story, in which the Italian contractor was the culprit and the government's alleged fault was concealment and "secret diplomacy." Neither account was supported by the other parties, and none of them shared the Spartans' claim that the vessel withdrew. The Minister for Foreign Affairs categorically rejected that claim in his written statement, stating that the survey programme was completed in full, that no permission was requested from Türkiye, and that there was no retreat. The Spartans' position is therefore best understood as an outlier. It was the most openly confrontational criticism of the government, and also the least consistent, adapting its narrative to new information while retaining the same conclusion: that the government had failed to defend Greek sovereignty.

Discussion and Conclusions

In conclusion, the Kasos incident illustrates the importance of distinguishing operational outcomes, official government claims, and political interpretations. The Greek government, ADMIE, and the Turkish Ministry of National Defense reported that the *Ievoli Relume* completed its survey activities. However, the two governments offered conflicting explanations of the coordination that preceded the completion of the work and of the authority under which the vessel operated. The subsequent interventions of Greek political parties further demonstrate that the same incident can be interpreted differently according to competing assessments of national interests, government effectiveness, and the desirability of the interconnector.

The evidence examined does not substantiate the allegation that the survey was abandoned, nor does it establish that Greece formally accepted Türkiye's maritime claims. At the same time, the public record does not independently verify every operational detail or disclose the precise content of the diplomatic contacts. The completion of the survey should therefore not be equated automatically with either an unqualified Greek diplomatic success or a Turkish recognition of defeat. Equally, criticism of the government's handling of the incident should be distinguished from allegations of retreat or the surrender of sovereign rights, which require additional evidence.

The principal contribution of this case study is to evaluate how governments and political parties represented the same episode and to distinguish claims supported by the documentary record from interpretations that remain unverified. The comparison

[13]Original Greek: Υπάρχει σαφής παραπληροφόρηση για την Κάσο. Υπήρξε προγραμματισμός ιταλικού πλοίου. Το πρόγραμμα ολοκληρώθηκε απολύτως. Δεν υπήρξε καμμία απολύτως υποχώρηση. Διεξήγαγε την έρευνά του σε θαλάσσια ΑΟΖ της Ελλάδας. Ουδέποτε ζητήθηκε άδεια από την Τουρκία ούτε υπήρξε αναγνώριση των κυριαρχικών δικαιωμάτων της Τουρκίας.

also reveals substantive differences among the Greek political parties: PASOK's criticism focused on the effectiveness of the government's response; SYRIZA alleged a failure to uphold Greek rights; the nationalist opposition adopted more confrontational interpretations, including calls for the use of force; and the KKE situated the incident within its broader opposition to the interconnector and its interpretation of geopolitical competition. These positions should not be treated as equivalent, particularly where the parties differed in their claims about the operational outcome and where their statements were made at different times.

The case ultimately demonstrates that the completion of a technical operation, the management of a diplomatic confrontation, and the defense of a state's claimed maritime rights are related but distinct questions. The available evidence permits an assessment of the competing public narratives, but it does not support a definitive judgment on every aspect of the diplomatic negotiations or the government's strategic effectiveness. Further research drawing on operational records and additional documentary evidence could clarify these unresolved questions and help establish more precisely how diplomatic crisis management affects the implementation of strategic infrastructure projects in the Eastern Mediterranean.

The distinction between these accounts is central to understanding the incident. The Turkish statement did not explicitly identify who requested permission, nor did it provide documentary evidence of a request. Its reference to permission being granted following coordination, together with its expression of thanks to the Greek and Italian authorities, nevertheless presented the outcome as consistent with Türkiye's claimed maritime jurisdiction. The Greek government rejected this interpretation. The available public record establishes the existence of these competing accounts, but it does not establish precisely what was communicated during the diplomatic contacts. It would therefore be premature to conclude that Greece or Italy requested Turkish permission, just as it would be inappropriate to treat the Greek government's account as independent verification of every operational detail.

A related qualification concerns the meaning of completion. The agreement of the two governments on this point is significant because they had competing interests in presenting the incident favorably. Nevertheless, their statements are not independent operational records, and the Turkish reference to activities at specified coordinates is not necessarily identical in scope to the Greek claim that the scheduled programme was completed. The evidence examined here does not establish that every originally planned survey point was reached. Nor does it establish that the survey was abandoned. The most defensible conclusion is that both governments reported completion, while the precise operational details and the meaning of the diplomatic coordination remain unresolved in the publicly available evidence.

The second finding concerns the claim that Greece retreated. The examination of Greek political-party statements shows that the term was used in different ways and did not always refer to the same event. Some statements questioned whether the government had effectively defended Greece's maritime rights; others alleged that the government had yielded to Turkish pressure or that Greek naval vessels had withdrawn. The strongest version of the claim, advanced by the Spartans, portrayed the episode as a humiliating flight from the area. Such statements should not be treated as equivalent. Criticism of the government's handling of a confrontation does

not necessarily establish that the survey was abandoned, just as the completion of the survey does not, by itself, prove that the government achieved every strategic objective it had pursued.

The comparison also reveals differences in the political responses. PASOK criticized the government's handling of the incident while accepting that the work had been carried out. Its position emphasized the need for a more effective defense of Greek interests through diplomatic and European channels. SYRIZA made the more serious allegation that the government had abandoned the exercise of Greek rights in the face of Turkish threats. Elliniki Lysi and the Spartans adopted more confrontational positions, with statements that invoked retreat, capitulation, or the use of force. NIKI questioned whether the government had adequately protected Greece's maritime rights. The KKE, meanwhile, situated the incident within its broader opposition to the interconnector and its interpretation of Greek foreign policy as increasingly shaped by Euro-Atlantic geopolitical competition.

These differences matter because they reveal that the political debate was not simply about the same operational facts. The parties also disagreed about what constituted a successful defense of national interests. For some, success meant completing the scheduled survey without recognizing Turkish claims. For others, the presence of Turkish warships and the need for diplomatic de-escalation were sufficient grounds for criticizing the government, even without evidence that the work had been abandoned. The KKE's assessment was further shaped by its opposition to the project itself. Consequently, the positions of the parties cannot be evaluated solely by whether they accepted that the vessel had completed its work; their underlying objectives and criteria for judging government performance also need to be considered.

My assessment is that the distinction between criticism of government performance and allegations of a surrender of national rights is essential. Opposition parties are entitled to question the government's preparedness, diplomatic strategy, and ability to protect Greek interests. However, a claim that the government surrendered sovereign rights or that the survey was abandoned requires evidence beyond the presence of Turkish naval vessels or the subsequent departure of the research vessel. In the material examined here, the allegations of retreat are not substantiated by documentary evidence showing that the survey was left incomplete or that Greece formally accepted Türkiye's maritime claims.

The Spartans' statements provide a particularly revealing example of the need for this distinction. In July 2024, the party presented the incident as a retreat and a national humiliation. In November, its criticism shifted towards the alleged disclosure of survey coordinates by the Italian contractor and the government's purported concealment of what had happened. These statements differ in their account of the alleged failure, although both assign responsibility to the government. This change is observable in the party's public statements; the evidence does not, however, establish why the party changed its emphasis. The appropriate conclusion is that its explanations were inconsistent in their focus, rather than that its motives can be established from the statements alone.

The positions of PASOK and SYRIZA also illustrate the importance of distinguishing political criticism from evidence of a concession. PASOK questioned

the effectiveness of the government's response without disputing that the work was carried out. SYRIZA's allegation that the government abandoned the exercise of Greek rights was more serious because it implied a substantive failure to defend those rights. Yet the statements examined do not establish what, if anything, was conceded during the diplomatic contacts. The evidence therefore supports a distinction between the parties' respective claims, but it does not permit a definitive judgement about the government's strategic effectiveness in the absence of a fuller record of the negotiations and operational instructions.

The third finding concerns the wider context of the incident. The *Ievoli Relume* episode was not the only maritime operation involving undersea infrastructure to encounter competing claims in the Eastern Mediterranean in 2024. The separate *Teliri* telecommunications-cable operation and the return of the *Ievoli Relume* to the area south of Kasos and Karpathos in August demonstrate that the issues surrounding maritime infrastructure extended beyond the immediate confrontation of 22–24 July. The August operation is particularly relevant because it shows that further survey activities took place after the July incident without a comparable escalation. These developments reinforce the need to distinguish the immediate outcome of the July confrontation from the subsequent implementation of the interconnector's survey programme.

The case also illustrates the political importance of strategic infrastructure. An undersea electricity interconnector is an engineering and economic undertaking, but its route and implementation can become entangled in competing maritime claims and broader geopolitical objectives. The resulting tensions create incentives for governments to present operational outcomes as demonstrations of resolve, while opposition parties may use the same events to question the competence or intentions of those in power. In this respect, the Kasos incident provides a useful example of how technical activities can acquire political significance far beyond their immediate operational purpose.

The implications for future Greek–Turkish relations should nevertheless be drawn cautiously. The incident suggests that diplomatic communication can help manage confrontations even when the parties disagree fundamentally about maritime jurisdiction. It does not establish that an ambiguous diplomatic formula will provide a durable solution to the underlying dispute. Each government may benefit in the short term from presenting the outcome as a success, but such ambiguity can also leave unresolved the questions that generated the confrontation in the first place. A more lasting settlement would require arrangements that address the competing maritime claims rather than merely manage individual incidents.

The role of external powers, particularly the United States, constitutes an important dimension of the Kasos incident that warrants further investigation. In my assessment, the United States is the most important external power influencing the strategic environment in which Greek–Turkish relations and major energy infrastructure projects in the Eastern Mediterranean evolve. Its strategic interests and diplomatic influence may therefore be relevant to understanding the context in which the incident unfolded. However, the evidence examined in this case study does not establish whether, or to what extent, the United States was directly involved in the management or outcome of the Kasos episode. Although American

involvement cannot be ruled out and may be a plausible hypothesis, it should not be presented as an established fact without additional documentary evidence. Future research should investigate the possible role of the United States, alongside that of the European Union and other relevant external actors, in shaping the diplomatic context and the implementation of energy infrastructure projects in the Eastern Mediterranean.

In conclusion, the Kasos incident demonstrates the importance of separating operational outcomes, official government claims, and political interpretations. Both governments reported that the survey was completed, but they offered incompatible explanations of the coordination that preceded its completion and of the authority under which the vessel operated. Greek political parties, in turn, interpreted the incident according to different understandings of national interests, government effectiveness, and the desirability of the interconnector. The available evidence does not substantiate the claim that the survey was abandoned, nor does it independently establish every detail of its completion or the diplomatic contacts surrounding it.

The principal contribution of this case study is therefore not to declare either government the winner of the confrontation. It is to demonstrate how the same event can sustain competing political narratives, and why those narratives must be evaluated against the documentary evidence rather than accepted at face value. The case further suggests that the management of maritime incidents involving strategic infrastructure requires both effective diplomacy and careful public communication. Future research could examine the operational records of the survey, the documentary record of diplomatic contacts where it becomes available, and the role of external actors in facilitating arrangements that reduce the risk of renewed confrontation. Such research would help establish more precisely the relationship between diplomatic crisis management, the exercise of maritime rights, and the implementation of major infrastructure projects in the Eastern Mediterranean.

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