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Political Economy of Energy in Eastern Mediterranean

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A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to be the name 'Lina', written in black ink.

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ABSTRACT

The very recent energy discoveries in the southeast Mediterranean have proved that they are capable of shifting away from the regional states' power balance. The discovery of the hydrocarbons in the exact middle of two sub-regional systems, Europe and the Middle East, along with the perspectives of the new possible energy resources, compose a recently developed political scene for national opportunities. The rise of natural gas as a main energy product in the energy pie has led to a decrease in oil's geopolitical merit. Energy sources in the Mediterranean could be crucial for the region's geopolitical change of balance. The coastal states are in constant pursuit of benefits from the exportation of natural resources, always bearing in mind not only the need for warranting their energy security but the economic aspects from their right of transporting and selling the energy in other regional markets, as well. Even though the region has suffered from long and severe conflicts, the discoveries have been prosperous for the creation of a collaborative environment, which in many cases helped the states to strengthen their economic and political bonds. Many interested governments have begun to take precautionary measures, new initiatives for energy projects, and shape new policies. However, exploration cost in the Eastern Mediterranean is extremely high, demanding many years and, as it shows, with very restricted results. Moreover, it is expected that the competition with other energy companies will be hard, regarding the involvement of extra-regional actors. Energy alone cannot serve as a strong motivation for peace after all these years of conflict. The scenario of the deposits being prosperous for the states is something that is being determined by the successful and prudent exploitation of the energy by the legal beneficiaries and also by the configuration of the supply and demand.

1. Introduction

- PURPOSE OF RESEARCH:

The researcher's objective is to analyze the Political Economy of Energy in Eastern Mediterranean, focusing on the economic benefits and changes in the regional countries.

This paper studies in-depth and presents the developments in the field of the Levantine Basin following the discovery of sufficient quantities of hydrocarbons. In addition, the paper studies the political and legal manifestations between the coastal states and the external actors involved in this subsystem.

In recent years, the regional political dynamic of the South-Eastern Mediterranean has been changing dramatically. Due to the recent discoveries of energy reserves in the region the status has changed. These natural resources are located right in the middle of two regional security complexes, Europe and the Middle East, and are the main reason for destabilizing the balance of power.

Currently, coastal states are seeking to earn benefits exploiting the gas from the Mediterranean seabed. Their primary objective is to guarantee their energy security through a safe access way to energy resources and to cover their domestic consumption. At the same time, some of the countries have the right to transport energy and earn from selling gas to regional consumption markets, thereby achieving diversification of energy routes.

Hydrocarbon discoveries are beneficial to the region and have contributed to shaping an environment of cooperation in many cases. In particular, states have the opportunity to strengthen financial-economic and political ties, alleviate common concerns about energy security, and address the problem of pollution in a region where oil is the primary fuel for electricity generation energy. So instead of frantically seeking distant markets that will ensure access to energy sources, the coastal states should turn to and invest in the potential for local development and consumption of natural gas.

Thus, little by little, the governments have begun to engage in energy projects. The most prominent projects involve the construction of pipelines from Israel and Cyprus to Greece and then to Europe or from Israel to Turkey and then to Europe or even from Israel to Egypt and Jordan. Each option, of course, has its own economic and geopolitical advantages and limitations.

Considerable attention has also been paid to the construction of floating facilities to make gas transportation easier and more accessible to overseas markets through this process.

Talking about Greece, these developments, combined with the prospect of new gas export sources constitute a new backdrop of national opportunities. Taking advantage of the geographical position, Athens has gained a significant role on the energy chessboard in the geopolitical game of the region. It thus often formulates and promotes specific plans.

Keeping Greece at the core of European integration provides new multiplication of the specific geostrategic weight of our country at the level of energy diplomacy. This contributes to a way of strengthening the political aspect of the Euro-Greek negotiation with opponents and allies alike at regional and international levels.

The EU's ultimate goal is to reduce its dependence on Russian gas, a threat to its energy security. At the same time, Greece is the end of a branch of the pipeline, it is not at the heart of a network but is the last end of it. As a result, it depends on the smooth transit of gas through several countries until it reaches Greek territory. This is another incentive for the consolidation of Greek policy to implement the long-standing European intention of changing the sources of gas imports in a way that Russian import sources and pipeline networks are bypassed. Thus, the fact that the new hydrocarbon resources from the Eastern Mediterranean could provide an alternative energy supplier for the ever-increasing energy needs of the EU makes the option of constructing a pipeline that, if built, would be the longest undersea pipeline in the world very attractive.

However, for at least the next decade, there is no actual scope for reducing Europe's overall energy dependence on Russian gas. Exploration costs in the Eastern Mediterranean are quite high, competition with other international companies is fierce, while export and transport costs are also very high. An actual diversification will take many decades and will cost a lot of money, having limited results. Creating a regional framework for energy cooperation is easier to talk about than to implement. Of the many pipeline options that could potentially bring Eastern Mediterranean gas to the European market, most fail because of the political, commercial, and technical frameworks required. Moreover, due to the regional turmoil and the suspicion that pervades the states, no single intervention will be accepted by the other parties involved, which makes the need for successful cooperation all the more urgent.

- METHODOLOGY:

In this dissertation the researcher aims to elaborate his thoughts in the perspective of the Political Economy of Energy. Scientific articles and literature reviews will be used as the main resources.

-CONTRIBUTION OF RESEARCH:

Main purpose of this research is to contribute to the understanding of the Political Economy of Energy after a robust examination of the economic behaviours of the coastal countries in the Eastern Mediterranean.

2. Energy Security

Introduction

Easy access to energy resources has been one of the states' main challenges for their internal and foreign policy. However, the concept of energy security has become more crucial than ever in recent decades, especially since the 1973 oil crisis. Today, all countries use their energy resources as the principal means of asserting and projecting their economic and political influence. Consequently, competition for the world's energy resources is inextricably linked to political power, thereby giving geopolitical rivalries over energy affairs a great role (Tsakiris, 2018, pp. 19-39).

2.1 Theoretical Context

According to the realists, national security and power are the primary concerns of every country's foreign policy (Kouskouvelis, *Introduction to International Relations*, 2004, p. 60). Foreign policy is based on national interests and aspirations. This implies that primary energy resources such as oil and natural gas are essential elements for securing national security and maximize power and influence.

The International Energy Agency (IEA) was established after the 1973-1974 oil crisis when the industrialized countries realized that they could not cope with the oil embargo imposed by the major producers. The IEA became the primary international forum for energy cooperation on various issues such as security of supply, long-term policy, transparency of information, energy efficiency, sustainability, research and development, technological cooperation, and international relations in the energy sector (International Energy Agency, 2021). However, it is at the discretion of each state to decide the geographical areas, always within its jurisdiction, in which to explore and develop energy resources, while determining the rate and manner in which energy reserves can be depleted or exploited (Tziarras et al, 2019, p.17).

Various efforts and studies have been made to render a definition of energy security as correctly as possible. The most widespread definition is that of availability and reliability of adequate energy supplies, but always with a reasonable degree of cost. There are various other factors to be taken into account in the energy security concept. For example, the need to protect energy resources, infrastructure, supply chains, and trade routes. Another factor is the vitality of access to the energy source. Energy security is a system determined by national policies and international institutions, designed to respond in a coordinated manner to disruptions, outbreaks,

and emergencies, as well as to maintain a stable flow of supplies (Tziarras et al, 2019, pp. 5-6).

Therefore, an objective definition of energy security is hard to describe accurately. As it turns out, it is a non-static, multi-dimensional concept, and how it is defined depends on the priorities and specificities of each state. For some states, the concept has tended to vary in different periods, such as for the United States and Great Britain, while for others, such as Japan and France, it has not. It is thus an important issue because it shapes the strategic energy objective of each country (Tsakiris , 2018, pp. 19-39).

In 2015, an extensive study was conducted on the definition of energy security (Ang et al (2015)). The study examined 104 articles and reports from 2011 to 2014. This study identified 83 different definitions of energy security, proving once again that there is no objective definition (Papanikos, 2017, pp. 2-6) .

a. The Energy Trilemma

The issue known as the Energy Trilemma is also worthy of analysis since energy security is not the only task that includes a country's strategic plan. Energy security is linked to economic competitiveness and environmental sustainability. However, this does not mean that the three concepts are always compatible with each other to achieve energy security (Papanikos, 2017, pp. 2-6). This is because, on the one hand, there are likely to be many economic, political, social, and technological policies arising from these three and because these policies often differ from country to country and region to region. A balancing of policies between the three energy objectives above would signal an Energy Trilemma [(Ang et al (2015: 1090)].

In many countries, fossil fuels are considered strategic energy resources considering their increasing needs for secure and competitive energy sources. However, fossil fuels do not meet the objective of environmental sustainability (in contrast to renewable energy sources, which, in turn, often undermine the sustainability of energy sources and the strategy of economic competitiveness for energy).

b. Producer-Consumer Countries and Transit Countries

Energy is part of economic security and is crucial for economic growth and competitiveness. Each country has its specific interests which are determined by its position in the global and regional energy order. In particular, interests are determined by whether it is an energy-producing State, a transit State, or a consumer State. Thus, we observe a plethora of interactions between the producers/exporters states, the consumer states, the transit countries, and, lastly, the international energy companies (Tsakiris , 2018, pp. 19-39) .

The ultimate goal of energy producer countries is to make more profits in order to increase their power over the consumer states. This is why they try to attract new "customers". Conversely, the consumer states want to achieve secure, competitive, and sustainable energy supplies at reasonable and stable prices. And finally, for the transit countries, their main desire is to become large transit centers of the transport routes (Tsakiris , 2018, pp. 19-39).

Thus, the phenomenon of dependency is often observed. Countries that do not produce or do not acquire energy resources are under constant quest of meeting their needs. This dependence alters the balance of power in favor of the producer state. A typical example with regard to the concept of dependency is the conflict between Russia and Ukraine, wherein in 2009, Russia (country/supplier) cut off the transport of gas through its territory to Ukraine.

In conclusion, an increase in demand also increases the competitiveness of the states. We should not exclude the possibility that this competitiveness may lead to severe conflicts. In any case, the threats deriving from energy dependencies are more usual between states or between regions with close geographical proximity [Palonkorpi (2006, p. 3)].

Conclusions

To sum up, in this chapter, we analyzed how the need for reliable and affordable energy is detrimental for each State. Energy is characterized as one of the most important inputs for economic development. Therefore, the causality between energy consumption and economic growth may have a significant impact on energy conservation policies.

3. Law of the Sea

3.1 Introduction

A state's power in maritime zones is regulated by the Law of the Sea. This law determines all the rules for the various issues (e.g. legal disputes) which arise between the state actors and their claims for the exclusive use of resources. As we move away from the coasts, the closer we are to the high seas and the states' potentials for co-exploitation of natural resources (Antonopoulos, Magliveras, 2017, pp. 311-388).

The issue of the law governing the sea was first raised in 1930 through the League of Nations. Almost thirty years later, in Geneva, a draft of articles (UNCLOS I/1958) on the Law of the Sea was submitted. The submitted draft included the adoption of four conventions:

1. Convention on the Territorial Sea and the Contiguous Zone (CTS)
2. the Convention on the High Seas (CHS)
- 3.the Convention on Fishing and Conservation of the Living Resources of the High Seas (CFCLR) and
4. the Convention on the Continental Shelf (CCS);

Of the above Conventions, Greece has ratified only the Convention on the Shelf Convention in 1972.

In 1982, The United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS 3) was signed in Montego Bay, Jamaica, by the 3rd Conference of the UN. States such as Turkey, Israel, Libya, and the United States of America did not sign the Convention. In this paper, we will stress out those states' considerable interests in the Eastern Mediterranean.

3.2 Theoretical Context

a. Maritime Zones Delimitation

The identification of maritime jurisdictional zones requires the establishment of points along the coastline of a State from which it will be possible to measure the outer limits of each zone. In particular, as we can see from [Table 1](#), the limit of the extent of the coastal zone and the contiguous zone shall be measured from the baselines, whereas the continental shelf and the Exclusive Economic Zone (hereinafter EEZ) are defined starting from the baselines (Antonopoulos, Magliveras, 2017, pp. 323-330).

We define the baselines as the physical lines from which all jurisdictional zones of coastal States are measured. These are "drawn" on the natural coastline, which in turn, is defined as the line of minimum shoal along the coast according to the nautical charts, officially recognized by each State. This line constitutes "normal baselines" and is the most common method of establishing baselines. However, a straight baseline could also be established, i.e. imaginary lines joining the various points of the natural coastline when it presents certain geographic peculiarities. It is always the line of the shortest distance between two points (Antonopoulos, Magliveras, 2017, pp. 323-330).

It should be noted that the lines should be determined in a way that does not affect or does not cut off the coastal zone of another State from the high seas. The coastal State must mark the baselines on nautical charts. This obligation shall apply in all cases of delimitation of the coastal zone, EEZ, and continental shelf.

Most coastal states, including Turkey, have adopted the method of drawing straight baselines. However, not each drawing fully complies with the provisions of the Convention. Our country has not adopted the straight lines method. Under Greek legislation, the normal baseline method was used to determine the extent of the coastal zone.

Concerning islands, the Convention stipulates that the existence of a cluster of islands near the coastline of a State is a legitimate reason for the establishment of straight baselines. Each island is entitled to all maritime and submarine zones, i.e. the territorial sea and contiguous zone, continental shelf, and EEZ. In contrast, rocks that cannot sustain human habitation or their own economic activities, cannot have an EEZ and continental shelf (Antonopoulos, Magliveras, 2017, pp. 323-330).

i. Territorial Sea

The territorial sea is the maritime zone that extends beyond the land and internal waters and over which the coastal State exercises its sovereignty and jurisdiction, in the sense that it is not limited to certain activities or rights but exercises all its powers. Each coastal State has the right to determine the extent of the coastal zone up to the maximum limit set by international law, which is 12 nautical miles from the baselines (Antonopoulos, Magliveras, 2017, pp. 339-346).

Greece's territorial zone extends six nautical miles from the baselines of the mainland and island territory. This maritime zone presents a peculiarity since it is not everywhere six nautical miles. In some places in the Eastern Aegean and the northeastern strait of Corfu, the distance from the coastline does not allow for the extension to six nautical miles. Regarding the Evros district area, the coastal zone of Greece and Turkey was delimited in 1926 at a distance of three nautical miles from the mouth of the Evros (Antonopoulos, Magliveras, 2017, pp. 339-346) .

In the absence of any other agreement about the North-Eastern Islands Aegean (Lesbos, Samos, Ikaria), the customary rule of the median line shall apply. The delineation shall be made at a point equidistant from the nearest points of the baselines and from which the width of the coastal zone of the respective States is measured. Finally, there is also a special provision for the coastal zone of certain islands of the Dodecanese.

While Greece wishes to extend its territorial waters to 12 nautical miles as it is entitled to under Article 3 of the Convention, Turkey has systematically opposed it since 1974, stating that such an extension constitutes a potential *casus belli*. Contrary to Turkey's position, international jurisprudence maintains that the right to the coastal zone takes precedence over the right to the continental shelf and EEZ, so that there is no question of limitation of the coastal zone due to overlap with the continental shelf of another State (Antonopoulos, Magliveras, 2017, pp. 339-346) .

ii. Contiguous Zone

The contiguous zone is the maritime area adjacent to the coastal zone and over which the coastal State may exercise limited rights of control, mainly of an administrative nature. This maritime zone may not be greater than 24 nautical miles. To date, 84 States have declared a contiguous zone. In terms of its legal status, it

can be concluded that it is either part of the high seas or part of the EEZ (Antonopoulos, Magliveras, 2017, pp. 349-350).

iii. Continental shelf

Continental shelf is the geological phenomenon that describes the natural extension of the land beneath the sea surface to the point at which it is observed a steep slope towards the ocean abyss. The parts of the seabed from the coast to the abyss shall have the names: the area from the coast to the abyss is called the shelf. Then this, in turn, is divided into three successive sections, the continental shelf, the continental slope, and the continental rise (Antonopoulos K., Magliveras K., 2017, pp. 351-356).

According to the Convention, the continental shelf is the seabed and subsoil of the areas of the sea adjacent to the coast, which lie beyond the limit of the coastal zone. This zone extends to a depth of 200 meters. More specifically, according to Article 76 of the Convention, 'the continental shelf shall consist of the seabed and the subsoil of the submarine areas extending over the whole extent of the natural extension of the land area the outer limit of the continental shelf or within 200 nautical miles of the outer limits of the baselines. In any case, this distance shall coincide with the maximum extent of the EEZ (Antonopoulos K., Magliveras K., 2017, pp. 351-356).

The legal concept of the continental shelf has practical significance only in the case where the coastal state has not delimited an EEZ. The outer limit of the EEZ coincides with the outer limit of the continental shelf, and the coastal state has in any case sovereign rights at the bottom.

Article 77 of the Convention underlines that sovereign rights in the zone of the continental shelf are exclusive rights. If the coastal State does not wish to exploit this zone, no other state may attempt to do so without the consent of the former. From the above sovereign rights, other related rights reveal such as the right to drilling, the right to construct tunnels, and the right to install artificial islands (Article 80). Furthermore, article 79 points out the right to use the possibility of third States to lay submarine cables and pipelines following all the provisions of the Convention, under the conditions laid down by the coastal State, which is obliged to accept the laying such cables, and pipelines (Antonopoulos K., Magliveras K., 2017, pp. 351-356).

iv. Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ)

The exclusive economic zone or EEZ constitutes the exclusive right of the coastal state to exploit economically the living and non-living resources of the maritime zone adjacent to the coastal zone. More specifically, this zone, which is 200 miles wide from the baselines, is a zone governed by a special legal regime which cannot be identified with the regime of the sovereignty of the coastal zone nor with the regime of freedom of the high seas. Its status consists of the rights of the coastal State and the rights or freedoms of other States. In the event of a conflict of interests between coastal States and the other States, the dispute may be settled on the basis of the principle of equity (Antonopoulos, Magliveras, 2017, pp. 357-360).

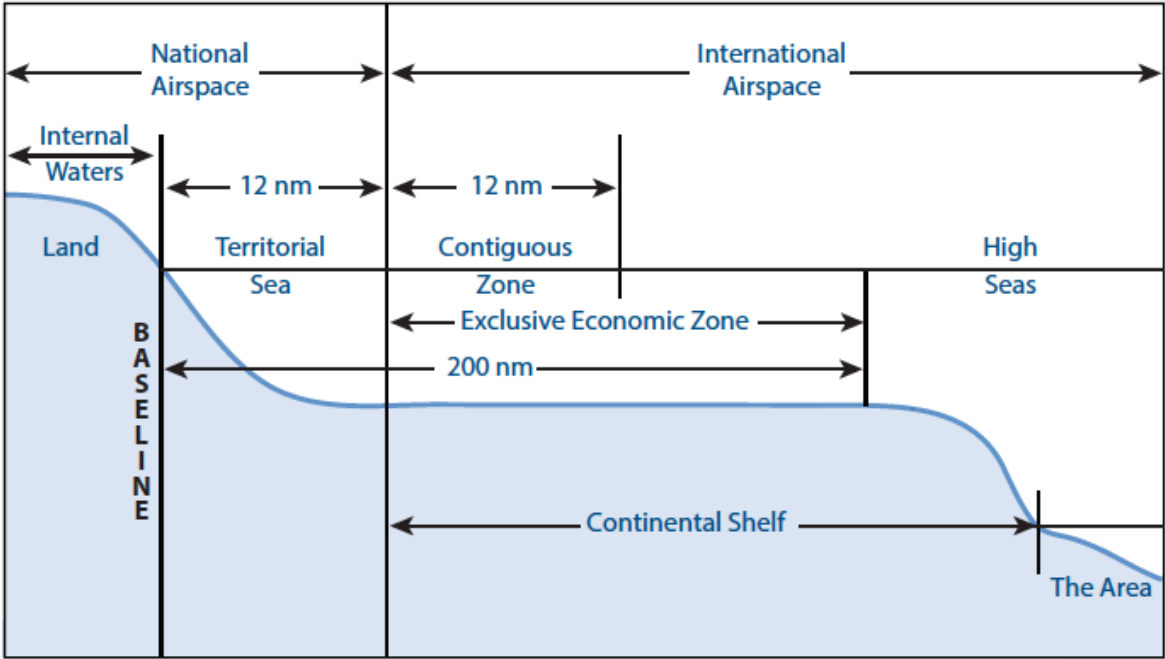
States have the right to exercise the amenities recognized by the Convention. For instance, the right of navigation, the right of overflight, the right to place submarine cables and pipelines, and others (art. 60). States are obliged to respect the sovereign rights of other States in the exercise of their rights.

EEZs in the Mediterranean have been established by Morocco (1981), Egypt (1983), Syria (2003), Cyprus (2004), Tunisia (2005), and Libya (2009) (Antonopoulos, Magliveras, 2017, p. 363).

Greece has not yet declared an EEZ, although there have been various discussions about the delimitation. Its possible delimitation would benefit the country in many ways. For example, it would provide the country the possibility of preventing overfishing by foreign fishing vessels beyond the 6 nautical miles of the coastal zone, areas which, under the current situation, have no jurisdiction. Furthermore, Athens would better exploit the economic advantages of its marine areas while at the same time conducting marine scientific research on its continental shelf with the overlying waters of its EEZ (Antonopoulos, Magliveras, 2017, p. 362).

The declaration of an EEZ should not be confused with the exploration and exploitation of hydrocarbons, which is part of Greece's sovereign rights over the continental shelf. Still, although the country has the right to declare this zone, it is obliged to take into account when delimiting its boundaries that there should be no overlap with zones of neighboring states. The declaration should be preceded by the conclusion of delimitation agreements with the States concerned.

Table 1: Legal Boundaries of the Oceans and Airspace.



nm – nautical mile

(Source: United Nations, 2018)

Conclusions

In the above chapter, we stressed out the legal boundaries concerning the seas. We also considered maritime delimitation as a very complex and multiform matter for the states. Regarding the emergence of the new maritime zones, it is undoubted that they can significantly increase the importance of delimitation in international law. The rights of coastal States to regulate and exploit sea areas under their jurisdiction are one of the foundations of the Law of the Sea Convention. Therefore, rising sea levels could effectively upgrade a coastal state’s status in the energy arena.

4. South-Eastern Mediterranean Actors

Introduction

The region of Eastern Mediterranean could be characterized as a meeting point of East and West, of North and South. Therefore, as significant geopolitical matters constantly emerge during the last ten years, Eastern Mediterranean has become more crucial than ever before. Region's geopolitics attract the growing interest of regional and external actors, as Eastern Mediterranean signals the crossroads of three continents.

Taking into account the countries involved, their geographical proximity and the interactions between them, we could say that we are studying a regional subsystem. According to Joseph Nye (1968), a peripheral subsystem is defined as 'the formation of transnational associations or groups based on the region that refers to a voluntary political process, usually driven by governments with similar objectives and values in pursuit of overall development ".

Which countries are currently active, and what are they seeking to benefit from the region's energy resources? As we can see from [Map 1](#), from a geographical point of view, the region includes Turkey, The Republic of Cyprus, Syria, Lebanon, Israel, Jordan, Egypt, Libya, and Greece. Another typology includes Palestine. Greece and Cyprus are European Union member states that are part of the Mediterranean basin (Mikelis, 2017, pp. 9-10).

As for the external actors operating in the region, those who have the biggest impact on the dynamics of the Eastern Mediterranean are the European Union, the USA, China, and of course, Russia. But the most important role is played by the EU, since, as we have already mentioned, two of the region's states are members and their interests are influencing the European policy applied in the region. Also, Turkey has wanted to become a member of the Union for many years, while Israel, Lebanon, and Egypt fall within the scope of the European Neighbourhood Policy. Finally, all the countries of the Eastern Mediterranean are partners of the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) (Dokos, Tsakonas, 2018, pp. 18-19).

Iran, Saudi Arabia, and NATO are also playing a highlighted role in the energy-rich region. Although they do not border the region, the United Kingdom, France and Italy are trying to maintain their influence in the Eastern Mediterranean (Dokos, Tsakonas, 2018, p. 11).

Since 2008, the situation in the region has become more complicated revealing conflicts and alliances. The Eastern Mediterranean is a region that, despite the

problems, offers several opportunities for cooperation. An ever-increasing political and economic cooperative environment should be encouraged through energy development and diplomatic dynamics.

Map 1: Eastern Mediterranean Region.



(Source: Google, 2021)

4.1. The Discovery of Hydrocarbons and Development in the South-Eastern Mediterranean

The area covers two major geological formations: the Levant basin and the Nile basin. The Levant Basin covers an area of about 80,000 square kilometers and is considered one of the most unexplored and highly prospective areas concerning the potential of the deposits of oil and gas resources worldwide. Since the 1990s, exploration efforts have led to significant gas discoveries in the region, and through various studies, the existence of oil deposits has been identified (Dokos, Tsakonas, 2018, p. 30). At the same time, estimations from the United States Geological Survey

(USGS) suggest that up to two-thirds of the hydrocarbon resource potential in the basin has not yet been discovered.

In 2010 the Tamar, Leviathan, Zohr, and Aphrodite fields were discovered offering large deposits of gas to Israel, Cyprus, and Egypt (Tagliapietra, 2019). The discoveries are treated with enthusiasm due to their possible impact on the economic, geopolitical, and political balance of the region. Consequently, economic opportunities have arisen from the discoveries and new security challenges. In particular, scholars hope for greater regional stability and a closer relationship with Europe. They believe that regional integration to some extent is even possible.

Beyond the prosperity of individual states and the region as a whole, the discoveries could have the opposite effects. The discovery of oil deposits in the Netherlands, which worked to the detriment of the country's economy, resulted in a phenomenon named The 'Dutch disease' (Valvis, 2012, pp. 23-24) .

In the case of the eastern Mediterranean, the discoveries contributed to exacerbating the already existing tensions and the creation of new threats between the states. Compared to other regions of the world, the coastal states have not all delineated their maritime borders. Of the fifteen states that are not parties to the Convention of the Law of the Sea, three (Israel, Syria, and Turkey) are located in the Eastern Mediterranean. Cyprus has been the most active state in the Eastern Mediterranean regarding the delimitation of maritime borders. At present, it has concluded EEZ delimitation agreements with Egypt, Lebanon, and Israel (Eiran, Mitchell, 2018, p. 39).

The discoveries also affected the diplomacy of the region. Regional actors wanted to strengthen their energy security. This resulted in an increase of their naval presence. Relations between Israel, Greece, and Cyprus were strengthened and sealed with the East Med pipeline agreement, which is said to contribute to the economic development of the region. The tensions between Israel and Turkey, and between Greece-Cyprus and Turkey played a major role in the conclusion of these alliance agreements (Stergiou, 2019, pp. 18-20).

Regarding the tensions between Turkey and Cyprus, they became more intense when the deposits were discovered. The disputes over maritime borders and exploration rights in the area increased. The example of 2018 is typical, where Turkish naval forces forced an Italian company, which had been granted permission to the exploration of one of the Cypriot land plots, to withdraw (Grigoriadis, 2014, p. 7.)

For the EU, these discoveries offer new possibilities to reduce its dependency on Russian gas imports. The direct access and management of energy resources by the two states (Greece and Cyprus) can increase their influence within the Union,

particularly in the decision-making process. Today, the Eastern Mediterranean is an important energy source from which can cover approximately 35% of the EU's natural gas consumption and 50% of the Union's oil consumption comes from the region (Stergiou, 2017, p. 3).

4.1.2. Greece

The geographical status of Greece is of great importance, considering its proximity with countries rich in energy reserves, such as the Middle East, North Africa (MENA) countries that are also rich in natural gas and oil deposits and maintained a rapidly growing energy industry (Stergiou, 2015, p. 2).

As we can see from [Table 2](#), nowadays, Greece is highly dependent on hydrocarbon energy. It produces small quantities of oil, but not yet any quantity of natural gas. To meet its energy needs, Greece relies almost entirely on imports. In particular Athens receives slightly less than half of its oil imports from Saudi Arabia and other regional countries and also one-third of its imports come from Russia, while the rest is mainly covered by Libya and Kazakhstan. The rest of the gas imports come in liquefied form from Algeria, while small quantities of Azerbaijani gas arrive via the pipeline connecting Greece and Turkey (Proedrou, 2009, p. 7). Its geographical position, however, cannot guarantee an energy security profile. The risks are numerous. Dependence on oil and gas on a single supplier are most of the importance (Proedrou, 2009, pp. 7-8).

Athens systematically observes international energy issues and shows particular interest in the energy sector, since gas/oil, transfer networks, and electricity are among the priorities of the country's foreign policy. Its main concern of energy policy is to maximize its energy security. More specifically, Athens is promoting energy cooperation with countries of the Eastern Mediterranean (Israel, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Cyprus). Greece is also actively involved in the promotion of energy cooperation at a multilateral level (European Union, Energy Union, East Mediterranean Gas Forum- EMGF, International Energy Agency) (Tsakiris , 2018, pp. 739-745). At the same time, it wishes to become a gateway and an energy transit hub from east to west and from south to north.

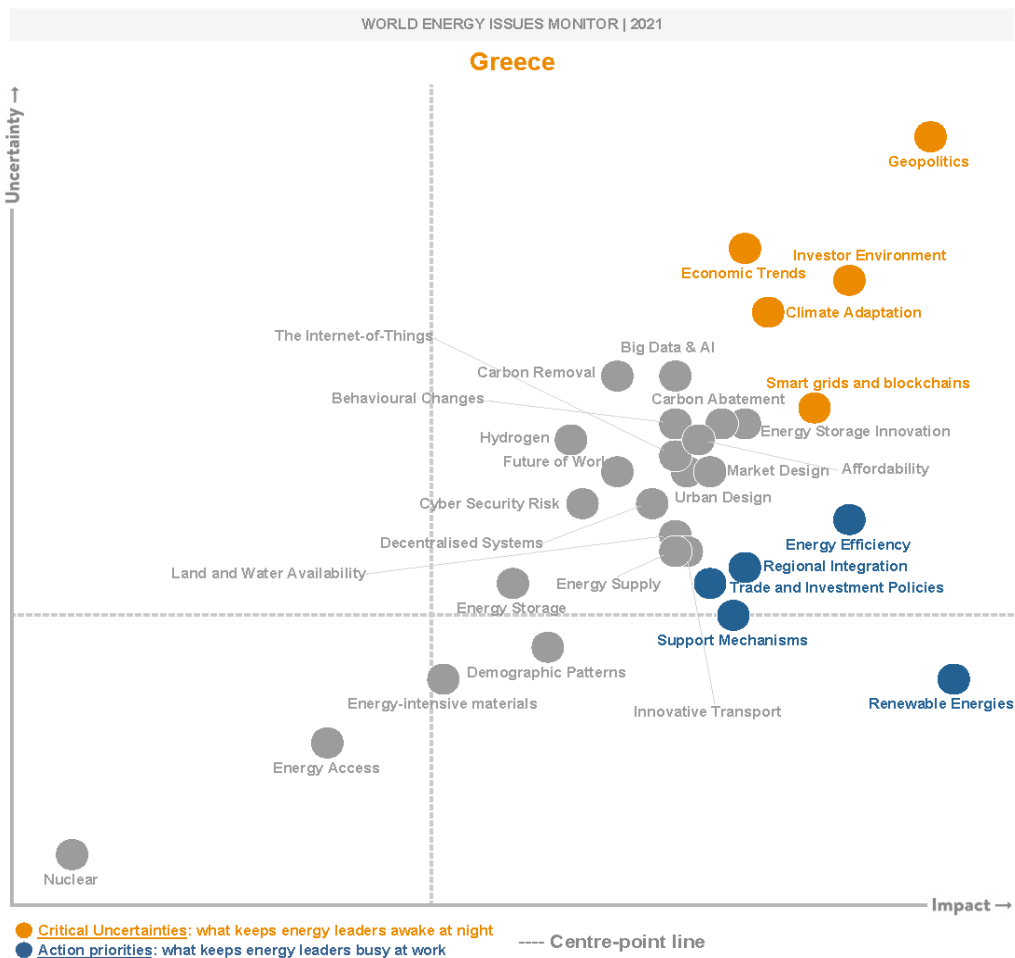
Quite important for the energy security of our country and the wider region is the Revithoussa LNG terminal and the construction of the floating LNG storage and regasification unit (FSRU) in Alexandroupoli. The Revithoussa station, which has been in continuous operation since the beginning of 2000, is the only LNG terminal in Southeast Europe and one of 24 in the European Union. The station imports natural gas mainly from Algeria, and it has contributed to secure further the energy supplies

and the transmission system, both for domestic and international consumption as well as for transport to neighboring countries [DESFA, (n.d.)].

In the same context, the prospect of the FSRU's operation in Alexandroupoli (Energy Press, 2020). The station is a new additional energy gateway, capable of securing significant quantities of natural gas for the supply to the Greek and regional markets.

Finally, of exceptional importance for Athens' energy policy and diplomacy, is the exploration and exploitation of domestic hydrocarbons. This activity is related to energy security and economic development issues. The aim is to attract the interest of international energy groups. The efforts of the diplomatic authorities of Greece abroad are also tending in this direction (Basias et al., n.d., pp. 19-23).

Table 2: Energy in Greece.



(Source: World Energy Council, 2021).

4.1.3. Turkey

Today, energy security is a key issue in Turkey's foreign policy, shaped by both external and internal factors. The main external factor is its geographical position between the energy-rich regions and regions with high energy demands. This position makes the country a crossroad between Europe, the Caucasus, Central Asia, and the Middle East. Its position between the two continents allows the country to play a role as a 'transit country for oil and gas (Misiągiewicz, 2019, p. 1.).

As a "hub" country, Turkey is a great economic partner for both producing and consuming countries. Through the growing energy needs, Turkey has shown a keen interest in developing links with the energy producers in the Middle East and the Caspian region and with the international companies that can invest in the construction of the necessary pipeline infrastructure (Demiryol, 2018).

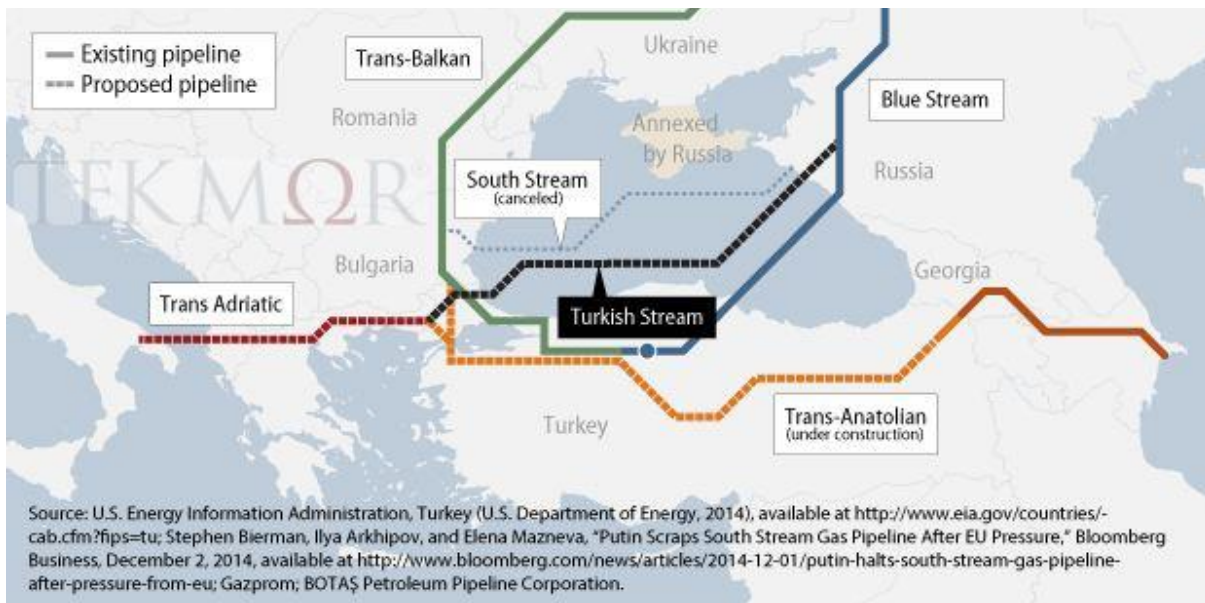
In contrast, the most important internal factor is the economic transformation that Turkey undergoes. This is linked to the increase in energy demand and the process of integration of the country into the European Union. Turkey's deep desire is an active role in the redistribution of energy resources passing through its territory. The transport and sale of oil and natural gas are important sources of income. In this way, it can upgrade its position on the world stage. Over the last decade, Turkey has undertaken many infrastructure projects to meet the growing domestic demand for energy. While it obtains oil from various sources (Caspian regions, Kazakhstan, Azerbaijan, and Turkmenistan), 60% of its gas needs are met by the Russian company Gazprom. Turkey also cooperates with its neighbors in the Middle East, Iran, and Iraq (Misiągiewicz, 2019, p. 6.).

There are many energy infrastructure projects and several marine terminals in the Turkish territory, As we can see from [Map 2](#). Until 2012, 6-7% of the world's oil supply was transported through Turkey. The most important pipeline is the Baku - Tbilisi - Ceyhan pipeline. The city of Ceyhan is one of the most important cities in the region and a key exit terminal for Iraqi and Caspian oil in the Eastern Mediterranean region. Also, the Bosphorus and Straits, which connects the Black Sea to the Mediterranean, served as one of the most important energy transit routes in Eurasia (BP Azerbaijan, n.d.)

Another important gas pipeline project is the Turkey-Greece -Italy interconnector, inaugurated in 2007. Natural gas is exported from the Shah Deniz region in Azerbaijan. The pipeline crosses Turkish territory, reaching Greece and from there extending to Italy via an undersea pipeline that crosses the Adriatic Sea. The capacity of the pipeline is approximately 250 million cubic meters per year (Misiągiewicz, 2019, p. 13.). Finally, the Blue Stream pipeline is a major source of natural gas for Turkey. Over 35% of Russian oil exports are also transported through it.

Regarding the role of Turkey and its relations with the European Union, being a key transit country, Ankara has the opportunity to affect the European strategy for the Union's energy security. The main area of cooperation is joint pipeline projects. Since the Union wishes to diversify its energy routes and reduce its dependence on Russian energy supplies, a possible future accession of Turkey to the EU would ensure easier

Map 2: Turkish Pipeline Politics.



(Source: Sputnik News, 2016)

access to energy sources and contribute to the emergence of the Union as a more economically competitive partner in the global arena. On the other hand, Turkey would gain new economic benefits that would result from the transit fees and at the same time would have the opportunity to become an indispensable partner for the Union since almost 70% of the energy reserves of the world's energy resources are located in regions around it (Misiągiewicz, 2019, p. 5.)

In sum, the export path of energy resources to European markets through the Mediterranean, which was signed with the East-Med pipeline agreement and connects Israel, Cyprus, and Greece serves as a threat to the Turkish ambition to turn into the main non-Russian gas route. In addition, despite the NATO membership that Turkey and Greece have, given the history of territorial disputes with Greece and Cyprus, Ankara cannot engage in joint strategies without first resolving its differences. Similarly, the country's relations with Egypt have been strained since 2013, when President Turkey's President Recep Tayyip Erdogan questioned the legitimacy of Egyptian President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi and demanded the release of former President

Mohammad Morsi from prison, while with Israel, although negotiations ended in 2016 with a reconciliation between the two parties following the Mavi Marmara incident, relations still face huge difficulties. There are also frequent turbulence due to Israel's policy on Palestine (whose which Turkey is presented as a self-appointed protector), and due to Turkey's support to the Muslim Brotherhood, a terrorist organization which Israel has repeatedly denounced (Grigoriadis, 2014, pp. 7-8.)

4.1.4. Israel

Israel is one of the most active producers/exporters of natural gas in the Eastern Mediterranean. In 2013, Israel took the appropriate measures to immediately start its regional exports (Tagliapietra, 2019).

Having only discovered some relatively small deposits (Yam Tethys), Israel continued to depend on Egypt to meet its energy needs. Although relations between the two states have been smooth since the signing of the Camp David Agreement (1978), the fall of Mubarak in 2011, coupled with the interruption of natural gas supplies, has led to the gas cuts and raised several serious concerns. Israeli electricity companies quickly switched to more expensive and polluting fuels, in order to avoid the problems of electrification of the state (Grigoriadis, 2014, p. 2) .

In 1999, deposits were discovered off the coast of the Gaza Strip, which, according to estimates, would only be sufficient for domestic consumption. However, for a series of security issues, Israel abandoned the efforts to exploit them. Up until now, the area remains unexploited, with Palestinians tormented by the lack of energy supply (Al Jazeera, 2019).

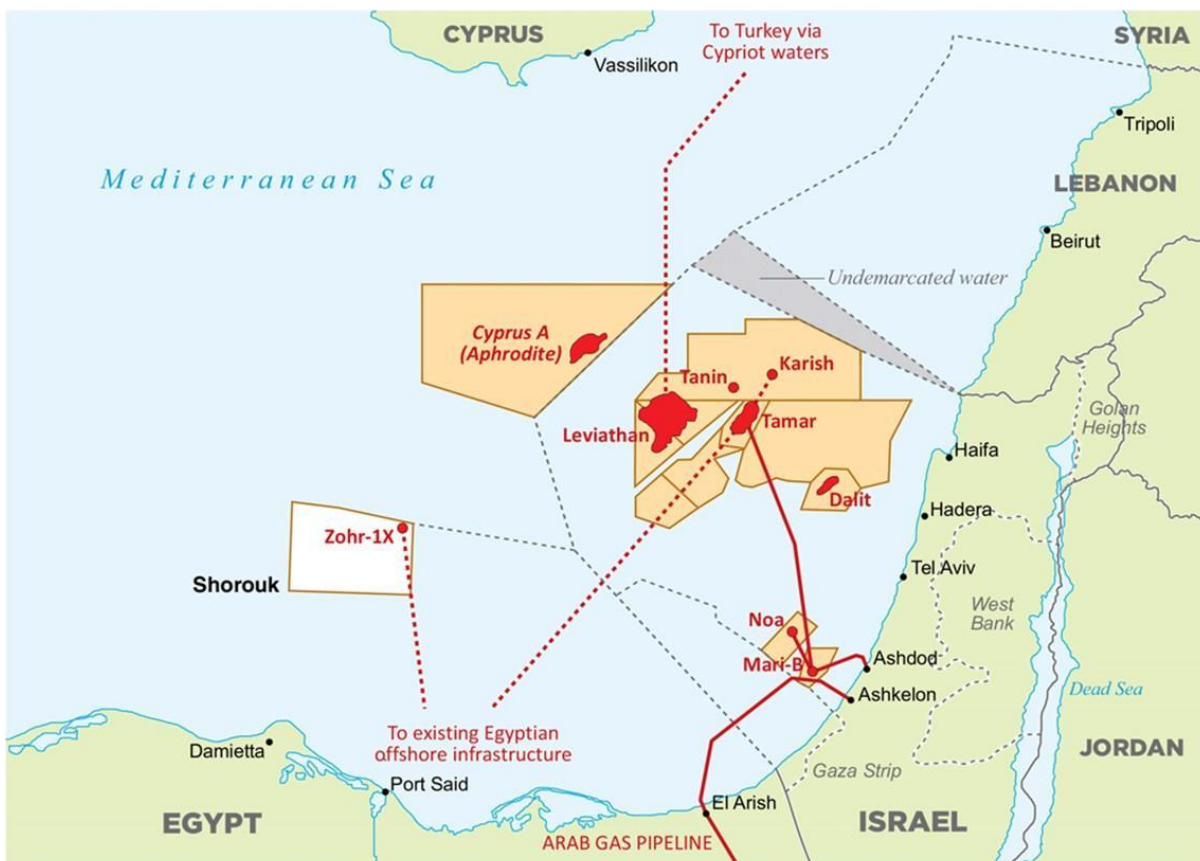
The most important discoveries came a decade later. In 2009, the American company Noble Energy together with several Israeli companies discovered the Tamar field with estimated reserves of 282 billion cubic meters (bcm) in the Israeli EEZ (Moran et al, 2016, p. 59). A year later, a much larger gas field was discovered, the Leviathan field, with estimated reserves of 500 bcm. The two discoveries were later complemented by two smaller fields which took the name Tanin (2012) and Karish (2013), as we can see from [Map 3](#). Those were counted with 30 bcm estimated reserves (Grigoriadis, 2014, p. 2).

The Tamar field quickly became exploitable with gas flowing for the first time in 2013, supplying the domestic market with 7.5 bcm of gas. Shortly afterward, agreements were reached with both Jordan and Egypt in which BG International Ltd would proceed with

the export of natural gas to them through the Idku LNG terminal in Egypt. Gas would also flow to Europe. The signing of the contract for the export of natural gas brought Israel and Egypt closer in terms of regional and global issues (Moran et al, 2016, p. 59).

Both Egypt and Jordan have seen their demand for natural gas growing rapidly. Egypt is now importing liquefied natural gas to meet the pressure created from repeated power cuts and Jordan (energy imports from Egypt) was no longer able to continue supplying the Jordanian market. The negotiations between the two countries and Israel were based on the construction of new undersea pipelines between their waters (Colombo, Sartori, 2016, p. 10).

Map 3: Eastern Mediterranean Offshore Gas.



(Source: Naval Post, 2021)

Despite the remarkable progress made, the political issues that arose in the next five years were enough to stop the exploitation of Leviathan, and the extraction of natural gas from it ended up being an unrealizable goal (Asseburg et al, 2018, pp. 31-32).

The discoveries were met with great enthusiasm by the Israelis. They were seen as an economic opportunity as they provided Israel with the opportunity to transform itself from a traditional pure importer into a potential regional exporter of energy. Unfortunately, however, they were also the cause of a series of internal political conflicts, thus underscoring yet another case of the 'resource curse' (Stergiou, 2016, pp. 9-10).

After the discovery of the Tamar field, Israeli society began to have economic and political differences. The main issue was the relevant legislation on government revenues that would be generated from the exploitation of the fields. According to, the percentage in favor of the state was low and not at all lucrative. After intense negotiations in 2011, and through a compromise between both parties, this percentage was increased (Stergiou, 2017, pp. 12-13).

With the discovery of Leviathan, the second round of controversy sparked regarding the issue of exports and the policy the state intended to adopt on it. After several revisions of plans, in 2012 the government decided that 60% of the gas discovered would be destined for domestic consumption, thus securing the market for Israel for about 30 years, and the remain quantity would be made available for export to foreign markets (Stergiou, 2017, pp. 12-13).

Israel's foreign relations were also cultivated towards other countries. The recent discovery of significant quantities of natural gas on the seabed between Israel and Cyprus has created new connotations. Jerusalem, Nicosia, and Athens have upgraded their relations into an unprecedented political, military, and energy cooperation, thanks to the expected economic benefits from natural gas and oil resources discovered in the exclusive economic zones of Israel and Cyprus (Stergiou, 2017, pp. 8-9).

Regarding their economic relations, in 2016 Greek companies such as Energean Oil and Gas, took control of the Karish and Tanin fields. Through this very strategic move, Greece has emerged as an important energy partner in Europe's diversification of energy routes (Stergiou, 2017, p. 10). Cyprus and Israel are expected to have huge economic benefits. They already signed contracts for exploration and drilling, which will soon be able to supply foreign markets with energy (Stergiou, 2015, p. 9) .

4.1.5. Cyprus

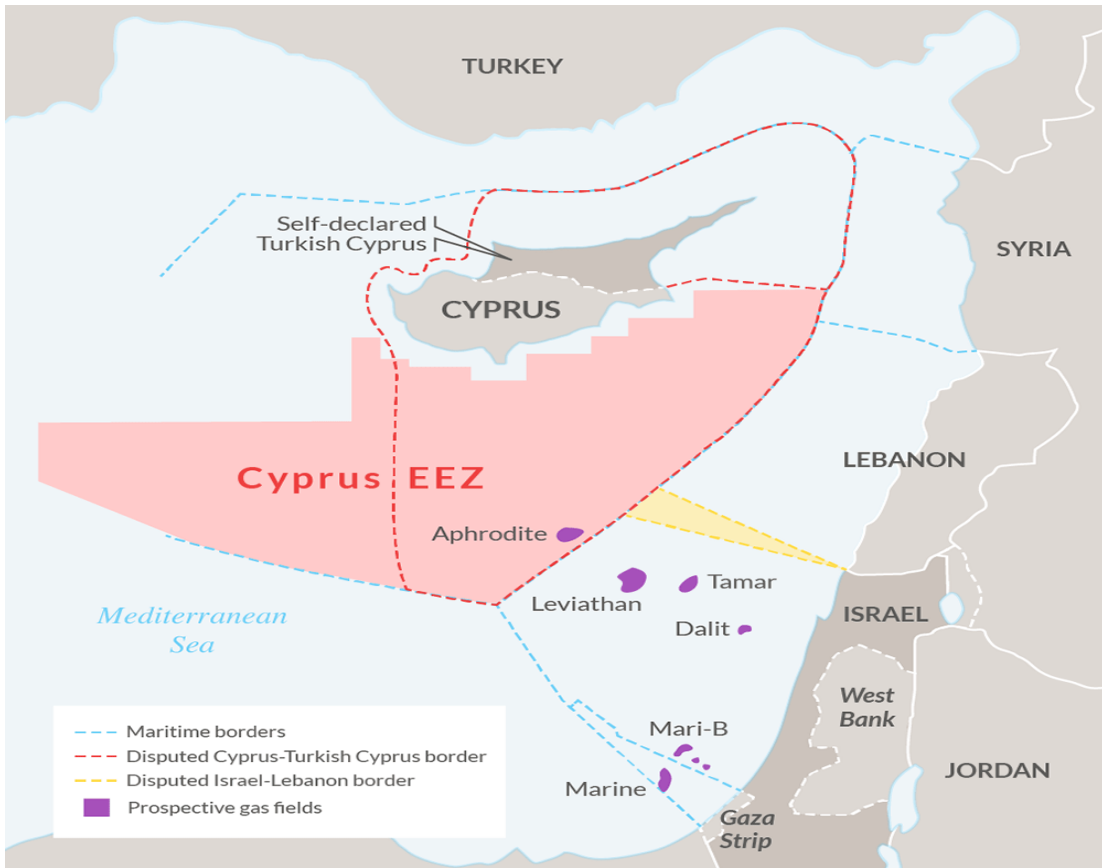
The first explorations in the Cypriot EEZ were carried out in 2007 following an initiative of the government of the RoC to implement a strategy strengthening its foreign and economic policy. The possible discovery of deposits would have meant the island's self-sufficiency in energy matters and would improve its economic situation (Tziarras et al, 2019, p. 13). To this end, the country announced the first round of licenses for the exploitation of its EEZ (see [Map 4](#)), granting a license to Noble Energy, a foreign energy company, which at the same time was also exploring the Israeli waters (Grigoriadis, 2014, pp. 4-5.)

Four years later, Noble Energy announced the discovery of natural gas. In 2011, the Aphrodite field was discovered, just 65 kilometers west of the Leviathan field and 180 kilometers from the baselines of southeastern Cyprus, yet with relatively few estimated reserves (140 bcm). However, scientific investigations have shown that there is a high potential for significant oil reserves located in deeper geological formations in this area. The Cypriot authorities carried out a second round of licensing in 2012. With the issuance of fourteen new licenses, all thirteen offshore parts of Cyprus were made available for exploration to oil and gas companies from the Netherlands, France, Italy, France, Italy, the United States, and Israel (Tziarras et al, 2019, p. 13).

In 2018, ENI announced the discovery of a deposit in Block 6, named Calypso (Tziarras et al, 2019, p. 13). This discovery looks a lot promising as it is a much larger deposit than Aphrodite. At the same time, in fair proximity to the aforementioned plot and the Egyptian Zhor deposit, similar reserves are suspected (Tagliapietra, 2019).

In conclusion, Cypriot diplomacy includes economic and political objectives. Nicosia should take advantage of the EU's desire to reduce its energy dependence on Russia and to strengthen its position as the only country of the Union in the region. Cyprus could act as an export center for Cypriot and Israeli gas to international markets (Tziarras et al, 2019, p. 21-27). To this end, it is necessary to cooperate with big energy companies which best serve Cyprus' interests. Although the country has established a national company for the management of hydrocarbons, it does not have the expertise and technology to carry out the relevant exploration and to build the necessary infrastructure. The Cypriot government has set up an LNG facility at the Vasilikos station in Limassol. Although the liquefaction method is more expensive, it is important that it omits Turkey as a transit country. Furthermore, with this method, it can export the product anywhere in the world and not only to the countries from which through which a pipeline passes, increasing its potential buyers (Grigoriadis, 2014, p. 3).

Map 4: The Delimitation of the Cypriot EEZ.



(Source: The American Interest, 2014)

4.1.6. Egypt

Egypt is one of the key countries in the Eastern Mediterranean basin. Its ideal location between the western and eastern markets attracts significant investments from major European energy companies. The country has been one of the region's gas exporters since the early 2000s. In 2015, the Egyptian government announced a quite pleasant discovery. The largest natural gas field in the Mediterranean laid within the Egyptian EEZ (Asseburg et al, 2018, p. 31).

In 2003, the country attempted to create a network and an infrastructure of pipelines and facilities for the liquefaction of natural gas. Cairo, slowly began to export energy to the periphery, in particular to Jordan, Israel, and Syria. It also planned to expand into the Lebanese market and Turkey (Ellinas, 2016, pp. 9-10).

Egypt's natural gas infrastructure is the most developed in the Eastern Mediterranean. There are two liquefaction facilities. The first is in Damietta, currently operated by ENI and Unifin Fenosa, and the second is at Idku, operated by Shell. Both have a capacity of 19 bcm per year, however, at the moment, they remain unutilized. In addition, the Suez Channel, which offers one of the simplest and cheapest trade routes for oil and gas to Asia. Last but not least, the partly state-owned Egyptian company Sumed is now building a new large gas liquefaction dock in the Gulf (Tziarras et al, 2019, p. 21).

Exports and domestic demand increased significantly, especially after the 2011 ' Arab Spring' events. In parallel, government subsidies had been unrepresented. In almost a decade, the difference in energy prices consumption is noticeable. Half or more of the country's needs (about 50 bcm per year) in various sectors, from industry to domestic use, was covered by natural gas. This way, the demand would sooner or later exceed supply (Asseburg et al, 2018, pp. 31-32).

By 2015, Egypt already ran out of stocks. The Egyptian government reached the exorbitant sum of \$3.6 billion in arrears to international companies such as Unifin Fenosa, ENI, and Shell. At the same time, pipelines to Israel and Jordan through Sinai were repeatedly bombed by rebels. In the end, Egypt was forced to suspend its exports (Asseburg et al, 2018, p. 31). In the same year, Egypt began importing gas from its long-time buyer, Israel (Colombo, Sartori, 2016, pp. 10-11). In addition to Israeli imports, in 2015, Egypt signed a Memorandum of Understanding with Cyprus to evaluate a project for an undersea gas export pipeline to Cyprus (Stergiou, 2017, σ. 8).

In 2015, Italian ENI announced the discovery of a large gas field, 150 kilometers off the coast of Egypt, the Zohr field (see [Map 5](#)). Subsequent evaluations have shown that this field with energy reserves of 850 bcm (a number that far exceeds the values of the Leviathan) was the largest natural gas discovery in the Eastern Mediterranean. Its exploitation by the Egyptian government would promote Cairo once again to an important regional energy player (Stergiou, 2016, σ. 12).

Two years after its discovery, energy procedures for exploiting began, and Egypt started recovering its energy self-sufficiency. The Zohr field raised hopes for further discoveries. A new phase of exploration was thus launched, and became fruitful (Tagliapietra, 2019).

Map 5: Egyptian Offshore Gas Fields.



(Source: Green Car Congress, 2018)

The importance of the Zohr field for the Egyptian economy is huge. It serves its strategic objective of making the country a gas hub (to be able to import, produce, transport, and distribute natural gas). After five years of internal turmoil events (Arab Spring, Muslim Brotherhood, Morsi government), the country has finally started to attract foreign investors (Kalehsar, 2019, Daily Sabah).

Cairo issued new exploration and production licenses, proceeded to new energy infrastructure projects, and saw its energy diplomacy in the Eastern Mediterranean flourishing by establishing close cooperative relations with Cyprus and Greece through various trilateral summits, official visits, and joint military exercises (Grigoriadis, 2014, p. 7). In 2020, Athens and Cairo signed an Exclusive Economic Zone agreement delimiting their maritime boundaries in the Eastern Mediterranean (Idlir, 2020, p.11).

Zohr Field discovery makes the deals with Israel a back seater in the energy table. Cairo's energy inefficiency had been used for circumventing the antitrust principle. When estimations revealed that the natural gas reserves in Egypt were about to double, internal political tensions arose in Israel. The news of the discovery led to a big drop in gas and energy firms on the Israeli stock exchange. Thus, Israel began to accelerate its production. As soon as Egyptian exports begin, they will have a direct impact on Israeli exports on a regional level (Stergiou, 2016, p. 12).

4.1.7. European Union

The natural gas fields in the Eastern Mediterranean are a strategic solution for Europe and its interests. The European Union is the largest market located in the closest geographical proximity to the region's energy fields. Its high dependence on Russian gas cannot go on, as it serves as a lever for its energy security (Papanikos, 2017, pp. 9-11).

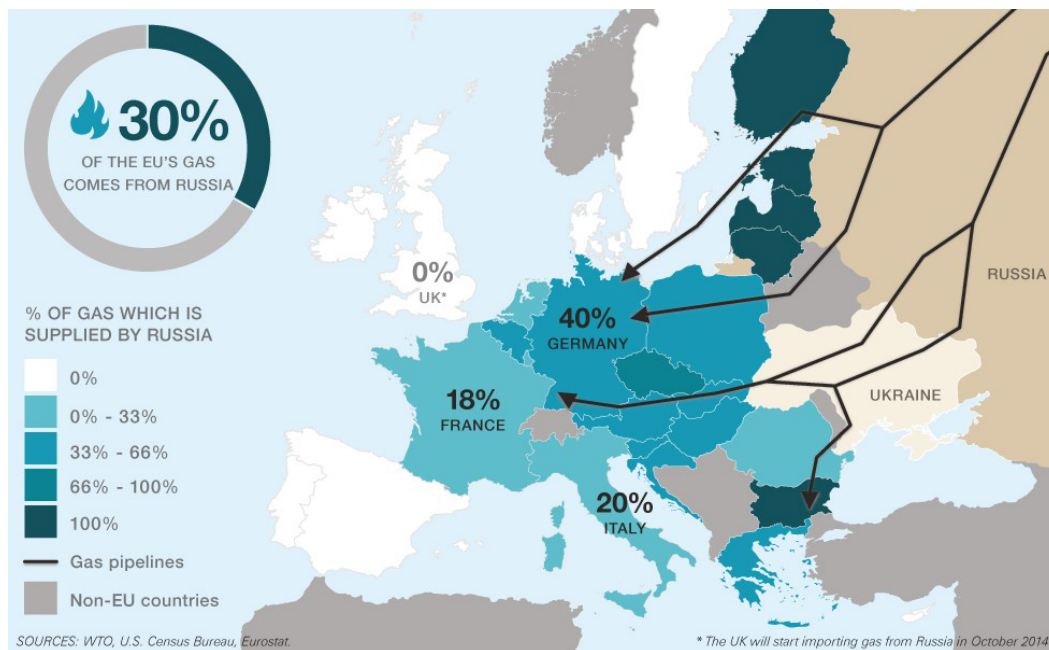
So far, the 27-member European Union is one of the fastest-growing economies/energy markets in the world and the largest importer of energy resources. Still, As we can see from [Table 3](#), the total annual consumption of natural gas continues to be met primarily by Russia (more than one-third), followed by Norway and other countries such as Algeria. However, Norway's gas production is gradually decreasing, with estimates indicating that Russia will remain the largest source of supply until 2025. Thus, the need for diversification becomes increasingly urgent (Tziarras et al, 2019, p. 12).

The Union remained vulnerable to supply problems, which were either caused by geopolitical conflicts, trade disputes, infrastructure failures, or other reasons. Indeed, Russia's 2006 decision to cut off the supply of natural gas to Ukraine for a short period caused a series of chain effects to the rest of Europe. This was because significant quantities of Russian gas are transported to the rest of the continent via Ukraine (Asseburg et al, 2018, p. 45).

The European Energy Security Strategy stressed the importance of natural gas, underlining once again its diversification through the Eastern Mediterranean countries. Of the 33 projects identified as critical to the future energy security of the EU, the 27 were gas projects (Asseburg et al, 2018, p. 43). A diplomatic plan was developed aiming at strengthening ties with neighboring gas producers, i.e. with North Africa and the Eastern Mediterranean countries. The EU also pursues the strengthening of defense capabilities through several initiatives such as PESCO, CARD, and the European Defence Agency. All these have a significant impact on the stability and security of the Eastern Mediterranean (Asseburg et al, 2018, p. 22).

Recently the EU implemented a strategy, with Brussels taking up a leading role in promoting regional energy partnerships which take into account security, competitiveness, and environmental concerns (European Neighbourhood Policy). To this end, Cyprus, Greece, and Israel have received European funds for the construction of gas infrastructure and equipment for the transport of energy from the fields of the Southern Mediterranean to the heart of Europe. Electricity interconnections were also made (Asseburg et al, 2018, p. 45).

Table 3: EU's Gas Sources.



(Source: Russian Business Today, 2018)

Nowadays, the EU continues to support the efforts to develop the EastMed pipeline and is planning to allocate huge sums of money for its construction. The Italian company ENI is the main exporter of Egypt's Zohr field while it is also exploring other areas of the Eastern Mediterranean. Its ultimate aim is to create an LNG hub in the Eastern Mediterranean, which will supply natural gas to all of Europe. At the end of 2019, the agreement to build the pipeline was ratified by Italy, Greece, Cyprus, and Israel (IGI Poseidon, 2021).

4.1.8. Palestine, Lebanon and Syria

According to international law, the Palestinian territories of the West Bank and Gaza do not have the status of a common state. The Palestinian Authority shall have the right to exploit the gas fields located near the Gaza Strip. However, the conditions and internal fights within the Palestinian Authority do not open the road to critical decisions. In addition, it remains unclear whether the transportation of natural gas from Israel to these territories could be considered as an export or as domestic consumption. In

2014, both parties signed an agreement to supply the Palestinians with Israeli gas for twenty years. Nonetheless, shortly afterward, the agreement was canceled by the Palestinian side (Asseburg et al, 2018, p. 31).

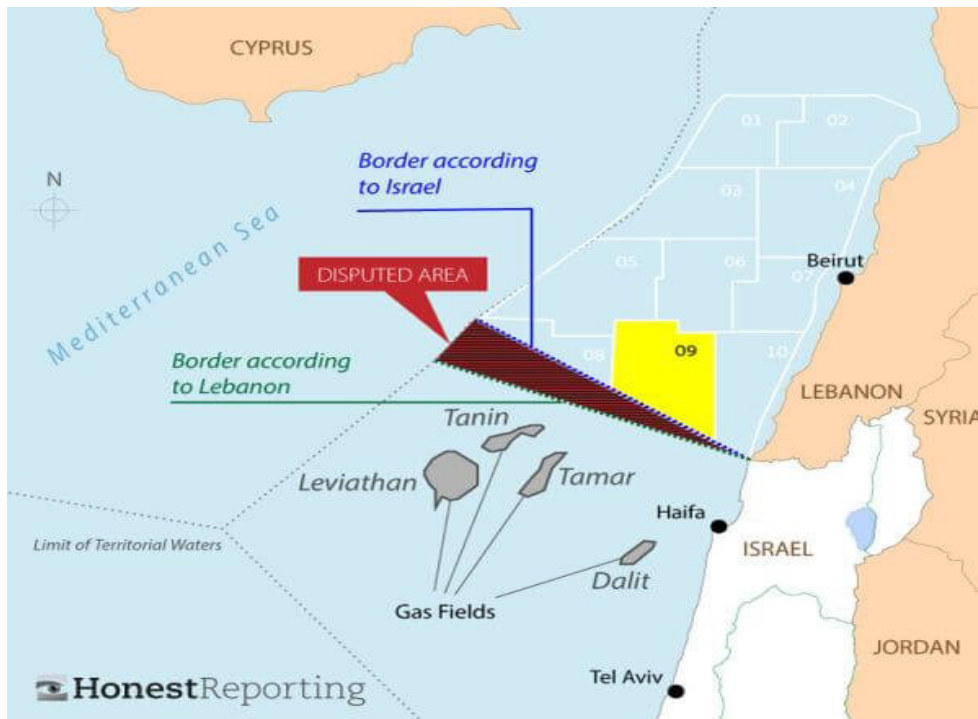
On the other hand, undoubtedly influenced by the discoveries of the region in the Eastern Mediterranean, Lebanon was keen to find companies interested in exploring its waters. The seismic survey conducted in 2012 showed that the deposits would reach 700 bcm in the country's waters. It is estimated that the country may have natural gas reserves that could potentially be higher and easier to process than those in Israel and Cyprus. However, the lack of infrastructure, the political situation, and the security risks of investing in Lebanon made future interested companies avoid the move. In 2017, the Lebanese government approved the first attempt to explore its EEZ by an international consortium, including Total, Eni, and Novatek. So far, these are the only companies that have shown interest in exploring the Lebanese waters (Asseburg et al, 2018, pp. 40-42).

In 2007 Lebanon signed a first EEZ delimitation agreement with Cyprus, which the Lebanese Parliament never ratified due to political pressure from Turkey. Ankara considered that the occupied part of Cyprus should be included in the agreement. Lebanon also wanted to reach an agreement on a free trade agreement with Turkey, which was finally signed in 2010 (Stergiou, 2016, p. 12).

Thus, in 2009 a new delimitation was proposed, different from the 2007 agreement, and a new list of geographic coordinates was sent to the UN in 2010. Beirut also claims that the bilateral agreement on the delimitation of the maritime boundaries border demarcation, signed in 2010, between Cyprus and Israel and ratified a year later, conflicts with the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, and violates Lebanon's sovereignty and economic rights. It should be noted that the two countries have not made any demarcation because they are officially in a hostile situation, since Israel declared independence in 1948, and Lebanon as a member of the Arab League, does not recognize it (Stergiou, 2016, p. 12).

The ongoing conflict between the two countries has added another variant to the geopolitical environment of the region that hinders the development of cross-border energy resources. Both Lebanon and Israel claim a maritime area of approximately 1,400 square kilometers, which is potentially rich in offshore hydrocarbons. As we can see from [Map 6](#), the area in dispute is located in a triangle whose western tip is the Israel-Lebanon land border and the base towards the sea is the Exclusive Economic Zone of Israel and Cyprus (Stergiou, 2017, p. 12). According to Lebanese measurements, which were made based on the Franco-British agreement (1923), a part of the Leviathan field falls within the area of 850 square kilometers. Israel rejected this claim and argued that the 1949 Armistice Convention did not include any map defining the boundary between Israel and Lebanon (Pedro, 2019)

Map 6: Lebanon and Israel's Maritime Delimitations.



(Source: Honest Reporting, 2019)

To talk about Syria now, historically, the country is characterized by sufficient domestic energy production. It is not yet clear, however, believed that there are large quantities of natural gas in its peripheral waters. The Russian company Soyuzneftegaz won the exclusivity to explore and develop Syria's natural gas reserves, nonetheless, with the start of the civil war, exploration operations were quickly halted (Asseburg et al, 2018, p. 31).

Considering the Arab Spring, the Syrian case stood out because of the civil war that broke out in 2011 between the ethnic sects. The internationalization (that took place after) of the war has been detrimental for the foreign policies of the actors involved. Thus, we can distinguish three different axes along which security in the Eastern Mediterranean is affected: the one concerning the situation in Syria, the other concerning the influence on the Arab-Israeli conflict, and the last has an impact on the competition between states for regional hegemony (Mikelis, 2017, pp. 4-5). Nowadays, Syria still faces the abhorrence of large companies, as they refuse to undertake the exploration risk activities under these circumstances. The political future of Syria and the end of the civil war will show whether investors will return to explore its waters (Stergiou, 2017, p. 13).

4.2. Cooperation Opportunities

The countries of the South-Eastern Mediterranean must give priority to the relations amongst them. The establishment of close international cooperation and positive diplomatic dynamics will create new opportunities, such as mutual benefits between energy consumers and suppliers. Several cooperation efforts have taken place in recent years, for instance, the trilateral summits of Egypt, Cyprus, and Greece, the establishment of an alliance between Israel, Cyprus, and Greece and the development of broader economic ties between Israel and Egypt. However, tensions have not ceased to exist. The war in Syria, the chronic Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the crisis between Turkey and Egypt, the more recent crisis between Turkey and Israel, are only some examples.

Competition over gas issues in the region is creating tensions and new pursuits by the actors. Turkey, for instance, is seeking to forge new alliances with countries that it has not previously approached as potential allies, such as Lebanon, Syria (without Assad), the Palestinian Authority, Libya (Demirol, 2018, pp. 13-16). Ankara has also signed up a non acceptable Memorandum of Cooperation with the GNA (Sarraj) government in Libya, in an attempt to delimit an EEZ with the civil war-ridden country (Filis, 2019) .

Both situations of competition and cooperation have two objectives for the states. First, to acquire a share of the energy reserves to meet their domestic needs, and secondly, to achieve cooperation between peripheral and non-peripheral countries in terms of the construction of pipelines to world markets.

a. The Cairo Meeting.

In 2019, a meeting was held in Cairo concerning energy matters. The Ministers of Energy of Egypt, Cyprus, Greece, Israel, Italy, Jordan, and the Palestinian Authority took part at the first meeting of the Energy Summit to discuss the establishment of an Eastern Mediterranean Gas Forum (EMGF), which will serve as an umbrella for the cooperation and the dialogue on development, gas and oil production, consumption, and marketing of natural resources in the region. On the table of negotiations also was raised the possibility of using the existing LNG infrastructure in Egypt (Tagliapietra, 2019). The issue of energy needs may have been the main trigger for this meeting,

nonetheless, the various geostrategic processes, economic development, and processes, and events in the region led to the need to establish this particular forum. The forum reflected the common perceptions of the coastal states of the Eastern Mediterranean. Although the Gas Forum was officially open for membership and other countries, the meeting in Cairo did not include representatives from Turkey, Lebanon, or Syria (Kalehsar, 2019).

b. The Greek-Israeli Relations.

Greece-Israel relations have a long history. Since the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948, Athens' contacts with Jerusalem were frozen. However, in a more general context, Greece was not hostile towards Israel. This was mainly because, in the past, Athens chose to adopt a friendly attitude towards the Arab world, to serve its then vital interests, such as the protection of the Greek communities in Arab countries, securing cheap oil, support for the Cyprus problem, control of the Patriarchate of Jerusalem. Also, in the 1947 UN resolution, Greece voted against the partition of Palestine and the creation of a Jewish state, a stance that continued for many years. On the other hand, the close relations that Jerusalem had developed with Ankara throughout the 1990s, further alienated Athens, which wished to maintain its contacts with the Arabs (Stergiou, 2015, p. 3).

However, in recent years, a series of military and energy developments have reshaped relations between the two states. Since 2008 and the deterioration of bilateral relations between Ankara and Jerusalem, the relations of the two states started to improve. Thus, 2010 was a landmark year, as the visit of the Israeli Prime Minister marked the beginning of a period of multi-level cooperation in many areas, including economic trade. Also of great importance is the quite constructive cooperation in the field of energy, on the one hand for Greece, which wishes to upgrade its energy profile as a transit state for Israeli and Cypriot natural gas on the European market, and on the other hand for Israel, which is seeking to become an energy producer and exporter. In 2011, the two countries signed a security cooperation pact. They had also been preceded by joint military exercises on Greek territory (Tziarras et al, 2019, p. 83).

In addition, the security of land and sea energy routes in the eastern Mediterranean is another catalyst for rapprochement between the two countries. Part of their broader cooperation is the 2012 agreement between the Energy Ministries of the two countries,

on environmental protection, the cables running from Israel to Cyprus and ending in Greece, and to the European market in general. This agreement took Israel out of its isolation in the Middle East and opened up relations with European energy markets. Three years later, the Greek Prime Minister visited the Israeli capital to renew this energy agreement (Stergiou, 2015, p. 9). In conclusion, Greece is an ally country for Israel, which serves both the energy and defense policy. In terms of defense policy, Greece provides the necessary strategic depth, which Israel lacks due to its geography, while in the energy sector Israel now sees itself as a reliable partner.

c. The Israeli- Cypriot Relations.

Following the discoveries of the deposits in the EEZs of Israel and Cyprus, a successful co-exploitation of energy reserves that would bring economic benefits for both sides would be essential. For that reason, in 2013 two Israeli energy companies (Delek and Avner), signed an agreement with Nicosia under which they acquired a 30% stake in the rights for exploitation and subsea exploration in the Cypriot EEZ. In the same year, the parties signed an agreement for the construction of a laboratory liquefaction plant. In 2018, the public gas company of Cyprus, Public Gas Transmission System (CPS), published the tender documents for the design, construction, and operation of the terminal. It is believed that this project is particularly important for the entire region and the overall development and production of natural gas (Tziarras et al, 2019, p. 15).

Other bilateral agreements followed. Other areas of cooperation were also promoted, such as the coordination of aeronautical and maritime Search and Rescue services (Stergiou, 2016, p. 10). However, after the discovery of the promising Zohr deposit in 2015, the two states are seriously considering a triangular gas export strategy. This idea involves sending gas to neighboring Egypt via undersea pipelines. A combination of the Jerusalem, Nicosia, and Cairo fields would make the reserves more attractive to the European energy market, which, as it was stated, wishes to diversify its energy corridors. This cooperation has also been facilitated by the fact that Shell is the operator of the Idku plant in Egypt and co-owner of the Aphrodite deposit (Tziarras et al, 2019, p. 21).

On the other hand, to maximize the economic benefits, the two states must solve two problems that have arisen. The first problem concerns the Aphrodite field, which extends 20% into Israel's EEZ. The problem has been rocking both sides since 2010 (Stergiou, 2016, p. 10). Gas extraction in the Cypriot EEZ would inevitably mean gas extraction from the Israeli field. To solve the problem, the two governments must reach

an agreement on the consolidation of their energy reserves found in this sea block. However, this is not an easy task. Israel refuses to allow Cyprus to proceed with gas extraction without a prior agreement (Grigoriadis, 2014, pp. 2-3).

The second problem concerns the export of natural gas from Israel to the EU market, through Cyprus. After the repeated issues with the terrorist attacks on Israel's gas pipelines, Jerusalem has decided to export quantities of energy through its LNG terminal and other export infrastructure. This is of enormous importance for Cyprus, as this way secures the viability of the LNG export facility. At the same time, Nicosia must for political and economic reasons ensure that Israel's export activities are carried out through its territory (Tziarras et al, 2019, p. 16).

In conclusion, neither of the two countries concerned, has a sufficient domestic market of natural gas to accelerate the exploitation of the deposits, nor does it have any built-up pipelines or liquefaction facilities. Furthermore, both Cyprus and Israel rely heavily on exports to foreign energy markets. Therefore, the aim of both is to attract foreign investment of several billion dollars so that all of the above can become viable (Tagliapietra, 2019). In addition, cooperation with Egypt is crucial for both states. The most logical course is to create a gas market in the region, which would be based on Egypt's existing LNG infrastructure, with benefits for all regional actors involved. A common regional gas export regime in the markets of these countries or to the more distant countries via the Egyptian LNG facilities would maximize commercial cooperation between the three (Tziarras et al, 2019, p. 21).

d. The Turkish-Israeli Relations.

Turkey was one of the first states to recognize the establishment of the state of Israel. The ties between the two became even closer during the 1990s. Ankara seemed willing to mediate the withdrawal of Israeli troops from the Golan Heights and to achieve conflict resolution between Jerusalem and Damascus. On the other hand, good relations with Turkey have been a priority for Israel's foreign policy in the region. Turkey is not only a leading market for Israeli goods but is seen as a Muslim ally for Jerusalem. However, due to a series of diplomatic conflicts and mistakes between 2008 and 2012, such as the failure of the Turkish peace initiative in Syria in 2008, relations between Israel and Turkey have entered a period of intense, after fifty years of close and successful cooperation (Demiroglu, 2018, p 13-16).

Their frozen relations have made it even more difficult to achieve cooperation in exploiting the energy reserves of the South-Eastern Mediterranean. The only cooperative relationship they maintain is trade-related, and this is because 20,000 Jews live and do business in Turkey. Finally, the relocation of the US embassy in Jerusalem in 2018, the killing of 62 protesters by Israeli soldiers, which Ankara strongly condemned, and Ankara's support for Palestine are major points of contention (Tziarras et al, 2019, p 16).

e. Greece- Cyprus- Israel.

Following the collapse of bilateral relations between Jerusalem and Ankara, Israel, Cyprus, and Greece have decided to deepen their cooperation in the field of security. The triangular strategic partnerships developed by Athens, Nicosia, and Greece with the participation of Cairo due to its LNG facilities, and its recent addition of Jordan, has gained the strong support of the US and EU, could also turn against vital Turkish interests in the region (Tziarras et al, 2019, p 100).

Significant gas and oil reserves discovered in an area covered by the EEZs of Cyprus and Israel have been a catalyst in the accelerated trilateral energy cooperation between the three countries. Since 2016, regular, formal, trilateral meetings have been held. Although the primary objective of the meetings is related to the management of the deposits, the states have committed to enhance their cooperation in many other areas, such as tourism, research and technology, environment, and migration. The new strategic axis they established would welcome other states with similar objectives in this alliance (Stergiou, 2016, p. 10).

Israel, Cyprus, and Egypt should pursue a strategy of cooperation to maximize their economic gains. If a common plan is not adopted for exploitation, Israeli and Cypriot hydrocarbons will be difficult to reach independently to European or Asian markets. On the other hand, Egypt may have both the domestic quantities and the facilities to operate independently of its neighbors, but cooperation could bring commercial benefits, increase market confidence, improve the quality of the product, and expand regional investment (Tagliapietra, 2019).

In 2019, the 6th Trilateral Summit between Israel, Greece, and Cyprus took place, during which the three states invited as a special guest the Foreign Minister of the US Mike Pompeo. The aim, among other things, was to promote the Eastern Pipeline

Mediterranean. According to scholars, the project is more of a political operation between the three. For the project to become a reality, it must be commercially and economically viable, and technically feasible. But the invitation of a US official is particularly significant, as it signals the US interest in what is happening in the Eastern Mediterranean (Tziarras et al, 2019, p 62).

During Trump's Administration, Turkey also enjoyed Washington's support (International Institute for the Middle East and Balkan Studies (IFIMES), 2020). However, the changed administration highlights several issues between the two countries. A tougher policy appears to be implemented after Trump's transactional diplomacy with Erdoğan. Nonetheless, Turkey continues to be a strategic country for the US, which cannot afford to lose it to Moscow or Beijing (Pagoulatos, 2021, ELIAMEP).

Furthermore, Greece, in 2020 and 2021, has upgraded its diplomatic initiatives. The Greek-Israeli relations were even more strengthened by the Philia Forum, an initiative that also involved Egypt, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, and Bahrain, after the successful normalization of Israel's relations with the Arab World. In addition, there are plans with Cairo regarding natural gas exportation to European countries (Ntousas, 2021, ECFR.EU.). The interests of eastern Mediterranean states and Gulf states seem more aligned than ever before.

4.3. Region's Natural Gas Pipelines

The ability to transport energy resources has always been a variant of security, as it shapes states' trade and diplomatic relations. Nowadays, the Eastern Mediterranean is an important route for natural gas and oil imports to the EU. Approximately 35% of the EU's gas and 50% of the EU's oil consumption products pass through the region (Tziarras et al, 2019, p. 12).

The transfer is carried out in two ways: either after gas liquefaction and its subsequent transport by a ship, or by pipelines. A successful pipeline transfer depends on several factors, such as the good relations between the countries through which the pipelines pass. If the relations between the contracting states have escalated, then transport through energy pipelines would be a problem. To this end, stable relations shall be established as a prerequisite before the start of the construction of major energy projects (Stergiou, 2017, p. 7).

a. The Southern Corridor Pipeline

Of primary importance is the South Corridor (South Stream), a key pipeline for the energy policy of the EU and Greece. The Southern Corridor includes the system SCPX (South Caucasus Pipeline Expansion), TANAP (Trans-Anatolian Pipeline), and TAP (Trans Adriatic Pipeline). These energy routes transport natural gas from the Caspian region to the European market via Georgia, Turkey, Greece, and Albania (South Stream Pipeline Project, Europe. Hydrocarbons Technology). However, the South Stream project was abandoned in 2014 (Tsakiris, 2018, pp. 721- 728).

b. The Vertical Corridor Pipeline

Greece is promoting the implementation of a Vertical Gas Corridor, which is planned to transport gas from a variety of sources. More specifically, the Vertical Gas Corridor will transfer gas from the Revithoussa LNG terminal, the Alexandroupolis' Floating Gas Terminal currently under design (FSRU), as well as from the TAP pipeline (Tsakiris, 2018, pp. 721- 728).

c. The Trans Adriatic Pipeline - TAP

The Trans Adriatic Pipeline (TAP) is the last branch of the Southern Gas Corridor and has been identified as one of the ten most important energy projects in the world. The construction of the Greek section of the TAP gas pipeline has been completed. The pipeline enhances Greece's energy security, as it can supply Greece with 1 billion cubic meters per year while upgrading its role in transporting gas from the Caspian Sea to European markets (Trans Adriatic – TAP). In addition, North Macedonia is interested in being supplied by TAP. Thus, a Memorandum of Understanding was signed between Athens and Skopje for the construction of an interconnecting gas pipeline (North Macedonia. Energy Press. Greek Energy News Portal). In conclusion, the choice of TAP as the main export pipeline for the consortium is a milestone for European and international markets (Tsakiris, 2018, p. 721).

d. The East-Med Pipeline

In 2017, Cyprus, Israel, Italy, and Greece signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to examine the possibility of constructing a gas pipeline connecting the energy deposits in the Eastern Mediterranean with the European market. The European Commission described the project as technically feasible and economically viable. The EU also stated that it was going to support it as a great option for the diversification of gas routes. To this end, the pipeline was identified as a project of common interest between the EU and the region (Tziarras et al, 2019, p. 17).

In 2018, at a meeting held in Israel, the leaders of Greece, Cyprus, and Israel formally declared that they were ready to sign an intergovernmental agreement (IGA) for the East Med pipeline project. The presence of the US Ambassador at the meeting shows the unequivocal support for the pipeline on the part of the US. The project was described as "very important for the stability and prosperity of the Middle East and Europe (Tziarras et al, 2019, p. 17). The text received the approval of the European Commission in 2019. The agreement was signed in 2020 in Athens (Koutantou, 2020, Reuters). Support is growing in numbers as this project is now joined by five additional partners, Bulgaria, Romania, Hungary, Serbia and North Macedonia (EnergyPress, 2021).

Since the summer of 2014, the development of the EastMed pipeline has been undertaken by the Greek company "Submarine Gas Pipeline Greece-Italy" "POSEIDON S.A.", in which DEPA of Cyprus and EDSON of Italy participate equally. The cost of the pipeline to Italy has been estimated at around \$7 billion. However, with continued technological development, the capacity of the pipeline is likely to increase further, carrying volumes above the 10 bcm per year of its original design, which would radically change the economic dynamics of the project (Thanos, 2019, East Med).

The project is of particular geopolitical interest and advantages for our country. The benefits for Athens are multiple, including the promotion of Greece as a European transit hub and all the economic effects, during the development, construction, and operation phases of the project. It also opens up a substantially new energy corridor, which will also cover the deposits, thus facilitating the economic development of Greece and Cyprus. Furthermore, as we can see from [Map 7](#), the project can ensure the supply of natural gas to areas of Greece which do not have access to the National Grid, such as Crete, the Peloponnese, and Western Greece. It, therefore, facilitates the replacement of oil with gas, contributing to the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions in the aforementioned regions (Thanos, 2019, East Med).

Map 7: The East-Med Pipeline.



(Source: Euronews, 2020)

Conclusions

In this chapter, a general overview of the Eastern Mediterranean's geopolitics was presented, as we analyzed the different energy profiles of the coastal states and the issues that affect them. As already mentioned, the recent and continuing discoveries of hydrocarbons in the Eastern Mediterranean have been among the main drivers of the changing geopolitical and security dynamics in the region. We also focused on the various aspects of the emergent trilateral/multilateral partnerships of the region. As presented, we were particularly interested in the individual and collective drivers and motivations that brought these countries together. The success of those partnerships depends on the common interests of the coastal states. In parallel, energy has also provoked geopolitical rivals. Last but not least, energy projects of the region were presented along with their general aspects.

5. Conclusions

The South-Eastern Mediterranean regime is a rather complex politico-economic environment, in the context of which the relations between the internal and external actors are constantly changing. The relations are influenced and shaped through time, depending on various historical and fraternal ties that developed (Greece-Cyprus) but also on interests that have strategic and economic backgrounds.

In this paper, the concept of energy security and the policies and measures that can be taken are examined. The legal manifestations that have emerged from the interaction of coastal states, following the discovery of hydrocarbons in the Levantine Basin also is stressed. As expected, energy issues have been providing a new impetus to the region, with many actors involved, seeking a more active, or at least just a role in the play.

The discovery and abundance of energy resources have the potential to unite states. On the other hand, of course, it can exacerbate or even lead to conflict. In the regional context under consideration, subsystem, it was proved that it is possible to achieve coexistence of the two above cases. The issue, however, is how to manage proper utilization of the resources. Building proper cooperation should not be solely based on direct economic benefits and a short-term positive diplomatic impetus but should also aim to make full use of the potential offered by the current gas market and the development of mechanisms, to establish a broader future environment for cooperation between the stakeholders.

However, contrary to an ambitious scenario, recent energy discoveries have exacerbated any pre-existing differences. The region is already classified as unstable enough to be plagued by chronic problems. Thus, intra-regional cooperation as well as cooperation with other neighboring or non-neighboring actors is difficult to achieve and exacerbates insecurity, and promotes an image of governance failure. For instance, civil conflicts (Syria, Libya), the democratic deficit that exists in many of the coastal states, the intense and uninterrupted migratory flows of recent years, the ambitions and political agenda of each of the actors involved, and competition for energy resources. All of these of the above lead to the lack of building a regional security architecture.

The new political and economic cooperative dynamics that have been observed in recent years in the Eastern Mediterranean have created a new image, that of a sustainable regional structure. The existence of a common goal by most of the coastal states and the attempt to strengthen their cooperation at bilateral, trilateral, and multilateral levels, through various agreements and alliances points out their determination. In a broader context, parallel cooperation with extra-regional actors, such as the USA and the European Union, is achieved.

The Member States of the European Union may follow a different energy security policy and meet their basic energy security needs in different ways, but as a whole, the EU, through its energy policy, emphasizes the dimension and role of security and competitiveness and gives non-European countries, a strategic energy partner, dimension and role. Energy, in this case, acts as a driving force between the two regions and contributes to building a new common, political, and economic development. The EastMed pipeline, although facing various problems, continues to be a window of optimism for the two regional systems. The Agreement is functioning as a new politically based bond with energy as a common component.

But, one should bear in mind that EastMed has not been built yet, but is in advanced planning stages. Nonetheless, the pipeline is characterized as an example of an expensive and non-climate-friendly gas project. If the EU wishes to meet its climate targets, then the gas EastMed pipeline transported could not be used. It is estimated that by 2050 EastMed's gas would produce as much carbon as France, Spain, and Italy currently together emit in one year. This also means that it is unlikely for Greece, Cyprus, Israel, or the EU to benefit from this project (GlobalWitness, 2021).

Moreover, the construction of the EastMed pipeline could turn out to be a dream-project, as its economic viability is constantly questioned. In order for a pipeline to be built, three things are needed. First a deposit with sufficient quantities of gas that can be extracted at a reasonable price. Secondly, customers who want to buy gas. And third, the political will to build the pipeline. Unfortunately for this project, the quantities are probably limited, the extraction is expensive and threatens the ecosystem, and there is only a limited period for the transition from hydrocarbons to renewables.

However, the EU's cooperation with Cyprus, Greece, and Israel conflicts with Turkey's geopolitical ambitions in the region. The ruling AKP party has shown little inclination to downplay them. Ankara claims to play the most crucial role in the Southeastern Mediterranean region, as Turkish territory is an important passage for channeling gas to the European market. It is undoubtedly a country from which several pipelines pass through, making it a hub for energy transit. The geostrategic position of the country, combined with the specific ties, shared religious, cultural, and historical beliefs, allows Turkey to see the Arab world as a policy tool. The ongoing Islamisation of Turkish politics, however, may be more powerful than any economic motive.

It is now clear that regional cooperation based on the energy background is a politically sensitive issue for states. It will not be an easy task, as the EU and the coastal states, seem to face the same obstacles in terms of energy issues. Undoubtedly, energy and politics in the region are two interdependent concepts. Therefore the concept of energy security is an integral part of every state's policy. The discovery of new energy sources has always allowed governments to meet their domestic needs and to gain greater bargaining power at a local and global level. Finally, the recently widespread optimism about the joint exploitation of energy resources may serve as an incentive to achieve

peace between conflicting states. However, energy itself is not a strong incentive for peace in deep and chronic conflicts. Nowadays, the emergence of natural gas as the dominant product in the energy pie has led to a shift in the geopolitical value of oil. Natural gas resources in the Mediterranean can be a crucial factor in the attempted geopolitical change.

In conclusion, energy, combined with the growing need of countries for consumption, continues and will continue for a very long time to influence to a fairly large extent the political economy of the region. The total size of gas reserves in the Eastern Mediterranean may have not been ascertained yet, however, the region's balance has been shifted. The elimination of obstacles and their impact on the relations between the states makes imperative the need for cooperative intervention by third parties. It will certainly be necessary a long time before the countries of the Eastern Mediterranean can export significant quantities of energy. Energy resources in the current context will still be very much in demand but have very little impact on Europe's energy security-sufficiency.

So whether the gas fields in the South-Eastern Mediterranean region will bring profits to the states is something that will be determined by the successful and prudent exploitation and management of the energy by the legitimate beneficiaries, but also by the shaping of demand and supply.

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