



Energy-Centric Conflict/Cooperation Between Regional and Non-Regional States in the Eastern Mediterranean

Doğu Akdeniz'de Bölge ve Bölge Dışı Devletler Arasında Enerji Merkezli Çatışma/İşbirliği

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Abstract

We can define states as organisms that act in line with the dominance they want to establish in the near or distant environment. Just like organisms, states also need energy to maintain their mobility. States need more energy to meet their energy, so their energy dependence always continues. The Eastern Mediterranean region is an important area for states that need energy. Both Eastern Mediterranean countries and external countries can establish various co-operations to unlock the energy in this region or they can reserve military power as an option. The energy geopolitics of the Eastern Mediterranean, which has the world's largest energy reserves, becomes more valuable with both energy lines and trade routes. For this reason, the mobilisations in this region are closely related to all Eastern Mediterranean countries, especially the countries with energy basins. This study analyses the energy geopolitics of the Eastern Mediterranean, discoveries and energy lines from the perspective of both Europe and the countries in the region. This article aims to analyse the cooperation on energy and energy routes in the Eastern Mediterranean within the geopolitical framework.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Eastern Mediterranean, Energy Reserves, Geopolitics, Eastmed Pipeline, Energy Crisis

Özet

Devletleri, yakın veya uzak çevrede kurmak istedikleri hâkimiyetler doğrultusunda hareket eden organizmalar olarak tanımlayabiliriz. Devletlerin de hareket kabiliyetlerini sürdürebilmek için tıpkı organizmalar gibi enerjiye ihtiyacı vardır. Devletler enerjilerini karşılamak için daha fazla enerjiye ihtiyaç duyarlar böylelikle enerjiye bağımlılıkları daima devam eder. Doğu Akdeniz bölgesi, enerjiye ihtiyaç duyan devletler için önemli bir sahadır. Hem Doğu Akdeniz ülkeleri hem de dışarıdaki ülkeler bu bölgedeki enerjiyi ortaya çıkarmak için çeşitli işbirlikleri kurabilir ya da askeri gücü bir seçenek olarak saklı tutabilir. Dünyanın en büyük enerji rezervlerine sahip olan Doğu Akdeniz'in enerji jeopolitiği hem enerji hatları hem de ticaret yolları ile daha fazla değerli olmaktadır. Bu nedenle bu bölgedeki hareketlilikler enerji havzalarına sahip olan ülkeler başta olmak üzere, tüm Doğu Akdeniz ülkelerini yakından ilgilendirmektedir. Bu çalışma, Doğu Akdeniz'in enerji jeopolitiğini, yeni keşifleri ve enerji hatlarını hem Avrupa hemde bölge ülkeleri açısından incelemektedir. Bu makale ile amaç, Doğu Akdeniz'deki enerji ve enerji yolları üzerine bölgede kurgulanan iş birliklerini jeopolitik çerçevede incelemektir.

Keywords: Doğu Akdeniz, Enerji Rezervleri, Jeopolitik, Eastmed Pipeline, Enerji Krizi

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Introduction

The Eastern Mediterranean, with its geographical location, energy resources, trade routes and historical past, is at the centre of international relations and has a geopolitical strategy in the foreign policies of states. Especially after the Arab Spring, the geopolitical position of the Eastern Mediterranean has become even more dynamic. Monitoring and analysing movements in the Eastern Mediterranean and understanding geopolitical interactions can help identify tools to guide regional policies.

The significance of the Eastern Mediterranean dates back long before the geographical discoveries. This geography, where traces of ancient Roman and Greek civilisations can be seen, has been a crossroads for countless civilisations throughout history. The Eastern Mediterranean has maintained its geopolitical significance with its maritime trade and strategic control centres at a time when there was not yet the technology to uncover energy resources.

After the industrial revolution and with the advancement of technology, exploration for energy resources has become important for humanity. Because of the race to access, obtain and use energy, competition between countries has increased. When we look at the Eastern Mediterranean in the narrow area, the geopolitical competition between Cyprus, Greece, Türkiye, Israel and Egypt has increased. Political developments in the Eastern Mediterranean have become tense due to maritime jurisdictions, energy transit routes and energy exploration activities.

The political future of the Eastern Mediterranean, whether there will be war in the region and legal issues depend on how diplomatic relations between the countries of the region will develop. How energy resources will be managed in the Eastern Mediterranean and how regional power balances will be shaped will change according to the global conjuncture. This study aims to analyse the geopolitical importance of the Eastern Mediterranean geography and energy geopolitics amid conflicts of interest and tensions.

1. Geopolitical Potential of the Eastern Mediterranean

Whether it stands sea or land, areas have expanded additional meaning for international policies and also its changing aspects principally power and purpose in international matters. Richard Haas underscores that the most imperative economic, military, and diplomatic communications do simply occur that juxtaposition issues as well as numerous states that means little at the international stage, owing to absence of either grasp or comparative bulk, hold a considerably superior influence on their neighbours. It is similarly underlined that areas stand influenced each other. Also, Henry Kissinger highlights that “the present-day pursuit for world direction will necessitate an articulate policy to found a notion of order in the countless areas and also for relating these local establishment with one another”. Areas remain assuredly coated in vagueness and discord. It stands vibrant that it stays rigid to bargain a compromise on a world-wide area that holds standard ranges, structures and societal construction, nevertheless alternatively, a subsystem as a term delivers a strong and intellectual denotation and understanding. The areas of the Middle East and Eastern Europe stand the enlightening instances that reproduce a vagueness, divergence and conceptual disorder. Even though those regions partake lively and shifting features, they have on no occasion happened in the first place and grown a recognised essential in world-wide politics. They remain normally professed and recognized as local subsystems. In this background, to outline a local subsystem delivers quite a few valuable characteristics (Yorulmaz, Kısacık and Helvacıköylü, 2022: 419).

There stand five foremost criterion in the framework of a area's description specifically topographical rank of the area, the security measurement of the area, inner and exterior credit of area, shared ancient context, economic interdependency and area's features. Unavoidably, an area is obliged to cover a firm land and precise states, although enquiries stand upstretched on both and it stands correspondingly moderately conceivable to express a broader local subsystem nonetheless claim that it ought to stand separated into two or additional sub-regions. In time, the figures of sub-regions possibly will upsurge and decline in internal and external boundaries, as well as therefore the nations' characters and tactics within the sub-regions do not display a perseverance and alteration for their benefits and local players' insights. As a second dimension, the idea of security had better stand examined in a local establishment within the framework of countries' relationships to each other within an area. Barry Buzan classifies security notion in a regional security complex and underlines that a set of countries whose principal security apprehensions connect collected adequately thoroughly that their nation-wide retreats are not capable of sensibly stand measured on top of one another. Regional security complexes stand the subsystems in a precise topographical zone comprise a high stage of danger touched by two or extra foremost countries. The third dimension stands the equilibrium and lucidity of an area for its inner and exterior credit. A fourth dimension stays the presence of a joint historical context. The mutual historical, cultural and experiences stand the most significant features of classification and also comprehension of an area. As the fifth pillar, economic interdependency beneficially marks and leads the relationships amongst the countries and underwrites to the comprehension and interiorization of area notion. Sui generis features as the last norm signify the area's distinguishing shared aims when compared with other areas. Those idiosyncratic features offer a foremost upshot and rank when compared with other areas. Consequently, it stays conceivable to address that an area is able to be designated by the occurrence of a topographical district that might encompass sub-regions nevertheless ought to contain quite a lot of countries. As a discrete local subsystem, the East-Med has regularly remained well thought-out as one separate fragment of Western and Eastern within the background of physical, political and tactical apprehensions. Notwithstanding its comparatively minor magnitude, the EM comprises the countries of Türkiye, Greece, Israel, Lebanon, Libya, Syria, Egypt and GCAS, and counting Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus and Gaza as the self-declared countries nevertheless it stands vibrant that the essential countries of the EM stay probably Türkiye, Greece, Israel, Egypt and GCAS. The EM states sporadically demonstrate a significantly mark of consistency when compared with the Mediterranean region as a total in spite of their divergences and quarrels to one another. Additionally, the East-Med holds a religious involvedness specifically the people of Muslim, Orthodox and Jewish. With regard to the East-Med's inner and exterior identifiability, the ambiguity associated with the EM accentuates over exterior identifiability and its local features and ancient context participate in inner identifiability (Yorulmaz, Kısacık and Helvacıköylü, 2022: 419-420).

The geopolitical position of the Mediterranean is multifaceted and important economically and strategically, as well as historically and culturally. The geopolitical dynamics of the region are influenced by power shifts, energy resources and historical developments, shaping its role in global and regional politics. The strategic importance of the Eastern Mediterranean does not only concern the eastern Mediterranean. The Mediterranean concerns the entire region, the world's maritime network, which runs from the Strait of Gibraltar to the Atlantic Ocean in the West and the Suez Canal to the Indian Ocean in the East. In other words, the region's potential as a transit corridor from Asia and

Africa to Europe increases its geopolitical importance. Moreover, the geopolitical significance of the Eastern Mediterranean has the potential to be a gateway for human migration.

The Eastern Mediterranean is a region with the potential for conflict at any time due to various factors such as maritime security and regional power shifts. The geopolitical value of the region has changed with the discovery and utilization of energy reserves, leading to a new balance of power (Karbuuz, 2021). In other words, the discovery of hydrocarbon reserves contributed to the construction of a new geopolitical order in the Eastern Mediterranean (Tziarras, 2021). The region's strategic geographical location and its potential as a source of oil and natural gas have led global powers to adopt a policy of containment against certain countries. Non-regional countries that come to the region for energy exploration activities can cooperate with regional countries and form alliances against other countries (Güçyetmez, 2021: 153-177). The commercial and military importance of the Eastern Mediterranean has led to the shaping of a new geopolitical design to protect the interests of certain countries (Bakhshandeh & Yeganeh, 2023). In addition, the region's maritime security has also become a major concern, with significant natural gas discoveries, disputes over maritime boundaries and large-scale violence contributing to the creation of a regional security complex (Rubin & Eiran, 2019).

Political instabilities, conflicts and forced displacement in the region will add to the worsening complex problems (Özertem, 2016). The geopolitical landscape of the region is also complicated by unresolved territorial disputes, such as the status of the Greek islands and the recognition of Northern Cyprus. The region is also affected by contentious claims over maritime delimitation, all of which add to the geopolitical complexity of the region (Erdoğan, 2021). In conclusion, the geopolitical significance of the Eastern Mediterranean is multifaceted, involving natural resources, maritime security, and regional power shifts. These factors have contributed to the changing geopolitical landscape of the region, making it a focal point for global and regional powers.

When we examine the geographical formation and geopolitical history of the Eastern Mediterranean, we know that it has hosted diverse and great civilizations and wars.

Map 1. Maritime Trade Routes in the Mediterranean in Ancient Times



Source: Nick Nutter (T.Y.)

Egyptian, Mesopotamian, Anatolian and Greek civilisations established important civilisations in this region. During the Mycenaean, Persian, Roman and Hellenistic periods, the region was enriched by being the intersection point of trade routes. Later, this region was an important part of the Roman Empire. At the peak of Rome, the region was economically and culturally developed. In particular, Rome's control of the sea routes increased the prosperity of the cities on the Eastern Mediterranean coast. Following the division of Roman Empire, the Eastern Roman Empire or Byzantine Empire dominated the Eastern Mediterranean. During this period, the region witnessed the strategic importance of Constantinople, the Byzantine capital.

Map 2. Map of the Ancient Roman's Trade Routes



Source: <https://earlychurchhistory.org/commerce/roman-empire-worldwide-trade/>

In the 7th century, with the spread of Islam, Arabs and other Muslim powers dominated the Eastern Mediterranean region. Islamic civilisation ushered in an advanced era of science, art and commerce. Between the 11th and 13th centuries, the Crusades from Europe caused major conflicts in the Eastern Mediterranean area. Events such as the capture and loss of Jerusalem affected the balances in the region. The Ottoman Empire began to control the region in the 15th century. The Ottomans controlled the maritime trade by capturing the cities and islands on the northern shores of the Mediterranean. By increasing their control over the seas, the Ottomans became the leading country in both trade and maritime trade. The most important role in the expansion and growth of the Ottoman Empire was to have a strong galley navy. After the collapse of the Ottoman Empire and World War I, the modern Republic of Türkiye was founded. At the same time, Greece and other countries in the region declared their independence. This process significantly influenced the borders and national structures in the region and created an international problem that continues to this day.

When viewed from a global perspective, the Eastern Mediterranean stands out as a critical region with significant implications across various key domains. Due to its strategic location and diverse elements, this area plays a crucial role in international relations, energy, transportation, and trade.

First and foremost, the Eastern Mediterranean serves as a pivotal gateway for the world to access the rich energy resources of the Middle East (Güçyetmez, 2021: 171). Energy sources from the Persian Gulf reach the Mediterranean through the Suez Canal and

subsequently disperse globally. This renders the region a strategic energy transit point. The Suez Canal, prominently positioned as one of the world's critical transit routes, holds substantial strategic importance for trade routes. By connecting the Red Sea to the Mediterranean, it creates a shortcut between the Atlantic and Indian Oceans, thus conferring both economic and temporal advantages to maritime trade.

Secondly, the Eastern Mediterranean encompasses a vast geography, including North Africa, the Middle East, Anatolia, and the Aegean Sea. This broad expanse enriches the region in terms of transportation, energy, and trade corridors. Embracing both land and sea routes, this extensive area establishes itself as a focal point for international trade and transportation. Consequently, it further elevates the economic and strategic significance of the area. The multifaceted nature of the Eastern Mediterranean reflects geopolitical dynamics on a global scale. Its role in energy security, transportation infrastructure, and trade routes underscores its strategic importance on a global scale.

The increasing significance of the Mediterranean in historical processes is fundamentally rooted in the influence of the region that encompasses Mesopotamia, also known as the Fertile Crescent, extending from the Tigris and Euphrates rivers to the Basra Gulf, where the first civilizations emerged. This area stands out as the cradle of early civilizations. In addition to this characteristic, the presence of traditional trade routes like the Spice Route and the Silk Roads passing through this region has fostered enhanced interaction among diverse cultures. This interaction has played a pivotal role in maintaining the Mediterranean's importance as a global trade hub for numerous years. The region has evolved into a cultural mosaic by bringing together various civilizations. Although the Mediterranean Basin experienced a certain degree of decline in the 15th century due to the impact of geographical discoveries, the opening of the Suez Canal revitalized its strategic importance.

According to Mackinder's theory of land dominance, the Eastern Mediterranean serves as the focal point for maritime commerce routes leading to the heartland regions. In line with Mahan's theory of maritime dominance, the Eastern Mediterranean, situated on the trade routes between the East and the West, holds a crucial position as the sole gateway for Black Sea countries to the world, playing a vital role in global trade. Douchet's theory of air dominance suggests that the Eastern Mediterranean allows for aerial intervention in the southeastern flank of the main landmass, covering the Balkans, the Middle East, and the Caucasus. According to Spykman's rimland theory, the Eastern Mediterranean, in direct contact with Greece and Türkiye and indirectly with Iraq and Iran, maintains control over a significant portion of the rimland surrounding the main landmass.

Map 3. Map of Sea and Land Power



Source: <https://geography.name/heartland/>

Even if several matters have been recognized with the purpose of demonstrating the standing of the Eastern Mediterranean region, for instance the civic war rampant in Syria, the refugee crisis, the upsurge of ISIS, the disentanglement of Libya, the powerful stance of Hezbollah in Lebanon and Hamas in Gaza, and the eruption of Islamic factional struggles, it stays the considerable original energy discoveries and the security dynamic forces functioning within the energy sector that make available the important distinguishing feature for such an area. The geopolitical worth of the Mediterranean Sea area stands, amid other effects the outcome of its prospective as a source of hydrocarbons. Fresh gas findings within the Eastern Mediterranean have individually confirmed this prospective. They have brought about a series of substantial geo-economic conclusions relating to the progress of streams and interactions in the method of trafficked gas. As it is addressed, geo-economy might attach geopolitical approach and economic programme, nevertheless it stands regularly professed as the practice of economic strategy tools to instrumentalize geopolitical objectives. This comes into meaning the predominance of geopolitical benefits over geo-economic unities and the subservience of economic strategy to geopolitics. Observing energy relationships via a geopolitical lens system does mean scrutinising them as country relationships run by national-security and foreign-policy benefits, not economic unities. It is similarly viewed as seeing energy occupation as a means for accomplishing foreign-strategy and security purposes. Nevertheless, the geopolitics of natural gas stands mostly multifaceted. When it is compared with oil, natural gas holds corporal features that cause transference luxurious, whether via pipeline or within liquefied form (LNG). This establishes a weighty portion of the whole transported charge of the gas commerce and also remains an imperative constituent of the related business's political economy. Typically, the substructure for gas transference necessitates enormous funds, a long-standing standpoint accompanied by political steadiness. On account of these static infrastructural mechanisms, the natural gas business stands predominantly subtle to political dealings amongst nations as well as gas-advancement strategies stand powerfully influenced by the security milieu wherein they remain surrounded. The inquiry of rule on those natural sources runs the framework for conceivable struggles amongst regional countries nevertheless the exploration of such sources correspondingly harvests motivations for collaboration (Stivachtis, 2019: 56-57).

In the following chapters of this research paper, the energy competition-collaboration axis of Eastern Mediterranean will be examined in detail so as to better comprehend the abovementioned framework.

2. Energy Geopolitics in the Eastern Mediterranean

At the beginning of the 2000s, the world energy geopolitics, principally the Eurasian energy geopolitics, has experienced outstanding variations with the finding of enormous natural gas deposits within the Eastern Mediterranean (EM). The deposits found, precisely those in Israel, Cyprus and so on, have been appealing the attentions of both local and external nations. The European Union, one of the principal energy users within the world, has instigated to search for renewed natural gas providers to decrease its snowballing dependence on Russian providers. Meanwhile, plentiful initiatives have been laid down for the transference of Israel's 900 billion bcm and RoC's 140 bcm reserves principally to the European markets. Thus far, three significant ways have been widely discussed; the EastMed Pipeline, the construction of an LNG terminal at Vassilikos, and the Türkiye-Israel Pipeline. It ought to correspondingly be discovered that there remained an unearthing of 850 bcm natural gas deposits within Egypt's Zohr field by the Italian ENI in 2015 too. This

stands documented as a game-changing progress in the EM energy geopolitics of the twenty-first century. However, there have continued quite a few matters with endeavouring to market these resources. These comprise the non-existence of mutually compromised Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZ) by the regional states, along with the continuing political complications between the EM states, largely Israel-Palestine, Cyprus (Türkiye-Greece-South Cyprus), Israel-Lebanon, Syrian Crisis, Israel-Türkiye (Jerusalem Crisis and so on). The related sides have been searching on the way to protecting their interests in the region by executing inclusive policies. Because of the nonexistence of a shared reimbursement over the demarcation of EEZs midst the states in the Eastern Mediterranean, each state has been putting forward its own initiatives, which just upsurge the local stiffnesses. Greek Administration of Southern Cyprus (GASC) has been independently adopting EEZs with the regional states, for example Lebanon, Egypt, and Israel, and has equally approved global energy companies to review for hydrocarbons in its self-confirmed regions. Some of these self-declared districts of Southern Nicosia do confront with the EEZs of Türkiye and the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC), where the latter stands simply known by Ankara (Kısacık, 2022: 40-47).

Shell Egypt penetrated the first well in its Mina West three-well survey operation in North East El-Amriya block in the Mediterranean Sea. Chief statistics established the occurrence of a gas-bearing deposit. Additional assessment of the attained statistics stands obligatory to fix the magnitude and recoverable capacity of the finding, the corporation stated in an announcement Nov. 21. The well stayed penetrated by Stena Drilling's Stena Forth mobile offshore drilling unit (MODU) in around 250 m of water in the Nile Delta. In September, Shell plc subsidiary BG International Ltd. settled to subcontract a 40% interest in the North East El-Amriya seaward part (Block 3) within the Egyptian Mediterranean Sea to Kuwait Foreign Petroleum Exploration Co. (KUFPEC) subordinate KUFPEC (Egypt) Ltd. (KEL) (Procyk, 2023).

3. Comprehensive International Struggle on the Commercialization of Eastern Mediterranean Gas Deposits: Alternatives and Impediments

Taking advantage from the predicament in Ankara's relationships with Cairo and Tel-Aviv, Athens has thriven in progressing its relationships with both. The realization of consistent three-sided summits with Cyprus, Egypt and Greece on the one hand, and Cyprus, Greece and Israel on the other have improved Greek self-confidence as they (Grigoriadis, 2022: 802-820) signalled cutting-edge collaboration in one of the world's slightest unified regions. Exertions to attain a shared comprehension amongst Cyprus, Greece, Egypt and Israel concerning matters of natural gas sea search and monetisation have concluded in the formation of the East Mediterranean Gas Forum (Grigoriadis, 2022: 802-820), a many-sided enterprise ultimately growing into the position of world-wide association as of March 2021. Its formation has come into the meaning of an effort to advance a formal basis of collaboration crossing the EM. This has been the primary local association to be instituted in numerous ages within a district customarily hindered by local struggles. Due to the non-involvement of Türkiye in this formation, it has stayed mistrustful of its motivations, as this formation has been regarded as suggestive of initiatives to detach or circumvent Ankara at the last decade of 20th century (Grigoriadis, 2022: 807).

Subsequently this occurrence, the transference of found gas in the Eastern Mediterranean to the intercontinental markets has come into agenda. In cooperation with the pressures of RoC and Greece, the Eastern Mediterranean (EastMed) Natural Gas Pipeline Project was advanced to transmit EM gas to the European market through Israel,

GASC, Crete, Greece, and Italy. As stated by calculations, the entire distance of this pipeline will stand 1,900 km and its all-out charge will stand 10 billion dollars. Greece and GASC have been aggressively collecting money to meet the charges of the full pipeline by the EU (Sall, 2022; Kısacık and Helvacıköylü, 2022: 214). The European Commission has upheld a planned pipeline linking the gas reserves in the EM to Greece through Cyprus and Crete on its original list of Projects of Common Interest (PCI) issued on November 28, 2023. The joint venture must make a final investment decision (FID) on the pipeline, which will be connecting numerous gas deposits in the EM, counting some in offshore Israel towards Greece (Landini, 2023).

If the EU achieves this, it will enable brand-new opportunities for collaboration and contact in the EM. Nevertheless, if the EU remains for backing the pipeline, rigidities will endure to heighten transversely the area, precisely the Cyprus Question. The Cyprus Question stands an alarm since the Turks existing on the northern part of the island too hold privileges on the natural resources within the basin of GASC, the same resources that remain premeditated for the transportation to European markets through pipeline. Türkiye has spoken up on these numerous periods. As stated by the 1959–1960 London-Zurich Treaties, Turkish Cypriots stand one of the two originators of the island (Atun, 2021: 63-159), and it remains incorrect for Turkish Cypriots to hand over their privileges regarding the energy resources. Türkiye has, nevertheless, situated Naval Forces to watch its drilling ships by promoting from unmanned aircrafts/weaponized-unmanned aircrafts along with in recent years, it has correspondingly been rising diplomatic initiatives.

A judgmentally noteworthy initiative was put forward by Türkiye and Libya on November 27, 2019. On this date, the Turkish government, and the Libyan government, recognised by the United Nations and under the leadership of Fayeze al-Sarraj, would sign a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on the description of EEZs among them. The pact is labelled as “Restriction of Marine Jurisdictions”, for the continuance of the security and military teamwork amid Türkiye and Libya. Likewise, Türkiye has projected an EM settlement to converse all associated subjects by the contribution of sides within the area. Nevertheless, there has not befallen somewhat constructive progress thus far (The Times of Israel, 2022; Kısacık and Helvacıköylü, 2022: 214).

Turkish President Erdoğan has commented on the countries’ attitude concerning the contemporary energy-linked developments within the EM as: “The sole purpose of our hydrocarbon exploration efforts in the Eastern Mediterranean is to protect the interests of our country and the TRNC. As we always say, no project which excludes Türkiye in the EM has a chance to be put into effect economically, legally, and diplomatically...” (Aydoğan, 2023; Bardakçı, 2022: 520-522 Kısacık and Helvacıköylü, 2022: 216). The EastMed pipeline appeared as a leading initiative of these local collaboration steps. The creation of a submarine gas pipeline linking Egypt, Israel, Cyprus and Greece has been addressed as a gamechanger in local geopolitics. This pipeline has not individually preordained to progress EU energy security by (Grigoriadis, 2022: 802-820), conveying EM gas indispensable for EU energy security. It has correspondingly been anticipated to hearth a calculated association amongst Egypt, Greece, Israel and Cyprus in terms of the non-appearance or even notwithstanding Türkiye. Greece and also the European gas market will be able to reach into considerable deposits freshly found within the EM (Grigoriadis, 2022: 802-820). This will be lessening EU dependence over Russian gas importations, a matter that has turned out to be even further noteworthy in the aftermath of Russia’s 2022 incursion of Ukraine. Nevertheless, the East Med pipeline has been whatsoever nonetheless a modest initiative.

The practical contests of creating a pipeline subterranean in the Mediterranean have been momentous. The economic practicability of the project has stayed contentious due to the fact that the building charge has been envisaged to stand costly, and the piece charge of gas to stand transferred via the pipeline has not seemed to remain further striking than prevailing substitute possibilities. Unsettling the East Med pipeline project has accordingly grown into an urgency for Ankara. This may well happen also thru distressing the survey actions of energy corporations, which had attained authorizations from GASC, or through directing individual probing actions in the Cypriot EEZ. From time-to-time Ankara has addressed that they have acquired authorizations from the establishments of the 'TRNC' to carry out geological survey. Every so often it has alleged that exploration vessels of Ankara have worked in the Turkish EEZ. Despite the fact that Turkish search actions have been halted after the pressures coming from Brussels, Athens's three-sided political steps have sustained deprived of safeguarding the fiscal and political tools needed for the creation of the East Med pipeline. The outburst of the pandemic and the diminishing projections of the hydrocarbon business in interpretation of the climate emergency and changeover to renewable energy have additionally faded the possibility of the East Med pipeline. A white paper of the US Embassy to Athens in January 2022 has targeted the necessity to cancel pharaonic hydrocarbon projects and also encourage renewable energy initiatives. Yet, Moscow's assault of Ukraine and the Brussels's wish to diminish or abolish its purchases of Russian gas may perhaps aid recuperate projections in terms of the pipeline (Grigoriadis, 2022: 807-809).

Cyprus stands the most significant island for geopolitical and geostrategic position amongst the islands in the EM. Cyprus stands similarly denoted to as an "unchanging warship" by reason of its placement in distinguished sea trade directions and air ways. Within the southern section of the island, England possesses two military establishments within Ağrotur and Dikelya (Örmeci, 2020: 596-598). Türkiye correspondingly holds military establishments of Turkish Armed Forces in the lands of TRNC (Özçelik, 2022: 23-27; Özgen, 2021: 311-329). In the past few years, France and GASC have settled to both benefit from the Evangelos Florakis Naval Establishment located at Mari, as well as to construct original accommodations here with the purpose of sending large ships for the military purposes. With this, Paris and Southern Nicosia contracted a defense collaboration pact in 2017, and this agreement has been operational with full force in 2020. In the pact, it stands specified that the French Navy stays to defend the ships that fit into the TOTAL company that stand exploring natural gas within the Southern Cyprus (Vavasseur, 2020).

On the word of the National Defense Ministry of Republic of Türkiye, the Naval Forces have been shielding Türkiye's drilling ships throughout the sea (Babahanoglu, 2018: 533) and also beneath the water, highlighting that the defensive drones, planes, helicopters, corvettes, frigates, and submarines stay equipped to turn if requirement stay. Consequently, from the international law on Cyprus, Ankara has decided to set up a drone base in Northern Cyprus. Within the Eastern Mediterranean region, the partnership amid Paris and Southern Nicosia initially has commenced with a defense pact in 2007. Subsequently, Paris has begun to sponsor gas exploration within the area of GASC. They have likewise contracted exclusive economic zone agreements concerning Greek Cypriots with states for instance Egypt and Lebanon. It can stand detailed that subsequently the commencement of the 2000s, GASC has realized numerous mutual pacts on the EEZs of Cyprus as well as by these, intends to upsurge its regional power by challenging Türkiye with the powerful states of the EU, specifically, France and Germany. In reality, the pact inked among Paris and

Southern Nicosia within 2017 stands a more modern and exhaustive form of 2007 pact. Additionally, the adoption of a defense arrangement among GASC, Greece, and Israel has stood additional imperative progress. France's strategy over the Eastern Mediterranean intends to obtain some of the energy deposits found within this region, principally subsequently 2010s. With this, as a result of the pact with GASC, TOTAL stays its gas findings and drillings in more than a few positions within the Southern Cyprus. With these changes, one can straightforwardly perceive that Greece and the GASC have not faltered to try to find security substitutions contrary to Türkiye (Örmeci and Yılmaz, 2022: 100-101; Kısacık and Helvacıköylü, 2022: 219-231).

One of these steps stands the Brussels' sponsorship of them via military means. For example, the EU has agreed to augment its security relationship with the PESCO (Permanent Structured Cooperation Agreement) by 2017. This step comprises 25 EU members, along with Greece and RoC. As a component of this partnership, relocating French and German naval forces to the region remained measured, and an economic backing plan was pondered for the RoC. The association has been named in the Greek Cypriot media as "The Protection Shield Agreement for Cyprus" (Efstathiou, 2019: 3-4).

GASC demands to reinforce its condition counter to Türkiye by snowballing its linking with other nations. One of them has been the military agreement among the Defense Ministers of GASC and France on May 15, 2019. In this deal, France does use Evangelos Florakis Naval Base being in the Mari region of GASC. Besides, it has been supposed that this naval base will stand refurbished with the intention of helping the steady occurrence of the French Navy in the region. Correspondingly within this deal, France will deliver the essential resources. Accompanied by the pact, the unrestricted deployment of French Charles de Gaulle aircraft carrier is intended. Also, the French Navy pledges to guard the ships belonging to TOTAL that are discovering hydrocarbons around Cyprus (Brief Cyprus, 2019). Similarly, Paris and Southern Nicosia will join forces to counter the actions of the Turkish Navy within the region. It stands specified that France will stand stringent with the military stations sited at the Greek part of the island. They will similarly aid advancement of the artillery arrangements of Greek National Guard Army, along with upsurging the quantity of joint trainings. However, this agreement stands an open abuse of the Security and Guarantee Agreements that created the 1960 Cyprus Republic. Additionally, France has facilitated the GASC's involvement into the PESCO, resting on its participation in 8 programs in this initiative. On January 29, 2020, Greece's Prime Minister, Kyriakos Mitsotakis, has greeted France's exertions to conveyance war frigates to the Eastern Mediterranean as an impasse with Türkiye regarding local energy deposits intensifies. With the stiffness among Athens and Ankara rising worldwide fear, Mitsotakis has termed the vessels as "guarantors of peace" and emphasised that "The only way to end differences in the Eastern Mediterranean is through international justice. Greece and France are pursuing a new framework of strategic defense". Macron has stated the following: "We have seen during these last days Turkish warships accompanied by Syrian mercenaries arrive on Libyan soil. This is an explicit and serious infringement of what was agreed [at last week's peace conference] in Berlin. It's a broken promise." (Rose and Pineau, 2020).

Notwithstanding the non-existence of settlement on the Cyprus Question, along with the nonexistence of reciprocated contract vis-à-vis the sea demarcation areas amongst whole coastal states, TOTAL has been dynamically participated in the energy research and drilling actions in numerous parcels. In common with quite a few energy firms, conspicuously Italian ENI, American ExxonMobil, Noble Energy, Israeli Delek, South Korean Kogas,

Russian Novatek, English BG Group, and Qatari Qatar Petroleum, TOTAL has effectively found energy deposits within the area. Nonetheless, Türkiye and France remain still in dissimilarity over the former's announcement of these agreements as flawed, besides Türkiye has been supporting that it does/will not permit the turning out to be operative of the pacts which it is bypassed. Correspondingly, it ought to be declared that in the EM, France anticipates to upsurge its market benefits and military occurrence owing to its close relationships with GASC. Additionally, it ought to be recalled that Türkiye stands one of the sponsor nations of the 1960 Cyprus Republic with Greece and the United Kingdom/England. Correspondingly, contrasting with France, it remains a bordering state to Cyprus (Bardakçı, 2023: 238-253).

Turkish statesmen have severely disapproved France's strategy on the Eastern Mediterranean within the few past terms. For example, ex-Turkish Defense Minister Hulusi Akar has mentioned that connection amid Macron, GASC, and Greece would be measured with the progresses in France's internal strategy. He has correspondingly stated that Macron trails an anti-Türkiye strategy with the intention of covering up his fiascos. The individual struggle amid Erdoğan and Macron stands manipulating the stiffness amid Türkiye and France, nevertheless in fact, France has been targeting to turn out to be a foremost power in the EM subsequently Nicholas Sarkozy's era. Similarly, owing to France's frustration with Türkiye, France has augmented its engagement in the region and avowed its ambitions in the region through an important activism. the French President stands indebted to display flag in the Eastern Mediterranean. In proportion to these examinations, Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs Spokesman Hami Aksoy has criticized France for "not behaving wisely and to get above yourself/itself". In contradiction of these disapprovals, the French President Emmanuel Macron, assesses his country's strategies concerning this subject as right and starkly condemns Türkiye's strategies (Kısacık and Helvacıköylü, 2022: 231-233). For example, notwithstanding the nonexistence of concurrence concerning the sea delimitation zones and exclusive economic zones amid the wholeness of the regional countries, Macron perceives Ankara's engagement in the Eastern Mediterranean as "the defilement of sovereign privileges of Greece and GASC". Correspondingly, in a reply to Türkiye's strategies, they have augmented their military existence in the EM, putting on the "red line policy" on the way to Türkiye, addressing that "Türkiye just understands from actions not from words" (Gözkaman, 2022: 156-157). Along with this, Macron has declared that "Türkiye's actions within the EU seawaters must be penalized", articulating the enactment of EU sanctioning strategies in the direction of Türkiye (European Council-Council of the European Union, 2023).

Holding a limited shoreline in the Mediterranean, the requests of Greece do not embrace a sensible basis. Instead, the dispute made known by France concerning the EU-combined coastal zone management (ICZM) comprises lawful wedges as well. It stands specified by John Gibson that albeit international law complements an appreciated feature to nation-wide and EC legislature, it stands not a self-reasonable foundation for ICZM. Furthermore, Türkiye has avowed ab initio and ipso facto rights within the Eastern Mediterranean centred on the coordinates of "32 Degrees 16 minutes 18" East and "33 Degrees 40 minutes" North. If an agreement of restraint stands practical in this region, it must comprise all the countries within the region. It should be underlined within this context that the GASC stands not the only representative of the entire Cyprus, as the TRNC must stand participated within the process as well. Because of Türkiye's not standing one of the countries inked the United Nations Convention on the Law of Sea (UNCLOS) in 1982,

the fallouts of this agreement concerning sea limitations cannot be practical to Türkiye. It must stand recalled that from December 21, 1995, Türkiye has declared to the UN Secretariat that “the signing and approval of the Convention by Greece and the following announcement with this context shall neither prejudice nor disturb the present privileges as well as legal rights of Türkiye in terms of maritime jurisdiction zones within the Aegean” which comes into the meaning that the Seville Map was not even deliberated with Türkiye. In this sense, Türkiye has completely reserved its rights on account of universal law. Meanwhile the legal disagreement among RoC, Greece, and Türkiye stands meticulously affiliated with the continental shelf where gas deposits are located, Paris’s support of Athens and Southern Nicosia has not persisted a conclusive one (Papanikos, 2023: 5-9, Kısacık, 2022: 245-248, Kısacık and Helvacıköylü, 2022: 230).

Conclusion

Since the beginning of human life in the world, some regions have come into the forefront when compared with other regions. In that context, the Mediterranean Region has been the one that emerges in terms of world’s geopolitical, geoeconomic, geocultural and also geostrategic considerations. This region has always persisted to stand one of the strategic regions that includes Middle East and Northern Africa as well as including some Western states. This region’s possession of strategic energy deposits, critical chokepoints for the world economy and also including huge civilizations have been transforming it to stand one of the critically imperative for the international relations.

Within this region, the eastern section of it, known as EM that encompasses Middle East, Northern Africa have increased its tactical prominence due to its inclusion of several hotspots in the world and alternative natural gas deposits since the beginning of 2000s. Within the 2000s, there has been occurring a wide-range competition/collaboration between regional states and outer-regional states on the commercialization of these natural gas deposits discovered in primarily Israel, Egypt, Cyprus, Lebanon and so on. Within this framework, two pipeline and also one liquefied natural gas transportation projects aimed at European markets holding an ever-increasing dependence on Russian gas as well as searching for new alternatives in this context. However, on account of several impediments namely the non-existence of mutually agreed exclusive economic zones, Cyprus Question, Israel-Palestine Question, Israel-Lebanon Question, it stands highly unlikely that one cannot talk about the marketization of the gas reserves in this region for the next couple of years. Due to the presence of these matters, each party whether or not they are in this region have been pursuing to put forward individual initiatives by benefiting from their own soft power and hard power means. When they develop initiatives for cooperation, they are able to use their soft power means such as diplomacy, agreements. But on the other hand, when they want to protect their interests as well as wish to send warning messages to other parties that consider them as violating their red lines, they do primarily benefit from their hard power tools such as military. This results in the militarization of the EM region’s energy reserves. That also enables the confrontation-collaboration axis much more effective in this region.

Consequently, the drilling as well as marketization of Eastern Mediterranean energy resources have been continuing as a brand-new phenomenon since its discovery between the regional and outer regional states. In that context, the collaboration-rivalry axis on the control/commercialization of energy reserves in the EM in the 21st century will form another sui generis aspect of this conflict-prone region. Whether or not collaboration / antagonism will prevail in that geography will be determined by regional and outer regional countries’ standpoints toward each other.

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