



## REFLECTIONS OF THE EGYPT-TÜRKİYE ALLIANCE ON THE ENERGY STRUGGLE AND POSSIBLE DEVELOPMENTS

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### Abstract

The Eastern Mediterranean is one of the important regions in the international political arena. Considering the unexploited energy resources in the world, the Eastern Mediterranean basin has turned into a polarisation area of regional and global powers in the 21st century. With the polarisation in the basin, countries determine strategies through possible energy policies in the future. In addition, the political developments in the Eastern Mediterranean region and the strategies of Türkiye and Egypt to become energy supply centres constitute the field of investigation of this study. In this manner, it is aimed to make a qualitative comparative analysis of the energy struggle between Egypt and Türkiye. Therefore, seeking new ways out in the Egypt-Türkiye dilemma and determining the possible equations of interest in the future seems to be the most appropriate option to create the optimum benefit with the Win-Win strategy. In this context, it is understood that the Eastern Mediterranean energy struggle has a critical importance in Egypt-Türkiye relations and that the energy dilemma will be resolved through bilateral and multilateral cooperation.

**Keywords:** Eastern Mediterranean, Egypt, Energy Policy, Energy Security, LNG, Türkiye

**JEL Classification:** F51, F52, F53

## MISIR-TÜRKİYE İTTİFAKININ DOĞU AKDENİZ'DEKİ ENERJİ MÜCADELESİNE YANSIMALARI VE MUHTEMEL GELİŞMELER

### Özet

Doğu Akdeniz, uluslararası siyasi arenada önemli bölgelerden biridir. Dünyada çıkarılmamış enerji kaynaklarına bakıldığında Doğu Akdeniz havzası 21. Yüzyılda bölgesel ve küresel güçlerin kutuplaşma alanına dönüşmüştür. Havzadaki yaşanan kutuplaşma ile ülkeler; gelecekte olası enerji politikaları aracılığı ile stratejiler belirlemektedir. Ayrıca Doğu Akdeniz bölgesindeki politik gelişmeler ile Türkiye ve Mısır'ın enerji arz merkezi olma stratejileri bu çalışmanın inceleme alanını oluşturmaktadır. Böylece, Mısır ile Türkiye arasındaki enerji mücadelesinin niteliksel karşılaştırmalı bir analizi yapmak amaçlanmıştır. Dolayısıyla Mısır-Türkiye ikileminde yeni çıkış yolları aramak ve gelecekte olası çıkar denklemlerini belirlemek Kazan-Kazan Stratejisi ile optimum faydayı oluşturmak en uygun seçenek olarak gözükmektedir. Bu bağlamda Doğu Akdeniz enerji mücadelesinin Mısır – Türkiye ilişkilerinde kritik öneme sahip olduğu ve enerji çıkmazının ikili ve çoklu iş birliği ile çözüme kavuşacağı anlaşılmaktadır.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Doğu Akdeniz, Enerji Güvenliği, Enerji Politikası, LNG, Mısır, Türkiye

**JEL Sınıflandırması:** F51, F52, F53

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## 1. Introduction

The Eastern Mediterranean is one of the regions that attracts attention in the international political arena and where dynamic politics are experienced in every period. With its hydrocarbon reserves, trade ports, economic cooperation and prosperity, it is a place that invites disputes and political conflicts. In other words, the fact that the Eastern Mediterranean is a gateway from Mesopotamia to the Middle East, the Suez Canal and the Persian Gulf allows us to better understand its geopolitical importance. It is a region of strategic importance in military, economic, political and cultural terms, as it is a key point of maritime communication among Asia, Europe and Africa and the countries bordering the Mediterranean. Due to this appearance, it is also important especially in terms of energy resources (Kazancı, 2015). One of the most important actors in the Eastern Mediterranean is Egypt, which has a place in world history with its deep-rooted civilisation.

Instead of analysing the political transformation of Egypt from past to present in a historical perspective, it would be healthier for the progress of our study to go deeper into the political turmoil in the region in recent times. For this reason, analysing what kind of changes Egypt has brought about in terms of international relations as a result of its policies after the British colonisation will reveal a more qualitative perspective. In addition, Egypt holds a strategic position by linking three continents, affecting regional dynamics with its historical political and policy shifts. On the other hand, Türkiye extensive Mediterranean coastline and recent exploration efforts in drilling have drawn international attention, especially in the realm of energy policies.

From the perspective of the Eastern Mediterranean, it would be appropriate to talk about the existence of a conflict of interest between Türkiye and Egypt. Although these two civilisations have faced each other many times in the pages of history, they have been influenced by each other in the socio-cultural context. From the reign of Yavuz Sultan Selim I to the World War I, it is possible to speak of a state of dependence between Anatolia and Egypt in many ways. Several examples can be given of the uprisings of Egypt, which was governed by a governorship under Ottoman rule, against the central authority. Despite the sense of Arab nationalism of the Egyptian people, the surrender of the Egyptian people to the colonial empires after the First World War and the influence of foreign political arguments in the region led to an unbridgeable disconnect between Egypt and Türkiye.

In 2013, Türkiye reacted to the change of political regime in Egypt due to the coup d'état, and economic and political relations have been severely damaged since that year. After seven years, the rapprochement between Ankara and Cairo started in late 2020. These developments are progressing positively with the commissions formed by the countries within the framework of common interests. The most obvious indicator of this situation is the observance of the continental shelf declared by Türkiye in Egypt's oil and gas tender in February 2021. Policies of geostrategic importance shed light on new political movements in the coming years.

The aim of this study is to examine the dynamic movements in the energy politics in the Eastern Mediterranean region, to search for new ways out of the Egypt-Türkiye dilemma and to examine possible mutual interest equations in the future. It also aims to identify the political and economic repercussions of the countries of the region in the Eastern Mediterranean energy struggle and the impact of these repercussions on the polarisation in the basin. In this study, it is aimed to make a qualitative comparative analysis of the energy struggle between Egypt and Türkiye. It also investigates the influence of other regional actors and global powers.

In this context, the first part of the study gives information about energy policy and energy security; underlines the significance of energy supply for countries and considers sustainable energy supply as an element of national security. In the second part, the effects of the administrative changes Egypt has undergone in the historical process on its foreign policy and its relations with Türkiye due to this administrative change are discussed. The third section analyses the political, military and economic relations of Egypt and Türkiye with the countries that are

regional actors. In the fourth section, the policies on the energy transport network in the region are discussed and ideas are presented on the consequences of these policies in terms of the interests of the two countries.

## **2. Energy Policy and Energy Security**

International energy supply is very important for countries in the current period in terms of sustainable production and meeting human needs in full. For this reason, each country has its own energy policy and an action mechanism is formed in the perspective of this policy. In fact, while energy policies are shaped in this respect, they are divided into two as long and short term energy policies. Problems such as low carbon emission, aiming to offer a more livable world to future generations, global warming, greenhouse gases constitute the titles of long-term energy policy problems. Short-term energy policy can be associated with the creation of supply and demand balance (Bayraç, 2010: 118).

As the energy needs of developed and developing countries increased after the World War II, expansionist policies were implemented on energy-intensive countries. To make the concept of energy policy more understandable, although it may differ between countries, it is a set of strategies that includes obtaining maximum efficiency with the expectation of low carbon emissions, taking measures to enable production opportunities and implementing policies to reduce foreign dependency.

Energy policy has become a political argument that includes many more components with the latest technological developments, transport and transport. The existence of a sustainable and accessible energy source increases the possibility of making clear investment decisions for the future. This situation creates the problem of energy supply security for countries. Travelling the distance between the geography where energy is produced and the geography where it will be consumed constitutes the main problem and solution point of energy security. Especially for developing countries to maintain their growth and production trend, energy supply security is of vital importance. For this reason, the correct selection of energy transmission areas and the creation of alternative import channels is a form of management that minimises this problem (Bayraç, 2010: 119).

In today's world, energy exporting countries build their own energy routes and seek stakeholder countries in this regard, which brings out the importance of energy supply security. The recent increase in the problems in energy supply with the Russia-Ukraine crisis has created many equations for the solution of this issue. As of the point reached, it would not be a wrong judgement to explain the energy policies of the states as the reliable transport of sustainable energy resources to the mainland.

The milestone in the Eastern Mediterranean energy discoveries is the Tamar field. As a result of the discovery made in the Tamar field in 2009, hydrocarbon exploration efforts in the region gained momentum and these efforts have borne fruit. It is mentioned that there are 280 billion cubic metres of gas reserves in the Tamar field. In 2010, as a result of the researches carried out in other areas, a larger reserve resource was discovered in the Laviathan field. According to Texas-based Noble, Israel has become the owner of approximately 620 billion cubic metres of gas reserves. It is said that with this discovery, Israel's 40-year energy needs will be met. In the same years, the Greek Cypriot Administration of Southern Cyprus (GCASC) made a discovery of approximately 129 billion cubic metres in the field called Aphrodite. As a result of these two discoveries, other countries' objections were realised and problems regarding the violation of maritime jurisdiction areas were experienced (Can, 2019: 110-111).

In the light of the data from the reports of energy companies, the total natural gas reserves in the Eastern Mediterranean basin are said to be 3.45 trillion cubic metres. If it is necessary to mention the size of this figure, it will be sufficient to look at the natural gas reserves of Türkiye's neighbouring countries. Azerbaijan has 2.2 trillion cubic metres of natural gas reserves (Energy

Atlas, 2020). The development and progress of the countries in the region in line with this reserve amount is an indisputable fact.

### **3. Political Relations between Egypt and Türkiye in the Historical Process**

The Eastern Mediterranean region is an ancient geography where numerous bordering and non-bordering states formulate policies to assert their influence. In addition, this region serves as a crucial link between world continents, and stands as the focal point of maritime trade. As a result of the development of technology and science, the Eastern Mediterranean region today stands out in terms of hydrocarbon energy resources. With the presence of hydrocarbon reserves, polarisations have started in the region in a sense and as a result of bilateral agreements, chaos has been prepared (Barun, 2020: 26-27). The world is like a chessboard where countries that hold a large part of the world's hydrocarbon resources and have a say in the world politically and countries that struggle to catch the trend of industrialisation and development face each other.

In this respect, Egypt's regional policies within the scope of the Eastern Mediterranean energy struggle are formed as required by international politics. The national feelings of Egypt, which struggled for independence by getting rid of the British hegemony, caused it to assume the role of the leadership of the Arab states in the geography in which it is located for the same reason. In 1948, the absolute defeat in the war with Israel resulted in the seizure of power by the nationalist officers in the country. With this coup d'état, even though the republican regime was adopted, an authoritarian political pressure prevailed. In 2011, the democratisation movement known as the Arab Spring took its place in Egypt's political history (Tamçelik and Kurt, 2015).

The reflections of the movement called the Arab Spring on Egypt's governance and political understanding are also closely related to Türkiye's policies in the region. With the democratisation movement, the political formation known as the Muslim Brotherhood came to power in Egypt for the first time with the participation of the people in elections. In this process, the policies carried out in parallel with Europe and the United States of America (USA) were partially distanced and more Ottomanist policies were pursued in the region. Negotiations with the GCASC and Greece were suspended with Türkiye's warnings and efforts were made to conclude mutual Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) agreements. This axis shift has led Egypt to assume a multi-equation role. Efforts to integrate the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC) into regional projects and to observe the TRNC's rights regarding maritime jurisdiction areas are foreseen in the coming years (Tanchum, 2021).

If the results of these changes are analysed carefully, the reflections of Egypt's historical and political image affect the mechanism of action. In addition, Egypt has a geostrategic position in regional and global terms. The existence of the Suez Canal constitutes one of Egypt's trump cards as an argument with limited substitutes in the world in terms of maritime trade. Being the owner of such an important commercial route brings with it the necessary privileges in the region. The Port of Alexandria has been the gateway of the east to the west and a privileged point where important developments have taken place in recent years to become the centre of hydrocarbon transportation.

The prominence of the port of Alexandria in terms of hydrocarbons has been exacerbated by the recent discoveries in the region. The first natural gas discovery was made by Phillips Petroleum in 1969 in the depths of the Nile River, and then large companies carried out hydrocarbon exploration studies in the waters called the Egyptian Exclusive Economic Zone. The reserves extracted as a result of these discoveries are transported to land via pipelines (Balkaş, 2019: 12-14). Exploration activities and the discoveries made in the region at levels that can be exported as a result of these studies have increased Egypt's aspiration to become an international energy country. Agreements have been made with major companies for the export of hydrocarbons to European countries and initiative have been prepared. However, the variability of commercial and

economic understanding, international diplomatic ties and conflicts of interest by changing governments have led to a regional chaos.

Within the scope of Türkiye's policy produced before 2020, Egypt-Türkiye relations have been interrupted, and political relations have reached a breaking point due to the Eastern Mediterranean energy struggle. The war of succession over Libya has caused the Sisi administration to harden its stance. As it will be remembered, Egypt and Türkiye took sides in the clashes between Haftar forces, who attempted a coup on Libyan soil, and the UN-recognised Government of National Accord (GNA) (Republic of Türkiye Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2020). Now, at least for Libya, is the most favourable time for Türkiye and Egypt to separate and move on. Libya could be a bridge rather than an obstacle in improving Ankara-Cairo relations (Parchami 2012).

At a time of heightened political and policy concerns and conflicts of interest, meetings between the officials of the two countries have become more frequent. Today, efforts to establish more rational relations continue. At this point, the energy concern that started with the Russia-Ukraine war is one of the most urgent issues awaiting urgent solutions in European countries. Europe acts with the motive of solving the energy problem in the most optimal way. In this context, there has been an effort to create alternative energy supply areas. Eastern Mediterranean energy resources are one of these alternative solutions. With the aim of creating a common denominator by ignoring political differences with the possible Russian energy crisis, Türkiye - Egypt officials are trying to develop policies that provide political and economic gains.

In reference to these developments, if we touch upon the last point brought to us by bilateral negotiations in the recent period; In early 2022, the meetings between the officials of the two countries gained frequency and the deteriorated diplomatic relations started to be re-allocated. The meetings held at the ministerial level upon the invitation of the Union of Chambers and Commodity Exchanges of Türkiye (TOBB) have created a positive atmosphere for the increase in export and import rates experienced in trade between the countries to continue in the coming years (TOBB, 2022). Again, one of the biggest problems between the two countries that has not been solved recently is that members of the Ikhwan al-Muslim are living in Türkiye. In this context, the demands of Egyptian intelligence officials for the extradition of these people in Türkiye to Egypt and the rejection of these demands by the Turkish authorities stand before us as an important argument that cannot be resolved (Esen, 2022). As it is known, the Ikhwan al-Muslim, also known as the Muslim Brotherhood, which dates back to before the Arab Spring movement, is one of the most important threats to the survival of the country in the eyes of the Egyptian government. It would not be absurd to liken this situation to the structure of terrorist organisations in other countries, which is one of the most important problems of Türkiye, and with this inference, to Türkiye's attitude towards Finland and Switzerland regarding membership in the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO).

When considering current, even if the issues waiting to be resolved between Türkiye and Egypt are seen as minor, they appear before us as a series of events that escalate the tension in terms of political arguments. There is no doubt that in the event of an agreement, there will be a result with a high gain for both countries.

#### **4. Regional Actors in the Eastern Mediterranean Energy Struggle: The Role of Egypt and Türkiye**

Countries have administrative habits from the past to the present. This understanding, which is an inherited characteristic, preserves its temperament even in the change of form. In relatively weak states, this temperament differs according to regional and global changes. Egypt's struggle for sovereignty in North Africa has been permanent from ancient times to the present day. Egyptian lands, which were governed in the status of governorship during the period of Turkish rule, have witnessed revolts many times with a sense of nationalism. With the period of Europe's colonial races, Egypt's sovereignty was further disrupted and the fuses of a new formation were

ignited with a sense of nationalism. When the recent history is examined, the erosion of Egypt's democratic structure has brought along economic, political and sociological problems. In this context, if we examine the chronological flow of events from the past to the present from the Eastern Mediterranean, it will be understood that Egypt's political manoeuvres are according to the slippery balance of power in the regional sense. Based on the regime change in Egypt, it will be easier to analyse the political planning of European countries, Israel and Russia on the region and to make inferences on this issue.

When the strategic structuring of other states other than Egypt is examined, a study was carried out to determine the maritime jurisdiction areas of the European Union (EU) countries initiated in Spain under the leadership of the University of Seville of the EU, which carried out an effective political search on the region in question. As a result of the study, the Seville Map has taken its place on the world political agenda. In the context of the scope and impact of this study, the problems between Greece and Türkiye in terms of maritime jurisdictions have deepened and the Republic of Türkiye has been left alone with the project of being confined to a small area in this map. In order to ensure the border security of Türkiye, an aggressive political attitude has been pursued against Türkiye in the Eastern Mediterranean, taking advantage of the land operations carried out on the borders of Syria and Iraq. In the face of this attitude, the Republic of Türkiye signed a mutual EEZ agreement with Libya and the Seville Map was rendered null and void (Kozanhan, 2022: 64-65).

Countries that shape world politics want to continue to be a part of the control mechanism of international trade with the strategies they have developed through the Eastern Mediterranean. On the threshold of all these struggles, Egypt's highly volatile political and military behaviour has become one of the most important variations of regional changes. In particular, Egypt has adopted an attitude parallel to the EU-orientated Eastern Mediterranean policy of Greece together with the GCASC, and has established close contacts with Russia, which has integrated into the region by increasing its influence over Syria.

If Egypt's temporally changing foreign policies are examined in terms of defence expenditures, while US-oriented defence imports were in the first place between 1980 and 2014. After the 2013 change of government, Egypt's defence imports continued in the Russian orbit against the threat of cross-border expansionism and the security of its borders. (Stockholm International Peace Research Institute [SIPRI], 2020) The main reason for this situation is that Russia, which is the most important supporter of the change of government after the military coup, provides the Sisi administration with a wide range of movement opportunities in North Africa.

Focusing at the founding purpose and objectives of the European Union, it is necessary to see trade as a result of triggering and encouraging unity and to interpret the future planning of the EU in this direction. In this respect, EU countries have attached great importance to commercial and political cooperation with North African countries in line with their own interests. The main reason for this is the desire to continue their colonial activities in these lands during the industrialisation process within the framework of international law rules from today's political perspective.

In the 1970s, the European Community countries in North Africa attempted to establish a free trade zone in order to increase Egypt's trade volume and to help Egypt gain an important momentum in foreign trade. After these attempts, as a result of Egypt's lack of production, the balance changed in favour of Egypt and the agreement did not succeed (Kurtbag, 2003). To give another example, the European - Mediterranean Partnership, also known as the Barcelona Process, started in 1995 with the uneasiness of the emergence of major problems in the future such as the flow of migrants to Europe, the supply of weapons of mass destruction and the increase in informal trade as a result of the impact of the socio-cultural backwardness of the Mediterranean countries, which are the neighbours of Europe, which have completed their development trend, in the 1990s. (Orhan, 2018) This formation, defined as the Barcelona Process, aimed to significantly increase

regional development and capital mobility by creating an integration union of European countries in the field of trade and energy on the Eastern Mediterranean in 2008.

### 5. Egypt and Türkiye's Arguments on Energy Transport

Starting in 1969 with Egypt's first hydrocarbon discovery and continuing with the explores by the countries in the Eastern Meditterian, the process has not been able to get out of the unresolved situation with alliances that include many variables. Many studies have been conducted and reports have been issued on the amount of energy reserves. The US Geological Survey reported that the Levant Basin has approximately 1.7 billion barrels of oil and 122 trillion cubic metres of natural gas reserves (U.S. Department of the Interior, 2010). Since the first hydrocarbon discovery, many energy companies have expanded their energy exploration activities in the region and with these developments, licensing initiatives have accelerated (Barun, 2020: 33).

As a result of positive changes in regional integration and development mobility, technological progress has been the harbinger of significant changes in the region. In this context, there are speculations about the amount of reserves in the process from the first energy discovery to the present day. Along with these speculations and the policies of large energy companies on the region, many political propaganda is being pursued in the region. As a result of these propaganda and strategic manoeuvres, political, military, economic and political unions are established between countries. In addition, the fact that countries with deterrent economic and political superiority as a power factor have allocated the Mediterranean political union and shared some projects with the public with this union has also escalated the tension in the region (Acer, 2020).

The emergence of mega projects on a regional scale has brought about large-scale effects in the international arena. The most important of these projects is undoubtedly the "EastMed Project". The project, which is characterised as a mega project, aims to transfer the Eastern Mediterranean energy resources from Greece to Europe through a pipeline. The idea of Europe, which has the largest share in the energy demand market, to obtain the highest efficiency from the region is based on a strategic alliance between the countries of the region. The most important obstacle to these steps taken towards becoming an energy exporter country in terms of the region is the declaration of EEZ in the region and the dispute over maritime jurisdiction areas. In accordance with the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, the states of the region are entitled to hydrocarbon resources in the Eastern Mediterranean region based on the legal infrastructure (Yorulmaz, 2019).

Figure 1: EastMed Pipeline Route



Resource: TIMETURK, accessed from <https://www.timeturk.com/dunya/abd-nin-eastmed-den-destegini-cekmesi-atina-yi-hayal-kirikligina-ugratti/haber-1718362> on 22.11.2022)

In the projects emerging within the framework of the United Nations Convention, strategies are observed to leave Türkiye in the background. Israel sees a pipeline project through Türkiye as a logical option in order to transport its energy resources to Europe in the most appropriate way. Likewise, Egypt's energy exports to Europe using the same pipeline is seen as a safer and economic step. Political unresolvability between Greece and Türkiye, such as the Cyprus problem and the islands issue, has brought the EastMed project to the agenda with Europe's desire to reduce its dependence on Russian energy. Multinational companies and powerful extra-regional countries (Russia, USA) and; regional countries such as the GCASC, Greece, Israel and Egypt, have agreed on this economically and legally challenging project (Acer, 2020).

Nevertheless, the transformation of national interests into an argument over energy resources in the region has led the countries of the region to a deadlock. Even though we underline that Europe is working on the region in line with its economic interests, they are numerically aware that their energy dependence on Russia cannot be ended within the scope of the EastMed project. The transport of 12 billion cubic metres of gas per year to Europe meets a very small amount of the average natural gas demand of 550 billion cubic metres. This situation proves that there is no alternative project to Russia (Şahin, 2021).

Another project that will realise Egypt's goal of becoming an energy exporter is the transfer of energy resources in the region to Europe by tankers. This method involves the transport of energy as liquefied natural gas (LNG). It is the process of storing natural gas cooled to  $-162^{\circ}\text{C}$  and liquefied in an atmospheric environment. LNG refers to the overseas shipment of liquefied natural gas by tankers. At the destination, it is converted back into gas at the facilities (Shell, 2020). Recently, it is one of the most widely used methods for the transportation of energy to the market in the world. In terms of Egypt, the SAGAS LNG Complex operates in Damietta, known as the port city of Egypt. The terminal, with an annual production volume of 6.75 billion cubic metres, is of great importance for energy deliveries to Europe (Energy Diary, 2021).

At the point where LNG is considered within the scope of the Eastern Mediterranean energy struggle, Türkiye's external dependence on energy is an inevitable fact. According to data from the Turkish Energy Market Regulatory Authority (EMRA), pipeline energy imports outpaced LNG imports in March 2020. Due to its geopolitical position, Türkiye is a transit point for commercial products between east and west. The rapid development of LNG technology and its integration into world energy markets has led Türkiye to increase its investments in this field (Temizer, 2022). One of the main objectives of these investments is the construction of conversion terminals within the borders of the country for the conversion of liquefied gas back into gas. The process of converting the natural gas purchased from energy exporting countries via pipeline and LNG into gas at the terminals and exporting it to the West via pipelines is a political, economic and political instrument for Türkiye.

Some of Türkiye and Egypt's political and leadership differences may have negative effects on relations, but productive discussions at the lower level are not stopped. The geographical backdrop and deep cultural and historical ties between the two countries are not more important than ideological differences. Egypt's long-term interests would bring a Turkish-Egyptian partnership even greater than Cairo's current alliance with Abu Dhabi and Riyadh (Al-Fawwaz, 2021: 358).

#### **6. Possible Scenarios and Regional Interactions in the Egypt - Türkiye Energy Equation**

It is insufficient to evaluate the energy struggle between Türkiye and Egypt in the Eastern Mediterranean solely through bilateral relations. In this region, there are numerous indirect and direct mechanisms of interests of global and regional powers that do not have a Mediterranean coastline. The complexity of the economic interests of Greece, Israel, Syria and the GCASC also complicates the mutual interests and political disputes between Egypt and Türkiye, which are on the Mediterranean coast. Moreover, factors such as the EU's external dependence on natural gas and its efforts to intervene in the region through Syria trigger a deepening in terms of economic



policies and interests. Hydrocarbon reserves lie at the heart of these conflicts of interest. For this reason, the movements of both countries are carefully monitored in the entire Mediterranean basin and third countries continue to take positions according to these moves.

Egypt, as a country linked to oil and gas production in the past, has the possibility of being connected to Israel and Jordan through two pipelines to export gas. However, it has recently become a net gas importer as a result of declining production and increasing domestic demand. However, the discovery of 845 billion cubic metres of gas reserves in the Zohr field discovered in the Mediterranean in 2015 has created a situation in Egypt's favour (Karbuz and Baccarini, 2017: 3). On the other hand, Türkiye, especially since 2010, has focused on oil and gas exploration activities to change the balance of power in its energy policy. The wells drilled by the Turkish Petroleum Corporation (TPAO) have yielded small reserves and a total of 1.5 billion profits between 2012 and 2021 (Yılmaz, 2022). In order to increase offshore drilling, four new drillships were purchased in the 2017-2022 period and economic benefits were achieved with the natural gas reserves discovered in the Black Sea. Natural gas discoveries in the Aegean and the Mediterranean caused international reactions and led to the formation of anti-Türkiye policies. These policies have led to the emergence of the Greece-GCASC-Egypt and Greece-GCASC-Israel trilateral alliances and aim to remove Türkiye, which is considered a regional power, from the Eastern Mediterranean (Karbuz and Baccarini, 2017: 4).

The policy tensions between Türkiye and Egypt are one of the important reasons for the trilateral partnerships. Türkiye's geopolitical position and its status have worried Greece in the region. While cooperating with Israel, Greece has also strengthened its relations with GCASC and Egypt. Although this situation has fuelled the controversial relations between Türkiye's neighbours in the Eastern Mediterranean, Egypt and Israel, it is acknowledged that it is difficult to build tactics without Türkiye. Therefore, relations between the two countries should be brought into a certain balance. Türkiye is an important country in the Eastern Mediterranean that cannot be excluded economically, militarily and politically. However, the disputes will not bring gains for the countries in the region, on the contrary, it will trigger the ongoing vicious circle. Therefore, one of the possible policies is for Egypt and Türkiye to cooperate with each other in energy activities (pipeline projects, energy exploration) with a win-win strategy. The mandatory resumption in 2021 of Türkiye- Egypt relations, which deteriorated in 2013, is indicative of this phenomenon. This approach means the distribution of new policy cards in the Eastern Mediterranean in the next decade. Positive developments in energy policies can diversify mutual relations by increasing bilateral and multiple trade (Kalyoncuoğlu, 2022: 24-25).

From a security perspective, it is also necessary to look at the sphere of influence of Egypt and Türkiye. In addressing the persistent terrorist threat affecting the Middle East and North Africa region, Türkiye and Egypt can utilise their positions to create a regional security umbrella. A coherent counter- terrorism strategy involving the cooperation of the military, intelligence, law enforcement and diplomatic sectors can benefit the region and help restore stability through synchronised collective action (Jones, 2014).

## **7. Conclusion**

This study has made a qualitative comparative analysis of the energy struggle between Egypt and Türkiye. Additionally, it delves into the influence of other regional actors and global powers. Moreover, the existing studies on these two countries are deemed insufficient, and disregarding international politics and regional political developments may yield misleading results. Especially the effects of the war between Russia and Ukraine show that the solution of energy problems in European countries may take a long period of time.

In the current situation, the importance of energy supply and transport on a regional basis should be emphasised. Türkiye's being a strong stakeholder in the regional and international context will have stronger economic and political effects in the context of energy exports with the

Türkish Stream projects. In this process, Türkiye should find regional and international stakeholders by applying a solution partnership and win-win policy. However, the agreements made by regional states with extra-regional actors increase Türkiye's obligations.

The declaration of the EEZ, based on the United Nations infrastructure, provides Türkiye with access to rich resources and enables the transfer of energy resources of other countries in the region. The disruptions in the Nord Stream projects increase the importance of Türkiye as a transit point and ensure the smooth transport of energy resources from other regions and the Eastern Mediterranean to Europe. In this process, Türkiye's political reflexes and efforts to minimise conflicts of interest will contribute to shaping the complex solution environment in the region. Commercial agreements with regional actors such as Israel, Syria and Libya will facilitate the transfer of energy flow to markets through pipelines and LNG transport. Thanks to these developments, the international influence of the Ceyhan port will increase and Türkiye will become a stronger energy-based country.

However, the delays in the resolution of the Egyptian-Turkish problems and the conflicts of interest arising from the political expectations of the governments of the two countries have created a tense web of relations. This situation appears as an important unresolved problem in the region. Therefore, in line with international politics and national interests, Türkiye should take steps to resolve the deadlock with Greece through moderate political manoeuvres. Such solution-oriented policies will contribute to Türkiye's gaining a positive reputation in the international arena. Creating a basis for an agreement where the interests of all riparian states are taken into consideration will be possible through solution-oriented political interventions of Türkiye and Greece.

Considering the possible scenarios from another perspective, it has been observed that an agreement ground has been formed with the countries of the region, the EU and the USA for the safe extraction and export of the Eastern Mediterranean hydrocarbon reserves and that Türkiye may be excluded based on this agreement. Such exclusion may lead to aggressive and self-interested search for solutions. Therefore, it is important that the agreements and projects are inclusive of the entire region. Türkiye's political steps with the temperament of a pioneering state and eliminating conflicts of interest will pave the way for economic, political and political gains.

In conclusion, the energy struggle in the Eastern Mediterranean is complex and is not limited to bilateral relations between Egypt and Türkiye. Therefore, it is important to adopt a holistic approach in the regional and international context. Türkiye's strong position in energy policies and solution-oriented policies will contribute to regional energy security and make Türkiye an important actor in the region. At this point, acting on the basis of co-operation and considering the interests of all countries in the region seem critical for ensuring regional stability and prosperity.

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