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ENERGY: STRATEGY, LAW & ECONOMICS

[ENERGY COMPETITION IN SOUTHEAST (SE)
MEDITERRANEAN AND HOW TURKEY'S
EXPANSIONISM CAN BE TACKLED]

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Αφιέρωση

Θα ήθελα να αφιερώσω την εργασία αυτή πρωταρχικά στη σύζυγό μου αλλά και τον γιό μου, χωρίς την υπομονή και την υποστήριξή των οποίων δεν θα ήταν δυνατή η περάτωση τόσο του προγράμματος όσο και της συγκεκριμένης εργασίας. Επιπλέον, θα ήθελα να ευχαριστήσω τους γονείς μου, οι οποίοι μου έδωσαν τις απαραίτητες υλικές και ηθικές βάσεις για όλες τις μετέπειτα επιτυχίες μου.

Dedication

I would like to dedicate this work primarily to my wife and my son, without whose patience and support it would not have been possible to complete both the Master Program and this Thesis. In addition, I would like to thank my parents, who provided me with the necessary material and moral foundations for all my subsequent successes and accomplishments.

Σελίδα Σκόττωμα Κενή

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ENERGY COMPETITION IN THE NORTH-EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN AND HOW TURKEY'S EXPANSIONISM CAN BE TACKLED

Important Terms: Energy Competition, South-Eastern Mediterranean, Trade Crossroads, Energy Hub, Energy Interdiction Zone, Energy Crisis, Energy Reserves, EEZ, «Blue Homeland» Doctrine, Turkish-Libyan Memorandum, Instrumentalization of Migration, Expansionism.

Abstract

The Southeastern Mediterranean is an extremely interesting region in every respect. In the current period of time, it is the field of a multidimensional competition of many actors, both local and international.

The discovery of huge quantities of hydrocarbons in its subsoil creates great prospects for ensuring energy security for the region and, under certain conditions, for the whole of Europe, contributing significantly to its energy independence from Russia. This is particularly important in the current period, especially after the Ukrainian-Russian crisis and Russia's blackmailing attitude regarding the supply of natural gas to Europe in order to obtain milder sanctions.

In addition, these huge quantities of hydrocarbons have created a new field of competition and confrontation in the region between local actors and powerful international players. This competition extends to both the energy and geopolitical spheres. The former are trying to acquire as much of the energy 'pie' as possible and to emerge as regional powers in the region, while the latter are trying to increase their sphere of influence by creating partnerships and alliances in the region, serving, behind the scenes in most cases, the interests of the former.

The confrontation between Greece and Turkey is part of this energy and geopolitical competition. Both countries, are seeking to gain the title of regional power in the wider Balkan Peninsula and the South-Eastern Mediterranean region. This effort puts them in a position of confrontation, sometimes with intense characteristics, to such an extent that they are not even

close to armed conflict. However, local hot incidents and crises are created, which activate their military forces.

The purpose of this thesis is to analyze:

a. The energy competition, mainly but also the geopolitical competition, to a lesser extent, in the Eastern Mediterranean region between the states of the region and the strong powers (USA, Russia, China).

b. Turkey's stance in the wider SE Mediterranean region, its claims, and how these affect its relationship with Greece.

c. The ways in which Greece is dealing with Turkey's expansionism in the region.

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CHAPTER 1

GEOGRAPHICAL - HISTORICAL ANALYSIS OF THE EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN REGION

1.1 Introduction

This chapter will provide a brief but comprehensive geographical and historical analysis of the wider Eastern Mediterranean region. Specifically, firstly, a geographical definition of the region under consideration will be made in order to delineate the region in relation to the wider Mediterranean basin, followed by a brief analysis of the countries that make up the region in question and constitute the local actors. This will be followed by a historical analysis of the Eastern Mediterranean area, which will link the area to time and events and provide the necessary background for understanding events as they are taking shape in the present time.

1.2 Geographical definition of the Eastern Mediterranean Region

The Mediterranean is a closed sea, located at the crossroads of 3 continents (Europe, Asia, and Africa). Its area is approximately 2,505,000 square kilometers. Its exact geographical position is located on the parallelogram defined by longitudes 36° 10' E, 05° 21' W and latitudes 30° 15' N and 45° 50' N respectively. Its maximum length (from the coast of Gibraltar to the coast of Syria) is about 4 km (3 860 m), its average width is 600 km and reaches a maximum of 1 800 km, while its average depth is 1500 m and its maximum depth is about 5,5 km (SW of Pylos).

The Mediterranean is connected to the Atlantic Ocean in the west through the Strait of Gibraltar, to the Red Sea in the southeast through the Suez Canal, and to the Black Sea in the northeast through the Straits of Hellespont.



Figure 1: Delimitation of the Mediterranean Sea area (Source: Wikipedia. gr)

The part of the Mediterranean Sea that extends from southern Italy to the coast of the Middle East¹ and Egypt is called the Eastern Mediterranean. The Eastern Mediterranean region includes 8 countries, which encompass it geographically. These countries, in a circumferential arrangement, from West to East are Greece, Turkey, Cyprus, Cyprus, Syria, Lebanon, Israel, Egypt, and Libya. These countries, each on their own behalf, are trying to gain an advantageous position in controlling the wider region. This leads to alliances based on common interests, but also to disputes, which are created between the above countries.

The Mediterranean area includes 3 choke points (International Shipping Lanes): the Straits of Gibraltar, which connect the Mediterranean with the Atlantic Ocean; the Dardanelles Straits, which connect the Black Sea with the Aegean and the Mediterranean; and the Suez Straits with the homonymous canal, which connect the Mediterranean with the Red Sea and then with the Indian Ocean.

¹ Coasts of Turkey, Syria, Lebanon and Israel.



Figure 2: Eastern Mediterranean countries (Source: Google Earth application)

Choke points are extremely important to the global economy and the uninterrupted flow of goods to such an extent that any disruption to the area in which they are geographically located causes extremely adverse side effects. The Eastern Mediterranean region includes 2 of the 3 choke points in the Mediterranean region, which dramatically increases the strategic value of the region.

It is therefore understandable that the geographical area of the Eastern Mediterranean is an extremely strategic area, due to its geographical position, which will always be at the center of events and will create an occasion for conflicts and temporary alliances between the actors.

1.3 Eastern Mediterranean countries

As mentioned above, the Eastern Mediterranean region is made up of 8 countries, located on 3 different continents (Europe, Asia, and Africa). These countries have specific characteristics (local, religious, cultural, etc.), and different interests and each one of them claims to gain as much control as possible over the region and consolidate its position. Below is a brief analysis of each country in order to understand their motives, actions, and aspirations in the region under consideration.

1.3.1 Egypt

Egypt is officially referred to as the Arab Republic of Egypt. It has an area of just over 1,000,000 sq. km. It extends over 2 continents, the African continent as most of its area is located on its northeastern edge, while a small part of it extends to the Asian continent, specifically the Sinai Peninsula. Egypt fully controls the Suez Strait with its homonymous canal, which, as mentioned above, is one of the most important choke points in the global economic and strategic arena.

Its land borders are with Libya to the west, Israel to the east and Sudan to the south. To the North, it has an outlet to the Mediterranean Sea, and to the east it meets the Red Sea. It is crossed from south to north by the world's largest river, the Nile.

The capital of Egypt is Cairo and larger cities are Alexandria, Giza, Port Said, Suez, etc. The majority of the country's cities are developed near water, namely in the Northern part (Mediterranean), the Eastern part (Red Sea) and along the Nile River.

The Egyptian economy is a fast-growing economy, which since 2015 has shown a steadily increasing growth rate of over 4.2%. In the 2019-2020 biennium, the growth rate of the Egyptian economy reached a rate of over 5%. The outbreak of the SARS - Cov - 2 pandemic (COVID - 19) slightly affected the growth rate against initial estimates that estimated a rate of around 6%.

The GDP of the Egyptian economy for the year 2020 amounts to \$363.25 billion which ranks it in the 2ⁿ position among the economies of 19 Arab states, namely behind the economy of Saudi Arabia which is in the 1st position and the United Arab Emirates which is in the 3ⁿ position. Specifically, the following chart (Figure 1) shows the trend of Egypt's GDP from 1986 to 2020. The estimate for 2021 is that it will reach \$396.33 billion increased by about \$33 billion which demonstrates the growth of the economy, especially in a difficult economic situation due to the pandemic.

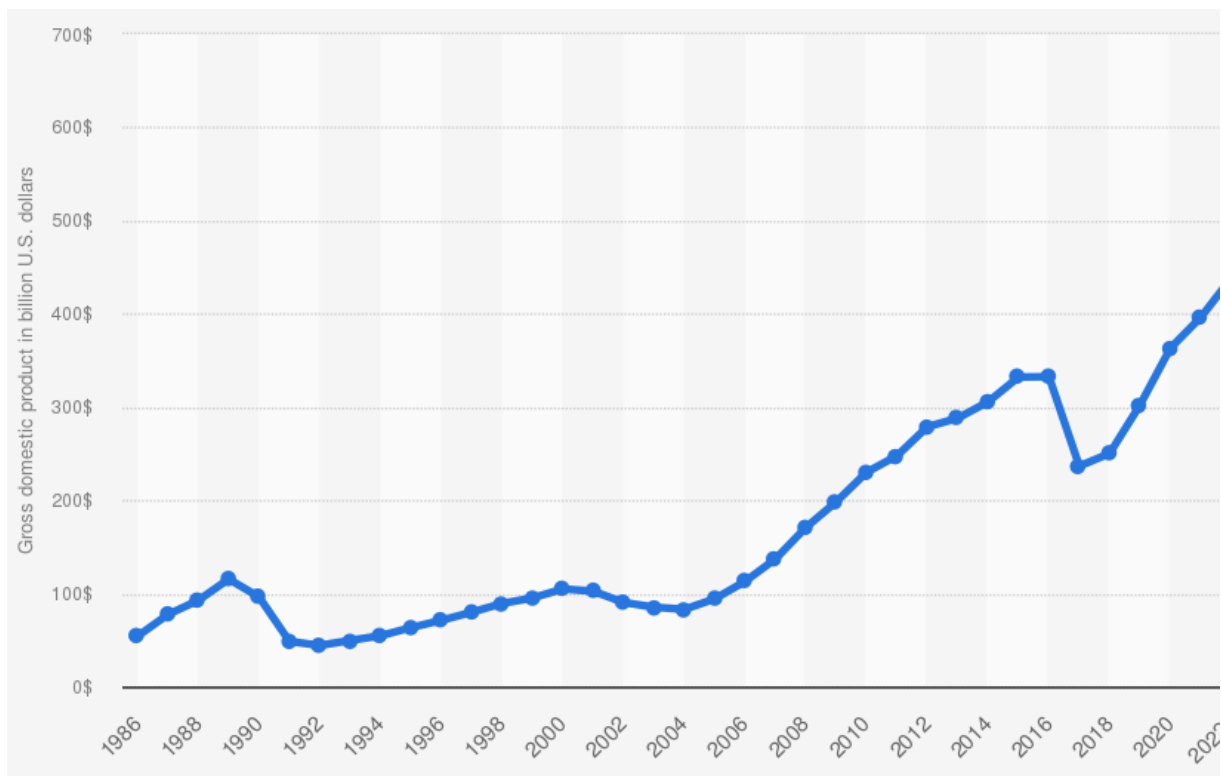
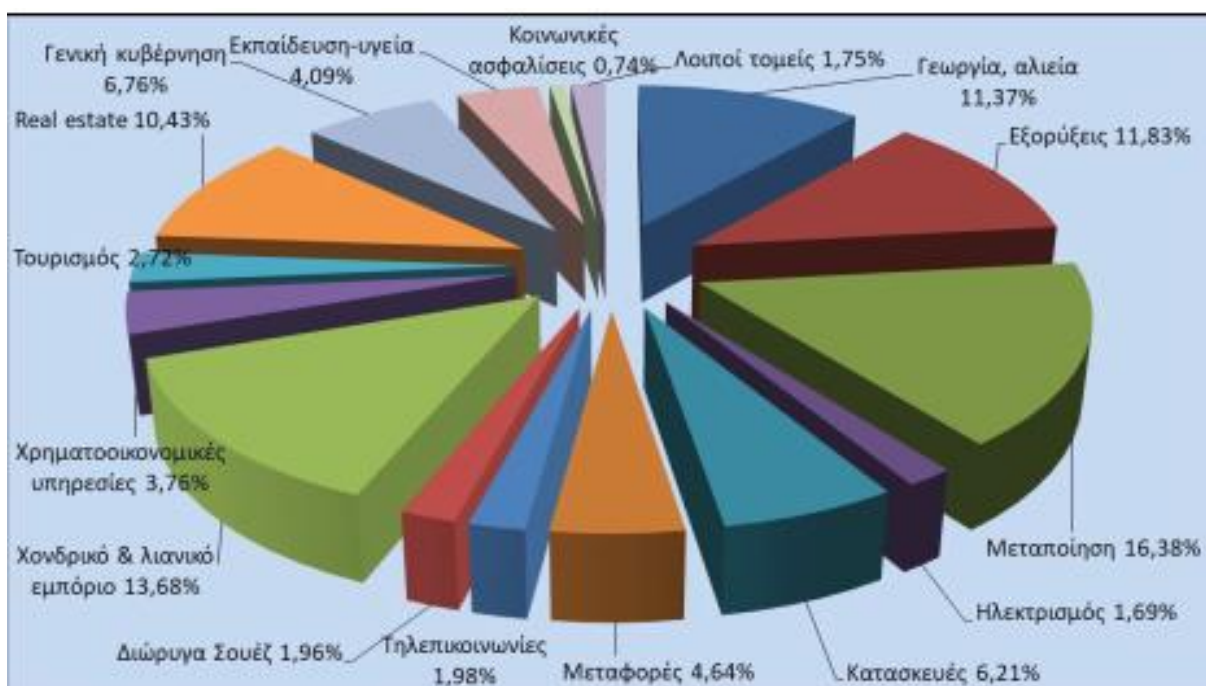


Figure 1 (GDP of the Egyptian economy for the period 1986 - 2021 Source: www. statista. com)

The contribution of each sector of the Egyptian economy to GDP in the period 2018 - 2019 is shown in figure 2. The largest contribution is made by the agriculture and industry sectors, while the lion's share is held by the tertiary sector (trade, construction, transport, government services, real estate, etc.).



(Figure 2: GDP composition by sector for the period 2018/2019 Source: Central Bank of Egypt)

The Constitution of Egypt is a semi-presidential democracy. The population of Egypt is approximately 94.8 million (2017 census) with an estimated population of 101.5 million in 2021, which demonstrates the country's rapid population growth rate. The majority of the population is Muslim in religion at about 85% - 90% with the remaining 10% - 15% being Christians with the majority being Coptic.

In concluding the brief analysis of Egypt, it is appropriate to make a superficial reference to the Egyptian Armed Forces. They are organized in 4 branches: Army, Navy, Air Force and Air Defence. They number about 500,000 personnel in all branches. As in Greece, Egypt has the institution of compulsory military service, the duration of which is 36 months. The Egyptian Armed Forces are considered one of the largest in the wider African and Middle Eastern region, with its equipment having been upgraded in recent years, since defense spending, according to the latest figures (www.statista.gr), amounts to 1.2% of GDP.

1.3.2 Cyprus

The Republic of Cyprus is the only island state in the Eastern Mediterranean region. It is one of the largest islands in the Mediterranean, namely 3^o in area and population. It has an area of approximately 9,300 square kilometers. Cyprus is geographically located within the indentation formed by the coasts of SE Turkey, Israel, Syria and Lebanon. Therefore, we could say that it potentially belongs geographically to the Middle East.

The capital of the Republic of Cyprus is Nicosia, which is its largest city, despite the fact that it is divided due to the 1974 Turkish invasion. Other major cities include Limassol, Larnaca, and Paphos.

The economy of the Republic of Cyprus is considered the fastest growing in the Eastern Mediterranean region. The GDP in the current year (2021) amounts to \$26.55 billion with a forecast for continuous growth for at least the next 5 years (Chart 3).

The currency of Cyprus until 31 December 2007 was the Cyprus Pound, whose exchange rate against the US Dollar (\$) and the British Pound Sterling (£) was 2.512 and 1.247 respectively. From 01 - 01 - 2008 the currency of Cyprus was replaced by the Euro (€) with the exchange rate at that time being 1 € = 0.585 CYP. It can therefore be concluded that it was a strong currency, an indication of the strong economy of the Republic of Cyprus.

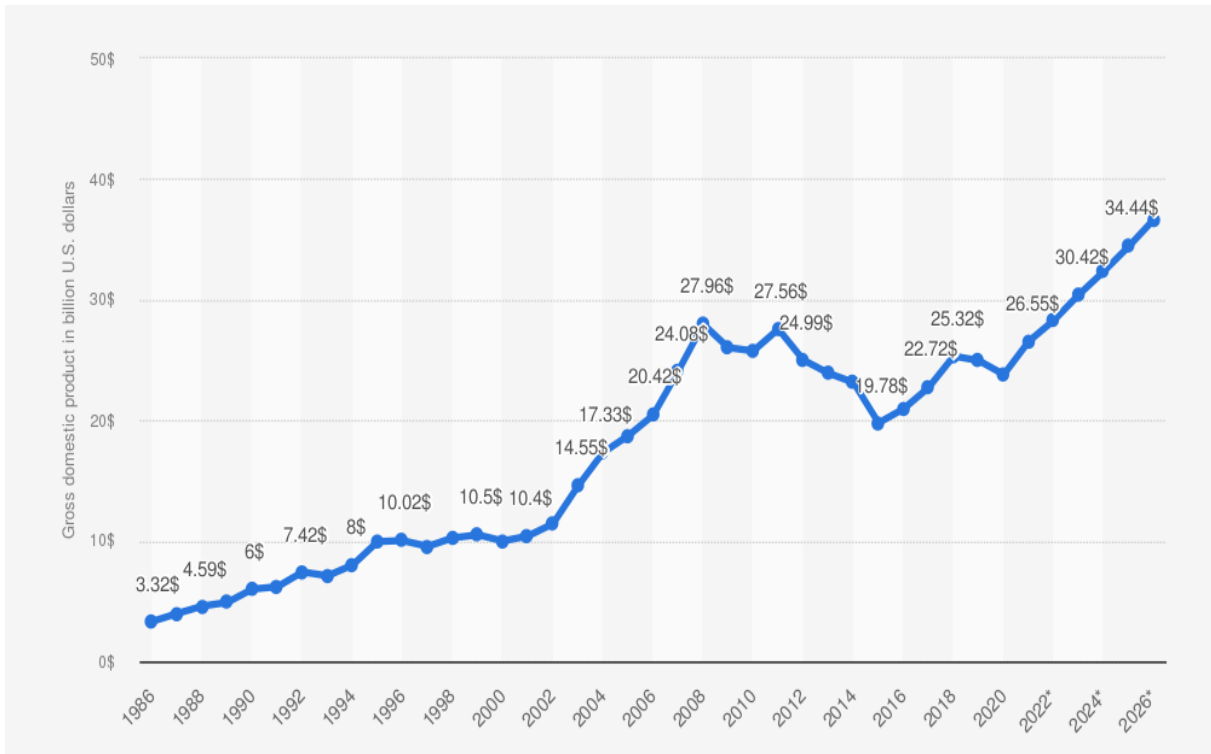
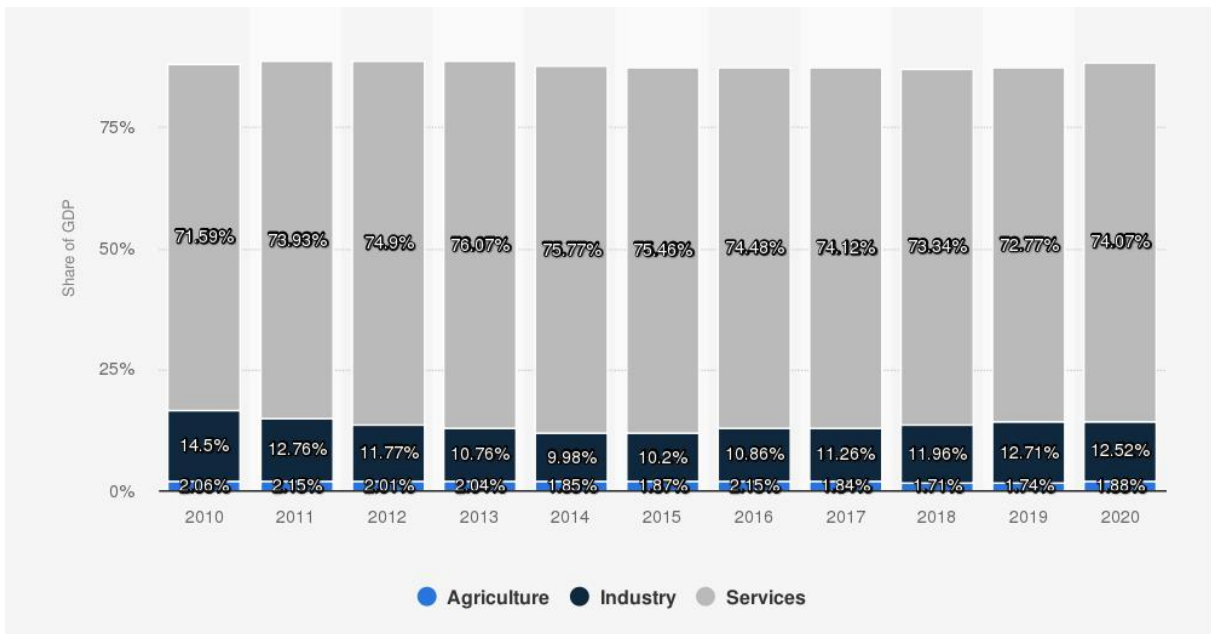


Chart 3 (GDP of the Cyprus economy for the period 1986 - 2026 Source: www. statista. com)

Economic activity in the Republic of Cyprus is based on 3 main sectors: Agriculture, Industry and Services (Tourism, Shipping, Finance). The distribution of GDP in the above sectors is as shown in Figure 4.



(Figure 4: GDP distribution by sector for the period 2010/2020 Source: Central Bank of Cyprus)

The constitution of the Republic of Cyprus is a Presidential Republic. The population of the Republic of Cyprus is 888,000 inhabitants, according to official data of 2019. The official

languages of the state are Greek and Turkish. The predominant religion is Christianity with a percentage of about 90%, while there are about 2% Muslims.

In the field of Defence, the Cyprus Armed Forces are organized into 3 branches: Army, Navy and Air Force. The active military personnel number around 23,000 and with the addition of the reserve force the total force reaches a strength of around 100,000 men. A point of particular attention - importance is the existence of British Bases on the island. These bases are used as outposts for the British Forces in the wider Middle East region and for surveillance purposes.

1.3.3 Israel

Israel has an area of 20,770 square kilometers (20,770 sq km), bordered by the Mediterranean Sea to the west and the Gaza Strip. To the north, it borders Lebanon, to the southwest Egypt and the Red Sea (via the Gulf of Aqaba) and to the east it meets the West Bank, Jordan and to northeast Syria.



(Figure 3: Map of Israel Source: www.wikipedia.gr)

Israel's capital and largest city is Jerusalem with a population of about 932,000². Other major cities are Tel Aviv and Haifa.

Israel's economy can be described as highly developed with a very high per capita income compared to both neighboring countries and the wider Eastern Mediterranean region. The country's GDP for the year 2020 amounted to \$407.1 billion with a forecast for growth in the next five years. Typically, the GDP trend from 1986 to the estimates for 2026 is shown in Figure 5.

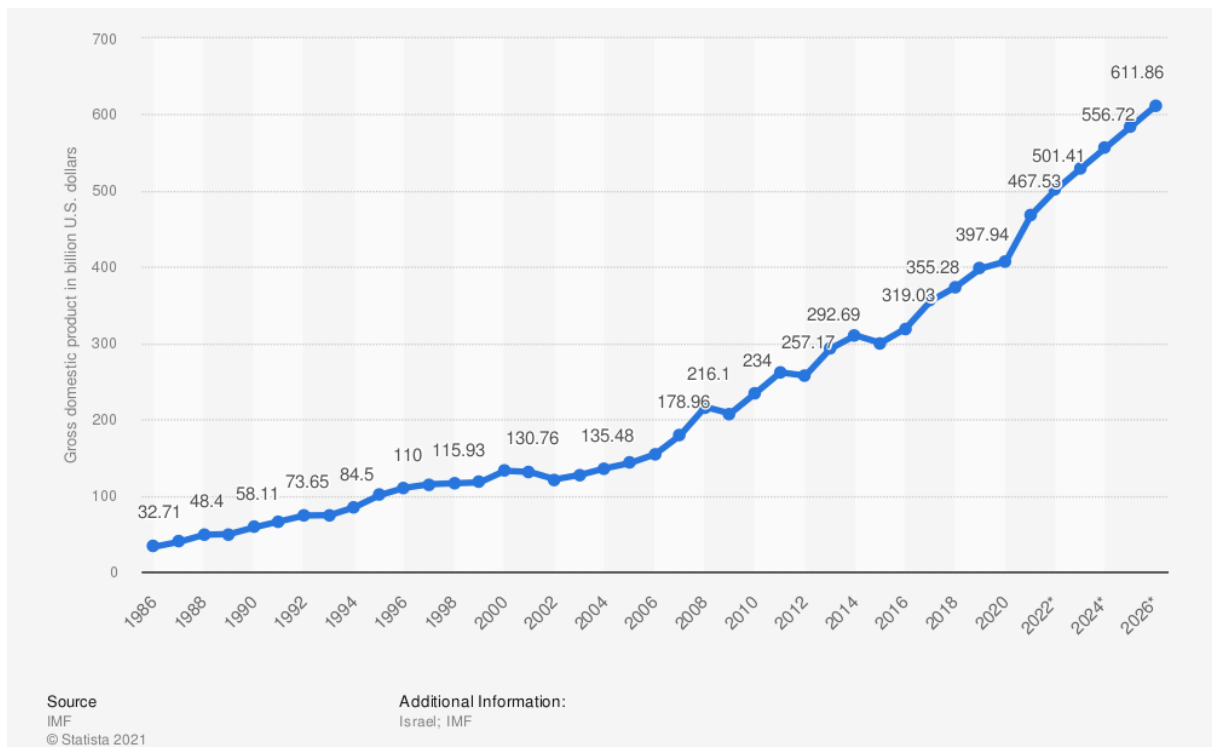


Figure 5 (GDP of Israel for the period 1986 - 2026 Source: www.statista.com)

Israel has a strong economic activity. It has a growing industry. In addition, Israel's economy is based on agriculture and livestock farming as well as an important service sector.

The constitution of Israel is a Presidential Parliamentary Republic.

In the defense sector, Israel has a significant defense industry. Israel's armed forces are organized into 3 branches (Army, Navy and Air Force). The number of the active army is about 170,000 men. The estimated total strength including the reserve and paramilitary forces is 643,000 personnel³. The distribution of the above personnel is shown in Figure 6.

² According to figures from the Israel Statistics Authority, in 2020

³ Year 2021 figures.

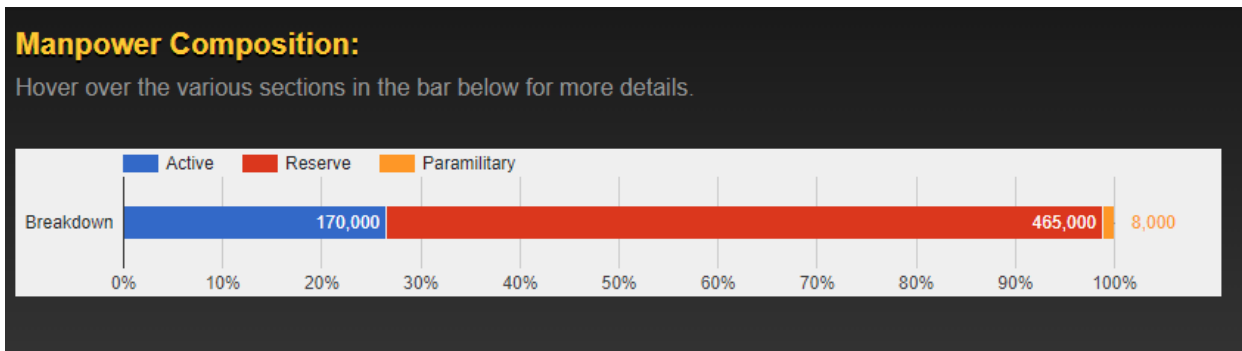


Figure 6 (Breakdown of Israel's ED personnel in 2021 Source: www.globalfirepower.com)

The armed forces in Israel are highly accepted by society as they are seen as one of its important institutions. An important characteristic of the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) is the compulsory conscription of women and the inter-branch nature of the IDF.

1.3.4 Syria

Syria is located on the eastern shores of the Mediterranean. It borders Turkey to the north, Iraq to the east, Jordan to the south and Israel and Lebanon to the southwest.

Syria only has access to the sea from the west and the country's largest port in the Mediterranean is the port of Latakia, although it also uses the ports of Lebanon for commercial purposes. The capital of Syria is Damascus, while other major cities are Aleppo, Homs, Idlib and Tartous,

Syria's constitution is a presidential democracy and the predominant religion in the country is Islam, which accounts for about 90% of the country's population.

Syria's economy suffered a serious blow with the outbreak of the civil war in 2011. Agricultural production, on which the Syrian economy was based, as well as the rudimentary industry (food, glass, petroleum products) that it had, suffered serious damage. The country's GDP stood at around \$60 billion according to 2010 figures⁴. Additionally severely hit by the outbreak of war, the industry that suffered an almost total loss was the tourism industry, which was also an important source of income for the country. The distribution of GDP in the various sectors of the Syrian economy in the decade 1997-2007 and the evolution of GDP from 1984 to 2010 are shown in Figures 6 and 7 respectively.

⁴ Since the outbreak of the civil war, there are no accurate data on the economic situation in Syria.

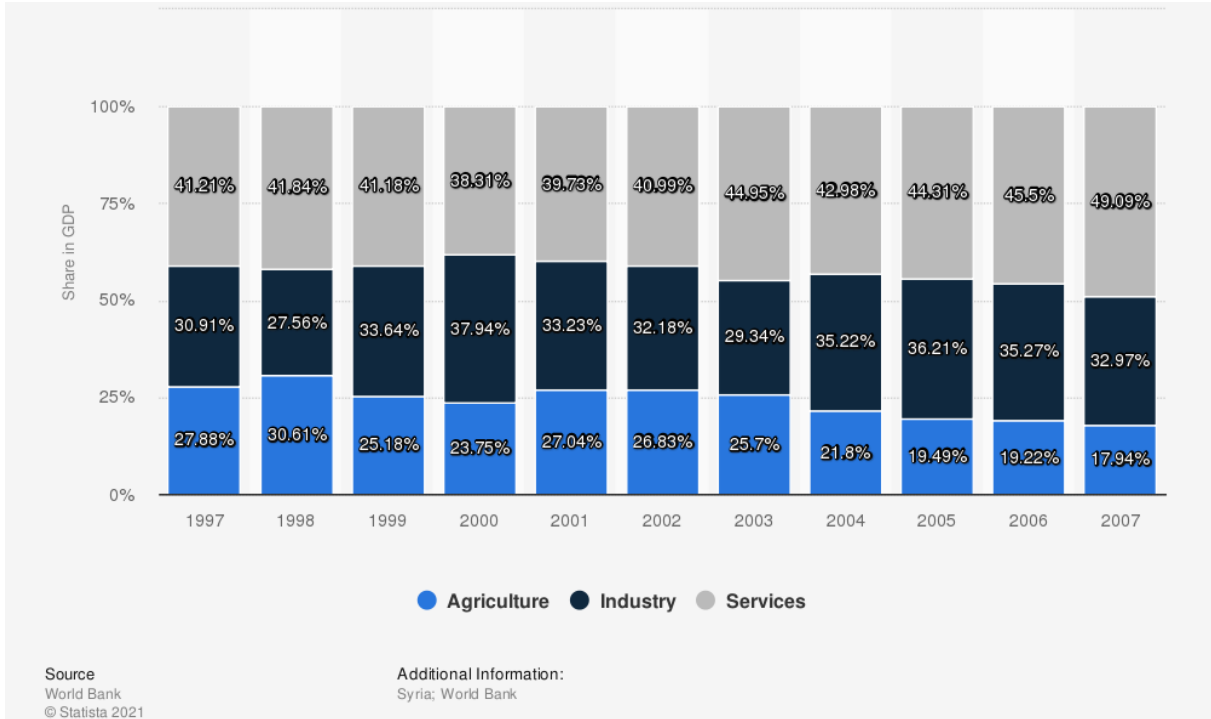


Figure 7 (Distribution of Syrian GDP for the period 1997 - 2007 Source: www.statista.com)

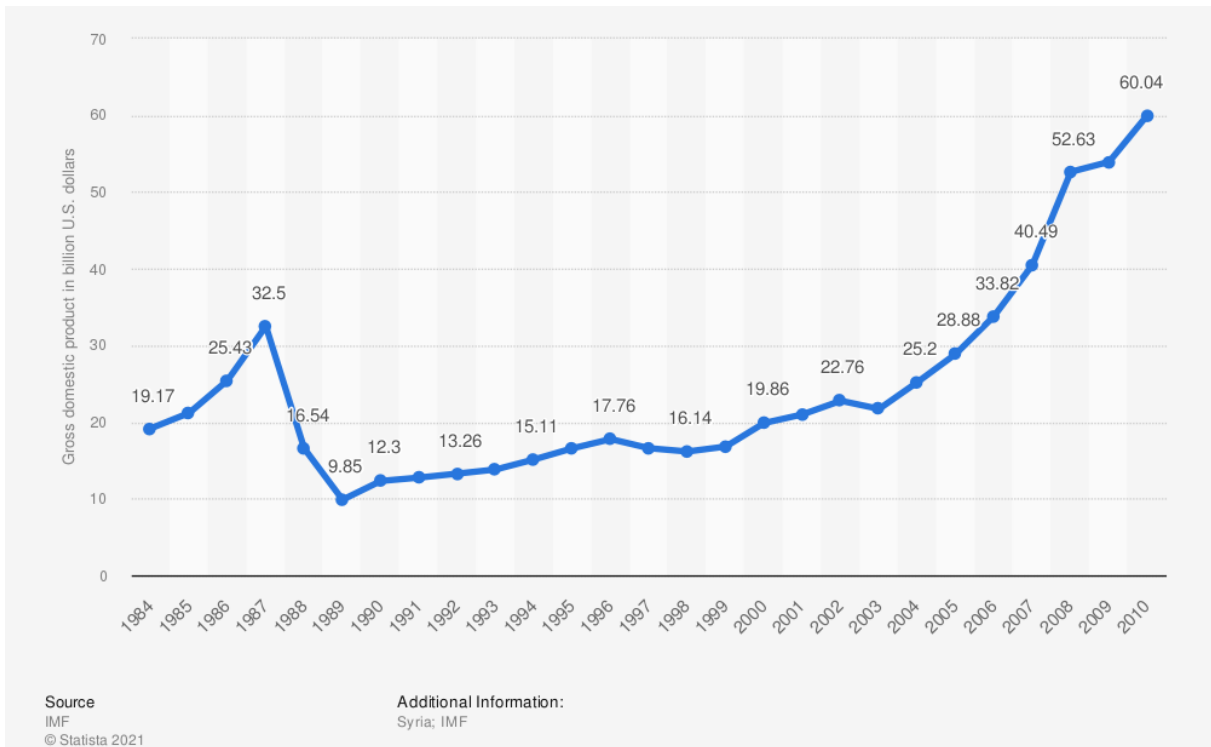


Figure 8 (Syrian GDP for the period 1984 - 2010 Source: www.statista.com)

The Syrian Armed Forces are organized into 3 branches: Army, Air Force and Navy. The Armed Forces are divided into three branches, the Army, the Military and the Army Corps.

Thereafter there are no accurate figures due to the civil war, but it is estimated that there was a significant reduction in the above numbers.

1.3.5 Lebanon

Lebanon is a coastal state on the eastern coast of the Mediterranean Sea. It is a small country, bordering Syria to the northeast and Israel to the south. Lebanon's capital is Beirut and other major cities are Tyre, Sidon and Aqar. Lebanon's population is 61% Muslim, 34% Christian and 5% of other religions.

Lebanon's economy in the last year could be described as rapidly declining, mainly due to mismanagement and political corruption. The country's GDP for 2020 stood at \$19 billion compared to \$52.4 billion in 2019. Lebanon's economy is service-oriented, particularly in the banking and tourism sectors.

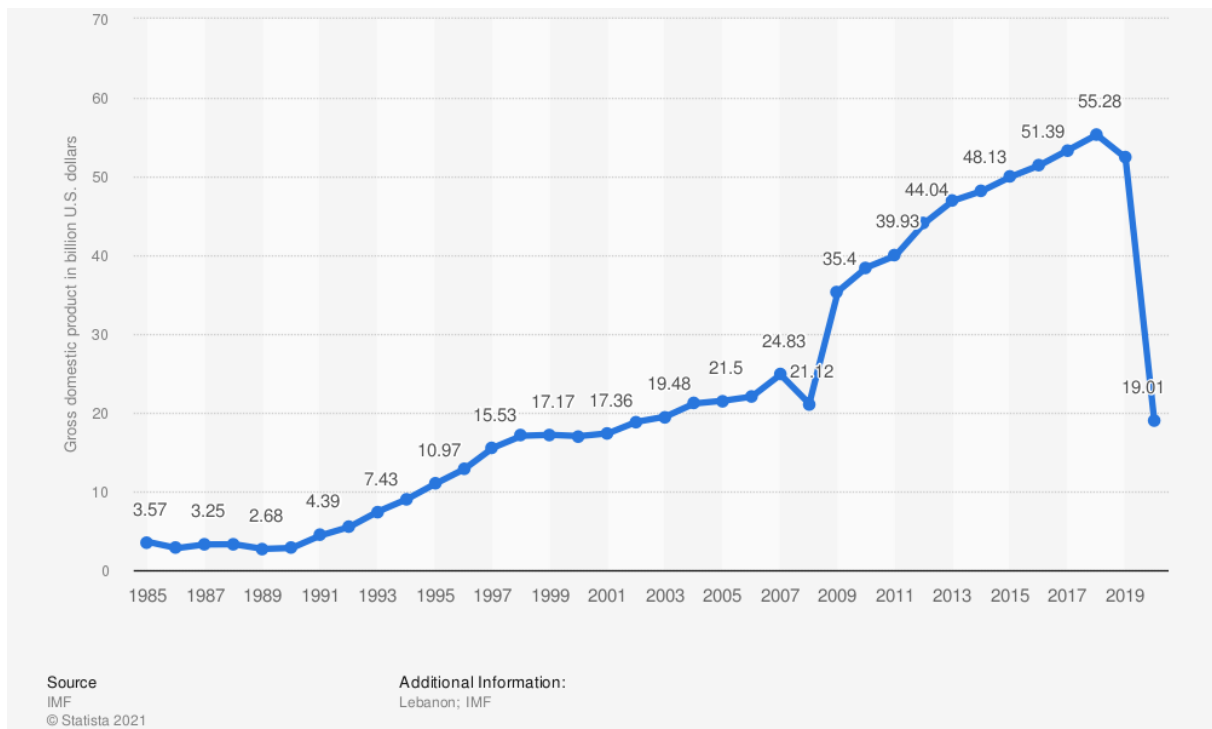


Figure 9 (Lebanon's GDP for the period 1985 - 2020 Source: www.statista.com)

For the Lebanese Armed Forces, there is not much information available. They are organized in 3 branches (Army, Navy and Air Force) and apart from border security, they are also active in the fight against drugs, smuggling and terrorism. It should be noted the reserves that the number of military personnel is around 90 000.

1.3.6 Libya

Libya is one of the largest countries on the African continent and in particular the 4th largest country in Africa. It borders Algeria and Tunisia to the west, Egypt to the east, Sudan

to the southeast, and Chad and Niger to the south. To the north it has a remarkable coastline on the Mediterranean Sea.

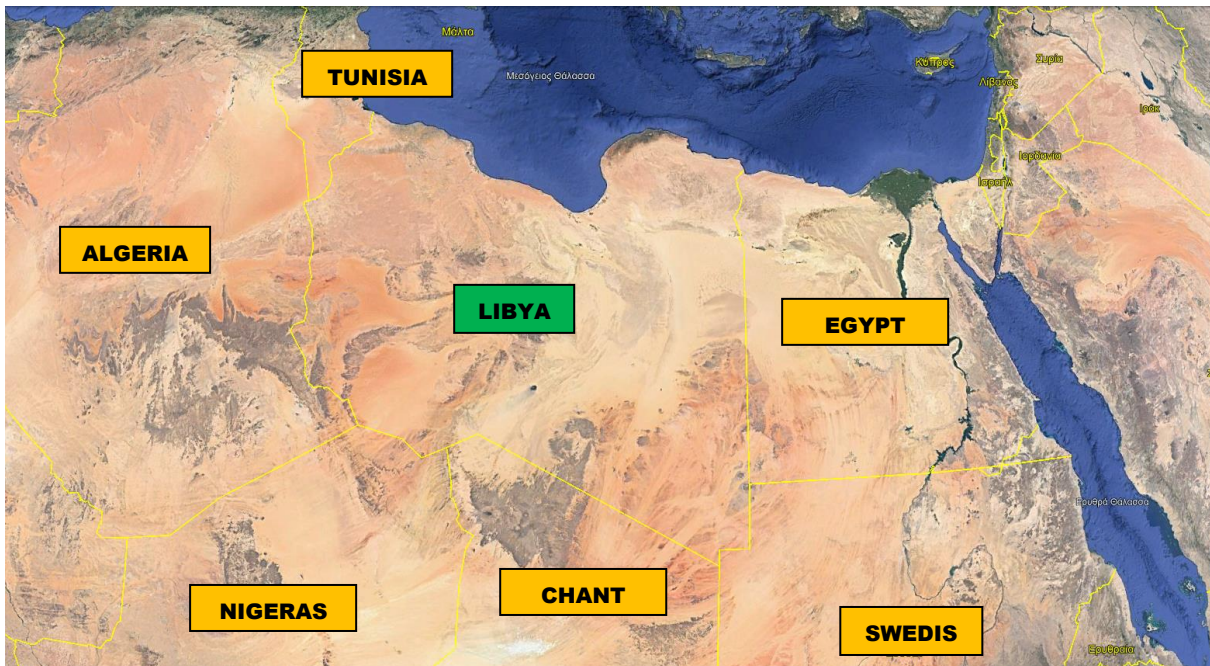


Figure 4 (Map of States bordering Libya. Source: Google Earth)

It is a very sparsely populated country, with most of it covered by desert and one of its characteristics is the great lack of water. The capital of Libya is Tripoli and other major cities are Misrata, Benghazi and Sirte.

The country's economy is based on oil production. Agricultural production, due to water scarcity, is small and is mainly sufficient to meet rudimentary domestic needs. The Libyan economy was severely hit by the conflict that erupted in the country in 2014. Gradually the economy started to recover and oil production started to return to pre-conflict levels. Revenues from oil production account for 94% of total revenues. The country's GDP for the year 2020 stood at \$19.2 billion and for 2021 it is expected to grow to \$27.3 billion showing an increase of about 43%.

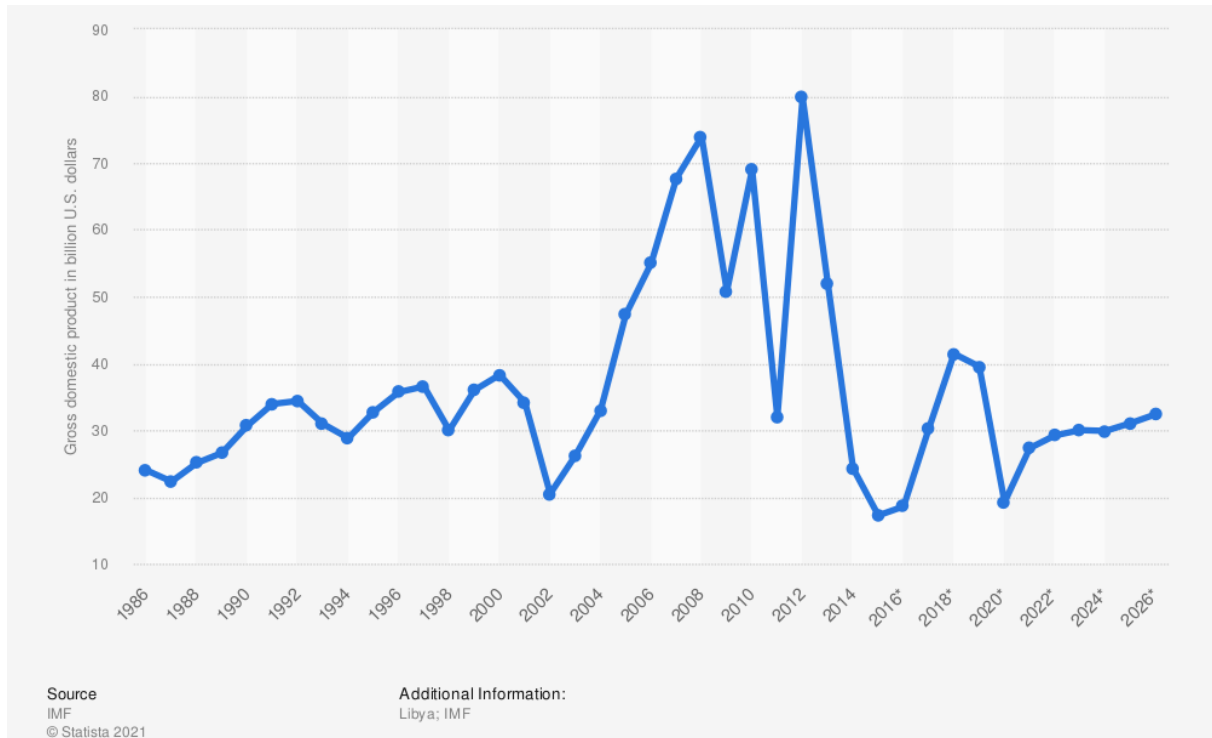


Figure 10 (Libya's GDP for the period 1986 - 2026 Source: www.statista.com)

The Libyan armed forces are organized into 3 branches (Army, Navy, Air Force). Due to the civil conflict, the Libyan military forces were divided into 2 coalitions [GNU (Government of National Unity) and LNA (Libyan National Army)], which were in conflict with each other. Precise data on the strength of the 2 coalitions is not available. What is known is that they include a large number of militias and paramilitaries.

1.3.7 Greece

Greece is a country of the Balkan Peninsula. To the north from west to east it has land borders with Albania, North Macedonia, Bulgaria and European Turkey. To the east it borders the coast of Turkey and to the west the coast of southern Italy. Greece has one of the longest coastlines in Europe and a large number of islands and islets (about 2500). The capital of Greece is Athens and the largest cities are Thessaloniki, Patras, Heraklion and Larissa. It has several important ports which can dock all types of ships and provide facilities and services. The most important of these are the ports of Piraeus, Thessaloniki, Patras, Heraklion, Volos and Alexandroupolis.

The constitution of Greece is a presidential parliamentary democracy and the official religion of the state is Christianity.

Greece's economy is characterized as developed and is based on agriculture, industry and services, which have the lion's share in the GDP distribution. Greece's GDP for 2020 amounted to \$189.3 billion and is expected to grow by 12% to \$211.7 billion in 2021.

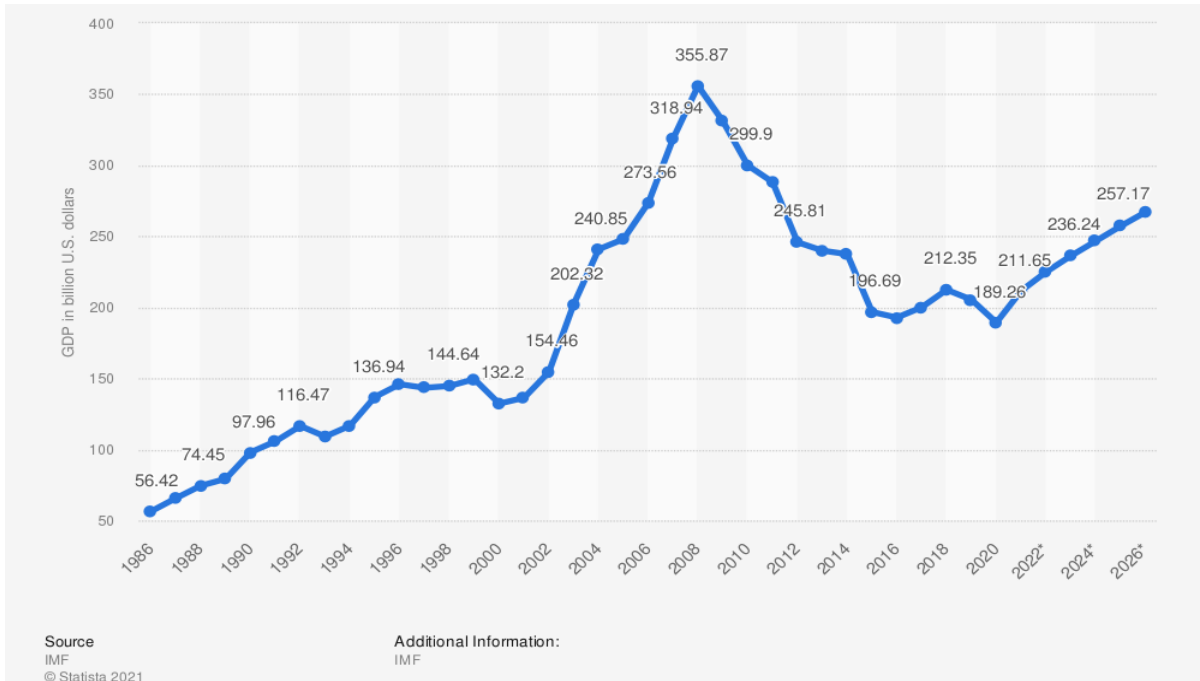


Figure 11 (GDP of Greece for the period 1986 - 2026 Source: www.statista.com)

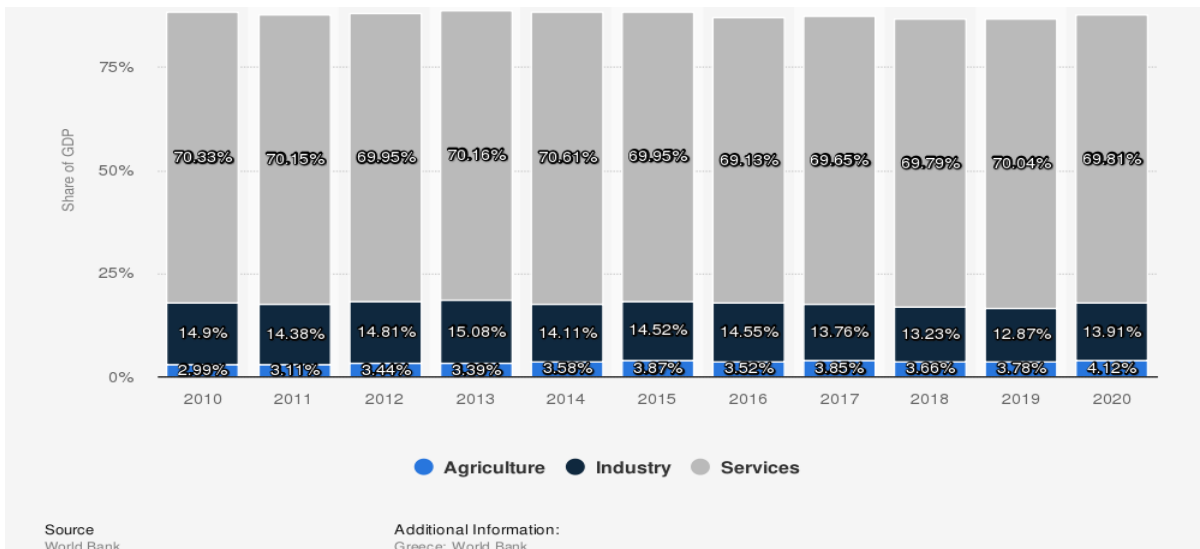


Figure 12 (GDP distribution in Greece for the period 2010-2020 Source: www.statista.com)

The Greek Armed Forces are organized in 3 branches (Army, Navy and Air Force). Compulsory military service is compulsory for all males over 18 years of age for 9 or 12 months, depending on the area of service. The Land Army includes the Active Army, the Reserve and the National Guard. The Greek Armed Forces are equipped with modern state-of-the-art equipment and continue to be constantly equipped in line with technological

developments. In addition, they adopt all the latest developments in structure, organization and tactics applied by modern NATO armies, adapting them to their needs and to Greek data.

1.3.8 Turkey

Turkey is the largest country in the Eastern Mediterranean in terms of area and population. It borders Greece to the west, Bulgaria to the northwest, Georgia to the northeast, Armenia, Azerbaijan and Iran to the east, Iraq to the southeast and Syria to the south.

The capital of Turkey is Ankara and larger cities are Istanbul, Izmir, Adana, Gaziantep, etc. The constitution of Turkey is a semi-presidential republic. The population of Turkey is overwhelmingly Turkish and there are minorities such as Greeks, Armenians and Jews. The religion in Turkey is 99% Muslim.

The Turkish economy can be described as developed. The country is a member of the OECD and G-20 which shows the strength of the Turkish economy. In the period from 2002 to 2007 it showed a remarkable GDP growth, which slowed down in 2008 and 2009 and from 2010 onwards the economy returned to growth rates. In 2021 Turkey entered a whirlwind of economic crisis, which especially in the second half of 2021 seems to have reached a tipping point with the Turkish Lira suffering one of the worst if not the worst devaluation in its history and inflation soaring to 21.3% (December 2021).

Turkey's GDP according to World Bank data⁵ was expected to grow by 8.5%. The challenges that the Turkish economy has had and continues to have are inflation and unemployment, which are at high rates. In 2020 the country's GDP stood at around \$720 billion. The breakdown of GDP by sector of the Turkish economy is shown in Figure 14. Industry and services, with tourism as the primary source of revenue for the Turkish economy, with agricultural production as a secondary source.

⁵ Pre-crisis created in October 2021 and beyond.

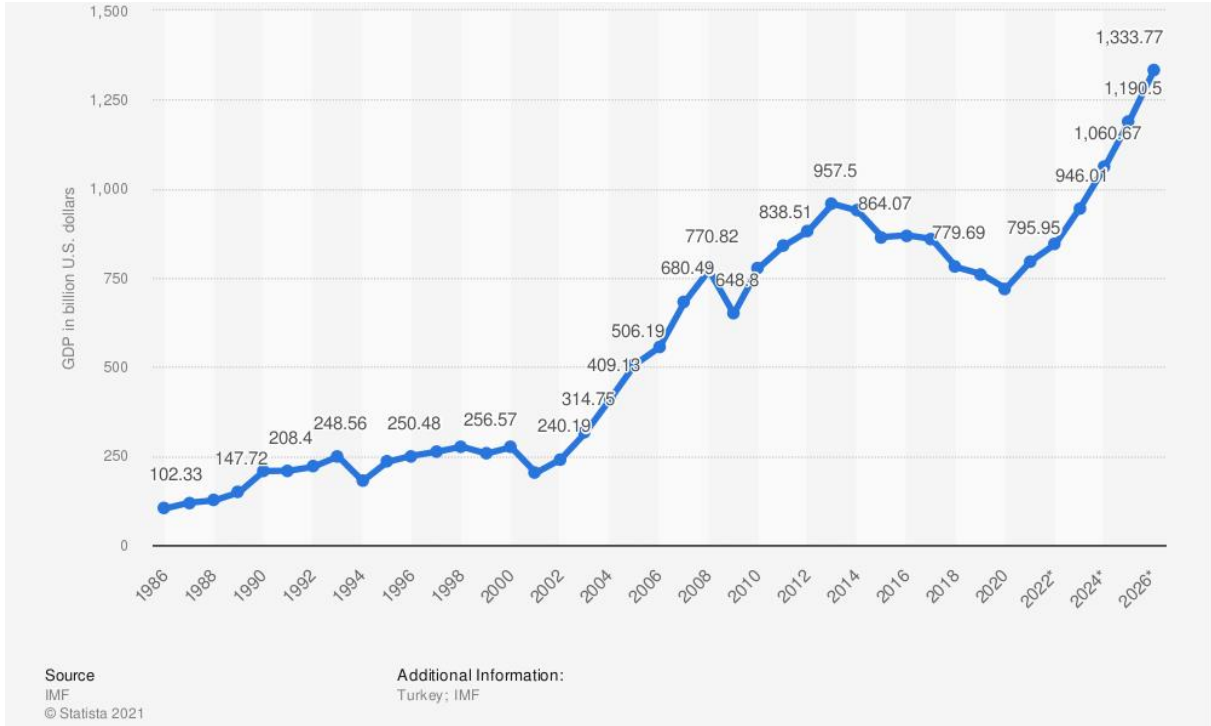


Figure 13 (Turkey's GDP for the period 1986 - 2026 Source: www.statista.com)

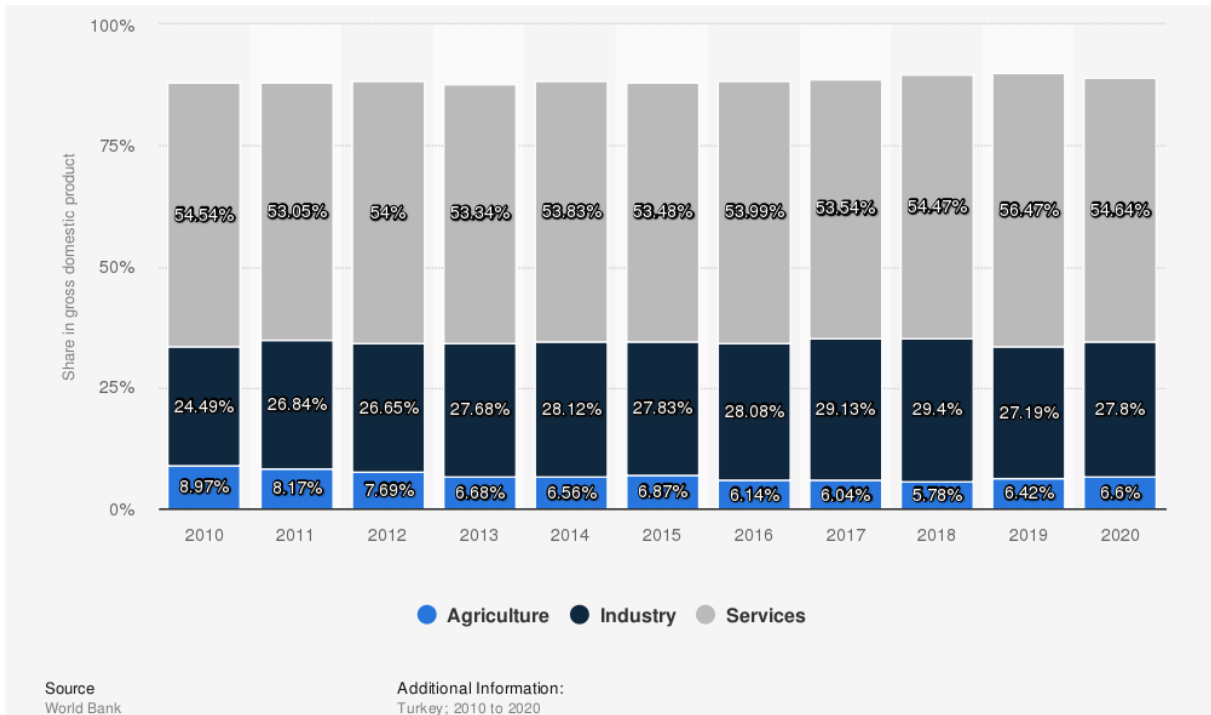


Figure 14 (GDP distribution of Turkey for the period 2010 - 2020 Source: www.statista.com)

The Turkish armed forces are a very powerful force in Turkey. They are organised in 4 branches (Army, Navy, Air Force and Military Police). The active personnel number about 660,000 and there is a considerable reserve force. They are equipped with modern hardware and there is a significantly growing defence industry, which produces defence equipment which

contributes to increasing their operational capabilities. In recent years and specifically, since the coup in July 2016, Turkey's armed forces are estimated to have experienced a decline in their combat capability since several members of the armed forces (Axis soldiers) have either retired or been imprisoned as a result. Of course, in the following years, Turkey participated in operations in the North. Iraq and Northern Syria⁶, which may bring significant benefits to the operational capability of its units.

1.4 Historical background

The Eastern Mediterranean region was for many centuries the area where many important civilizations and empires were born, developed and prospered. At the same time, it has also been a field of rivalries and disputes between the various states, empires and religions in order to secure, each for its own purposes, an advantageous position in the local geographical landscape, which would bring it wider benefits on the international geopolitical scene.

The frictions - conflicts between states arose mainly because states or empires competed in order to dominate sea or land trade and seek to secure their economic interests.

Typical historical examples of rivalries between great civilizations - empires are:

- a. The Persian Wars between the Greeks and the Persian Empire.
- b. The Carthaginian Wars between the Roman Empire and Carthage.
- c. The wars between the Byzantines and the Arabs and later with the Turks.

The opening of the Suez Canal on 17 November 1869 was a key point that played an important role in increasing the role and importance of the Mediterranean. The construction of this huge project led to the linking of the Mediterranean with the Red Sea, the Indian Ocean and the seas of the Far East (the China Sea).

In later years, the Great Powers (Britain, USA, Russia, Germany) wanted to control the Eastern Mediterranean region in order to gain access to the energy reserves of the Middle East and North Africa. Africa. A typical example of the importance attached to this geographical area is the fierce battles fought between the Axis (Germany - Italy) and the Allies (England - USA).

In modern history this situation has not changed dramatically. The most important variations that we can discern are:

- a. Additional actors (Turkey, Greece, Egypt, Israel) have entered the game of energy pie distribution and geopolitical control, all claiming a share and an increase in their

⁶ Operations Elaia Branch and Euphrates Shield.

geopolitical role in the region. This fact leads to new alliances (Greece - Cyprus - Israel, Greece – Egypt, etc.) but also to new or intensification of existing rivalries.

b. The emergence of extremist actors [Islamic State (ISIS)], which are active in the region and can be used by third powers (see Turkey) as a means of pressure and destabilizing factors in order to gain benefits in the region.

1.5 Summary

In this chapter we dealt with the geographical definition of the Eastern Mediterranean, the countries that make up the geopolitical puzzle and their specificities. This analysis will assist in further deepening the relationships between the various actors and how this region can influence the geopolitical chessboard.

In addition, the historical review enables us to evaluate, through the prism of historical examples, the relationships between the actors and any roots of competition or traditionally good relations and alliances that determine their actions and behaviors.

Simply put, this chapter lays the groundwork for further analysis of the region from a strategic and geopolitical perspective, as well as the resulting energy competition for local and international actors.

CHAPTER 2

STRATEGIC - GEOPOLITICAL VALUE OF THE EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN REGION

2.1 Introduction

In this chapter, firstly, an analysis is made of the role of the Eastern Mediterranean in world trade, what the trade power of its countries is, and how this affects geopolitical relations between them and between them and regional and international actors.

It then identifies the threats that are potentially developing in the wider Eastern Mediterranean region and then develops briefly ways in which the Eastern Mediterranean can be a barrier to contain these threats and a pillar of stability for Europe.

In addition, an extensive reference is made to the role that the region can play as an energy hub, both for Europe and for regional countries, especially after the latest discoveries of huge hydrocarbon deposits in various parts of the eastern basin (Israel, Cyprus, Egypt, Greece).

2.2 The Eastern Mediterranean as a Trade Crossroads

As mentioned above, the area of the Eastern Mediterranean from ancient times was where trade flourished between the states of this region and important empires developed as a result. The Egyptians, Babylonians, Greeks, Persians, Phoenicians, Byzantines, Venetians, etc. are typical examples of great empires and maritime powers that emerged in the region over time.

A key date in the history of the Eastern Mediterranean is 17th November 1869, when the Suez Canal was opened. The construction of the canal dramatically reduced the time it took for ships from ports in SE Asia, the Indian Ocean and the Middle East to reach their Mediterranean counterparts. This resulted in a surge in the rate and volume of goods passing through the canal to the Mediterranean. During the 1967-1973 Arab-Israeli crisis the canal was closed and reopened in 1975. From that period onwards there was an explosive increase in the movement of goods, as the chart below illustrates.

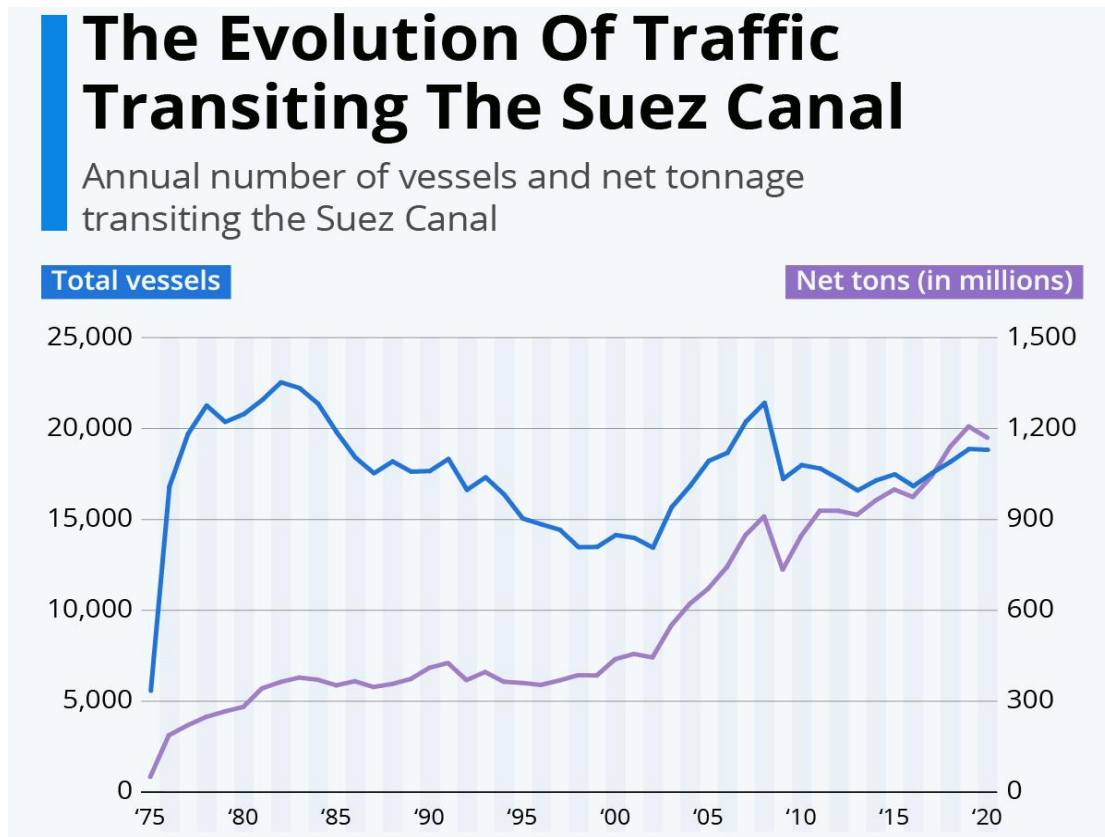


Figure 15 (Annual number of ships and net cargo passing through the Suez Canal for the period 1975 - 2020 Source: Suez Canal Authority www.statista.com)

The opening of the Suez Canal, moreover, led to the creation of new maritime lines of communication, resulting in many new areas acquiring great commercial and strategic importance (the Sinai Peninsula, Gulf of Aqaba with its homonymous port, etc.).

The Suez Canal and the Dardanelles Straits are the gateways to the eastern Mediterranean, which makes them of the utmost strategic importance. The Suez Canal accounts for 12% of world trade, 7%-10% of the world's oil and 8% of liquefied natural gas. Similarly, the Dardanelles Strait carries about 3% of the world's daily oil production (3 million barrels) from Russia and the Caspian countries. In addition, huge quantities of goods, mainly agricultural, are transported from Russia, Ukraine and Kazakhstan to world markets.

It is therefore clear that these two choke points, located in the Eastern Mediterranean region, are a source of significant revenues for the countries that control them, while at the same time they give them significant geopolitical advantages and considerable strategic value (see Egypt in the Arab-Israeli crisis).

In recent years, there has been an increasing trend to use the Straits of Gibraltar as a gateway to the Mediterranean and to avoid the Suez Canal. This is mainly due to the tense situation and geopolitical instability in the wider Suez region, which is constantly deteriorating. In addition, the piracy that plagues the areas of the Gulf of Aden and the Straits of Bab El Madeb¹ creates difficulties for trade conducted through this sea route. There was an upsurge in piracy between 2008 and 2012, which subsequently decreased due to the presence of NATO naval forces.



Figure 5 [High Risk Area (HRA) for piracy incidents in the Indian Ocean. Source: <https://channel16.dryadglobal.com>]

¹ The area is defined as follows: Northern limit the line in the southern Red Sea 15° 00' S. Then from the east coast of Africa to 05° 00' S 050° 00' E and then to points 00° 00' S 055° 00' E, 10° 00' S 060° 00' E, 14° 00' S 060° 00' E. Finally from the last point at azimuth 310° to the coast of the Arabian Peninsula. Source: <https://www.sail-world.com>).

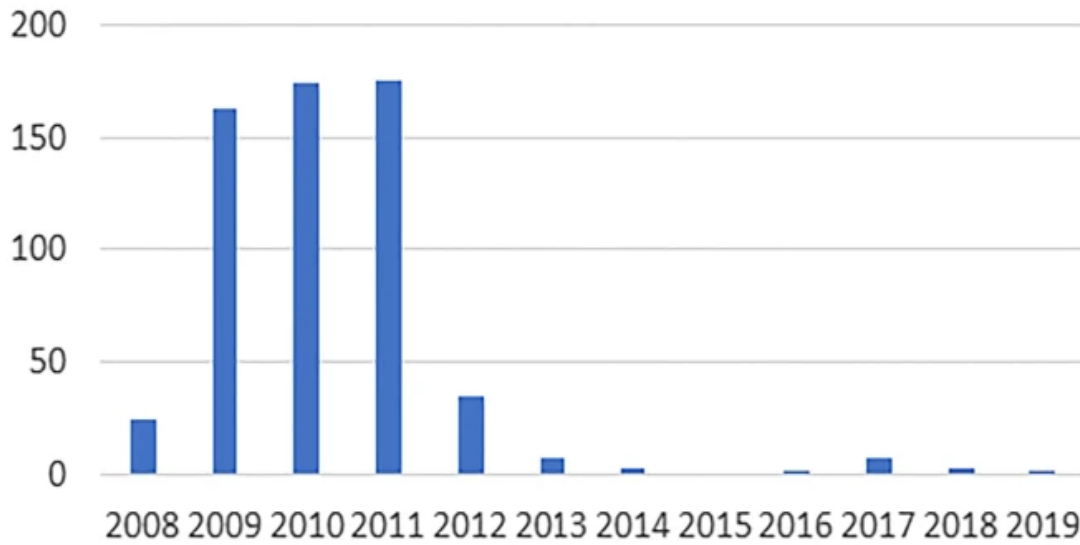


Figure 17 (Total Attacks in the Gulf of Aden - Somalia 2008 - 2019. Source.)

This has resulted in an increase in the cost of transporting goods through the Suez Canal sea route.

A further critical factor that makes the Eastern Mediterranean extremely important in global trade is the existence of a large number of important ports in its countries, through which huge quantities of goods and raw materials are traded. These ports are considered to be commercial hubs between the Mediterranean and the wider region. For some countries, because of their importance in terms of the volume and type of goods handled, these ports are also a factor in the development of foreign policy.

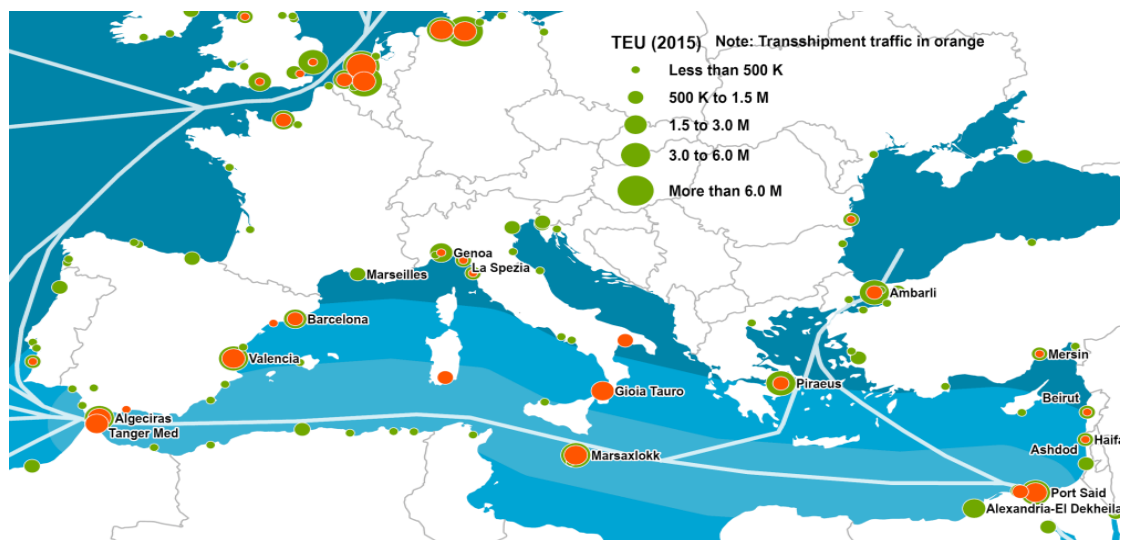


Figure 6 (Main Commercial Hubs of the Mediterranean region. Source:

<https://porteconomicsmanagement.org>)

From the above, it can be concluded that the Eastern Mediterranean is of great importance to world trade as it includes two of the world's choke points in international

shipping. Any change in the geopolitical - economic situation of the Eastern Mediterranean countries could be said to create a "Butterfly Effect" in world trade, affecting both prices and availability of the goods traded.

Beyond that, the Eastern Mediterranean:

a. It is an important maritime corridor in all directions (North→ South and East→ West and vice versa), which is also connected to important land trade routes.

b. With a large number of ports and their increasing strategic importance due to their proximity to energy hubs and international shipping lanes, it is of great strategic importance both economically and geopolitically.

c. It increases its geopolitical value with the entry of international actors and players (U.S.A., Russia, China).

2.3 The Eastern Mediterranean as a containment zone against threats to Europe

The Middle East and the wider region of the Arabian Peninsula with its neighboring countries (Iran, Pakistan, Afghanistan) in general have always presented peculiarities and at times several instabilities at the political and military level, which led to frequent disputes and warlike conflicts between states.

The result of these conflicts and wider instability is the creation of a series of multidimensional threats, both for the European continent in particular and at the global level, against which the Eastern Mediterranean has over time been a barrier that keeps the balance and absorbs the resulting pressures.

In recent years, culminating from 2010 onwards, due to major geopolitical changes and conflicts, which were rooted in earlier crises and events that marked the region², the Eastern Mediterranean barrier began to be shaken and the deterrence capacity of its countries was significantly reduced, with the result that the European continent felt much more acutely the threats that surfaced.

The main threats to the security of the European continent and to some extent the world, which have emerged as a result of the wider instability in the wider region around the Eastern Mediterranean including this one, are the activities of terrorist groups combined with religious fanaticism, organized crime, smuggling of all kinds (drugs, arms, weapons, contraband, etc.), uncontrolled migration due to armed conflicts

² The fall of Saddam Hussein's regime in Iraq, the collapse of the Taliban regime in Afghanistan, the Syrian Civil War, the birth of the Islamic State (ISIS).

and also the risk of proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. The main ones will be analyzed in detail below.

The armed conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan and the fall of the previously prevailing regimes created a nationalist current, which was mixed with a sense of religious fanaticism. This resulted in the emergence of extremist groups, which initially developed their activities within the borders of these countries, in the form of attacks against the forces of NATO countries, mainly the United States and the United Kingdom, which were involved in the reconstruction of these countries. Over time, this action began to evolve, to become more externalized and to be directed against the populations of Europe and America. The activities of these groups, which evolved into terrorist networks, required huge sums of money in order to provide the arms and means needed to carry out the attacks. In particular, the attacks that were launched began to go beyond the limits of simple strikes and to use more sophisticated methods, tactics and means (high technology). In particular, terrorist networks spent huge sums of money on the acquisition of SMEs³ through which they gained access to specialized technology (remote-controlled bombs, cyber attacks, etc.) and on bribing government officials in exchange for services for the benefit of the networks.

These sums came from all kinds of smuggling, but mainly from the smuggling of drugs, arms and white flesh through the networks operating in these countries, which, in the absence of institutions and repressive forces, had found the right place to develop. The process of financing terrorist networks is usually linear and is used to support terrorist groups and activities.

³ Subject Matter Experts = Scientists specialised in a field.

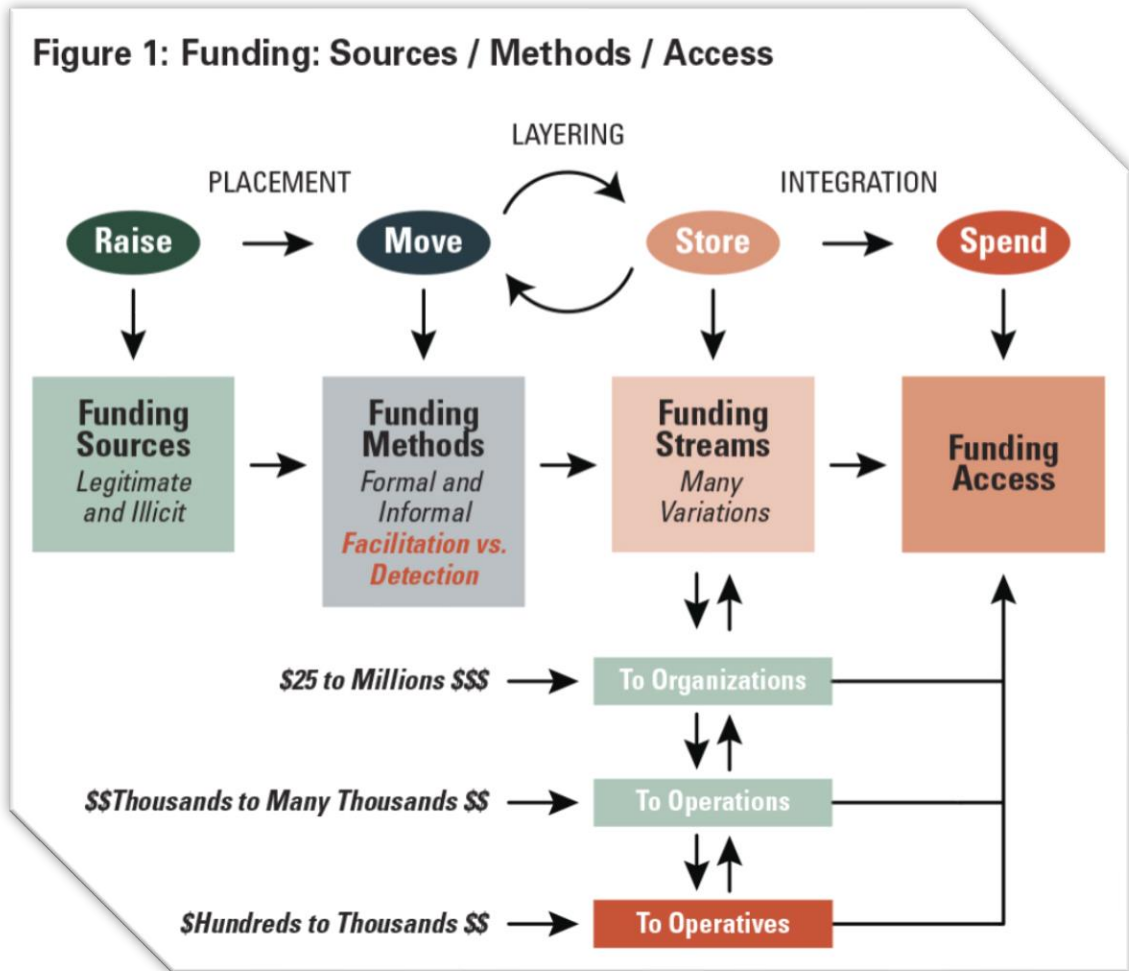


Figure 7 (Terrorist Network Financing Process. Source: <https://www.acamstoday.org/terrorist-financing-visualizing-funding-flows>)

The chart below shows annual illicit trade revenues by sector for the year 2011 worldwide⁴.

From the above, it can be understood how profitable the illegal trade is and how these profits can feed the activities of extreme extremist - terrorist groups.

⁴ According to data from the United Nation Office and Crime (UNODC)

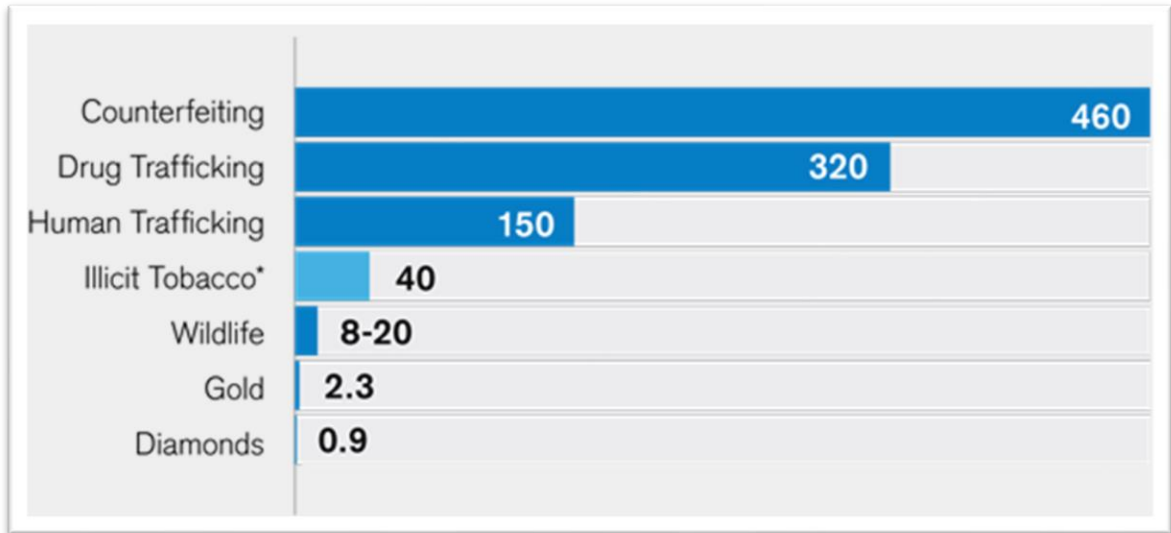


Figure 8 (Estimated Profits of Illicit Trafficking. Source: Converging Criminal Network OECD)

Another threat, which arises from the armed conflicts mentioned above, in addition to all the economic, cultural and infrastructural destruction they have created, has resulted, in combination with the growing religious fanaticism and the activity of religious extremist groups (Islamic State), in the explosion of a large wave of refugee - migrant flows towards the countries of the European continent. In many cases, this wave was reinforced by paramilitary centers and organizations, which aimed to speculate against these people and to cause greater instability, insecurity and internal disturbances in the European region. In addition, the flows created were often the ideal way of providing a cover for extremist - terrorist elements to infiltrate the European capitals.

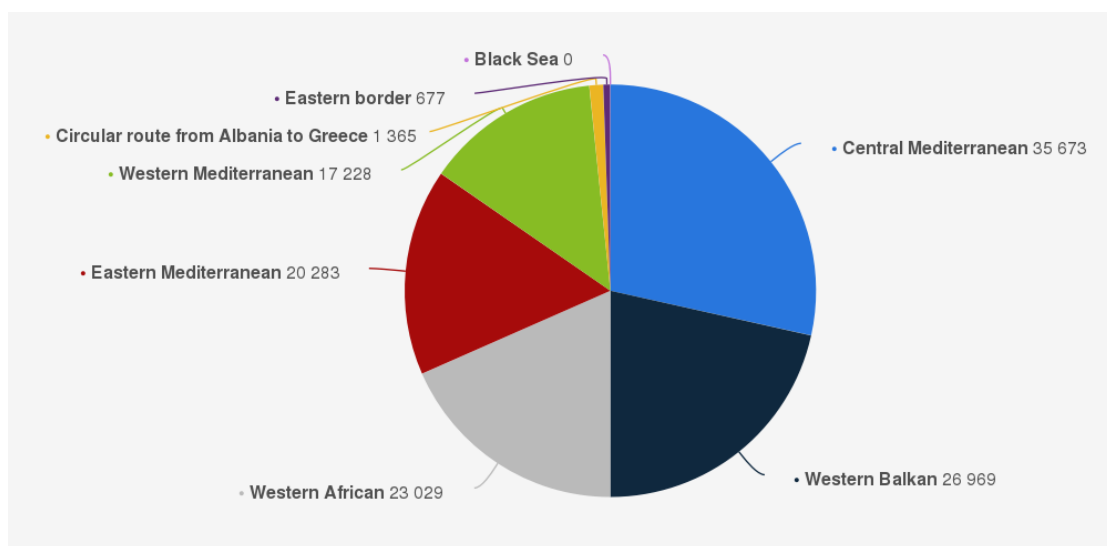


Figure 9 [Border Crossings to the European Union 2020. Source: Frontex]

In the short list of potential threats under consideration, the possibility of the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (nuclear or chemical), mainly from the arsenals of countries affected by civil conflicts or from the countries of the former Eastern bloc, where after the fall of their regimes, either the security of the facilities where such material was stored has been significantly reduced or, for a financial consideration, it has been sold to interested parties (terrorist networks - organizations, or by states wishing to join the list of potential nuclear powers) by corrupt state officials.

The Eastern Mediterranean, as mentioned above, was the buffer against the aforementioned threats. However, recent developments in this geographical area have had a significant impact on the deterrence capacity of several states in the region.

The civil war in Libya and the fall of Muammar Gaddafi's regime, which resulted in the almost total collapse of the state and the effort to date to restructure it and re-stabilize it in the region, are mentioned. As a result, Libya ceased to be a barrier against migratory flows to Europe from the interior countries of the African continent. Similarly, in the eastern part of the Eastern Mediterranean basin, Syria faced a similar crisis, mainly in the northern part of the country, creating a large wave of migrants to the European continent.

Turkey, which could make a significant contribution to curbing the threats, has preferred to support them underground, doing everything it can to reap economic and geopolitical benefits by blackmailing the European Union (EU). At the same time, it seems to be slyly turning a blind eye to the destabilizing forces⁵, which are helping it to promote its agenda and its efforts to become a major regional power in the region.

From the foregoing, it is concluded that the only countries in the Eastern Mediterranean that can reliably act as deterrent forces against the growing threats to the wider region are Greece, Israel, Cyprus and Egypt. The fact that in recent years the relations between the aforementioned states have become particularly close confirms and illustrates this.

In particular, Greece, which is the easternmost bulwark of the European Union (EU) in the fight against terrorism, uncontrolled migration and illegal immigration and smuggling of all kinds. It has the necessary forces, institutions, infrastructure and human resources to be the spearhead of the EU and a pillar of stability, peace and

⁵ There have been several reports of links (economic - commercial) between members of the Turkish government or the Presidential family and the Islamic State.

prosperity for the entire Eastern Mediterranean region, together with Cyprus, which gives depth to Greece to the east, helping to control the region more effectively (Syria, Suez) and assisting Israel in case of need.

It can be seen that all the countries of the Eastern Mediterranean had an important role as agents of stability and threat prevention for the European continent. However, geopolitical turbulence has created several changes in the landscape of the Eastern Mediterranean, with new powers emerging due to the collapse of some states (Libya, Syria) or the inability of others (Jordan, Lebanon) to play an active role. In any case, it is imperative that the Eastern Mediterranean continues to play the role of a barrier against threats to the West in order to ensure its stability and prosperity.

2.4 The Eastern Mediterranean as an Energy Hub

As mentioned above, the Mediterranean has been an extremely important crossroads throughout time, within which great civilizations developed, which played an important role in the wider region and shaped to some extent the region as we know it today.

The Mediterranean region, and especially the Eastern Mediterranean, has long been an energy crossroads, as sea and land energy routes to Europe, mainly from the oil-producing countries of Saudi Arabia, the Caspian and Caucasus and Russia, passed through or through it. North African pipelines connect mainly Italy and the Western Mediterranean (France, Spain)



Figure 10 [Oil and gas pipelines to Europe. Source: <https://theodora.com>]

Its importance as an energy crossroads is also demonstrated historically by the fact that the region of North Africa and Libya in particular was a point of friction and significant battles during the Second World War between the two warring sides (Axis Powers, Allies), in order to control the oil deposits of the region.

Later, around 1958, oil deposits were discovered and started to be exploited in the Syrian region. Until 2011, when the civil war broke out, the country was a major oil-producing country and an exporter to the European Union (EU)⁶. The percentage distribution of oil exported from Syria to EU countries is as follows.

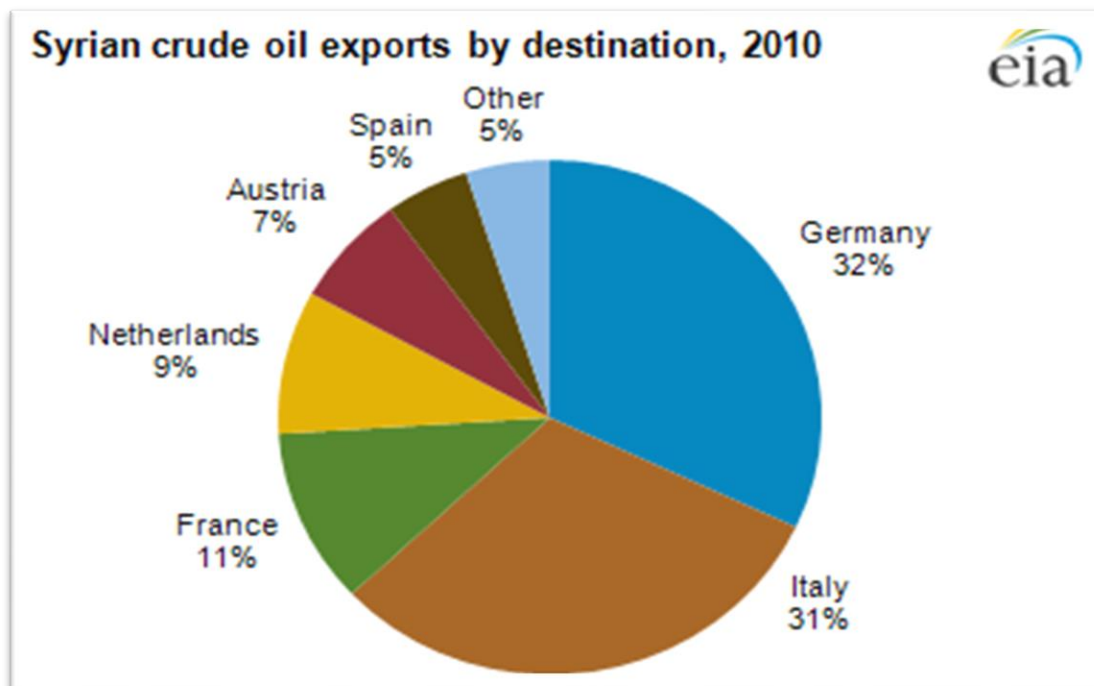


Figure 11 [Syrian Oil Exports by Country. Source.]

Over the last 13 years, huge quantities of hydrocarbons have been discovered in the Eastern Mediterranean region, specifically in the maritime area between Egypt, Greece, Cyprus and Israel [Zohr (Egypt), Aphrodite (Cyprus), Leviathan (Israel)].

⁶ Syria, according to 2010 data, produced 387,000 bbl/d and exports to third countries were 109,000 bbl/d, 90% of which were to EU countries. Although the quantity imported by the European Union is relatively small in relation to the total share of the quantity required to meet its needs, it nevertheless accounted for 30% of Syria's revenue.



Figure 12 [Zohr (Egypt), Aphrodite (Cyprus), Leviathan (Israel) Source: the Economist]

At the same time, exploration and discovery of new deposits with significant positive prospects are being carried out in the marine areas of south-southwest Crete, western Greece and the Ionian Sea.

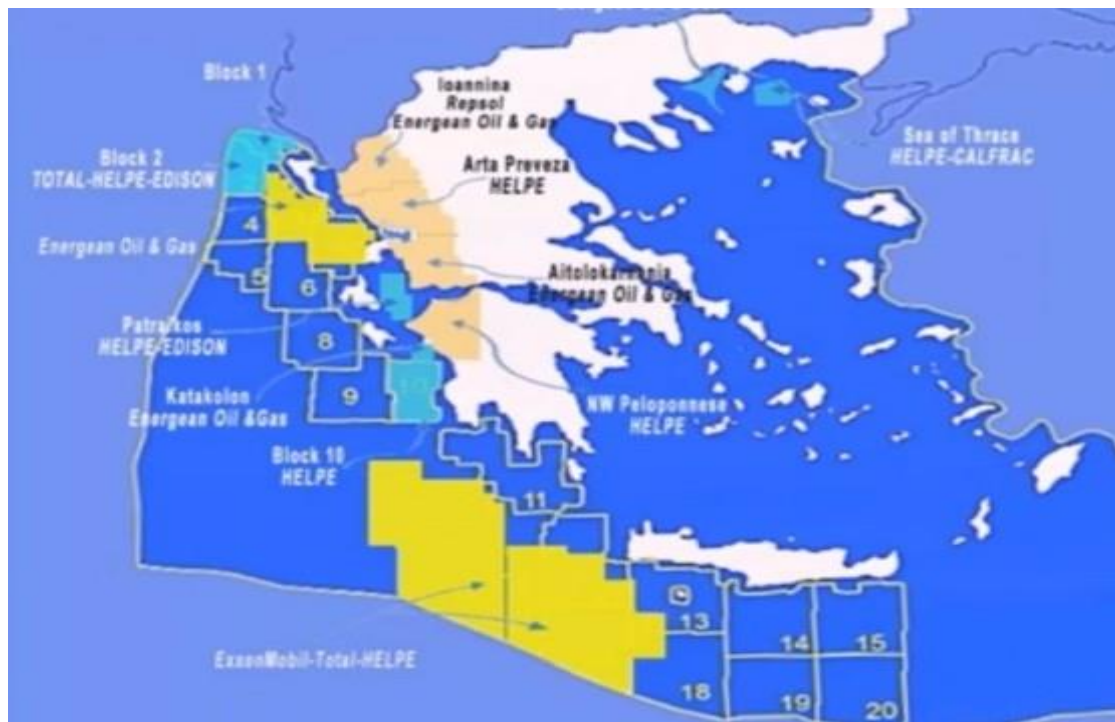


Figure 13 [Greek hydrocarbon exploration plots under investigation Source: Economico. gr]

This fact, namely the existence of the huge deposits in Egypt, Cyprus and Israel and the prospect of the Greek ones under investigation (of equally great potential), can

make the Eastern Mediterranean a very good choice as a source of supplying Europe with hydrocarbons, in order to contribute to its gradual decoupling from the need of Russia, the Caspian countries and Saudi Arabia. At present, the EU's dependence on these regions for hydrocarbons, especially natural gas, is quite high, since it covers just over half of its needs (around 53 %).

An additional element, which is a supportive factor for the role that the Eastern Mediterranean can play in terms of energy, is that the regions from which Europe is currently supplied (Caspian, Caucasus, North Africa) face political instability or are plagued by the activity of terrorist groups, which affects the stability of supply and the energy security of the fields in these countries. This particularity can give countries such as Greece, Cyprus, Israel and Egypt a strategic advantage, turning them into new energy hubs for the transport of hydrocarbons to Europe. Moreover, the fact that the countries with confirmed large deposits and those under investigation, with confirmed prospects for large deposits, include Cyprus, Israel and Greece respectively, may help Europe's future decoupling as these deposits are considered to be located in European territory, thus potentially increasing its energy footprint on the local energy map. This, in the future, will gradually lead to a reduction of energy needs from third countries outside the EU.

In addition, in the Eastern Mediterranean region, an important fact that can be a multiplier of the European Union's energy security is the existence of a large number of ports, which can be potential energy hubs, handling large quantities of hydrocarbons, without depending on pipelines, which are either subject to restrictions imposed by the producing countries or are vulnerable to terrorist attacks in countries that have a high level of energy security.

Finally, in addition to the above, it should be mentioned that apart from hydrocarbon deposits, the Eastern Mediterranean region has a significant potential to produce energy through Renewable Energy Sources (RES) [Solar, Wind, Geothermal], due to the climatic conditions prevailing in the region, especially the increased sunshine that prevails in the region throughout the year.

Characteristically, it can be mentioned that the levels of sunshine in the Eastern Mediterranean are high and this creates the necessary conditions for the possibility of producing energy from the sun. In this effort, each country could take advantage of areas such as micro-islands (e.g. Greece), and desert areas (Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, Israel, Libya and Israel) by installing solar panels for the production of electricity. In a

similar way, the power of wind energy could be exploited to a lesser extent by installing wind farms (wind turbines) in areas of high wind activity.

This will have multiple benefits for the Eastern Mediterranean countries as it can contribute to their energy security. For example, the countries that develop renewable energy sources, whether or not they are exporters of oil and gas, will be able, through the energy produced by renewable energy sources, to save hydrocarbons in order to increase their export capacity and reduce their energy dependence on hydrocarbon imports from third countries. Furthermore, energy production from renewable energy sources will make a significant contribution to preventing energy poverty in the region and in Europe, as well as reducing the environmental pollution.

2.5 Summary

In conclusion, this chapter has analyzed the importance of the Eastern Mediterranean as a commercial and energy hub and how it can redeem this fact, especially geopolitically, especially in those countries that can play an important role in the region (Greece, Cyprus, Israel, Egypt, Turkey).

In addition, the huge contribution of the Eastern Mediterranean in addressing the threats created by the geopolitical processes that have taken place in the region since the beginning of the 21st century and have intensified over the last 10 years was analyzed.

Finally, it highlighted how the Eastern Mediterranean itself was affected. In particular, how through geopolitical processes its deterrent capacity against threats has been reduced and how by acting as a barrier against them, its countries can increase its geopolitical importance.

CHAPTER 3

REGIONAL - INTERNATIONAL ACTORS

3.1 Introduction

In this chapter, the importance of the role of the Eastern Mediterranean region in global affairs is first mentioned. In the microcosm of Europe and the Middle East, the important role that the countries of the Eastern Mediterranean can play, both in the trade and energy sector and in the geopolitical sector, as a barrier against the various threats to Europe, was analyzed.

Subsequently, the importance of the region for the major players of the geopolitical chessboard (USA, Russia, China, etc.) and how they influence the wider area and what their aspirations are is analyzed.

Each of the international actors (USA, Russia, China, Russia, China and Iran) claim, each for their own reasons and interests, to control the Eastern Mediterranean in order to gain the maximum possible geopolitical benefits, which will put them in a position of power over the others.

3.2 Importance - Role of the Eastern Mediterranean in the World

The Eastern Mediterranean, as mentioned above, is a region of great importance for the global geopolitical system. In the geopolitical chessboard in this region, not only do local and regional actors interact, but it is a field of competition and gaining influence, at multiple levels, for international actors, who play an important role in the global arena. These include the USA, Russia, China, etc.

The position of the Eastern Mediterranean is of great strategic importance, on the one hand, due to the existence in the region of two choke points of global importance and significance (Suez Canal, Dardanelles Straits), through which maritime arteries of great importance for global trade pass, and on the other hand due to the recent discoveries of significant quantities of hydrocarbons in its subsoil.

The geopolitical value of the Eastern Mediterranean in the global arena has increased geometrically over the last 10 years due to the strategic position of some of these countries (Greece, Turkey, Cyprus), as they control access to and from areas of increased interest, such as Libya, Syria, Crimea, Ukraine, etc. At the present material time, the Eastern Mediterranean

is presenting an extremely positive geopolitical momentum due to the ongoing ferment taking place in areas of interest, which are attracting the interest of all major international actors, each with different interests and aspirations.

In the region, there are rivalries between these countries, which can be divided into historical confrontations, such as the relations between Greece and Turkey or Turkey and Cyprus, as well as conjunctural confrontations such as those between Turkey and Egypt and Turkey and Israel. The causes of these confrontations have been compounded by the efforts of local and regional actors, most notably Turkey, which is trying to gain a share of the energy 'pie', without, however, having a substantive basis to justify this assertive behavior to this extent. This attitude of Turkey, among other things, has led to the creation of quadrilateral cooperation in the energy sector between Greece - Cyprus - Israel and Egypt, which creates great prospects in this sector for the participating countries and sharply increases their geopolitical and strategic value in the region. Of course, in this particular region, these correlations are constantly changing, resulting in conflicts leading to cooperation and vice versa.

In addition to its geopolitical importance, the Eastern Mediterranean is a region of paramount importance in global economic and cultural architecture. This can be justified by the fact that the region is a vast network of sea and land trade arteries, with major trading hubs, ports and airports, where a significant proportion of the world's goods are traded. In addition, it is a crossroads of cultures with a huge contribution to the global cultural scene, and we should not forget that it is also one of the world's most important tourist destinations, generating huge revenues for the economies of its countries.

It is therefore clear that the importance of the Eastern Mediterranean region is extremely significant due to its geographical location close to important areas of global interest and its energy reserves. The combination of these two factors is attracting the interest of powerful actors who are trying to establish their presence and influence in the region. This in turn creates additional competition, confrontation and changes to the status quo in the region.

3.3 USA: Interests - Aspirations - Prospects.

It is well known that the Eastern Mediterranean region has always been an area of great strategic interest for many powerful actors, e.g. Germany, the USA, and Great Britain, both because of its energy deposits (around North Africa) and its proximity to areas of great

geopolitical interest (Black Sea, Caspian Sea, Caucasus, Azerbaijan region, Middle East, Persian Gulf, etc.).



Figure 14 (Areas of High Geopolitical Interest Near East. Mediterranean. Source Google Earth)

For the U.S.A. in particular, the region in question had been a matter of maintaining it in the Western sphere of influence since the end of the Second World War, a fact expressed by the Truman doctrine¹. In recent years, the Eastern Mediterranean region has become even more important for the US due to the evolving geopolitical situation in the region. More specifically, the main reasons why the Eastern Mediterranean is a key factor for its interests are:

- a. The fact that many threats developed in the region, either in the form of state actors or non-state actors (terrorist organizations, ISIS, Al Qaeda, etc.), which threatened the already fragile stability in the region.
- b. The ambiguous behavior of Turkey, which in recent years has chosen to approach Russia, but without fully clarifying its position and following a more opportunistic policy, trying to extract as many geopolitical benefits as possible. Russia was comfortable with this behavior, as it was both creating friction in the foundations of NATO and serving it in its efforts to consolidate its presence in the region.

¹ A policy implemented by the United States under the presidency of Harry Truman (12 April 1945 - 20 January 1953), which involved economic and military aid to Greece and Turkey in order to keep them in the Western sphere of influence and prevent their annexation to the Russian sphere of influence.

c. The intention of the US is to help the energy development and the European Union's (EU) decoupling from Russian hydrocarbon and gas imports in order to reduce the influence and political leverage of the latter in the region.

d. The massive movement of Muslim populations from Africa and Middle Eastern countries to Europe is a factor of destabilization of the European States, due to the intrusion of extreme Islamic elements, while it favors their instrumentalization as a means of asymmetric threats by countries such as Turkey and Russia.

e. The discovery of huge quantities of hydrocarbons in the region, particularly in the areas of Cyprus, Israel and Egypt.

f. The existence in the region of two choke points of exceptional economic and geopolitical importance (Suez Canal, Dardanelles Straits), which on the one hand control maritime traffic and global trade and on the other hand connect the Eastern Mediterranean region with the highly strategic areas of the Black Sea, the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden.

The position of the Eastern Mediterranean region, as mentioned above, is in a key position to allow control and access to areas of high geostrategic interest for US interests. In particular, the region is at the crossroads for the control of both Russia and Iran, as well as China, which is trying to play its own role in the region. In particular, containing Russia and preventing its exit into the Eastern Mediterranean is a fundamental ANSF - a fundamental US policy objective. This fact is reflected, given Turkey's shift towards Russia, in the importance, the US attaches to Greece, both because of its highly strategic position in any direction and because Greece is a pillar of stability and security in the region.

Moreover, the US policy is to develop Europe's energy development through the energy deposits of Israel, Cyprus, Egypt and Greece, but also through the supply of shale oil and natural gas, where the US is an exporter of this form of hydrocarbons, in order to reduce its energy dependence on Russia and gradually, if possible, its complete independence.

U.S. crude oil exports by destination (Jan-Jun 2018)

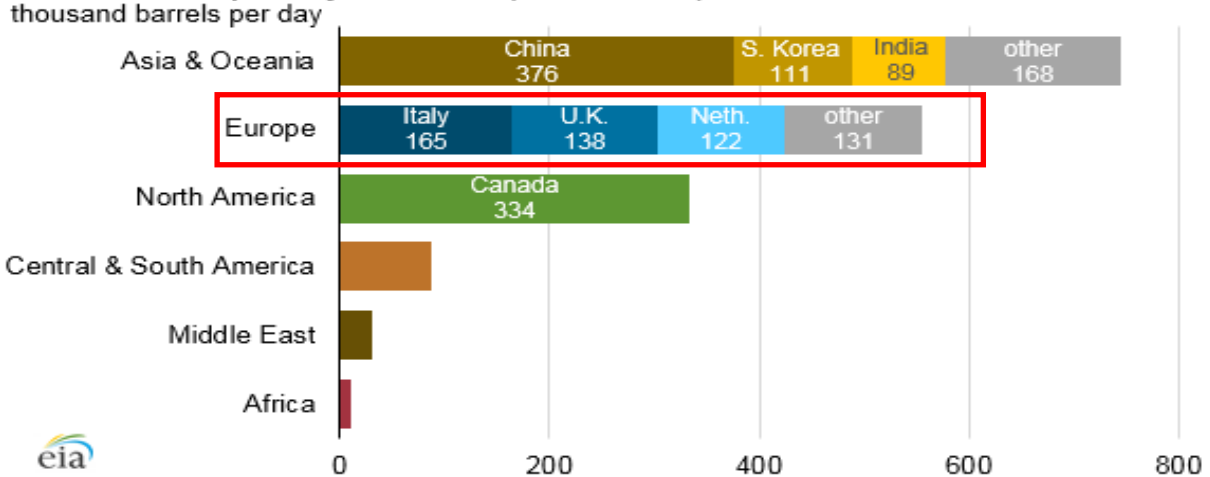


Figure 15 (Crude Oil Exports from the U.S.A. First Half 2018 Source: Eia)

Annual U.S. liquefied natural gas (LNG) exports by country (2019–2020)

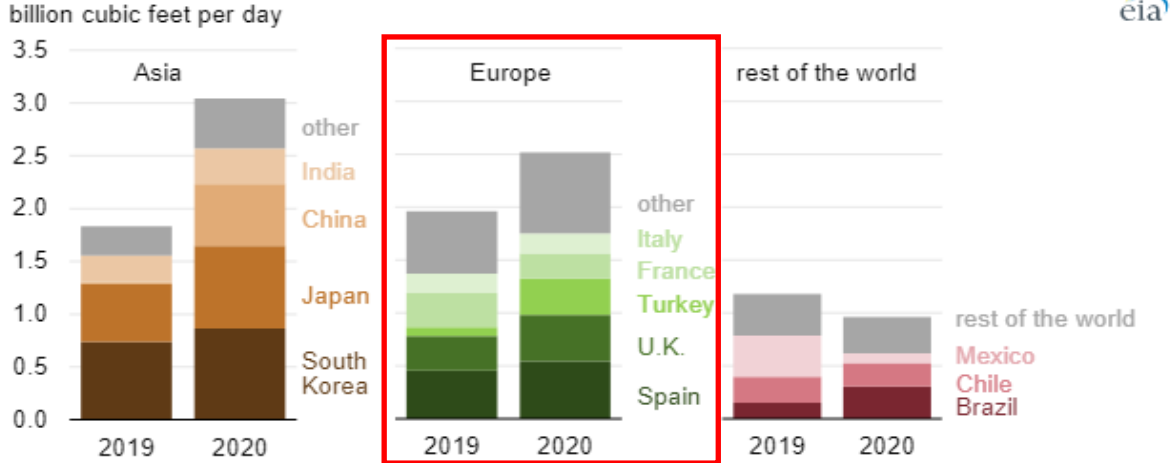


Figure 16 (LNG exports from the U.S. 2019 - 2020 Source: Eia)

In conclusion, the United States should develop the prospect of cooperation with the countries of the Eastern Mediterranean even further, both in the field of trade, and investment and in the political-military field. Significant steps have already been taken in this direction and this can be seen from:

a. The expansion of relations with Greece, through the exploitation of the port of Alexandroupolis for both economic and military purposes. The development of relations in the military sector is also shown by the expansion of cooperation through bilateral exercises and the supply of military equipment from the surplus of the US Army.

b. The redefinition of relations with the Republic of Cyprus. It is a fact that bilateral relations between the two countries have entered a new period and are at a very good level, as evidenced by the lifting of the embargo on the sale of military equipment to the Greater Horn of Africa, as well as by joint exercises and participation in training sessions.

In conclusion, the United States must maintain a strong presence in the Eastern Mediterranean both because it serves its interests in the region (control of strategic areas and energy reserves) and in order to be in a position to reduce as much as possible the competition of the other powerful players (Russia, China, Iran) operating in the region, which is the crossroads of the strategic interests of all.

3.4 Russia: Pursuits in the Eastern Mediterranean.

Russia is one of the most important international actors in the Eastern Mediterranean region. Although Russia is not a country in the wider region, nor does it have direct access to it, it has nevertheless over time sought to gain access to it and expand its relations and sphere of influence in the Eastern Mediterranean countries.

Russia's interests in the region focus mainly on energy, economy and geopolitical security. Over the years Russia has developed economic relations with the countries of the Eastern Mediterranean, such as Greece, Turkey and Cyprus. With Turkey on several occasions, especially until the First World War, the relations between the two countries were challenged by rivalries, resulting in several conflicts between them. Their relations improved significantly and followed a neutral relationship for several years. In the last 20 years, their relations have been further strengthened, culminating in the last 5 years or so when they reached their best point.

Russia's relations with Greece date back to before the establishment of the first Greek state, mainly commercial, but also because Russia was inciting underground revolutions against the then Ottoman Empire. Today the relations between the two countries focus on the economic - trade sector and the energy sector. In general, Greece's relations with Russia can be described as formal.

In contrast, with the Republic of Cyprus, relations were initially economic, as Russia provided a substantial loan in order to bail out the Cypriot banks. In the future, this amount could be redeemed for political and economic benefits for Russia as well as in possible investments in the energy deposits discovered in the Cypriot EEZ.²

² In 2011 it gave €2.5 billion at an interest rate of 4.5%, which was below the current market rate. In 2012, the Republic of Cyprus asked for an additional €5 billion in exchange for a share in the Cypriot deposits and a port in the Mediterranean, but Russia rejected the request (Source.)

In general, Russia in Cyprus to date maintains a significant level of investment, exports and tourist flows, which closely links the two countries on an economic basis and brings significant economic benefits to both.

Russia's aspirations in the Eastern Mediterranean have started to change in the last 10 years and specifically since the 2^o half of the last decade, mainly in the geopolitical part. One of its primary aspirations is to be able to play a significant geopolitical role in troubled regions such as Syria, and Palestine, while at the same time degrading the capabilities of the US and the European Union in the context of competition between them. In addition, it wants to maintain its dominant position in the supply of hydrocarbons (mainly natural gas) to the European Union.

Geopolitically, Russia is trying to increase its military footprint in the Eastern Mediterranean and especially its naval presence, since, as is well known, sea power can give great strategic advantages to whoever has it. Of course, in the region, it has to face powers with a long tradition and extremely important naval power (U.S.A., Great Britain). Proof of the importance Russia has attached to increasing its naval presence in the Eastern Mediterranean is the existence of an airbase at Tartus in Syria, which it has significantly upgraded in order to be able to dock a greater number of warships. The existence of significant units of Russia's fleet in the region can provide strategic depth and firepower against competitors. Russia's presence in Syria has provided support to President Assad in order to eliminate threats in the Northern provinces, in contrast to the corresponding policy of the US and the EU. In the same context, it has also acted in the case of Libya, where it assisted General Haftar's LNA with equipment and armed units (not regular troops), in contrast to Turkey, which supports the government coalition for their own reasons³.

On the energy side, Russia has a dominant position in the supply of hydrocarbons to EU countries. In particular, the EU imports 27% of its crude oil and 41% of its natural gas from a dense network of pipelines crossing Europe.

³ In Libya, the tactic of proxy wars was used to a fairly large extent.

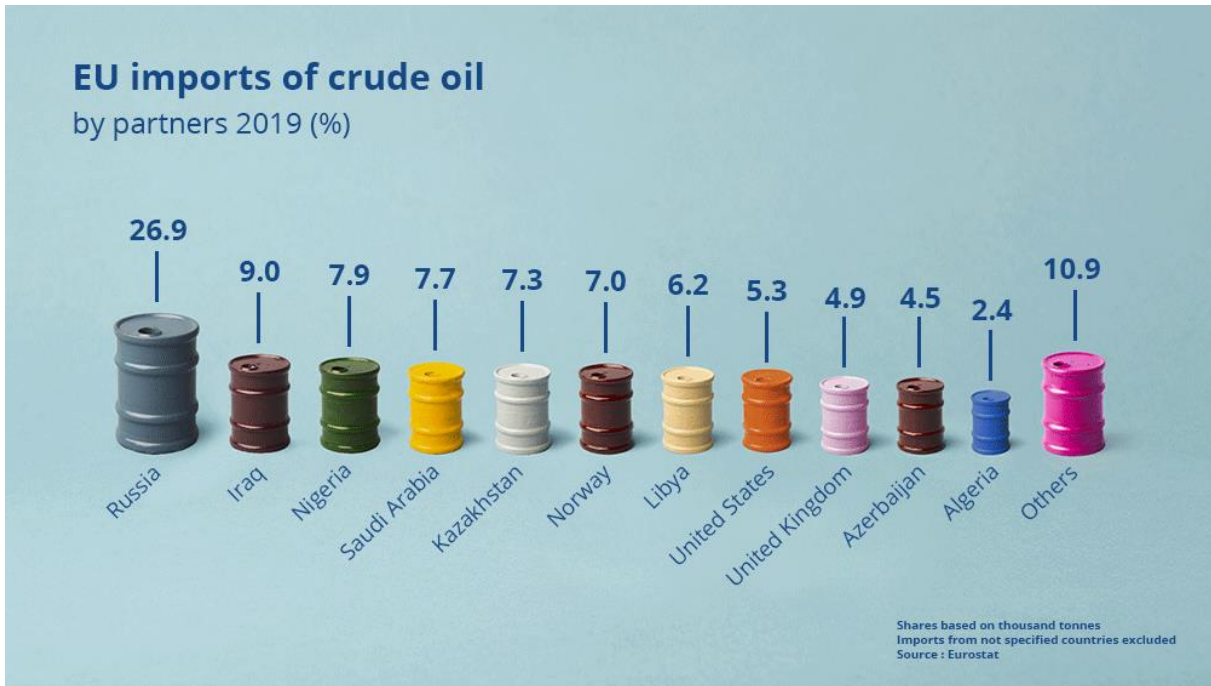


Figure 17 (Percentage of EU crude oil imports in 2019. Source: Eurostat)

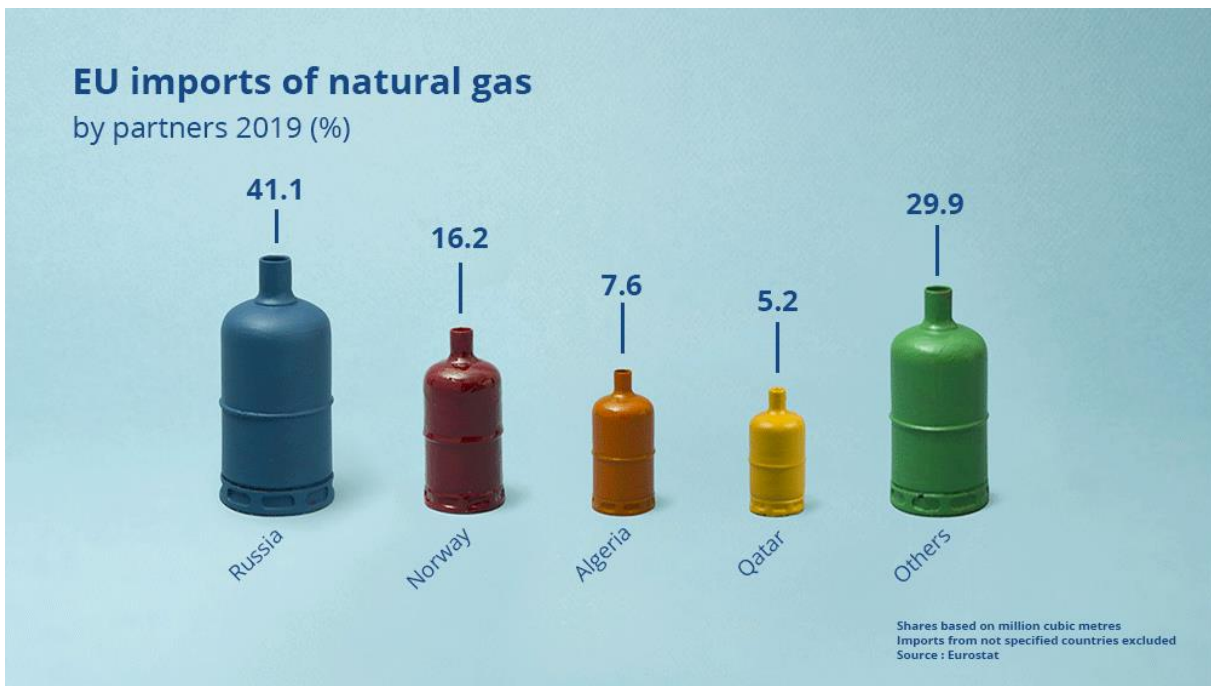


Figure 18 (Percentage of EU crude oil imports in 2019. Source: Eurostat)

Russia is using this dominant position to cash in on geopolitical gains and to put pressure on the EU to impose more flexible sanctions. In addition, Russia seeks to downgrade competing projects supported by the US or the EU in order to maintain the degree of energy dependence that brings it political and economic benefits.

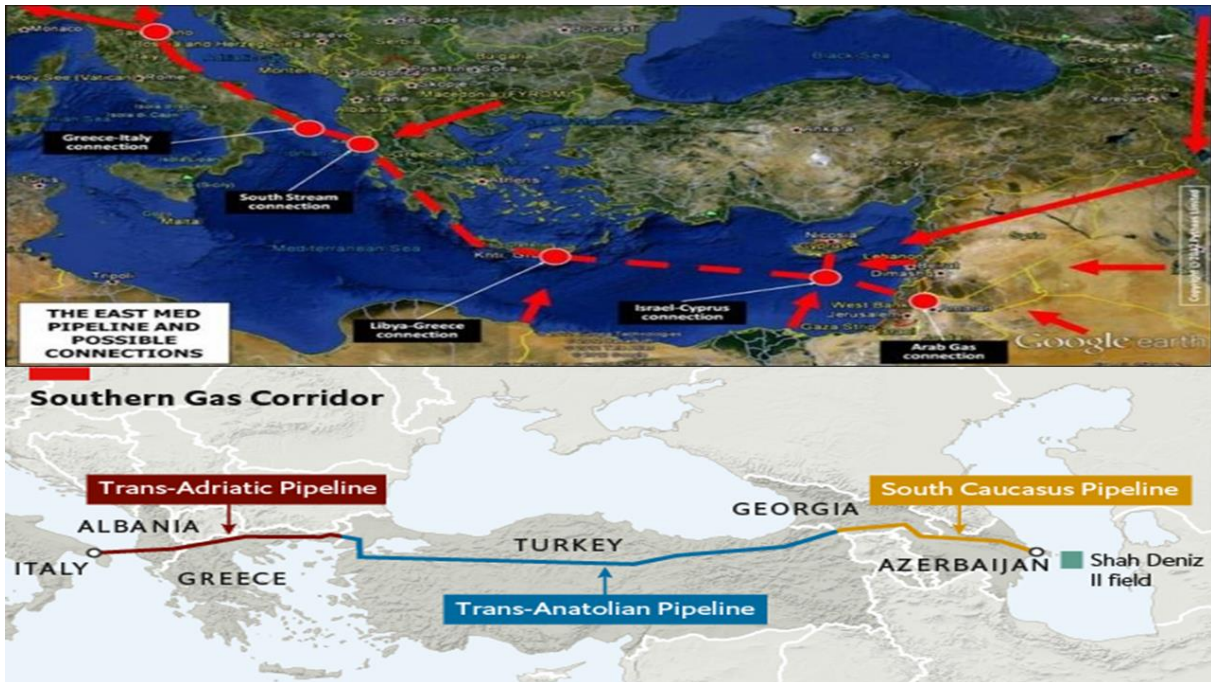


Figure 19 (East Med and Southern Gas Corridor (TANAP) pipelines. Source: Economist Intelligence)

The discovery of large quantities of reserves in the Eastern Mediterranean region and the involvement of American and European companies seems to threaten this domination of Russia and seems to be able to contribute to the gradual decoupling of the EU.

In conclusion, Russia, in general, is using the instability in the Eastern Mediterranean and its dominant energy position in order to achieve its consolidation in the region against its competitors.

3.5 China: Pursuits - Objectives.

As mentioned in the previous chapter, the Eastern Mediterranean region includes two of the most important choke points in the world (Suez Canal, Dardanelles) and is also a crossroads for important maritime arteries, which pass through these choke points and through which global trade is conducted on three continents. (Europe, Asia, Africa).

China's presence in the region is relatively recent and focuses on developing mainly economic ties with the Eastern Mediterranean countries. It is trying to achieve this by acquiring facilities and infrastructure, mainly ports and storage facilities, in various countries (Greece, Turkey, Israel, Egypt), which it uses as hubs to facilitate the marketing of its products in the region and, in particular, with the European Union, which is one of China's main trading partners (importers).

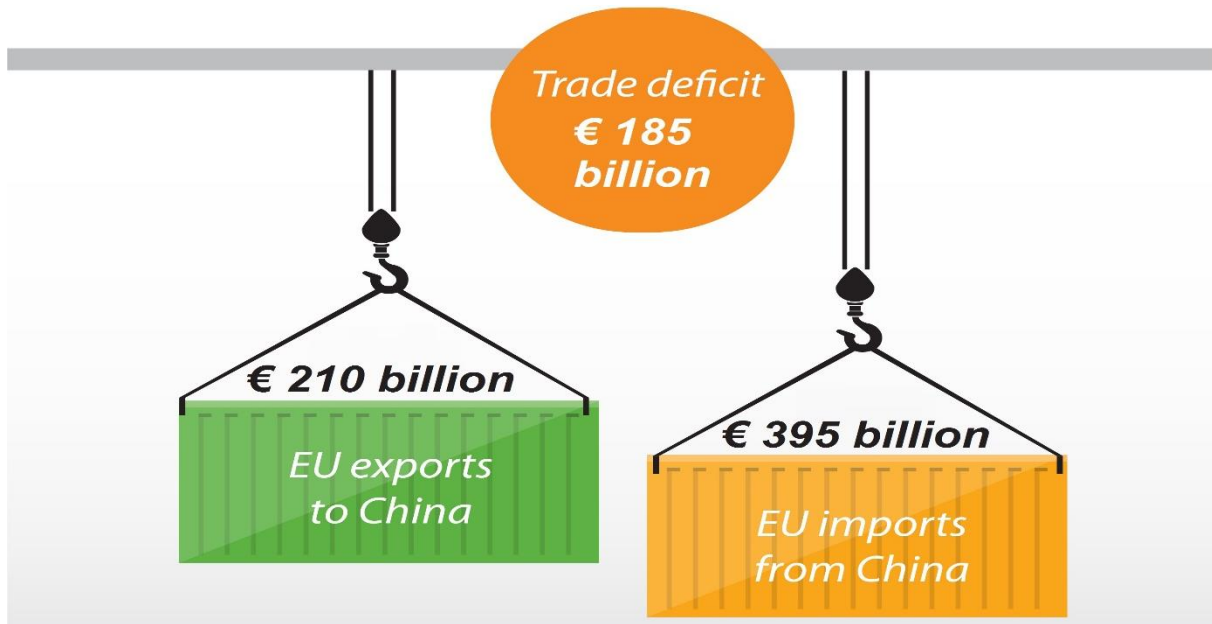


Figure 20 (EU-China Trade Balance 2018. Source: Eurostat)

In China's effort to develop economically and create strong trade links with Western countries and beyond, the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) project was developed, which aimed at economic development through infrastructure investment. It essentially revived the old land-based Silk Road, combining it with a maritime one.



Figure 21 (The Chinese One Belt and One Road Initiative project. Source: MehrNews.com)

The first priority of Chinese policy in the Eastern Mediterranean and more generally was economic development, through expansion into new markets, the influx of new capital, raw material technology and know-how through knowledge exchange. Unlike other international actors in the region, China has been and continues to be a proponent of gaining influence through the economy and economic competition rather than through the display of force and military might. For this reason, it has begun to acquire ports and infrastructure in various regions of the Eastern Mediterranean. A typical example is the port of Piraeus, which is the most important project in the region. The intention is to develop it and equip it with modern means and facilities in order to make it the most important commercial hub in the Eastern Mediterranean for the promotion of Chinese products to the European Union. Similar projects are being developed by China in Italy.

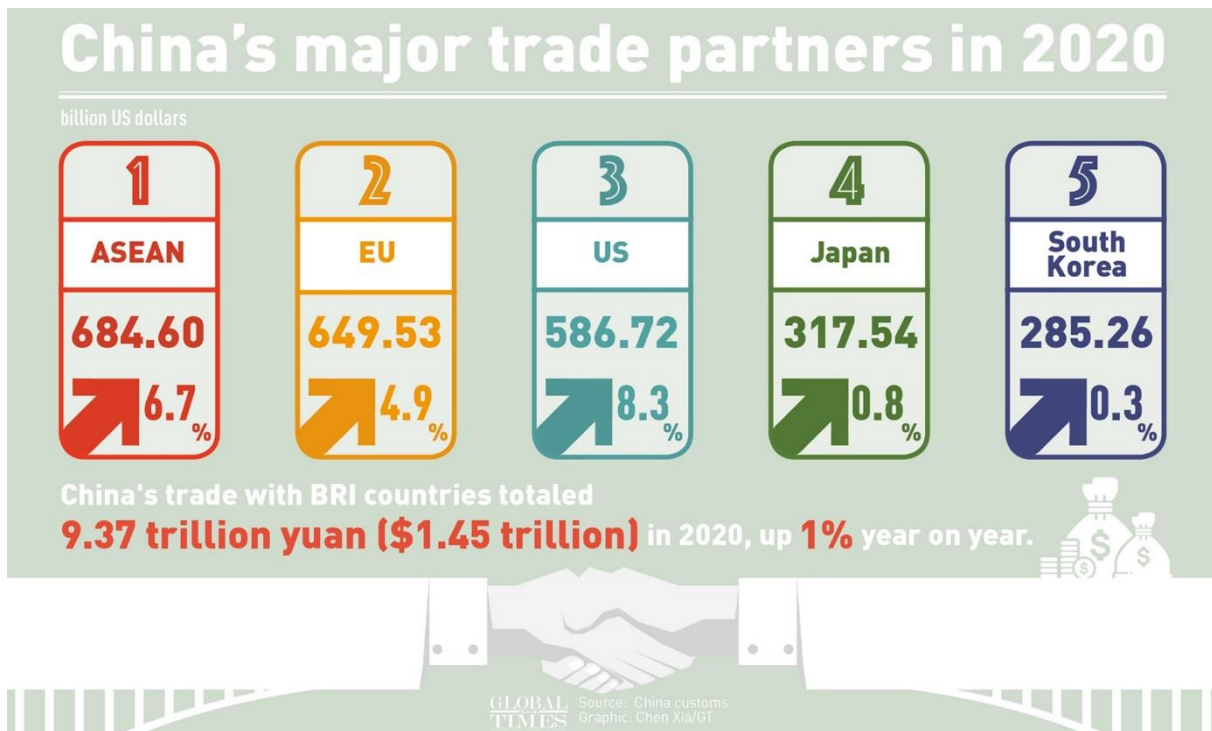


Figure 22 (China's Main Trading Partners for the year 2020. Source: Global Times. cn)

In addition to investing in port facilities, China is also investing in rail infrastructure, creating new trade routes between China and other Eurasian countries.

In recent years, and particularly since 2018, there has been an explosion in tourist traffic from China to the rest of the world.

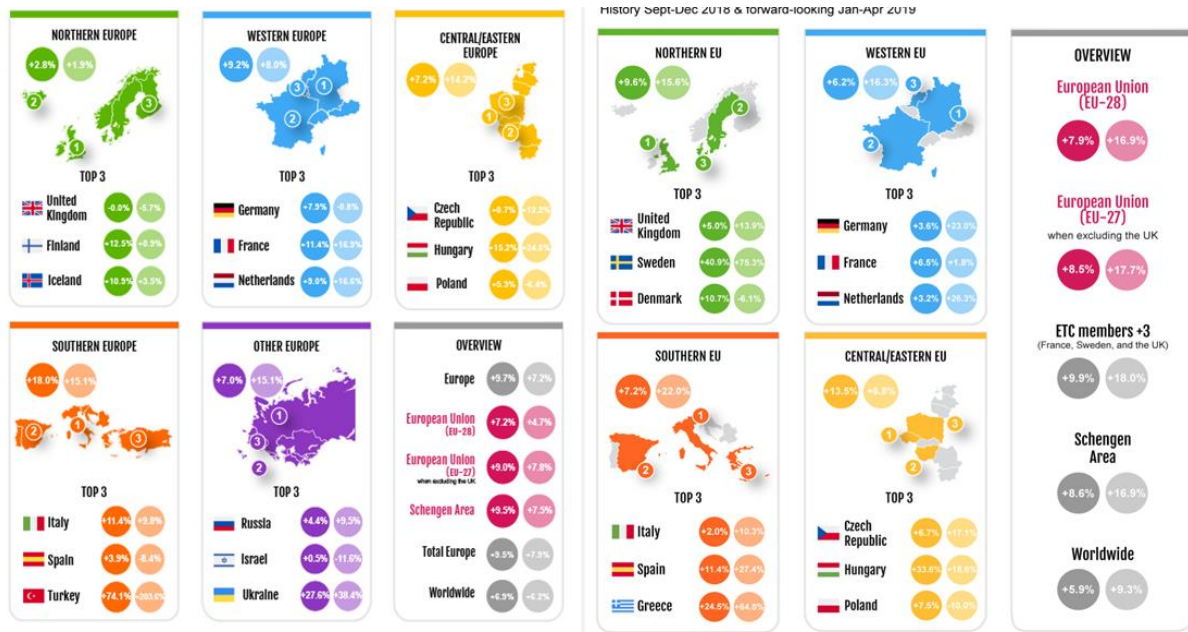


Figure 23 (Destinations of Chinese tourists in 2018 [Percentage increase]. Source Traveldailymedia. com)

The Eastern Mediterranean is a very popular destination, especially in countries like Greece. The development of tourism in Greece from China is helped by the fact that China is investing in infrastructure such as the port of Piraeus and in real estate facilities (houses, hotels, etc.).

Another region in which China has strategic interests is the North African region. Here, China's interests are focused on the energy sector, since both the countries of North Africa and the Middle East (the so-called MENA) have a strong interest in the energy sector. Both Africa and the Middle East are suppliers of hydrocarbons (oil and gas), which China needs in order to power its industrial machine, which will produce the products that it will then export via land and sea routes to the European Union and North America.

As mentioned above, in the Eastern Mediterranean region, China is betting on economic development and the shaping of politics through it, with a show of soft power. China's penetration of the economy, trade and infrastructure affects the interests of other international actors in the region, especially the United States with which it already has growing tension in the South China Sea. The rivalry between the two powers in the region is at a borderline level and could lead to a conflict if we also take into account the "Thucydides' Trap" theory, where when a rising power (China) develops, it provokes a violent reaction from the strong power (the USA). However, although in the South East Asia region China is an important power militarily and economically, in the Eastern Mediterranean region its geopolitical role is much smaller than that of other international actors in the region.

3.6 Iran: Pursuits - Objectives.

Iran is a country that has a long presence in the Eastern Mediterranean. Geographically it has no connection with this region. However, the Persian Empire, through its conquests in the region and its powerful navy, had managed to establish itself militarily and commercially in the region. So we can see that, here too, it is naval power that created the basis for domination.

Today, Iran, as its borders have been shaped, is in a very strategic position. Geographically, it is located south of the Caspian Sea and controls the Strait of Hormuz, one of the world's most important choke points as it controls the entrance/exit to the Persian Gulf. Often, Iran uses the control of the Strait as a means of exerting pressure on third countries due to the fact that it is the main maritime artery for the movement of oil and gas from the producing countries of the Persian Gulf in all directions.

Iran is one of the world's major oil-producing countries. In particular, it is the 4th country in the global oil production ranking since it produces 11% of the total production of OPEC countries. This fact makes it one of the main exporters for the countries in its close geographical vicinity.

In addition, it has a strong military force in the region and is also a nuclear power⁴. It uses its military power for the demonstration of military power (Force Projection) in the region and towards the Western countries.

One of Iran's aspirations is to establish and consolidate its presence in the Eastern Mediterranean region. In order to achieve this, it is important to secure the cooperation - support of countries that have access to it and are friendly to it. It is moving in this direction by developing economic and political relations with Syria, Iraq and Lebanon and to a lesser extent with Turkey. Iran is a strategic adversary of Israel and their relations can be described, to put it mildly, as purely hostile. Their relations are constantly deteriorating due to Iran's support for Lebanese organizations such as Hezbollah and Hamas.

Iran, through its allies, is seeking to create a land energy corridor to the Mediterranean in order to be able to enter the energy market of the region. Iran already has energy relations with Europe, exporting significant quantities of oil to Europe. However, relations have been disrupted in recent years because of Iran's nuclear program. Iran is seeking to restore the

⁴ There is no nuclear arsenal in Iran. Currently nuclear energy is used for peaceful purposes. Although sanctions have been imposed in the past for withholding information to the IAEA, it has not been proven to have carried out nuclear weapons development activities, according to reports from the US and Israeli intelligence agencies.

disrupted relations with Europe using its main asset, that of providing a capable energy solution, which could lead to the European Union's partial energy independence from Russia. Of course, on the basis of the data available so far, this seems quite difficult because of the sanctions imposed for violations of its nuclear program.

In addition, Iran is trying to consolidate its presence in Syria, not only in the military sector but also in the economic sector. In particular, the recent hostilities with the Islamic State reinforced President Assad's government formation with material, equipment and personnel. In addition to this military assistance, however, Iran is also trying to secure important contracts in the construction sector and in the exploitation of natural resources.

Iran's presence in Syria has the following effects:

- a. It redeems financially the aid it offered to President Assad, which was extremely costly.
- b. It creates the conditions for consolidating its presence in the Eastern Mediterranean and developing further trade relations.
- c. It gains access to space that allows it to irritate Israel and pose a constant threat to it, given its military power.

In general, Iran is seeking through its oil exports to gain access to countries to increase its geopolitical influence, but also in return in the form of know-how, trade relations, infrastructure construction, etc., which will help to mitigate the consequences of sanctions over its nuclear program.

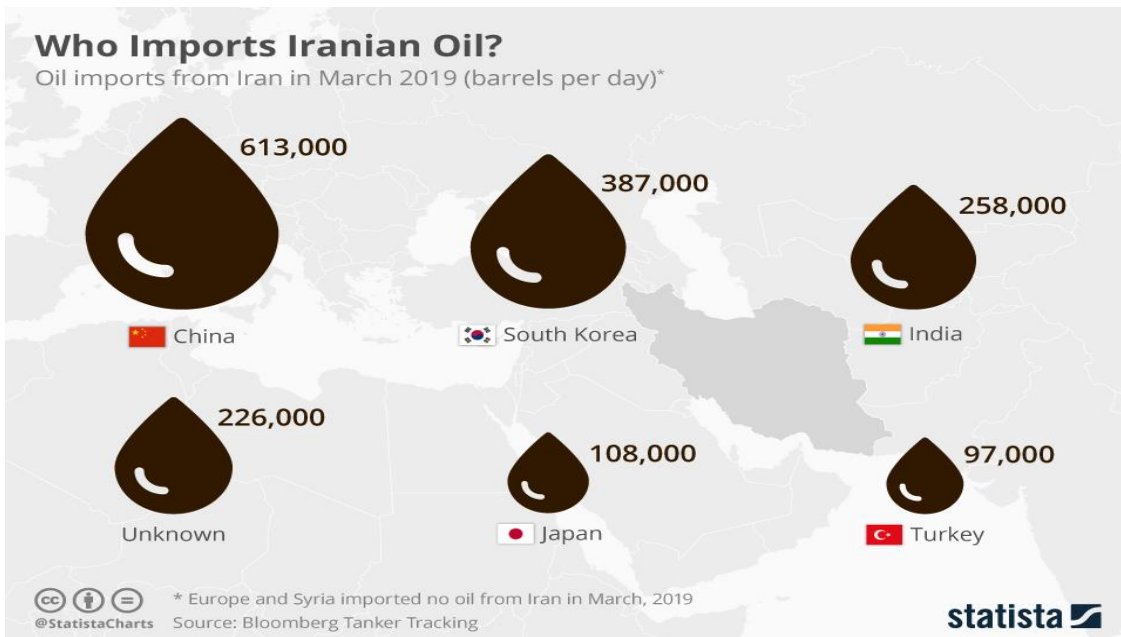


Figure 24 (Who Imports Iranian Oil. Source Statista)

A typical example is a relationship between Iran and China. China has maintained relations with Iran because of its oil imports, since it is the largest importer of oil from Iran, as shown in the previous picture. This ensured, initially, not openly, subtle support for Iran in the UN Security Council on issues related to the imposition of sanctions because of its nuclear program. This relationship strengthened to the point of the historic signing of the 25-year Strategic Cooperation Agreement on March 27, 2021, which included \$400 million of investment by China in Iran focused on infrastructure, transportation, technology, trade, etc. In the trade sector specifically, it is estimated that the value of this deal is estimated to be worth trillions of \$. From its slipway, Iran will supply China with a steady flow of oil, gas and oil derivatives for the next 25 years. In addition, the deal provided for the deployment in Iran of China's security elements to protect Chinese investments as well as the transportation of hydrocarbons from Iran to China via the Persian Gulf. This deal led to China gaining a foothold in the Middle East, an area traditionally occupied mostly by the United States.

In conclusion, Iran is trying to come out of isolation and to counterbalance the consequences of the international sanctions imposed on it, seeking new alliances and exploiting its great asset, its oil production. In addition, it is trying to establish itself in the Eastern Mediterranean region through the countries with which it maintains friendly relations in order to increase its geopolitical footprint in the region.

3.7 Summary

In this chapter, we have seen the influence of international actors in the Eastern Mediterranean.

The interests of the powers intersect in this region, mainly because of its commercial, geopolitical and energy value. Each of the actors is trying to increase its geopolitical influence in order to gain mainly energy benefits, but also access to areas of high geopolitical interest. In addition, it seeks to gain a more favorable position in the region in order to control the other actors operating in the region.

It was found that, in addition to the traditional powers that historically played an important role and influenced the geopolitical situation in the region, new powers (China, Iran) began to emerge on the geopolitical chessboard, which were gradually strengthening their position by establishing relations with local actors in the region and claiming a share of both the energy map and, above all, the geopolitical scene.

CHAPTER 4

ENERGY COMPETITION IN THE EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN REGION

4.1 Introduction

The Eastern Mediterranean, due to the extremely large quantities of natural resources (oil, gas), which are essential for the energy security of the various states, has become a field of competition for all regional and international actors in the region.

First, an analysis of the energy crisis in the Eastern Mediterranean and Europe, in general, will be made in order to understand the root cause of the competition between the various actors.

Next, a relatively brief reference will be made to the energy reserves in the Eastern Mediterranean region, what their importance is for the countries to which they belong and how they affect the relations of the various states in the region. In this context, the competition that arises because of these energy reserves will also be analyzed.

Because it was a very innovative project, of great importance and potential for the European Union's energy independence from Russia, a special reference will be made to the EastMed pipeline and its importance.

Finally, the energy cooperation between Egypt and Greece will be mentioned, the prospects it opens up in all sectors, its importance for both countries and how they can benefit from it.

4.2 Energy Crisis in the Wider Europe - Eastern Mediterranean Region

As mentioned above, Europe has a serious shortage of energy resources, particularly hydrocarbons (oil and gas). Europe's problem is centered on the fact that it is overly dependent on hydrocarbon imports from both Russia and the countries of the Middle East.

In recent years, all the countries of the European continent and the Eastern Mediterranean have entered a new period of energy crisis. Of course, this was not the

first time this phenomenon has occurred. The last energy crisis that had concerned Europe and the Eastern Mediterranean was the US military operation in Iraq in 2003. At that time, the price of oil reached \$103 per barrel. Historically, the highest oil price occurred in 1980 shortly after the Iranian Revolution, with the price of oil reaching \$104 a barrel. The first energy crisis that the Western world came into contact with after World War II was the 1973 oil crisis, when the OPEC oil-producing countries imposed an oil embargo in retaliation for the Arab-Israeli 'Yom Kippur' war. This led to a rapid increase in the price of oil by the standards of the time.

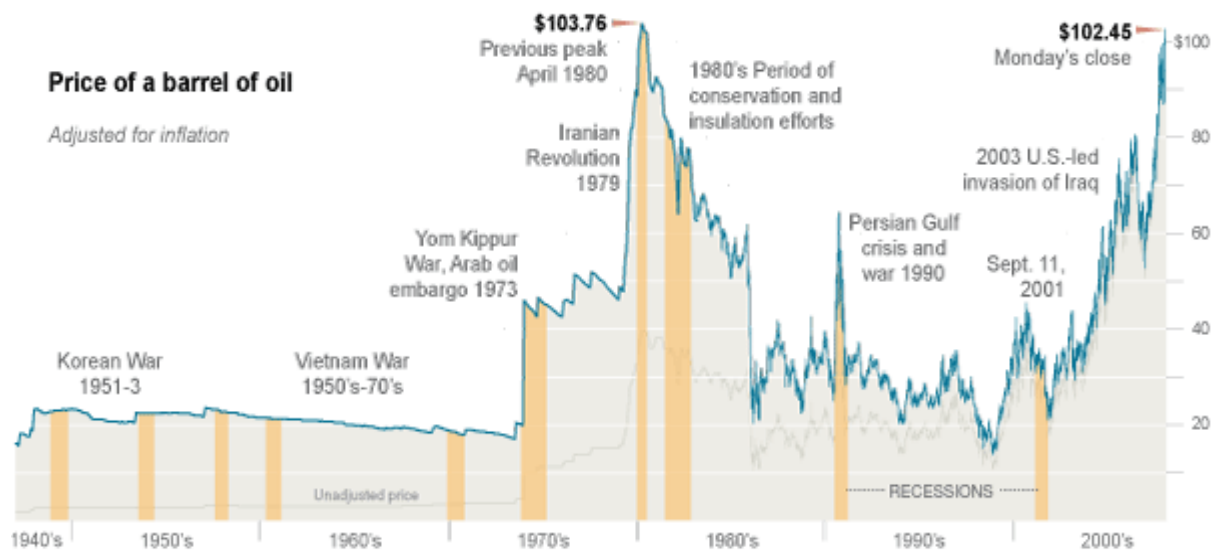


Figure 25 (Oil Price per Barrel 1940 - 2005. Source: New York Times)

After the rise in the price of oil, the price stabilized until 2008, when, due to the economic recession, for about two years, the price of oil rose significantly. Today, both the price of oil and the price of natural gas, as there has been a shift in the use of natural gas over the last 10 years due to the price and the reduced emissions, after having gone through periods of stability, has started to show significant fluctuations again. Highlights are the price collapse due to the COVID - 19 pandemic in 2020 and the sharp increase with the turmoil in the Ukraine region and the Russian invasion.

At the present material time, both Europe and the Eastern Mediterranean and especially countries such as Greece, Cyprus, Israel and Turkey, are going through another energy crisis, as energy prices have risen, thus affecting the prices of various categories of goods. This increase in prices is due to various interrelated factors, the main ones being:

- a. Europe's excessive energy dependence. Europe does not have a large production of natural gas. Imports of natural gas from Russia, as mentioned in the

previous chapter, account for about 50% of the imports to meet Europe's energy needs. As can be seen, this percentage is quite high and could potentially be a Trojan horse for political pressure, since any disruption in the smooth flow of gas to Europe would cause significant turbulence in the prices of both gas and other basic commodities (fuel, foodstuffs, etc.).

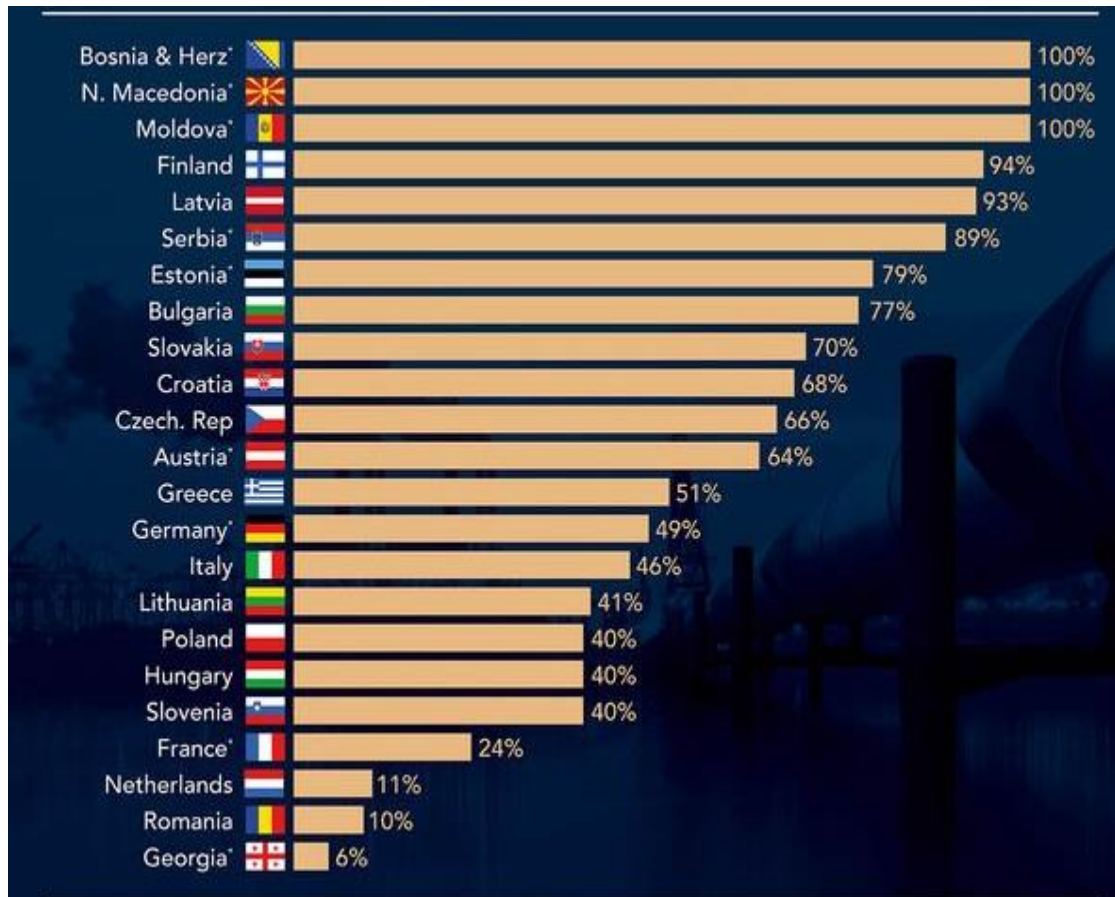


Figure 26 (Percentage of Natural Gas Imports from Russia 2019. Source: Statista)

b. The unstable geopolitical environment. The region of both the Eastern Mediterranean and Eurasia in general is a turbulent geopolitical environment with many conflicts, both direct and underlying, between the various actors, which causes significant fluctuations in hydrocarbon prices from time to time. A typical example of the effects of the unstable geopolitical environment is the Russian invasion of Ukraine, which highlighted in the most obvious way both Europe's energy dependence on Russia and the direct dependence on all goods (gold, minerals, agricultural products, etc.) on the geopolitical situation since there was a rapid increase in the price of all goods.

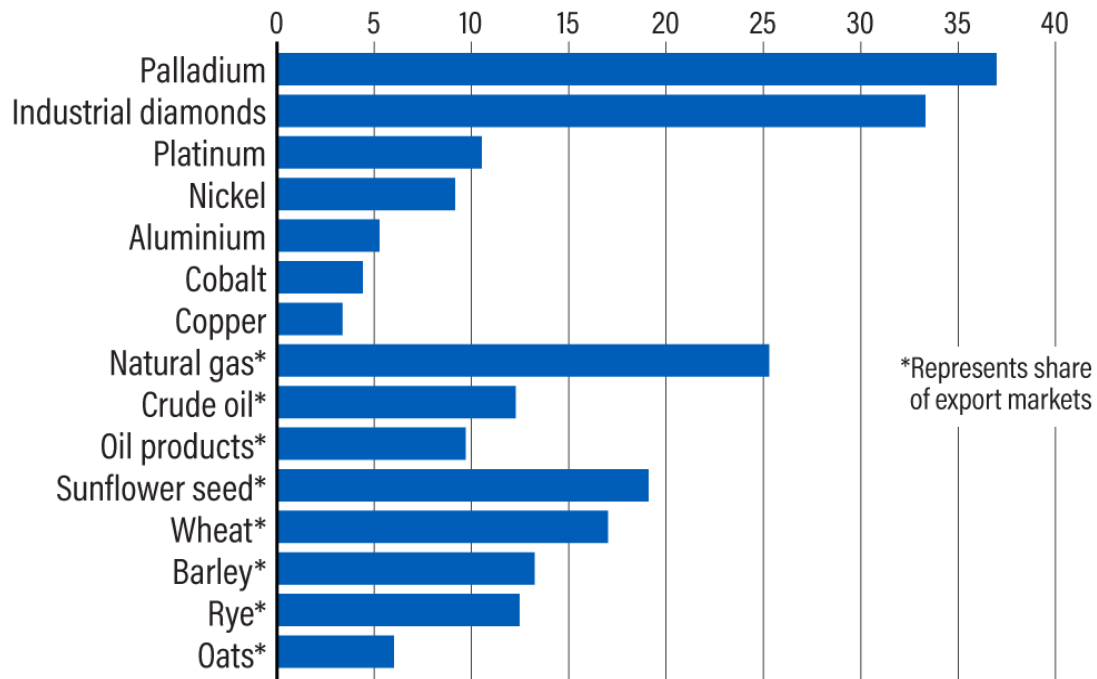


Figure 27 [Percentage of Russian Exports to World Markets (Feb 22). Source: thenationalnews]

c. Climate change. In recent years, mainly due to increased environmental pollution, there has been a significant change in climate conditions worldwide, with extreme weather events such as extreme heat and severely cold winters. This results in increased energy consumption for both cooling in summer and heating in winter. The result is a huge need (demand) for hydrocarbons (gas and oil) for energy production.

d. The new environmental policy of the states. According to the Green Deal adopted by the European Union, the target is 0% CO₂ pollutants by 2050. In this context, efforts have been made to replace coal and oil with natural gas and to include renewable energy sources in the energy mix. This switch from oil and coal to natural gas creates an increase in the demand for natural gas which, in conjunction with the given production, leads to higher prices and consequently to an energy crisis.

4.3 Energy Resources in the Eastern Mediterranean

As mentioned above, the traditional providers of oil and gas for both European and Eastern Mediterranean countries are the Middle Eastern countries, Russia and the Caspian countries (Azerbaijan). In recent years, huge oil and gas reserves have been discovered in the Eastern Mediterranean region, which is expected to change the energy map of the region in the near future. Typically, according to the report of the US Geological Survey, there are 1.7 billion barrels of oil and 3.7 trillion barrels of natural gas.

Gas-field	Probable reserves (bcm)	Discovery date
Tamar - Israel	280	2009
Leviathan - Israel	620	2010
Aphrodite - Cyprus	128	2011
Zohr - Egypt	845	2015

Table 1 (Possible Quantities of the Main Eastern Mediterranean Gas Injections)

In addition, new exploration is constantly being carried out to discover new deposits with quite positive results, mainly in the area of Egypt (Nile area), and the maritime area between Cyprus - Syria and Israel.

Currently, the only exporter of natural gas in the region is Egypt and is expected to remain so until around 2030. From that point onwards, it is estimated that Cyprus will also contribute to the gas export sector as it will exploit the volumes of the Aphrodite field. Israel, for its part, will initially meet its needs with the smaller fields and subsequently use Leviathan for exports.

In Greece, there are significant indications of large Zohr-level gas fields, which are expected to be confirmed by further seismic surveys. However, the whole effort is facing obstacles, mainly due to environmental concerns from organizations. However, this is not expected to seriously affect the progress of the exploration.

The discovery of these deposits and the prospect of new ones in the region creates areas of cooperation and tensions in the region, both between local actors and international actors operating in the region. Typical examples of cooperation are the agreements between Israel - Cyprus - Greece, Egypt - Cyprus, Egypt - Greece, while on the contrary, similar examples of confrontation are observed between Turkey - Cyprus - Greece, Turkey - Greece, Israel - Lebanon.

In general, it is clear that the situation in the global energy scene, with the discovery of the huge deposits in Egypt, Cyprus and Israel, as well as the exploration of the Greek deposits under investigation, creates new data and new energy and geopolitical balances in the wider region. The geopolitical value of the Eastern Mediterranean is increasing dramatically, creating new data for the energy security of the countries in the region and great prospects for combating energy dependence on Russian gas in the medium term.

Greece has a unique opportunity to become an excellent gas hub in Europe, either by pipeline or in the form of liquefied natural gas with appropriate facilities and,

in a second year, to ensure its energy security and create the conditions for exports that will help its economic growth by exploiting the fields under exploration.

4.4 Energy Competition between the Eastern Mediterranean States.

As mentioned in the previous section, the discovery of large deposits in the Eastern Mediterranean region has created both opportunities for cooperation and competition to secure a larger share of the energy pie.

The main local actors in the Eastern Mediterranean energy marathon are Egypt, Israel, Cyprus, Greece and Turkey. In addition to the local actors, international actors (USA, Russia) are also involved in the region, trying to secure influence and geopolitical benefits over the energy resources. In particular, the US is trying to gain economic and geopolitical benefits through its energy giants of interest. Russia, on the other hand, is trying to preserve its position in the supply of energy resources to Europe, which seems to be threatened by the existence of deposits in the Eastern Mediterranean.

Egypt and Israel are currently the main exporters of natural gas in the region to Europe. Israel even exports gas to Egypt via a pipeline through Jordan.

Israel has a dispute with Lebanon over plot 9 of the sea between Lebanon and Israel, which Israel claims ownership of. In this energy dispute, the role of the arbitrator has been taken over by the United States. Nevertheless, possible cooperation between Israel - Lebanon and Cyprus seems to be the best possible solution for resolving the dispute between the first two. Possible legal recourse to resolve the issue in institutions would be extremely time-consuming and in no way serves the conflicting parties energetically.

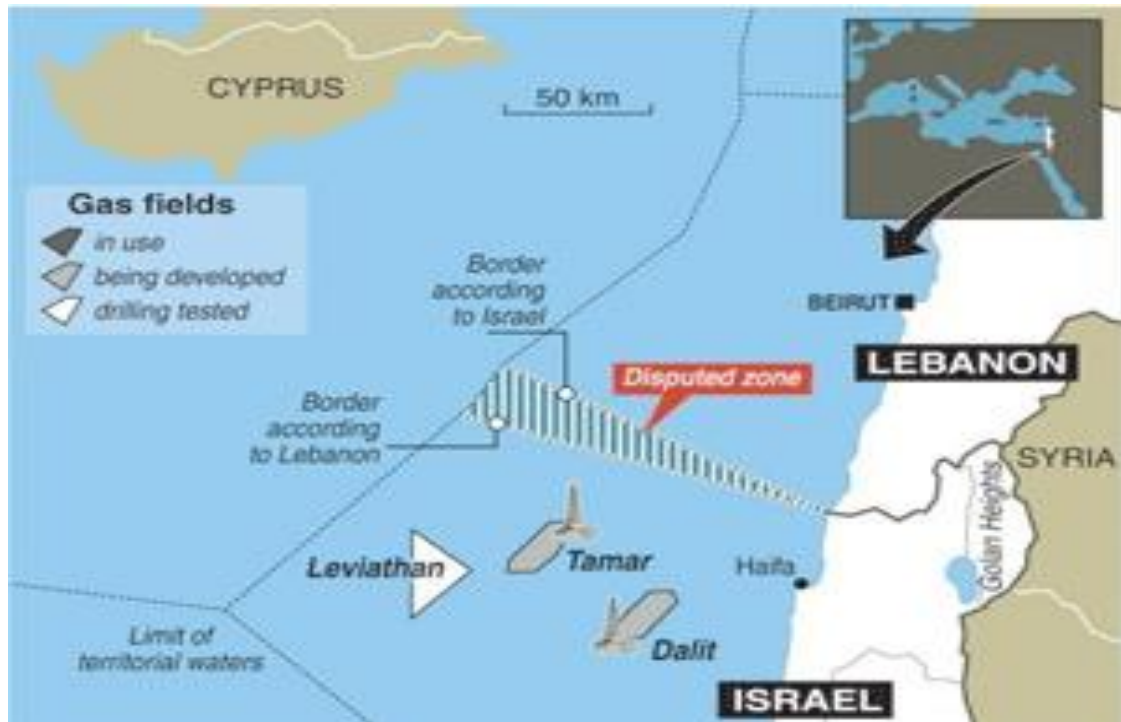


Figure 28 [Maritime Area Disputed by Israel - Lebanon. Source:arabamericanews.com]

Competition has also been created between Turkey, Greece, Cyprus and Egypt. Turkey has made it clear to all parties involved, in every possible way, that any exploitation of hydrocarbons in the region is not possible without its participation. This is creating tensions in the region, as it is trying to gain access to areas to which it has no rights. One of the areas in which Turkey is challenging is the area to the southeast of Cyprus, where it is claiming parts of the EEZ on behalf of the Turkish Cypriots. The details of Turkey's behavior and especially its evolving relations with Greece will be developed in the next chapter.

This behavior of Turkey has led to the creation of 2 trilateral partnerships between the other local actors. In particular, the trilateral partnerships that have been created are:

- a. Greece - Cyprus - Egypt
- b. Greece - Israel - Cyprus.

Both partnerships, behind the scenes, have the support of the United States, which wants energy development in the region as it involves energy giants of American interests and because they can be important tools in Europe's energy decoupling from Russia.

In general, the huge quantities of hydrocarbons in the region and the prospect of new discoveries are a source of tension and controversy and seem to be another

destabilizing factor in the region. This fact keeps investors cautious, as investments in the energy sector require geopolitical stability because they take a long time to pay off. The environment in the Eastern Mediterranean is generally geopolitically unstable, but in recent years and in the light of the huge economic and energy advantages, transnational partnerships have been established which promote energy and geopolitical stability in the region.

4.5 The EastMed Pipeline (Greece - Cyprus - Israel): Importance - Prospects - Benefits.

In 2018, a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed between Greece, Israel and Cyprus for the construction of an undersea gas pipeline to transport natural gas from Israel and Cyprus via Greece and Italy to the countries of the European Union.

It was an ambitious project, which was intended to help significantly in the effort to wean the European Union off Russia.

EastMed is a subsea gas pipeline, which would be built to connect the deposits in the Levantine Sea (Leviathan) with those in Cyprus (Aphrodite) and would end in Italy and from there with a network of pipelines to the rest of Europe. This project is planned to have a total length of about 1900 km (1350 km subsea and about 550 km onshore) and be located at a maximum depth of about 3 km. The capacity of the pipeline is estimated to be up to 10 billion m³ with the possibility to increase the capacity in the future. The initial cost of the pipeline construction has been budgeted at \$5.2 billion.



Figure 29 [East Med pipeline. Source: Ta nea. gr]

This pipeline is a project, which can be described as a project with many challenges. First of all, it is a project which is 70% subsea, with all the difficulties that

this implies in terms of the difficulties that may arise during its construction. Its cost is quite high and there are several doubts as to whether it is viable.

The EastMed pipeline is a project of great strategic, geopolitical, economic and energy importance, both for the countries involved in the project and for the European Union in general. This is due to the following factors:

a. Increases the energy security of the participating countries and especially those whose deposits it exploits, since a prerequisite for exporting gas to third parties is the coverage of domestic gas needs.

b. It increases the geopolitical importance of the countries through which it passes by making them important energy or transit hubs as significant quantities of natural gas will pass through them and be stored in order to be transported to third countries.

c. It can be the means for the European Union to become independent of Russian gas imports. This is expected to have a catalytic effect on the political pressure that Russia can exert on the European Union since it will be greatly reduced since its main lever of pressure (natural gas) will have been degraded.

d. It can be a very good alternative to the South Gas Corridor for the transport of natural gas to Europe, bypassing pipelines originating from Russia and passing through Turkey, especially in the current period of time when relations with Russia are tense and Turkey is considered unstable and volatile in its behavior. And in this case, the ANCC is energy decoupling from Russia.

The EastMed pipeline, when the study for its construction started, was presented as a project with great potential for transporting gas from the fields of Israel and Cyprus to Europe via Greece. This pipeline also had the support of the United States, which was expressed by the presence of the American ambassador to Israel at the signing of the interstate agreement between the participating countries. As the study for the project progressed, a number of challenges emerged, the most important of which were:

a. The financial viability of the project. Due to the large subsea section of the pipeline, extremely high costs for construction and maintenance are required, and it was not certain that they could be covered by export revenues as the sales price would rise significantly making the pipeline uncompetitive with its Russian counterparts or those from the Caspian and Middle Eastern countries.

b. The construction part. The construction of the pipeline presented several difficulties, as well as its maintenance and the issue of repairing any parts of the

pipeline, due to the great depth at which the pipeline would be installed. This concern was particularly acute for the part of the pipeline that would cross the Greek territory because of the seismicity of the terrain, which could cause damage to the pipeline section.

c. Whether the quantities of natural gas exported to Europe would cover its energy needs to a sufficient extent to eventually achieve its gradual independence from Russian gas.

The EastMed pipeline is a real gamble for all 3 countries involved. Their cooperation is not only limited to the energy field. The 3 countries have developed in recent years very close cooperation in the military field, in which Egypt is also involved, as the pipeline is a point of friction with Turkey. Turkey opposes the construction of the East Med without its participation. This creates tension and friction between the countries involved, as Turkey is stubbornly making unreasonable demands in the energy game, which cannot be accepted by the other countries in the region.

In addition to the already existing difficulties of the project, there is also the distancing of the US from the project. The main reason that formed the basis of the argumentation for this 'freeze' was the economic viability of the project, since the construction of the pipeline, which would have transported fossil fuels, was contrary to the strategy of green energy, i.e. the production of energy from renewable sources. In fact, the reason was that, with this move, the United States wanted, on the one hand, to ease tensions in the region and, on the other hand, it was found that the pipelines were now creating dependency relationships and did not serve its interests to the extent that the movement of LNG via ships and terminals did. Let us not forget that the US is the world's largest exporter of LNG and pipelines are outside their philosophy.

Finally, the recent crisis in Ukraine has demonstrated in the most emphatic way the energy dependence of Europe on Russian gas. The freezing of the Nord Stream 2 pipeline, but also the inability to meet the increased energy needs of European countries only from LNG or via Norway created the conditions for the East Med pipeline to reverse the climate, as Europe will need gas from new pipelines that are not dependent on or restricted by Russia.

4.6 Energy Cooperation between Greece and Egypt: Declaration of EEZ - Significance - Prospects - Benefits.

Greece and Egypt have traditionally had very good relations. These have improved to a very significant degree since 2014, with the election of President El Sisi to power. Characteristically, Greece, in the context of this friendship, would seek to promote the development of relations between Europe and Egypt.

The practical part of this "friendship" is reflected in the very good economic relations between the two countries. Greece is one of the best investors in Egypt. It is in the 5ⁿ position among the European Union countries investing in the Egyptian economy. Moreover, Egypt is considered one of Greece's most important trading partners in the Middle East and North Africa.

In 2015 came the discovery of the huge Zohr field, which would cover both Egypt's gas needs and exports to third countries. Due to the size of the deposit, Egypt may become a future energy hub. The following factors may also contribute to this:

- a. The existence of 2 major LNG facilities, which are among the very few in the Eastern Mediterranean region.
- b. The control of the Suez Canal, one of the world's most important choke points through which major sea and land trade routes pass.
- c. Its geographical location. It is located at the junction of the Asian and African continents. It is close to European markets, to other suppliers (Libya, Algeria, Israel, Cyprus) of energy raw materials (oil, gas, etc.) and to regional markets (Persian Gulf).
- d. The powerful navy¹, which is able to ensure the security of Egypt's sovereign rights and the physical security of the gas export platforms and gas liquefaction facilities.

On 06 August 2020, the partial maritime delimitation agreement between Greece and Egypt was signed in Cairo. This is an extremely important agreement, which is the result of years of negotiations between the 2 sides. This agreement creates a new situation in the Eastern Mediterranean, as it enhances the potential and prospects of the region's energy projects, which aspire to link the vast reserves of the South-Eastern Mediterranean basin (Zohr, Leviathan, Aphrodite) with the demanding energy

¹ Egypt's navy is the 12^o most powerful navy in the world and the 1st African military power, according to Global Fire Power for the year 2022.

markets of Europe. In addition, it also effectively addresses the illegal Turkish-Libyan memorandum in the maritime area that Ankara is trying to challenge.

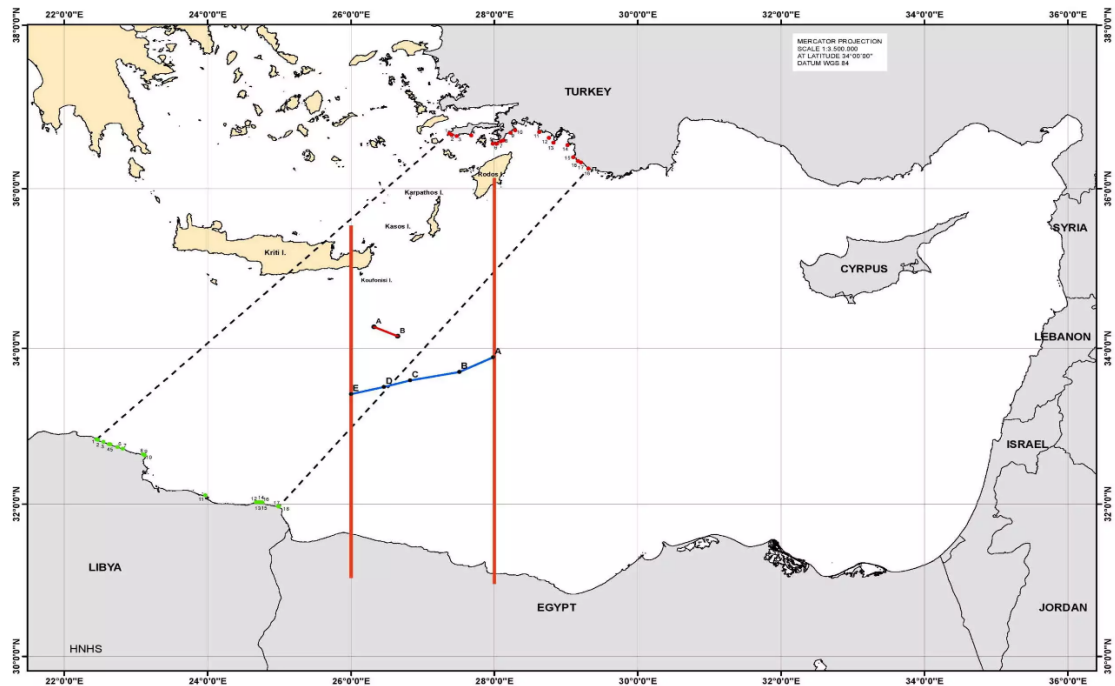


Figure 30 (Map of the Partial EEZ between Greece and Egypt. Source: [www. to.vima. gr](http://www.to.vima.gr))

The agreement between the 2 countries is in parts² and includes 5 articles. The agreement was described by experts in the field as fully balanced and a very important point of particular importance is that the agreement enshrines the jurisdiction of the islands in maritime zones, a point which the Greek side strongly emphasizes and is fully in line with the International Law of the Sea.

The prospects and benefits that arise from the bilateral agreement are several and very important for both Greece and Egypt and if we can summarize them, in order of priority, they would be the following:

- a. The sovereignty of the islands in maritime zones was confirmed, which gives a clear message to the Turkish side.
- b. The illegal Turkish-Libyan Pact is practically annulled.
- c. The Agreement is fully in accordance with the International Law of the Sea, is entirely legal and in no way prejudices the interests of the Parties.

² The agreement was described as partial because it concerns only Greece and Egypt and does not include points where Libya (West) and Cyprus with Israel (East) should be part of the agreement. The reasons are understandable since in the West, on the one hand, there is no political stability for participation in such agreements and, on the other hand, the signing of the illegal Turkish-Libyan pact, which creates shadows in relations between the countries, while in the East, the maritime zones of Cyprus have not been clarified, due to Turkey's unrealistic claims on behalf of the pseudo-state and Israel's dispute with Lebanon.

- d. It facilitates the exploration of hydrocarbons in new areas (South-East Crete), since the landscape is now clear with the delineation of the maritime zones.
- e. The sovereign rights of the contracting countries are safeguarded.
- f. A strong message is sent in all directions that International Law and the Law of the Sea are the most appropriate solution for the peaceful resolution of disputes.
- g. The country's diplomatic power is increasing, based on the principles of international law.
- h. Libya, which signed the illegal pact with Turkey, is at an impasse and finds that an agreement with its neighbors (Greece - Egypt) is a one-way street and the most legitimate option. This is reinforced by the fact that there are now 2 fully legal EEZ agreements (Greece - Italy and Greece - Egypt) surrounding it.

4.7 Summary

In this chapter, a reference was made to the energy problems and the energy crisis that is plaguing the countries of the European Union. Also mentioned was the energy dependence of European countries on Russia, which was emphatically shown in the recent Russian-Ukrainian crisis, which resulted in the Russian invasion of March 2022.

The energy reserves of the Eastern Mediterranean countries were mentioned and what prospects are created by their existence, especially in the area of energy independence from Russian gas and the sharp increase in the geopolitical value of the wider region. In addition, a reference is made to the prospect of discovering new deposits, particularly in Greece.

As a result of the discovery of these deposits and the prospect that is created in the energy and geopolitical chessboard for the countries that will be involved, a fierce competition is developing between local, regional and international actors, each for their own reasons, in order to secure the maximum possible benefits.

Finally, a detailed reference is made to 2 facts about the energy security of the region and their wider impact on the energy security of Europe. These are, the signing of the agreement for the construction of the East Med submarine pipeline, which, although until recently seemed to lose ground and the prospect of its construction was frozen, due to both the economic cost and the technical and geopolitical challenges, however, with the latest developments in Ukraine, interest seems to be revived and gain new momentum. The second important event is the energy cooperation and the partial

demarcation of the EEZ between Greece and Egypt, which sends clear signals regarding the application of international law in inter-state agreements and practically annuls the illegal Turkish-Libyan pact. In addition, it sharply increases the diplomatic power of the participating states, safeguards their sovereign rights and largely clarifies the landscape between them with regard to marine hydrocarbon exploration.

CHAPTER 5

TURKEY: THE "BULLY" OF THE EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN

5.1 Introduction

In this chapter, we will discuss Turkey in more detail. Turkey is a very important regional actor in the Eastern Mediterranean region, which periodically makes its presence felt in every possible way.

Firstly, a reference will be made to Turkey's current energy situation and its future prospects. In this context, its aspirations in the Eastern Mediterranean region, mainly in the energy and geopolitical fields, will also be mentioned.

In the context of both energy competition and the pursuit to gain as favorable a position as possible on the geopolitical chessboard, a reference will be made to the "Blue Homeland" project and the illegal Turkish-Libyan Pact. In both cases, Turkey's expansionist tendency and its attempt to gain access to the region's energy resources are clearly evident.

Finally, directly linked to both of the above two projects is the rivalry between Greece and Turkey, which has historical roots and largely determines their neighborhood and their wider relations. This rivalry reached a critical point in 2020, when relations between the two countries reached a breaking point, both with the migration crisis and the crisis with the ORUC REIS research vessel.

5.2 Energy Situation in Turkey: Present And Future.

Turkey is a country with huge energy needs, both because of its industrial activity and because of its large population. It is a fact that the western part of Turkey and the coastline require larger quantities of energy than the central and eastern part of the country, which is more sparsely populated but does not have the same industrial activity as the western part.

The annual energy supply in 2019 amounted to approximately 150 Mtoe, of which 45 Mtoe came from domestic production and the rest through imports. Total final consumption for the same year amounted to about 100 Mtoe.

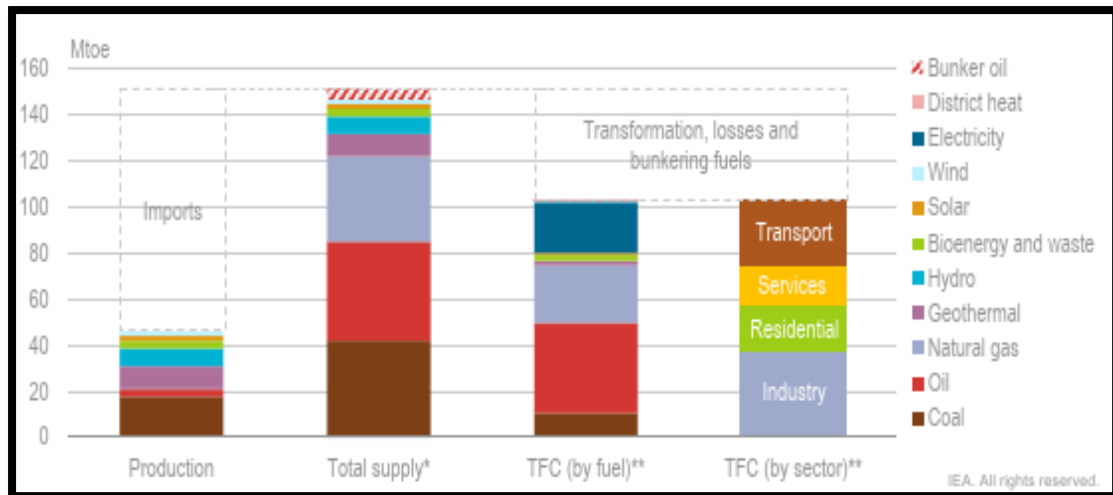


Figure 31 [Turkey's Energy System by Fuel and Sector (2019). Source: IEA Turkey 2021]

Turkey's energy production is mainly based on fossil fuels (Lignite, Oil, Natural Gas). The share in the year 2019 was about 85%. Energy production from lignite in recent years has decreased significantly as a result of Turkey's shift to greener forms of energy. In the opposite direction, the use of natural gas has increased. It is typically reported that, annually, Turkey needs 50 - 60 bcm of natural gas to cover about 1/3 of its needs.

Turkey, due to the fact that its energy production is based on fossil fuels, is an energy-dependent country, as it has to import the quantities of gas and oil it needs to meet its energy needs. It imports 99% of the natural gas and 93% of the oil it uses. The main countries, its main suppliers, are Russia, Azerbaijan and Iran, from which gas and oil are transported by a network of pipelines. In addition, it also imports LNG from Algeria and Nigeria, taking advantage of the 4 LNG stations existing on Turkish territory.

In recent years, Turkey has invested heavily in renewable energy production (Solar, Wind, Hydropower, etc.). Typically, it is reported that investments in renewable energy production so far exceed \$50 billion. The share of RES in total electricity generation is 52.5%, which makes Turkey one of the fast-growing countries in this sector worldwide.

Going forward, Turkey is promoting the further development of renewable energy production, with an emphasis on hydrodynamic energy and solar energy through photovoltaic panels, in order to increase their share in the current energy mix, which amounts to 44% of the total fuel mix.

Great hopes have also been pinned on the imminent completion of the Akkuyu Nuclear Power Plant to diversify the energy mix, bringing nuclear energy into play and further reducing Turkey's dependence on fossil fuel imports. Of course, the construction of the project in question raises additional concerns, mainly at the environmental level (waste management, etc.), but also because of the security in the wider region in the event of a nuclear accident and the fact that Turkey is about to gain access to technology that could make it a nuclear power in the future under certain conditions.

A noteworthy event, which will be a catalyst for reducing Turkey's energy dependence on gas imports from third countries, is the recent discovery of a large gas field (405 bcm) in the Tuna -1 field in the Black Sea, the exploitation of which can cover part of domestic needs. Of course, research for the discovery of new hydrocarbon deposits continues and new explorations in the Black Sea region have been prepared for the future since the explorations in the SE Aegean Sea did not yield the expected results and also resulted in a conflict with Greece¹.

To conclude on Turkey's future energy prospects, it is necessary to mention that in recent years there has been an effort to exploit Green Hydrogen technology. It is estimated that in less than 10 years, Turkey will be able to transport Green Hydrogen by taking advantage of the existing gas pipeline network (about 10%).

5.3 Turkey's Ambitions in the Eastern Mediterranean.

As mentioned above, Turkey is a highly energy-dependent country, with a high proportion of fossil fuel imports (oil and gas) from third countries to meet its huge energy needs. The consumption by sector of activity and by type of energy in the year 2018 is shown in the chart below.

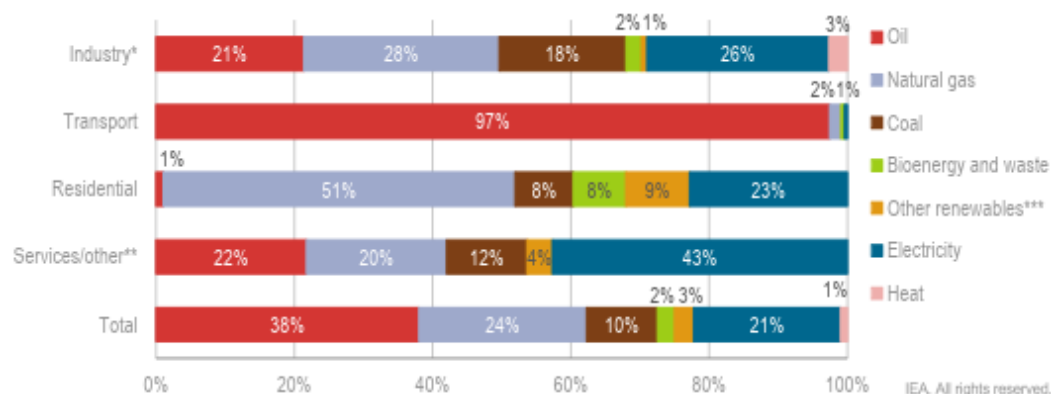


Figure 32 [Energy Consumption in Turkey by Sector and by Fuel (2018). Source: IEA 2020]

¹ In August 2020, tension was created in the area SE of Castellorizo, as a result of the issuance of an illegal NAVTEX, on the part of Turkey, for the Turkish research vessel ORUC REIS to conduct seismic surveys in an area of Greek interests.

However, Turkey has taken significant steps to gradually become energy independent, investing in renewable energy sources (Hydrodynamic, Wind, Solar), having a nuclear power plant under construction in Akuyu, and exploring for hydrocarbons in the Black Sea and the South-Eastern Mediterranean. Its energy independence from imports of mainly natural gas and oil from third countries (Russia, Azerbaijan, Iran) will give it the necessary impetus to realize its ambitions in the Eastern Mediterranean.

Turkey's aspirations in the Eastern Mediterranean are specific, enduring and timeless.

Turkey's main strategic objective is to gradually become energy self-sufficient by diversifying the sources of energy production (Oil, Natural Gas, Renewable Energy Sources, Nuclear, and Green Hydrogen). This will boost the Turkish industry for further growth, free from the "stress" of energy shortage. Moreover, it sets the basis, in a second year, to proceed with energy and/or natural resources exports (depending on the developments in the exploration activities).

In line with Turkey's above-mentioned pursuit of energy sufficiency, Turkey aims to become an energy hub both in the wider Eastern Mediterranean region and in Europe, taking advantage of its strategic position in the region. Turkey has a large number of pipelines, which transport oil and gas from countries such as Russia, Azerbaijan, Iran, Iraq and Georgia to the Balkans and Europe, providing significant transit fee revenues and equally important geopolitical benefits. With the recent Russian-Ukrainian crisis, this can be particularly beneficial for Turkey, as it can provide an alternative for supplying Europe with oil and gas in the latter's attempt to wean itself off Russian gas. An important project and pipeline that can play a special role is TANAP, which connects the Caspian gas fields in Azerbaijan with Turkey and has the potential to connect to TAP via Greece, supplying Europe with Azerbaijani gas, which is also cheaper than the Russian and Iranian gas. In addition, using its 4 LNG terminals, it can become a major LNG hub in the Eastern Mediterranean region.

Finally, a major ambition of Turkey, which is also a personal bet and goal of its President, is to obtain a permanent seat on the UN Security Council. In order to achieve this goal, Turkey is making considerable efforts to prove that it is an important regional power with considerable influence that can play a particularly important role in the region, which is tense, but also in the wider Eurasian region. Examples that show this effort are its interventions in Syria and Iraq (although they concealed an attack against

the Kurds in the background) and the recent Russian-Ukrainian crisis. Particularly in the latter, Turkey is taking advantage of its geopolitical trump cards, such as its proximity to the area of operations, its possession and control of the Bosphorus straits, and the very good relations with the two rivals, in order to gain a peacemaking role on the one hand, which it will be able to redeem later in order to implement its aspiration for a permanent seat in the UN Security Council and on the other hand, to re-engage with the United Nations. USA and Europe, with which relations have been severely disrupted over the last two years. In general, this is a standard tactic of Turkey, which tries to exploit international and regional crises in the region in order to project its geopolitical value and strategic role and to gain material and geopolitical benefits.

5.4 The "Blue Homeland" Doctrine (The "Mavi Vatan" Doctrine).

The "Blue Homeland" doctrine is a doctrine of the Turkish Navy, which has become a fundamental beacon of Turkish foreign policy and defense.

This doctrine was developed by three admirals of the Turkish Navy. It was created in response to the Seville Charter², and clearly challenged (but with no institutional basis) the Greek and Cypriot positions on the coastline and the rightful EEZ, which were entirely consistent with the International Law of the Sea, to which Turkey is not a signatory.

The purpose of this particular doctrine is threefold. First, it aims to make Turkey the greatest naval power, not only in the Eastern Mediterranean but in all the seas surrounding it (the Black Sea and Aegean). This will work to increase its regional influence in the region, serve its interests, act as a deterrent to other actors from getting involved in issues that concern it, and make itself a necessary ally to international actors who have interests in its wider area of influence.

A second purpose, if we can characterize it as such, of this doctrine, which is not separate from the previous one, is the maintenance and strengthening of Turkey's maritime borders in the three seas (Aegean, Black Sea and Eastern Mediterranean). Turkey is clearly claiming maritime areas, in violation of the international Law of the Sea, with the ultimate aim of accessing energy deposits from which it will reap economic, energy and geopolitical benefits.

² The Seville Map was an attachment to an article by two scientists from Spain (University of Seville), which showed the EEZs of EU member states and validated Cyprus' claims to its EEZ.

Finally, the third dimension of an ultimately unified, as we can see, the purpose is the containment of Greece, the European Union, and most recently the United States, from trying to limit Turkey's sovereignty and rights in the wider region.

The "Blue Homeland" doctrine has, as mentioned above, become an integral part and pillar of Turkey's foreign policy. The President of Turkey, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, made sure to emphasize its fundamental importance for Turkey both in his statements and in his photographs on the map depicting the 'Blue Homeland', which gave the doctrine an institutional character in the most official way.



Figure 33 [Graphic illustration of the "Blue Homeland" Doctrine. Source: Defence Point]

The "Blue Homeland Doctrine", having as its cornerstone the sovereignty of the three seas and the safeguarding of Turkey's interests in the wider region against its competitors (Greece, Cyprus), gave the impetus for the development of the Turkish Navy in order to make it strong and self-sufficient in order to respond to the new challenges that were emerging in the region.

The Turkish Navy has drawn up an ambitious program to build domestically produced ships. This program started in 2003, but was interrupted in 2007 due to political developments ("Ergenekon" case) and remained inactive until July 2016, when the coup against the current President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan took place, which was not successful and led to fundamental changes in the hierarchy and the backbone of the Turkish Armed Forces. This point in time is also the "ground zero" point, as the "Blue

Homeland" doctrine and the Turkish Navy's program to build the national ship was restarted, which would lead to the achievement of the ANSF at all levels (Tactical - Operational - Strategic).

Today, Turkey has made enormous progress in its Navy, implementing the plan. It has built the MILGEM-class corvette and KILIC-class missile boats. In addition, it has gone into indigenous torpedo production, as well as the development of an indigenous command and control system. In addition to the above, the Anadolu Amphibious Operations Ship, which was designed to have the capability to recover F-35 aircraft, which Turkey would supply as a member of the program, is currently under construction. With its withdrawal from this program, Turkey redesigned the ship to be used as a platform for launching unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs), which are manufactured by the domestic military industry. The unmanned surface vessel, which aspires to become a new offensive weapon in the Turkish Navy's quiver, is still in the field testing phase.

From the above, it is clear that the Turkish Navy is dutifully following the necessary steps in order to support the "Blue Homeland" doctrine and to gain lost ground against its other competitors in the region, which will allow it to implement its strategic objectives ("Blue Homeland", participation in hydrocarbon extraction, power projection).

5.5 The Turkish-Libyan Pact: Prospects - Pursuits.

The Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between Turkey and Libya, signed on 27 November 2019 and made public on 28 November 2019, aims at defining maritime zones, in effect defining an Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ). This memorandum was signed by the President of Turkey and the Head of the Government of National Unity (GLA). In addition to this, military cooperation agreements were signed between the 2 parties.

This memorandum of cooperation caused strong reactions, both in neighboring states, such as Greece and Egypt, and within Libya, as it violated fundamental principles of international law, the Vienna Convention, principles of the Law of the Sea, which, as is known, Turkey does not accept and has not signed. In addition to this, it blatantly violated the sovereignty of third countries (Greece, Egypt) as it did not take into account important geographical areas (Crete, Rhodes, Kastelorizo), which were interfering in between.

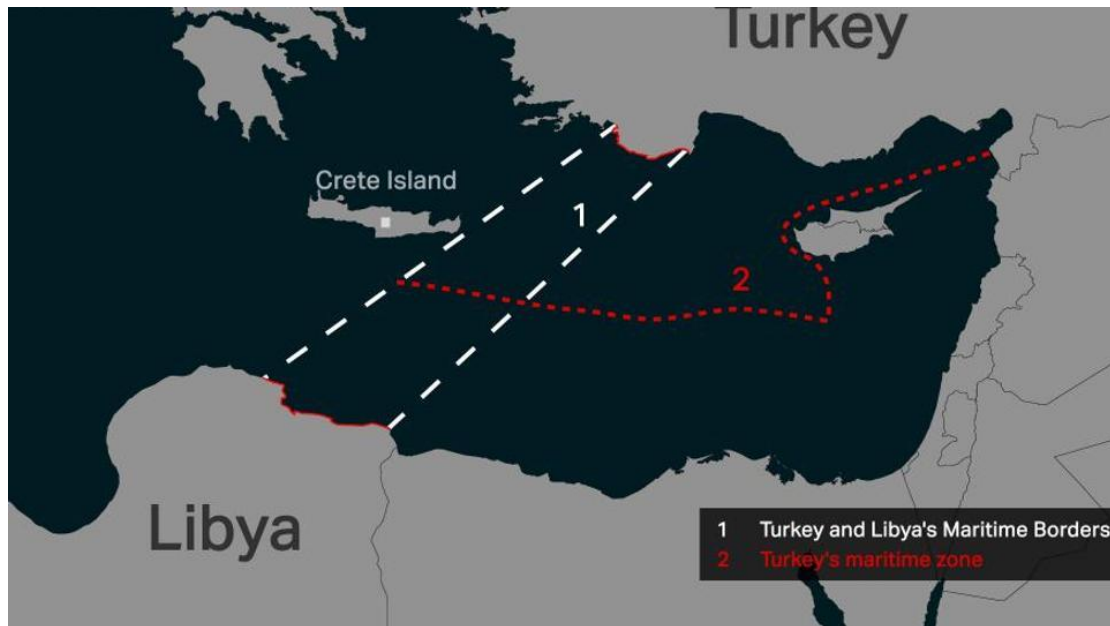


Figure 34 [Map of Turkey-Libya zones according to the Memorandum. Source: TRTWorld]

Turkey's aim, especially since the signing of the Memorandum of Understanding, was to annihilate Crete and Kastelorizo in the declaration of an EEZ by Greece with Cyprus and Egypt. In other words, it directly affected the declaration of an EEZ by Greece.

Moreover, it became emphatically clear that Turkey could not be excluded from the distribution of maritime areas in the Eastern Mediterranean. The protection of the corresponding rights of the Republic of Northern Cyprus (pseudo-state) is also part of the same framework.

The Turkish- Libyan MoU, as mentioned above, has no prospects, as it has not been accepted by any other country or international organization as it violated International Law and the Law of the Sea. Moreover, this MoU would not produce legal effects for third parties (Greece, EU), in accordance with the principle of 'res inter alios acta'.

Finally, the Memorandum of Understanding has not been ratified by the Libyan Parliament and there is no prospect of it at present, as both it and the agreement on military cooperation between the two countries are facing strong opposition in the Libyan Parliament.

5.6 Extortion of Europe Through The Instrumentalization of The Migration Issue (Economic - Geopolitical Pursuits).

In March 2011, a civil war broke out in Syria, between the Islamic State, opponents of Syrian President Assad's regime, the Government forces and other armed

groups, which were supported behind the scenes by other regional actors. One of the results of this civil conflict was the destruction of important populated areas. This, combined with the fact that the area of operations was located on Syria's northern border, led to a large wave of migration to various countries, but mainly to Turkey and from there, mainly by illegal means, to the European Union.

Turkey received about 45% of the total number of refugees from Syria³. Until 2015 a large number of refugees and irregular migrants reached the European Union via Turkey and then via Greece or Cyprus or Bulgaria. This is the so-called Eastern Mediterranean route. Because of these high migratory and refugee flows, the EU has concluded a joint declaration with Turkey to deal with the phenomenon.

The declaration between Turkey and the EU provided for a total funding of €6 billion. The purpose of this declaration is to tackle irregular migration. Turkey committed to contributing decisively to a drastic reduction of irregular arrivals at the borders of the European Union and by 2019 there was a reduction in illegal migration flows of up to 90%. By February 2020 the reduction in irregular migration flows was increasing. At the end of February, Turkey's attitude changed. On the occasion of the death of Turkish Army soldiers in Idlib, Syria due to an attack by Syrian and Russian forces, but with the real reason was blackmail and pressure on the EU to secure more funds and political benefits and favorable treatment on various issues, Turkey unilaterally opened and pushed irregular migrants to the Greek-Turkish border claiming that the EU border is open. As a result, there have been huge concentrations of irregular migrants along the Evros River with the main effort focused on the Kastanies region. In addition, there has been an increase in the flows from the Turkish coast toward the islands, especially Lesbos. All entry efforts were supported by Turkish police, Military Police and Turkish Coast Guard forces. Eventually, the flows to Greece and thus to the EU were prevented.

Greece, using all appropriate methods to deal with the threat and always guided by the principles of international law, managed to maintain the integrity of the European borders and to expose Turkey's attempt to instrumentalize the migration issue and the suffering of migrants and refugees.

³ According to 2015 figures (UN Refugee Agency), the total number of refugees who fled Syria to neighbouring countries is about 4 million. Turkey's share corresponds to about 1,800,000 refugees.

Turkey continues to this day, albeit to a significantly lesser extent, to help underground the promotion of irregular migrants, mainly starting from the Turkish coast and heading for the Greek islands and islets. Turkey's aim is to blackmail the EU to secure additional funding for refugees, taking advantage of the 2016 declaration.

In addition, Turkey, always using as a threat the opening of its borders and the risk of uncontrolled migratory flows spilling over to the EU, which may lead, among other things, to the influx of extremist Muslim elements (jihadists) on European soil, is trying to cash in geopolitically, seeking immunity and support for its actions in the wider region (e.g. acceptance of the Turkish - Libyan Pact, provocative actions against Greece and Cyprus, claims to hydrocarbon deposits, etc.). Greece, always using appropriate deterrent actions and relying on the principles of International Law, combined with financial assistance from the EU, has managed to keep the European borders intact.

5.7 Greek - Turkish Competition in the Eastern Mediterranean.

The Greek-Turkish antagonism is not a phenomenon that has appeared for the first time in recent years. It is a phenomenon that has its roots in the depths of history and is multilevel and complex. In recent years, however, with the discovery of promising natural gas deposits, another dimension of competition has been added to this competition, but it is inextricably linked to all the others, creating periodic explosive situations in the region.

Turkey, from the time of the Greek Revolution, could not forgive Greece for seceding from the Ottoman Empire, considering it to be one of the most privileged provinces of the Empire. This rivalry continued over time, with bloody conflicts, victories and defeats on both sides, political disputes, claims, etc.

Over the last 50 years or so, an evolving competition has developed, mainly concerning maritime zones (continental shelf, 12 nautical miles) but also airspace. To the already existing competition, in the last 15 years, the energy competition between the two states has been added in order to secure a share in the energy pie of the Eastern Mediterranean. The following is a summary of the main points of friction between the two countries, which have plagued relations between them and have led to the current situation.

The first confrontations begin in 1973 when Turkey makes claims to the Greek continental shelf. The crisis between the 2 countries over this issue is so deep that the possibility of an armed conflict between them has reached a breaking point. The deep rift between them was exacerbated by Turkey's invasion of Cyprus in 1974 and its occupation of 37% of the island. This event brought Greek-Turkish relations to a nadir and further increased war scenarios. Greece unilaterally resorted to the UN Security Council and the International Court of Justice in The Hague, but without being able to find a solution to the problem of the continental shelf, conflict was avoided for the time being.

Since then and until today, Turkey has adopted a policy of increasing claims and disputes. In 1975, while the dispute over the continental shelf was still going on, Turkey contested the extent of its national airspace. The strange thing is that from 1931 until 1975 Turkey did not contest the extent of the airspace. From 1975 to the present day Turkey has disputed the 10 nautical miles of airspace and says it should be limited to 6 nautical miles, where Greece has territorial waters. This claim is absurd since Greece has a legal right to extend its territorial waters and airspace to 12 nautical miles.

This tactic of contestation translates into violations by Turkish warplanes within the EEZ, as well as overflights over Greek islands and islets, which are intercepted by Greek fighters, often after fierce air battles.

From 1996 onwards, after the Imia Crisis, where the two countries were again within touching distance, literally, of the war, which was averted after the intervention of the United States. Turkey continued its rhetoric of disputes and provocations with statements by Turkish officials about the illegal occupation of islands, their militarization, illegal occupation of small islets, illegal return of illegal immigrants, etc., in order to create artificial tension in order to achieve its strategic objectives, depending on the time period, such as grey zones in the Aegean, preventing Greece from exercising its legitimate sovereign rights, taking barter for "decent" behavior.

An important point of friction between the two countries is the exercise of Greece's right to extend its territorial waters from 6 nm to 12 nm. This right is legally enshrined under the Law of the Sea and Greece reserves the right to exercise it at any time. On top of this right of Greece, Turkey has responded with a permanent "casus belli", which applies forever.

Directly related to the above point of friction is the next one, which has to do with the Turkish claims of illegal occupation. In reality, the above claim has no legal

basis as Turkey, in accordance with Articles 15 and 16 of the Lausanne Treaty, has renounced all rights to the Dodecanese complex and the adjacent islands and ceded them unconditionally and with full sovereignty to Italy. Later, Italy by the Treaty of Paris⁴, the Dodecanese with the adjacent islets came under the possession of Greece.

And in the other points of friction - competition between the 2 countries, the central idea is the issues of sovereignty and especially maritime sovereignty. Such issues are the competence within the Athens FIR as well as the competence to conduct Search and Rescue operations. According to the international treaties⁵, the Search and Rescue competence coincides with the Athens FIR, which is disputed by Turkey claiming that it has the means to conduct Search and Rescue operations in an area, which extends up to the middle of the Aegean Sea, within the Athens FIR.

In recent years, with the discovery of huge quantities of hydrocarbons in the Eastern Mediterranean, but also the increased needs in combination with the energy dependence on third parties (Russia, Iran, Arab countries), the issue of defining the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) by the two countries were added to the already explosive mix of disagreements. In August 2020, Greece and Turkey again reached situations of increased military tension, with the fleets of the two countries remaining for a long time outside their naval bases, performing maneuvers at a short distance, since Turkey took out the research vessel ORUC REIS for illegal hydrocarbon exploration in an area within the Greek EEZ. At the same time, it was illegally threatening research vessels and drilling boats of international energy giants within the Cypriot EEZ in case they were drilling in it. This fact constitutes an obstacle to the exploitation of the deposits in the Cypriot EEZ and the exploration of new deposits within the Greek EEZ.

The result of the competition between the 2 countries is:

- a. The creation of a permanent negative climate between them.
- b. The increasing tension, which may turn into an armed conflict at any time.
- c. The increase of armaments in the region, in order to give each country a tactical, quantitative, and qualitative advantage over the other.

⁴ Treaty of Paris Peace Treaty, took place on 10 Dec 1947

⁵ IMO Convention of 1979, signed by Greece 20 August 1980

d. The delay in the exploitation of the already existing extremely large hydrocarbon (oil and gas) fields in the Eastern Mediterranean and in the search for new ones that will further contribute to the effort of energy self-sufficiency and independence from Russia.

5.8 Summary

Turkey is objectively one of the most important actors in the Eastern Mediterranean region and the wider Middle East region, both because of its size and because of its pace of development. Its aim is to play a role as a regional power and to have a say in what happens in the region.

The main problem facing Turkey is its extremely high energy dependence on third countries (Russia, Algeria, Azerbaijan, etc.). This is why it is trying to enter the energy game of the Eastern Mediterranean. It is also trying to exploit the Black Sea deposits and increase the share of renewable energy in its energy mix.

In this context, it tries to create alliances and conclude agreements with countries in the region (Libya), which are not in accordance with International Law and also tries to undermine the efforts of other countries (Greece, Cyprus) by exploiting their own resources.

Finally, in this chapter, a reference was made to the blackmail methods used by Turkey in order to gain economic and geopolitical benefits by exploiting the migration issue, as well as to the competition between Greece and Turkey on sovereignty issues, which affect their relationship and the prospect of cooperation at the commercial and economic level.

CHAPTER 6

FINDINGS - CONCLUSIONS - WAYS OF DEALING WITH TURKISH EXPANSIONISM IN THE EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN

6.1 Introduction

The analysis of the previous chapters shows that the Eastern Mediterranean is a geographical area, in the coming years is expected to play an important role in geopolitical, energy, economic and commercial terms. Already, the great importance of the region, geopolitically and energetically, has begun to become apparent in the current period of time, with the Russian-Ukrainian crisis acting as a catalyst accelerating the need to exploit its unique advantages and characteristics.

This chapter will present the findings and conclusions resulting from the previous analysis, taking into account all the latest developments, in all fields, which are taking place in the region and changing the equilibrium.

In addition, focusing on the microcosm of our region, an attempt will be made to present some proposed solutions to deal with Turkey's expansionism in the Eastern Mediterranean, both dynamic, so as to achieve the goal of deterrence, and milder, in the context of creating some form of cooperation.

6.2 Findings - Conclusions

From the analysis carried out in the previous chapters, very important conclusions emerge regarding the Eastern Mediterranean region, and the multilevel competition (energy, geopolitical) between the various actors of the region, i.e. local, regional and international. The main conclusions that emerge are as follows:

a. In the Eastern Mediterranean region, there are important local actors who are trying to gain an advantageous position in the region on the geopolitical chessboard. They are assisted in this effort by powerful international players, who in turn are trying to consolidate

their influence in the region, gaining economic benefits and consolidating their spheres of influence.

b. The economy of the Eastern Mediterranean countries is mainly based on services and not particularly on industrial production. In recent years, some countries have seen an increase in the industrial sector, contributing significantly to GDP (Turkey, Greece, Israel).

c. Major historical events in the region (Syrian War, Libyan Civil War, rise of the Islamic State), have degraded important states in the region (Syria, Libya), almost excluding them from the events and, in addition, have created the conditions for the development of terrorist groups and the creation of instability in the wider region.

d. The Eastern Mediterranean, due to its morphology, which is very much like a closed lake, is extremely affected from an economic and geopolitical point of view by the situation prevailing in the 2 choke points included in it (Suez Canal, Dardanelles Straits). Blockage of the choke points can create significant problems for the commercial and economic activity of several states in the choke points. Moreover, the latest crisis in Ukraine has clearly shown that states controlling the entrances to areas of strategic importance (Black Sea), such as Turkey, can exploit this to their advantage, supporting one side or the other or alternately, in order to gain geopolitical barter.

e. Countries such as Greece, Cyprus, Egypt and Israel should create an axis to contain the terrorist threats to the EU, which have been created by the rise of actors such as the Islamic State. In addition, they should make a decisive contribution to tackling illegal immigration, which is a Trojan horse for extreme terrorist groups but also creates conditions for the emergence of social problems in EU countries.

f. The Eastern Mediterranean is an important energy crossroads between the 3 continents. Many oil and gas pipelines from countries such as Russia, Azerbaijan, Persian Gulf countries, etc. pass through it. This makes it a huge energy hub to and from the EU and the countries of Western and Northern Europe.

g. Major international actors (USA, Russia, China) are active and competing in the Eastern Mediterranean region in order to gain the strategic advantage to achieve their Objectives. The US and Russia are competing in the energy and geopolitical fields, while China is currently focusing its efforts on the economic and commercial fields rather than the former two.

h. The Eastern Mediterranean region has historically been an area of energy competition between powerful international actors, as it has been and continues to be a major energy artery to EU countries. Today, with the discovery of huge oil and, above all, natural gas reserves, this competition has grown and expanded as other countries (Israel, Egypt, Greece, Cyprus), in whose region the deposits in question are located, have entered the scene, as well as countries (see Turkey), which are opportunistically trying to gain a significant share of the energy pie and become an influential factor in it, without having the right to do so.

i. The Eastern Mediterranean region can be the vehicle for the EU's energy decoupling from Russia. In particular, the Ukrainian crisis and the soaring hydrocarbon prices have highlighted the urgent need for the EU to find alternative ways of supplying itself with oil and gas in order to avoid energy blackmail by Russia. This can be achieved by a network of pipelines that can bypass Russia as a producing country and use countries such as Azerbaijan, countries of the North Caucasus and other countries in the region. This could be done using the countries of Azerbaijan, Azerbaijan, Russia, North Africa and the countries of the Eastern Mediterranean (Israel, Egypt, Cyprus).

j. The Eastern Mediterranean can effectively contribute to the diversification of Europe's energy mix, as the climatic conditions favor the development of RES (Solar, Wind, Hydrodynamic, etc.), which can make a significant contribution in terms of energy, while significantly reducing the emission footprint of pollutants and helping to protect the environment and mitigate climate change.

k. Development of new Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) plants and expansion of existing ones, in order to exploit the advantages they provide. The main one is that LNG terminals are not dependent on intermediate countries and the flow of supply is not stopped if there is a problem (technical or otherwise) to a destination country, as it is possible to bypass the problem. In addition, the possibility of storing LNG makes it possible to build up reserves for supplying countries in the event of violent disruption. The Russian-Ukrainian crisis has demonstrated the urgent need for such stations and their important contribution to the effort to achieve energy self-sufficiency for countries through alternative supply routes.

l. However, for the development of the Eastern Mediterranean region and the exploitation of the region in terms of energy, a necessary condition is the cooperation of all countries that can play an important role in the region (Greece, Cyprus, Israel, Egypt, Turkey), without unfair competition and threats, so that the know-how, the workforce, the energy

reserves can be exploited for the benefit of the wider region and Europe. At present, this seems to be a utopian scenario, since Turkey is not prepared to cooperate with the other countries of the region in harmony, but only on its own terms, which are sovereign, but are not justified by its current situation.

6.3 Ways for Greece to Counter Turkey's Expansionism in The Eastern Mediterranean

Turkey, as mentioned in Chapter 5, is a strong regional power in the Eastern Mediterranean. With a rapidly growing industry and armed forces that are quite strong and technologically at a fairly good level, it is trying to gain a leading position in the region. It could, however, be described as a giant with feet of clay, as it does not have solid foundations.

To begin with, in recent years, its economy seems to have been on a tightrope, culminating in the last two years, when the Turkish economy seems to have reached a nadir, with continuous devaluations of the Turkish Lira and declines in its main indices.

In addition, Turkey faces a serious problem of energy dependence on third countries to power its industry and to meet its overall needs.

This problem of its energy dependence leads it to confrontations and expansionist policies in order to expand into areas with oil and gas deposits, which are in turmoil due to civil conflicts or terrorist groups (Libya, Syria), trying to exploit these deposits through Turkish energy companies. On the other hand, without any willingness to cooperate within the framework of international law, it is trying to gain access to the deposits of the Eastern Mediterranean by coveting the deposits of the Republic of Cyprus and by carrying out illegal exploration in the Aegean Sea in areas under Greek sovereignty.

Against the expansionism of Turkey, Greece should develop a defense mechanism, multidimensional and complex, which will effectively deal with all its dimensions. The main ways of countering Turkish expansionism, from Greece's point of view, are as follows:

a. Promoting Turkey's expansionist policy in the international community. It is necessary to highlight the violations of good neighborliness that Turkey is committing and the violations of international law.

b. Efforts to develop the country into an energy hub in the Balkan region, the Eastern Mediterranean and the EU in general, taking advantage of the 2 LNG stations [Revithoussa (existing), Alexandroupoli (under construction)]. The Russian-Ukrainian crisis and the desire of the EU countries for energy independence from Russia are decisive factors in

this. Success in this sector, apart from the economic benefits it will bring, will also ensure geopolitical and strategic benefits.

c. Maintaining and strengthening alliances and cooperation ties in economic, energy, political and military terms with the powerful actors in the Eastern Mediterranean region (Egypt, Israel), the Balkans and the wider Mediterranean and North African region (Algeria).

d. Cooperation in the energy sector with the Republic of Cyprus for the optimal exploitation of natural gas deposits. Construction of an LNG terminal on the island in order to promote Cypriot gas to the markets in cooperation with the Greek shipping industry. The construction of the LNG terminal is expected to significantly help the export of Cypriot gas in case the East Med construction does not succeed. In addition, it will make Cyprus an important energy hub in the region and increase its strategic value but will also be a deterrent to any expansionist plans by Turkey.

e. Strengthening ties with the US and the EU in the economic and geostrategic field. Providing facilities to the US or EU military forces with military installations in specific areas of Greece (e.g. Crete, Alexandroupolis), in order to increase the political and military value of Greece.

f. Expanding trade links with China to promote Chinese products in the EU. This will add an additional strategic partnership with a superpower, without any conflict of interest with other powerful international actors (the US), strengthening the country's economy and making it a trading hub in the Eastern Mediterranean.

g. Creating a favorable climate (affordable taxation, labor force, provision of privileges) for attracting investments by large companies in various sectors of the economy (mainly trade, construction, energy, tourism, etc.) This will have a twofold benefit because on the one hand, it will upgrade the country's economy, significantly improving several economic indicators such as liquidity, competitiveness, etc. At the same time, it will reduce unemployment and increase the purchasing power of the population, as there will be an inflow of money and income. On the other hand, the existence of investment in a country can also be a potential protective shield, as large companies, especially in sectors such as energy, construction, industry and tourism, are supported by their respective national governments, which 'protect' their investment because it is an important source of revenue.

h. Seeking cooperation with Turkey in various sectors such as trade, industry and tourism, as Turkey is a country with a large population and undeniable geopolitical value due to its size and geographical location. This cooperation could be extremely beneficial for both countries, helping their economic development and mitigating many of their differences. A prerequisite, of course, is the absence of mistrust on both sides and the elimination of threats and claims on the part of Turkey.

i. Finally, in addition to all of the above, one of the most important factors in countering Turkish expansionism, which ultimately allows the development of the preceding, is the demonstration of strong military power and deterrence capability. This is achieved by modernizing the existing military equipment and procuring new, technologically capable of meeting the operational needs of the future. In addition, it is necessary to conduct small, medium, and large-scale exercises, which will showcase the degree of training, readiness and deterrence capability of the Greek Armed Forces. In recent years, despite the difficult economic situation in which the country has found itself, the Armed Forces have managed to maintain a very high level of combat effectiveness of their units, a fact that was confirmed in the most emphatic way in the crises of April and August 2020.

j. Strengthening of the national defense industry and investments with private domestic companies active in the field of defense systems, in order to acquire know-how in areas such as the manufacture of general purpose and combat vehicles, unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs and UCAVs), advanced munitions, optics, sensors, electronic systems and communication systems, in order to create the conditions for exports to neighboring countries and the wider region. On the one hand, this will provide security to cover domestic equipment needs and, on the other hand, it will make the country an important exporter of military equipment to the wider region, a role that Israel has played so far and that Turkey, having taken significant steps in this direction, is trying to play.

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