

**ISTANBUL KULTUR UNIVERSITY
INSTITUTE OF GRADUATE STUDIES**

**IMPACTS OF EAST MEDITERRANEAN GAS FORUM ON THE ENERGY
SECURITY**

MA Thesis by

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Department: International Relations

Programme: International Relations

Supervisor: Prof. Dr. ÇAĞLA GÜL YESEVİ

SEPTEMBER 2023

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ÖZET

Doğu Akdeniz, yüzyıllar boyunca dünyanın en önemli stratejik geçiş güzergahlarından biri olmuştur. Günümüzün modern dünyasında da durum aynıdır; Doğu Akdeniz bölgesindeki ülkeler arasında pek çok çatışma bulunmaktadır. Bu tez kapsamında, bölgedeki uzlaşmazlık ve çatışmalar, Doğu Akdeniz Gaz Forumu'na odaklanılarak incelenmiştir. Ülkelerin bugünkü sorunları geçmişten farklıdır. Bölgenin sorunları incelendiğinde, enerji güvenliğinin önemli sorunlardan biri olduğu anlaşılmaktadır. Enerji güvenliği ve son yıllardaki doğal gaz keşifleri önemli konulardır. Bu tez, Doğu Akdeniz Gaz Forumu'nun enerji güvenliğine etkisine odaklanmıştır. Tezde kullanılan liberal kurumsalcılık teorisi, Doğu Akdeniz Gaz Forumu'nun tarihi gelişimini ve değişimini açıklamak için en uygun teoridir. Avrupa'nın içinde bulunduğu enerji krizinden çıkabilmesinde, Doğu Akdeniz Gaz Forumu'nun etkisinin olup olmadığı incelenmiştir. Bu çalışmada, Doğu Akdeniz Gaz Forumu'nun gelişiminin, Avrupa enerji krizine etkisi anlatılmıştır. Avrupa enerji krizinin çözümünde etkili olacak bir örgütlenme olan Doğu Akdeniz Gaz Forumu, Türkiye ile iş birliği sağlandığında güçlenebilecektir. Bölgedeki enerji tedariki ile ilgili çatışmalar, Türkiye'nin bölgedeki iş birliği sürecine dahil olması, ikili anlaşmalar yapması ile mümkün olacaktır. Bunun yanında, taraflar gerekli şartlarda anlaşabilirlerse, çatışmaların son bulması mümkün olabilecektir. Türkiye'nin bölge ülkeleri ile ikili ilişkilerini geliştirmesi, Doğu Akdeniz'de iş birliğini güçlendirecektir. Tezde ayrıca Doğu Akdeniz Gaz Forumu'nun yıllar içinde gösterdiği gelişim incelenmiş, üye ülkelerin bu süreçte nasıl roller oynadıkları açıklanmıştır. Türkiye Cumhuriyeti bu forumun üyesi değildir. Bu tez, Doğu Akdeniz Gaz Forumu ve Türkiye'nin bölgesel enerji güvenliğine etkileri ve katkıları üzerinde durmaktadır. Bölgede etkili bir aktör olan Türkiye'nin Doğu Akdeniz Gaz Forumu üyesi İsrail, Yunanistan ve Mısır ile ilişkilerine yer verilmiştir. Doğu Akdeniz'deki ülkelerin birbiri ile olan ilişkileri tarihi bir bakış açısı ile ele alınmıştır. Doğu Akdeniz enerji güvenliği meselesi, üye devletler arasındaki çok taraflı iş birliği yanında, Türkiye'nin dahil olacağı bir sürecin sonunda gerçekleşebilecektir.

Anahtar kelimeler: Doğu Akdeniz, Doğu Akdeniz Gaz Forumu, Doğal Gaz, Enerji Güvenliği, Enerji Krizi, İş birliği, Liberal kuramsalcılık, Türkiye, İsrail, Mısır, Yunanistan.

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ABSTRACT

For centuries, the Eastern Mediterranean has been one of the world's most important strategic transit routes. In today's modern world, the situation is the same; there are many conflicts between the countries in the Eastern Mediterranean region. In this thesis, the regional disputes and conflicts are analyzed focusing on the East Mediterranean Gas Forum. The problems of countries today are different from those of the past. Considering the regional problems, it is understood that energy security is one of the critical problems. Energy security and recent natural gas discoveries are important issues of the Eastern Mediterranean region. This thesis focuses on the impact of the East Mediterranean Gas Forum on energy security. The liberal institutionalism theory used in the thesis is the most appropriate theory to explain the historical developments and evolution of the East Mediterranean Gas Forum. It is analyzed whether the East Mediterranean Gas Forum impacts Europe's ability to overcome its energy crisis. In this study, the impact of the development of the East Mediterranean Gas Forum on the European energy crisis is explained. The East Mediterranean Gas Forum which is an international organization will be effective in solving the European energy crisis. It will be strengthened in its cooperation with Türkiye. Conflicts related to energy security will be able to be solved with Türkiye's involvement in the cooperation process in the region and with its bilateral agreements. In addition, if the parties agree on the necessary conditions, it will be possible to end the conflicts. Improvement of bilateral relations between Türkiye and regional countries will strengthen cooperation in the Eastern Mediterranean. The thesis also analyzes the development of the East Mediterranean Gas Forum over the years and explains the roles played by the member countries in this process. The Republic of Türkiye is not a member of this forum. This thesis focuses on the regional energy security implications and contributions of the East Mediterranean Gas Forum and Türkiye. As an influential actor in the region, Türkiye's relations with Israel, Greece, and Egypt, the East Mediterranean Gas Forum members, are analyzed. The relations among the countries in the Eastern Mediterranean are analyzed from a historical perspective. The energy security in the Eastern Mediterranean can be accomplished with multilateral cooperation among the member states of the East Mediterranean Gas Forum and with the help of Türkiye's involvement in this cooperation process.

Keywords: Eastern Mediterranean, East Mediterranean Gas Forum, Natural Gas, Energy Security, Energy Crisis, Cooperation, Liberal institutionalism, Türkiye, Israel, Egypt, Greece.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

EMGF	: East Mediterranean Gas Forum
EEZ	: Exclusive Economic Zone
EU	: European Union
GCA	: Greek Cypriot Administration
SGCA	: Southern Greek Cypriot Administration
IEA	: International Energy Agency
LNG	: Liquefied Natural Gas
USA	: United States of America
MoU	: Memorandum of understanding
GNA	: Government of National Accord
MFA	: Ministry of Foreign Affairs
JDP	: Justice and Development Party
COP21	: The Paris 21 st Climate Conference of the Parties
FSRU	: Floating Storage Regasification Unit
GIAC	: Gas Industry Advisory Committee

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CHAPTER 1:

1.1. INTRODUCTION

The Levant region, called the "Eastern Mediterranean," has historically been one of the most critical regions of the Mediterranean in terms of political and economic aspects, depending on its geopolitical position. The Eastern Mediterranean has always attracted the attention of world powers because of its strategic location. For centuries, the Eastern Mediterranean has played a vital role in shaping today's modern world (Tziampiris, Asderaki, 2021). It has been in the middle of Africa, Asia, and Europe for thousands of years. The Eastern Mediterranean has been one of the most important areas where humankind has fought. For many civilizations and empires, control of the fertile lands and maritime trade was seen as a national idea, and various struggles ensued to maintain power and were their influence. Though it made great strides in the Industrial Revolution, the Eastern Mediterranean was not able to achieve parity with other regions. As tensions over gas availability in the region intensified, it directly impacted efforts to resolve the gas crisis. National interests continue to clash as those in charge seek to secure economic dominance in energy. Over the past decade, many essential gas fields have been discovered in the Eastern Mediterranean. After that littoral countries in the region have started to seek out these fields' resources.

Looking back today, the energy crisis has sparked new conflicts in the modern world, leading to severe problems, disagreements, and clashes. These recent gas discoveries in the Eastern Mediterranean have also brought another level of competition between states. The development of the region's natural gas reserves has intensified regional rivalries. Previously, resources found on the seabed had been seen as conducive to global and regional cooperation, but this has not been the case in recent years. The competition for these reserves has turned into a geopolitical battle, with economic partnerships morphing into political-military alliances. The prospects for development in the East Mediterranean are uncertain, and there is a heightened risk of conflict as discoveries have not progressed as expected. As noted above, the significant amounts of offshore natural gas discovered in recent years in the Levantine basin have the potential to transform the region into an oil and gas production hub and supplier.

In addition to that, in our age where international relations and collaborations are changing rapidly, energy resources have become influential in the internal and foreign policies of countries in every period. In particular, energy security is a major actor in

the energy policy of each country. Energy security is to ensure that energy is constantly supplied from reliable, clean, and various sources or countries in appropriate amounts, at affordable prices, and consumed with high efficiency (Telli, 2015).

Energy security is not a new issue for the countries of the European Union. The Russian-Ukrainian war has affected region deeply, and Russia has applied sanctions to Ukraine. In response to the embargoes imposed by Western countries on Russia, Russia has significantly reduced the gas flow, especially to Europe (Anadolu Ajansı, 2023). As sanctioned, Russia reduced gas resources incrementally to Ukraine and then Ukraine and EU faced a gas crisis as a result of the Russian-Ukrainian war. The European Union (EU) has taken various measures to fill natural gas storages, find alternative sources, and reduce dependence on Russian gas. This situation led to extraordinary gas prices in the markets reaching record levels. As a result of that, in the region several littoral countries, namely are; Egypt, Israel, Cyprus, and, more recently, Greece, have all created national energy research and exploitation programs with the intention of extracting, using, and exporting their underwater resources to varied degrees (Helsinki Times, 2022). With the noteworthy exception of Türkiye, the majority of Eastern Mediterranean nations founded in 2019 an intergovernmental body named the East Mediterranean Gas Forum to coordinate their actions and collaboration on natural gas concerns. Türkiye is conspicuously excluded from this forum, despite its geographical location, which allows it to transfer natural gas to Europe (Solomou, 2022). From this point of view, energy security in the Eastern Mediterranean is important from a geopolitical and political standpoint. Related to this, how recently explored foreign energy resources will affect the energy policies of riparian countries is another issue. After the foundation of the East Mediterranean Gas Forum, member states had several meetings. However, recently, budget of the project and some internal and external factors have affected its developments as well. For this reason, members understand that the East Mediterranean Gas Forum cannot be successful without Türkiye. For the present, Türkiye is not a part of the East Mediterranean Gas Forum. They do not want to join, but it is clear that without them, the forum will not be able to reach its goals. That is why it is so important to have strong bilateral relations. Türkiye's cooperation process will only be possible with high-level meetings and talks. It is only possible with table talks and negotiations if there are good relations between these countries. Cooperation is necessary. From this point of view, the East

Mediterranean Gas Forum has a few ministerial meetings during certain times. There can be both technical and political meetings, and technical meetings can take place over a shorter period. Political meetings involve top-level meetings with the member states' ministers, and these can be sent through the managers' reports. Continuity is also key for these meetings.

In addition to this, there is historical disagreement between Greece, the Southern Greek Administration, and Türkiye. Despite all this, members of the East Mediterranean Gas Forum are aware that Türkiye has the longest coastline in the Eastern Mediterranean region, after Egypt. So, it has brought a different point of view that is related to the forum. Cooperation is going to be at the center of the forum. Rather than conflict, the East Mediterranean Gas Forum is going to have cooperation. One of the main aims of the forum is cooperation as well. Also, with Türkiye, it seems much more visible.

This thesis analyzes the impacts of the East Mediterranean Gas Forum on Energy Security and a possible impact for Europe from exiting the energy crisis. In addition to energy security, the Republic of Türkiye is not a member of the EU and EMGF organization, but I will examine the contribution of Türkiye's Eastern Mediterranean policy and its role. From this point of view, in this thesis, I will highlight the East Mediterranean Gas Forum and its impacts to see if a possible solution exists or not for solving the energy crisis by using liberal institutionalism.

The thesis aims to analyze the impacts of the East Mediterranean Gas Forum on the energy security of the region and how this organization can potentially provide solutions to the gas crisis in the Eastern Mediterranean. The analysis will be based on the liberal institutionalism theory, European Union, which is well-suited for understanding the dynamics of organizations and their impact on international relations.

The liberal institutionalism theory suggests that international cooperation and the establishment of institutions can lead to the creation of shared norms and values, which can promote stability, cooperation, and peace among states. This theory emphasizes the importance of international institutions in promoting collective action and resolving conflicts among states.

The East Mediterranean Gas Forum is a non-governmental organization that seeks to foster collaboration and coordination between the countries involved in the region. It is composed of a number of countries, including Egypt and Cyprus, as well as Italy and Israel, as well as Jordan and the Palestinian Authority. The purpose of the forum is to facilitate the exploitation of natural gas resources in the region through collaboration and coordination (Mazel, 2019).

By analyzing the impacts of the East Mediterranean Gas Forum on the energy security of the region, the thesis will assess the effectiveness of this institution in promoting cooperation and resolving conflicts among the participating states. The analysis will also examine the potential solutions that the forum can offer to address the gas crisis in the Eastern Mediterranean.

Overall, liberal institutionalism theory provides a valuable framework for analyzing the role of the East Mediterranean Gas Forum in promoting cooperation and resolving conflicts in the region. The analysis can provide insights into the potential of international institutions in promoting stability and security in the Eastern Mediterranean and may offer recommendations for improving the effectiveness of these institutions in achieving their goals.

Contributing to the literature on the impacts of energy security is the aim of my thesis, in addition to the East Mediterranean Gas Forum, and regarding that can there be a solution for Europe's gas crisis by using data analysis. There are some states that are involved in the competition to get profits from the Eastern Mediterranean gas reserves (Evaghorou, 2020). Also, they are members of the East Mediterranean Gas Forum: Greece, Cyprus, France, Egypt, Jordan, Israel, Italy, and Palestine. The strategic positions of these states are explored so carefully. My thesis aims to identify the Eastern Mediterranean gas crisis by explaining the East Mediterranean Gas Forum and if the East Mediterranean Gas Forum has a solution for solving that gas crisis or not. In the thesis, I am going to seek out the East Mediterranean Gas Forum to analyze the gas crisis from different points of view and from different perspectives.

The East Mediterranean Gas Forum has been established as a USA-backed coalition to address disagreements among coastal states over how to fairly share maritime wealth in light of recent hydrocarbon discoveries. The forum aims to promote

cooperation and coordination among the participating states in the development of the region's natural gas resources (Wolfrum, 2019).

The East Mediterranean Gas Forum (EMGF) has been instrumental in consolidating the role of member states as energy suppliers in the region's increasing energy demand. To achieve this, it is essential to collaborate with state actors who are willing to establish mutually beneficial relationships, both bilaterally and multilaterally. This has been demonstrated by the maritime delineation agreements, energy exploration agreements, and infrastructure arrangements (Joseph, Peedikayil 2022).

It is wise to recognize the importance of Egypt and Türkiye as gateways for both bilateral and multilateral energy exchanges with other regional countries. For example, the implementation of the Arabian Gas pipeline, which runs via Syria, Lebanon, and Türkiye, can unlock the energy resources of these countries, which are not primarily members of the East Mediterranean Gas Forum (EMGF).

This can lead to improved relationships between the territories in which the pipelines will be constructed, as the motivations behind pipeline policy remain a potential area of study in the region. Therefore, the tendency to foster positive interdependence, combined with the determination of the Member States to address the aforementioned issues, can be essential in allowing the EMGF to flourish as a beacon of optimism for the region (Joseph, Peedikayil 2022).

The formation of the East Mediterranean Gas Forum highlights the importance of international cooperation and coordination in addressing disputes over the exploration of resources in the Eastern Mediterranean (Fahmy, 2020). By bringing together key stakeholders in the region, the forum provides a platform for dialogue and negotiation and may offer a framework for resolving conflicts and promoting stability and prosperity in the region (Smyrnioti, 2019). In addition to that, there is not any established organization like the East Mediterranean Gas Forum. There are similar organizations to the East Mediterranean Gas Forum. For instance, OPEC, is a worldwide organization that was established in 1960 by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the Republic of Iran, the Republic of Iraq, the Republic of Kuwait, and the Republic of Venezuela. Its primary objectives are to ensure the stability of the oil market, protect the interests of oil exporters, and regulate the price of crude oil. It is responsible for

setting production quotas and determining the amount of oil each member state can produce. This helps to maintain the control and stability of oil prices. Furthermore, it monitors other factors that can affect oil prices. Currently, 13 countries are members of OPEC, including Saudi Arabia, Iran, Iraq, Kuwait, the United Arab Emirates, Qatar, Libya, Algeria, Nigeria, Gabon Congo, Equatorial Guinea and Angola the United Kingdom. As a result, the global oil production of OPEC accounts for around one-third (Turkdegs.org, 2023).

However, the effectiveness of the East Mediterranean Gas Forum in achieving its goals remains to be seen. The forum will need to address significant challenges, such as balancing competing interests among its members and addressing concerns over sovereignty and territorial disputes. The success of the East Mediterranean Gas Forum will depend on the willingness of its members to engage in constructive dialogue and compromise and on the ability of the forum to serve as a neutral and impartial arbiter in resolving disputes (Çubukçuoğlu, 2021).

Türkiye's critical task is to be heard and to push its proposal among a sea of other parties. It is important for Ankara to change the bilateral negotiation geometry between Turks and Greeks and address the complex, multipartite nature of the EEZ dispute. Türkiye should be able to engage all stakeholders and create a positive atmosphere in order to invent options for mutual gain and try to pull away some members of the coalition, like Jordan and Italy, with carrots and sticks (Çubukçuoğlu, 2021).

According to that hypothesis, this thesis discusses the impacts of the East Mediterranean Gas Forum on energy security. By putting the East Mediterranean Gas Forum at the center of analysis, which in the Eastern Mediterranean is based on liberal institutionalism theory, in the light of recent energy discoveries, the East Mediterranean Gas Forum can have a possible impact on solving the gas crisis in the Eastern Mediterranean region. What are the impacts of it on the energy security issue?

So, beginning from a different perspective in the thesis, if Türkiye were a member of the East Mediterranean Gas Forum, it would be an intermediary between Russia and Europe. Also, with the participation of Türkiye; the East Mediterranean Gas Forum would be successful as a project, and it could have been a much more serious and respectful project. Related to that, if Türkiye were a member of the forum,

the project's cost could be more affordable. In addition to that, the East Mediterranean Gas Forum was established as a regional organization, but over time it turned into an international.

The East Mediterranean Gas Forum's thought is, to carry the gas from Israel and Egypt through Cyprus. Otherwise, with membership in Türkiye, the forum could carry the gas through Türkiye, and it would be easier for Europe because Türkiye has land in Europe.

Liberal internationalism is a body of ideas based on the idea that peaceful cooperation between political communities can advance the world. Theories of liberal internationalism focus on the best ways to set up and change the global order. Liberal internationalists typically support the view that international organizations are important. Supranational political institutions (such as the European Union) and international institutions, especially the United Nations (Eminel, 2016), advocate diplomacy and multilateralism as the best options for states to act. They also tend to see violence as a last resort. Liberal internationalism and realism were often at odds with each other, and in the late 20th century, the discipline of international relations was seen as a conflict between different iterations of these two traditions. Internationalists accuse realists of being overly fatalistic; realists accuse them of being naive and even dangerously utopian.

Liberal internationalists have emphasized a variety of reforming agents and tactics. Some people's transformation will be primarily impacted by a change in global morality. The creation of international institutions is necessary for others. The majority of modern internationalists place a strong emphasis on institutions. Thus, institutions emerged as mediators that facilitated cooperation between states on issues of common interest. Liberal institutionalists specify that states are more concerned with absolute gains. Absolute gain is the benefit that a particular policy or action brings to states, regardless of its impact on other states (Heywood, 2011). For instance, Türkiye's exclusion from the East Mediterranean Gas Forum. There are so many states on the forum like Egypt, Jordan, Israel, Palestine and etc. However, Türkiye is not a member of the East Mediterranean Gas Forum, and with the cooperation of Türkiye the East Mediterranean Gas Forum is going to pass another level of development.

1.2. Research Design and Methodology

The qualitative method is a research method that can be used to identify which ideas prevail and how conceptual mechanisms construct common interests. Qualitative research has strong principles in various disciplines. Mostly, it is used in the social sciences. In this thesis, it will be used to learn about natural gas resources and energy security. By using this method, this study aimed to identify which ideas matter in actors' energy policy discourses.

1.3. Methodology

Researching such a complicated and unwritten topic contains different chapters and information. This topic is not in the literature, and this makes the thesis much more significant. This thesis has one method, and it is the qualitative method. This study will count on the qualitative method to explain the energy security in the Eastern Mediterranean region and how it is shaped in the region and reflects the East Mediterranean Gas Forum's members' actions and choices. In other words, this study believes that the inductive analysis connect the "energy security " with the "impacts of the East Mediterranean Gas Forum on the energy security" by forming the members' decisions; by using this method, this study aimed to identify which ideas matter in actors' policy discussions.

1.4. Theoretical Framework

Liberal institutionalism will be used to analyze a regional organization's transformation into an international one. This theory has a lot of explanatory power when looking at mutual gain and common interest, something that is observed in the study of how regional organizations transform into international ones. It is one of the key themes in the liberal theory, and it will be explained in this section. According to liberal institutionalism, cooperation is possible even in an anarchic international order.

1.5. Research Aims and Objectives

In this part, I am going to explain the aim, specific objectives, and research design of the thesis.

Overall Aim:

This academic thesis seeks to analyze the Eastern Mediterranean Gas Crisis we have today and explain the impacts of the East Mediterranean Gas Forum organization on energy security in the Eastern Mediterranean.

Specific Objectives:

Specific objectives are to examine the East Mediterranean Gas Forum's impacts on energy security in the Eastern Mediterranean and also to analyze diplomatic tensions in international relations between littoral countries and highlight energy security in the Eastern Mediterranean putting Eastern Mediterranean. It is going to be a gas forum at the center of the research.

Research Design:

I am going to use the *qualitative research* method to explain the Eastern Mediterranean gas crisis. For understanding the impacts of the East Mediterranean Gas Forum on Energy Security and its role, I am going to give details for inductive analysis. Induction is aimed at analyzing the data obtained with a holistic approach. As it can be seen above, I am planning to highlight the East Mediterranean Gas Forum on energy security and its impacts on the issue. This thesis consists of six main chapters. The introduction chapter introduces the issue briefly; the second chapter discusses the Eastern Mediterranean offshore energy resources. The third chapter analyzes energy security in the Eastern Mediterranean and the East Mediterranean Gas Forum. The fourth chapter discusses the East Mediterranean Gas Forum: Can be a possible solution solving the energy crisis? which is very significant; it argues the research question in this chapter. The fifth chapter examines the contribution of the Eastern Mediterranean policy of Türkiye The sixth chapter analyzes the conclusion. The outcome derived from the data gathered indicated the consequences of the energy security approach adopted by the East Mediterranean Gas Forum in the Eastern Mediterranean .The research was conducted through inductive analysis of the collected data to provide an insight into the impact of the East Mediterranean Gas Forum's energy security process on the region.

1.6. Liberalism

In the Liberalism section, the theory and its features are going to be explained. In addition to liberalism, relation between liberalism and democracy is highlighted from a postgraduate student's standpoint.

Liberalism is a political philosophy that places a high priority on defending individual liberties. Government, even in its best form, is merely a necessary evil; at its worst, it becomes intolerable, as Thomas Paine noted in *Common Sense* (1776). In order to protect human life and liberty, laws, judges, and the police are required. However, they can also be used against people. The challenge then is to establish a framework that gives the government the authority to safeguard individual liberties and stop those in positions of authority from behaving unfairly. The preoccupation with individuality that characterizes the West also led to liberalism. Western culture values freedom, autonomy, and self-assertiveness above all else, which has resulted in a loosening of social conventions and a promotion of individual rights. Liberalism is the result of these impulses and symbolizes individual liberation. Liberalism is also derived from the adversarial system, often known as the adversary process, which is a collection of organized conflicts between diverse groups. Competition produces social constructs, such as the opposition between unusual political occurrences in election campaigns, between prosecution and protection in court, or between agencies in a competitive market, and the teeth are flexible. However, the system of opposition persists, and it takes a long time for consensus and opposition to emerge from a cultural standpoint (Dagger, Ball, Girvetz, Minogue, 2023).

Traceable, at least to Plato, who believed that the country ought to be like a hive of bees in which distinct training works collectively to fulfill every different work together. The trust that opposition is an integral phase of the political device and that suitable authorities require opposition was once regarded as a horrific issue in many European nations in the early 1800s. Libertarianism and oppositionalism believe that humans are rational creatures who can control their political variations through negotiation and compromise. The twentieth century saw the emergence of a strain of liberalism that focused on the abolition of war and the establishment of institutions to settle inter-state disputes, such as the International League of Nations (the League of Nations) and the United Nations (Dagger, Ball, Girvetz, Minogue, 2023).

The relationship between liberalism and democracy is often problematic. At the heart of democracy is the belief that government achieves this through democratic elections; liberalism, on the other hand, is exceptionally involved with the function of government. Owen has defined Liberal democracy is defined as a state in which liberalism is the prevailing philosophy and citizens have influence over war choices. Liberal democracies are nations with a conspicuous liberal presence, including free speech and frequent competitive elections for leaders with the authority to declare war. In addition, Owen maintained that liberal philosophy and institutions operate in tandem to promote democratic peace. Liberals think that people everywhere are the same. As a result, liberalism asserts that while faiths and cultures differ, all people have a fundamental goal in self-preservation and materialistic well-being (Owen, 1994).

Liberals argue that alternating between international locations leads to multiplied prosperity and conflict. Essential business relationships reduce conflict through trade-related welfare losses. The type of goods sold also plays a role when different countries act. Trade disruptions due to disputes over essential commodities such as oil cause severe economic damage (Dagger, Ball, Girvetz, Minogue, 2023). Last but not least, political science highlights liberalism as one of the dominant ideologies in Western political thought. Liberalism is a school of thought that places an emphasis on the individual, places a premium on reason, envisions privacy in one's private life, and allows for only minimal state involvement in one's daily affairs (Heywood, 2011).

Libertarianism holds that the promotion of free enterprise and the flourishing of civil society are necessary. It is based on the assumption that when market systems operate in a free manner with minimal interference, individuals and society will benefit (Toprak, 2022). On the other hand, liberalism, which takes a utilitarian approach, holds that individual wealth will ultimately contribute to the prosperity of society as a whole (William, 2006). Thus, liberalism is inextricably linked to capitalism. Furthermore, the fact that individuals possess their own assets will also guarantee that a legal system safeguards those assets. For this reason, the rule of law has become a concept that liberals often discuss. Liberals also advocate a secular definition of morality. As a result, social harmony and order will rise on the foundation of secular morality. The basic concepts of liberalism are: the priority of the individual, universal human rights,

progressivism, modernism, the rule of law, secular morality, natural state and harmony, freedom of enterprise, free market, free trade, limited state intervention, and rationality. Liberals also subscribe to the notion that humanity is inherently good and that harmony and collaboration are inherent to human nature. Consequently, the "state of peace" is the "normal state" of international relations, whereas war is abnormal (Williams, 2006). Liberal theories may predict that an international system focused on the nation-state can evolve into a universal order or world government. The situation observed in the EU integration process is that nation-states in Europe give up their privileges over time and share them with both sub-state and supra-state centers (Oğuzlu, 2014).

Liberalism prioritizes a common interest in foreign policy, which is vital. The system's anarchic and chaotic character does not preclude governments from collaborating as long as they have shared interests. The emphasis on economic interests, the importance put on regional and global integration, the emphasis on shared identity, and the dependence on soft power aspects like diplomacy and persuasion are among the main characteristics of liberal foreign policy. Harmony and balance between opposing interests are fundamental concepts in all varieties of liberalism. Individuals, groups, and nations can pursue their goals within this framework, but a natural equilibrium will emerge. All stem from the complementarity of competing interests, and conflict is never irreconcilable. From a liberal standpoint, a balance of interests occurs, which leads liberals to hope in the prospect of world peace and cooperation, just as economic life tends toward an unrestricted equilibrium. However, liberals recognize that interstate competition shapes world politics, implying that the international system is, or must be, decentralized. Furthermore, liberals believe that competition within the system takes place within a larger framework of harmonization. This circumstance encourages liberals to believe in internationalism (Heywood, 2011).

1.7. Liberal Institutionalism

Liberal institutionalism is one of the key themes in the liberal theory. Liberal institutionalism in all its aspects will be explained in this section. According to liberal institutionalism, cooperation is possible even in an anarchic international order. In an anarchic situation, it should be known that no higher center of authority over the states can control them and punish them accordingly.

According to Nye and Keohane (1971), relationships between states can be classified as interstate, transnational, or transgovernmental. International diversity is advanced, some governments' influence over others is strengthened, and private actors with independent foreign policies can emerge thanks to multinational corporations and organizations. Transgovernmental relations are considered to be those between government actors that are not dependent on the central policy organs of their nations. States are responsible for their security and welfare, but that is not an obstacle to taming their relationship. International organizations, regimes, institutions, and laws need to eliminate the lack of mutual trust and doubt about intentions in the relations of states with each other. In other words, their existence makes it possible for states to trust each other more and to enter into mutually cooperative relations. One of the essential obstacles to cooperation is the uncertainty of whether states can keep their promises to each other. This is a situation that takes time to understand beforehand. Being in international organizations and communicating around multilateral relationship mechanisms can eliminate this problem. If the states know that not keeping their promises is disgraceful behavior and are convinced, they will keep their promises. The existence of organizational structures that can evaluate whether promises are fulfilled will increase the frequency of actions such as making promises and commitments (Oğuzlu, 2014). Therefore, the principal argument among liberals is that by boosting commercial relations and creating economic opportunities for future investment and trade, cooperation can be achieved (Gür, 2020). Engaging in international cooperation is key to resolving energy issues effectively. The formulation of these policies is heavily influenced by domestic policies, but the impact of energy issues on economies and foreign policies can be significant. Concerns about the environment, energy markets, pipeline politics, and energy security are all on the international and global agenda (Keohane, Victor 2013).

Liberal institutionalists believe that international organizations play an essential role alongside states. These institutions do not have a specific identity, but they are effective in the extent that they help states cooperate and increase predictability in their behavior. The League of Nations was based on the idea that political structures can be intuited. Although it had some flaws, this was the first attempt to put this into practice.

On the other hand, the United Nations has emerged as a permanent element of global politics with much broader support. Liberals anticipated that such organizations would build a solid international framework based on common security and the rule of law. As a result, institutions evolved as mediators, allowing collaboration among governments on problems of mutual interest. To put it another way, liberals think that international institutions are the necessary external mechanism for limiting sovereign nations. This description exemplifies what is known as "liberal institutionalism." Finally, liberal institutionalism is a work philosophy that stresses the importance of institutions in accomplishing liberal ideals and aims (Heywood, 2011).

In liberal institutionalism, international organizations are one of the legal addressees of international law and the leading actors in international politics. International organizations are created through agreements called treaties, and international law governs their operations and activities. Because states have conventional powers, they can only create international organizations. In other words, international organizations can become entities under international law, but this is only possible with the consent of states (Çakmak, 2014).

International organizations and institutions help to build confidence in international interactions. This climate encourages governments to maintain their pledges and to have faith in one another's intentions (Oğuzlu, 2014). Institutions emerged as mediators that facilitated cooperation between states on issues of common interest. Liberal institutionalists specify that states are more concerned with absolute gains. Absolute gain is the benefit that a particular policy or action brings to states, regardless of its impact on other states (Heywood, 2011).

The East Mediterranean Gas Forum's founding objectives demonstrate a shared interest in gas and the potential economic benefits it will bring to its members. From a liberal point of view, the potential for offshore energy and the economic advantages associated with it will serve as a driving force for regional cooperation in the Eastern Mediterranean (Gür, 2020).

CHAPTER 2: THE EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN OFFSHORE ENERGY RESOURCES

The South Greek Cypriot Administration's 2007 call to international companies for deep-sea oil and gas drilling led to an environment in which borders and ownership of natural resources are debated and problems between almost every Mediterranean coastal state in the Levant are re-emphasized. In 2009, drilling companies announced the states' discovery of large quantities of natural gas in the Tamar field, 130 km off Haifa, and in 2010 in the Leviathan field, 135 km off Israel. Leviathan is the most extensive deep-sea discovery in the last decade. Meanwhile, Lebanon has accused Israel of interfering with its resources through horizontal drilling. Although Israeli politicians insist on using all-natural gas for domestic consumption, it is easy to imagine that foreign investors will not come under these conditions (Gürel, Mullen, Tzimitras, 2013).

Meanwhile, despite Türkiye's continued objections to drilling off the coast of Cyprus, observers argue that Türkiye lacks the political and military power to control all Mediterranean waters. If natural gas is extracted offshore Cyprus, how it will be transported to Europe is another debate. A pipeline to Greece would be too costly and risky in terms of security, while a channel to the South, a facility to liquefy natural gas, could be built in Cyprus; in this case, Israeli nationalist circles would object, fearing the loss of control over natural gas. Royal Dutch Shell, Exxon Mobil Corporation, and companies like France's Total, especially offshore Lebanon (Gürel, Mullen, Tzimitras, 2013).

The Eastern Mediterranean countries lining up for drilling and exploration rights still seem far from a solution and cooperation in the Eastern Mediterranean, where energy-hungry and energy-dependent countries are in the same region. As the EU moves closer to the Eastern Mediterranean, access to energy resources becomes more difficult. The natural gas industry in Israel has been dominated by Noble Energy, an American oil and gas exploration company headquartered in Houston, Texas. Israel has only been partnering with Noble Energy since the discovery of natural gas, and its asset portfolio includes assets offshore in the eastern Mediterranean, off the west coast of Africa, and onshore in the United States. As stated on its official website, the company had reserves totaling 2.05 billion barrels of oil equivalent at the conclusion

of 2019. The year 2019 was particularly profitable for Noble Energy, earning a total of \$4.44 billion in sales. Noble Energy's most significant discovery to date, the Leviathan field, began producing natural gas in December of the same year. The company owns a 39.66% stake in the field and collaborates with Ratio Oil Exploration (1992) LP and Delek Drilling LP, which hold 15% and 45.43% of the field, respectively. Noble Energy is also a shareholder in the Tamar field, which has supplied Israel with fuel since 2013. The Tamar field contains 10 trillion cubic feet of natural gas, half that of the Leviathan field. Additionally, Noble Energy has a direct interest in the Dalit field, located offshore Israel (Solomon, 2020). The Leviathan offshore discovery was made in 2010 off the coast of Israel's Mediterranean region and is projected to begin operation in 2019. Its natural gas reserves are estimated to be around 622 cubic meters (Israel News, 2016).

In addition, the dominance of Noble Energy in Israel's natural gas industry raises questions about the country's commitment to free market principles and the potential impact on the country's economy and overall stability. Türkiye has been incorporated into Russia's energy transit network, and the EU's ability to reduce its dependence on Russia in the Northern Black Sea region has significantly diminished (Tichý, 2019). However, on June 10, 2007, the Commission stated that energy should be the focus of all the EU's external relations and that delivering Caspian energy resources to Europe is an essential priority of the EU's International Energy Policy (Kassoti, Idriz, 2022). During this period, European companies were amid a significant increase in the world's gas reserves. The Caspian Sea basin, however, does not have the adequate resources to significantly alter oil and natural gas prices (Bahgat, 2005) has been turned to for investment in natural gas extraction and pipeline projects, but Türkiye's energy policy is the most critical part of this equation (Erşen, Çelikpala, 2019). Its importance in the EU's foreign policy has somehow been overlooked (Kassoti, Idriz, 2023). The disorganization of EU foreign policy has played an essential role in this, and bilateral relations and partnerships related to energy policy also contribute to the EU's foreign policy, which is far from ordinary and gets stuck. The EU's relations with Türkiye need more orientation experienced by Turkish foreign policy decision-makers (Kassoti, Idriz, 2022). Due to the inexperience of its buyers, the lack of concern for energy security, and shortsighted practices, both the EU and

Türkiye were unable to set joint energy policy goals in Türkiye's interest and assess possible resources.

The dynamics of energy politics continue to be shaped by the ambitions and needs of a growing number of actors as energy resource-producing countries fall short of meeting global consumption. According to Mitchell (2011), energy is not a field of determinism but rather technical uncertainty. This means that the development of energy solutions is not predetermined but subject to various technical, economic, and social factors. However, Mitchell (2011) also argues that building the energy solutions of the future can create new forms of modern life.

In other words, Mitchell (2011) says, 'How we produce and consume energy profoundly impacts our social and economic structures. By developing new and more sustainable forms of energy, we can create new ways of living and interacting with each other. This could include everything from decentralized energy systems to new ownership and governance models.

Overall, Mitchell's argument highlights the importance of energy in shaping our collective future. By embracing the uncertainty of the field, we can create a more sustainable, equitable, and resilient world. The complex relationship between oil, violence, finance, expertise, and democracy in the Eastern Mediterranean points to the human security dimension of energy security, which is too important to be left to the predatory competition between external powers and the preferences of local rentiers in the future. Traditional oil installations to protect the citizens of consumer countries with military means the more difficult it becomes to explain the instabilities in the energy market, energy security, and sovereignty of law in the Eastern Mediterranean, democracy, and transparency in the use of oil and gas revenues will be more widely accepted. As a result, both geopolitical and rent-seeking behaviors will need to change (Özer, 2013).

2.1. Maritime Boundaries Delimitation Conflict in Eastern Mediterranean

The Eastern Mediterranean is a small, partially closed gap connecting Africa, Asia, and Europe. It has been a vital position and a center for trade and transit since antiquity. Its sea border stretches over the whole nation, covering 464,637 square kilometers. The Eastern Mediterranean Sea is a partially contained sea bordered by eight governments or nations: Egypt, Libya, Syria, Lebanon, Türkiye, and Cyprus in the

northeast; Israel; the State of Palestine, and Cyprus in the east. The Aegean Sea borders the Eastern Mediterranean Sea to the northwest. Its western bounds are determined by a hypothetical line that connects the Greek island of Gavdos to the Libyan cape of Ra's al-Hilal, south of Crete (Yiallourides, 2021).

The Eastern Mediterranean has recently experienced renewed interest due to the discovery of large amounts of natural gas, which has enabled the continuation of previous production. Despite this, the region is still characterized by a number of unresolved territorial and maritime conflicts between territorial states, despite diplomatic efforts to resolve these issues. This complexity of the region highlights the need for diplomacy and international collaboration in order to resolve territorial disputes and ensure the conservation of marine resources (Yiallourides, 2021).

In recent years, most Eastern Mediterranean states have made significant progress toward resolving disputes and establishing regional cooperative agreements regarding seabed energy resources. This progress is particularly significant given the complex and entrenched territorial and jurisdictional claims that have historically characterized the region.

One notable example of regional cooperation is the East Mediterranean Gas Forum, established in 2019 and including eight member states: Egypt, Cyprus, Greece, Israel, Italy, Jordan, and the Palestinian Authority, and France (Caba Maria, 2020). The East Mediterranean Gas Forum seeks to promote cooperation and coordination between member states in exploring, developing, and transporting natural gas resources in the Eastern Mediterranean (Farah, Tremolada 2015).

In addition to the East Mediterranean Gas Forum, there have been other positive developments in the region. For example, in 2018, Greece, Cyprus, and Egypt signed a trilateral agreement to cooperate on energy issues, including developing the East Mediterranean Gas Pipeline to transport natural gas from the Eastern Mediterranean to Europe. These efforts towards regional cooperation are essential for developing energy resources and promoting stability and peace in the region. By working together, Eastern Mediterranean states can potentially build a more prosperous and interconnected future (Kavaz, 2021).

This section will provide a quick overview of the maritime border disputes in the Eastern Mediterranean Sea. The Eastern Mediterranean Sea conflicts are a

complicated subject that must be addressed in the present contribution because of their long history and intricate political and economic components. The majority of the Eastern Mediterranean states have sought to settle maritime boundary conflicts in accordance with international laws as well as foster greater regional cooperation in the area of underground petroleum resources (Yiallourides, 2021). The ownership of potential offshore oil and gas deposits in the Eastern Mediterranean has been a source of protracted legal disputes between several coastal states. Since Cyprus and Egypt signed an agreement to delimit their exclusive economic zones under the median line principle in 2003, legal disputes over the demarcation of maritime borders have intensified. This has led to a situation where the demarcation of maritime borders has become a highly politicized issue with significant implications for the region's resource geopolitics. In particular, Cypriot oil and gas corporations have been impacted by these disputes as they seek to develop and exploit the region's energy resources. The situation has been further complicated by the involvement of external actors, such as Türkiye, asserting its claims to the region's energy resources (Bahgat, 2007). This has led to tensions and the deployment of military assets in the region.

The legal disputes over ownership of potential offshore oil and gas deposits in the Eastern Mediterranean highlight the complex geopolitics underpinning the region's energy sector. Resolving these disputes will be critical to unlocking the region's energy resources' full potential while promoting stability and cooperation among coastal states (Proedrou, 2012).

The agreements at the time only received a ministerial note from Türkiye as its sole response. Despite this, the competition for the region's energy potential has recently deteriorated gradually. SCGA has still signed Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) contracts. On January 17, 2007, a delimitation agreement was signed between SCGA and Lebanon. Subsequently, in December 2010, SCGA and Israel agreed to delineate the EEZ. The agreement utilized the median line method to divide the Eastern Mediterranean area of 115 nautical miles between Israel and Cyprus, separated by 230 nautical miles (Kariotis, 2011).

Türkiye's response to the regional developments was not limited to formal protest via MFA notes but also took concrete measures, including agreeing to the continental shelf. Türkiye took this action to demonstrate its position on the issue.

Türkiye and the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus agreed to a delimitation agreement on September 21, 2011 (Bardakçı, 2021). On the continental shelf of the TRNC, Turkish Petroleum Company, a state-owned company, has been conducting oil and gas exploration since 2012. Türkiye and the internationally recognized government of Libya signed a delimitation and cooperation agreement in December 2019. This development has resulted in a geopolitical shift in the dispute over the regional maritime borders. In November 2019, the Maritime Jurisdictional Agreement between Türkiye and Libya, signed on 27 November 2019, effectively ended Greece's ambition to construct a gas pipeline in the eastern Mediterranean by excluding Türkiye from the project. The most significant outcome of the agreement, which was the result of legal and de facto studies conducted to ensure that Türkiye's international law rights in the region would not be lost, was the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on the limitation of maritime jurisdiction areas in the Mediterranean. This agreement clarified the respective maritime jurisdictions of the two Mediterranean States and the respective rights of the two states, thus safeguarding these rights. The maritime jurisdiction areas between the continental shelf between Türkiye and Libya are defined as the maritime jurisdictions that cross the axis of the coasts of Türkiye corresponding to the coasts of Libya's Bardiya, Tobruk, and Derne (Özekin, 2020).

Due to its location, Türkiye is a bridge between the West and energy resources, and it is located in the Eastern Mediterranean. It has opened up political and economic opportunities for riparian states as well as non-regional actors with the discovery of hydrocarbon reserves. To meet Türkiye's growing energy needs and to ensure the advancement of energy production technology, the region's energy export security and continuity are crucial in this context. In this regard, the energy resources in the area have the potential to transform Türkiye from an energy importer dependent on foreign sources to an energy exporter, allowing the country to pursue an active foreign policy in the Eastern Mediterranean. The country's economic development will have numerous opportunities thanks to the export of energy. In response to these potential opportunities, Türkiye took this important step by obstructing attempts by Greece, the Greek Cypriot government, Egypt, and Israel to export, process, and export gas from the Greek shelf in southern Cyprus. Cypriot administration and Israel towards the Greek islands in the Mediterranean Sea. It put a blockade on a potential energy line that might reach up to 100 meters away. In this regard, the 7–9-billion-dollar pipeline

that is anticipated to transport gas sourced from the Eastern Mediterranean through the island of Crete to mainland Greece and then to Italy for distribution to Europe will need to pass through the maritime jurisdiction of Türkiye and Libya (Reuters, 2019). On the other hand, energy from the Eastern Mediterranean is exported to Europe. Türkiye will be in the unique position of serving as both a land and a sea transit country in this scenario. First of all, through this agreement, Türkiye, for the first time, shared maritime jurisdictions with a coastal state. By signing a delimitation agreement, the borders of the Exclusive Economic Zone were mutually determined. And as a result of this agreement, Türkiye's legal bases and claims on the Eastern Mediterranean are not accepted by other neighboring states in the Eastern Mediterranean. As a result of this agreement, Türkiye passed from being a state that merely opposed the agreements made by other neighboring states in the Mediterranean or 'trying to unlawfully dominate' the maritime border rights of the countries in the region to a state whose international legal arguments were accepted and that signed maritime border agreements with its neighbors in the region. So, it has become a significant country (Acer, 2019).

The preamble of the border agreement states, "Having determined that a fair and equitable delimitation shall be made, taking into account all relevant factors." (Memorandum of Understanding, 2019). These statements in the agreement indicate that Türkiye's legal approach to determining the maritime borders between states, which it has been trying to explain from the beginning and which matches the relevant articles in international law, has been accepted in the international arena with this signed agreement. With this agreement made in line with international law criteria, a legally legitimate basis was gained for Türkiye's EEZ (Mira, 2022).

Nations like Israel, Egypt, Greece, Cyprus, and the EU vehemently opposed this agreement. In response, Greece lodged a UN complaint and expelled the Libyan ambassador from Athens (Jimenez Garcia-Carriazo, 2021).

The agreement signed between Cyprus and Egypt to delimit their exclusive economic zones by the median line principle met with disapproval from several parties, including the EU, SGCA, Egypt, and Israel. In the Eastern Mediterranean, maritime border disputes are highly politicized, as this illustrates. The situation has become more complicated as a result of several regional states declaring their own exclusive

economic zones (EEZs). Additionally, the UNCLOS defines the exclusive economic zone as a region outside of and close to the territorial sea that is governed by the relevant provisions of this Convention and is subject to the specific legal framework established in this part (UNCLOS, 1982, Article 55). This has exacerbated political tensions between Türkiye, SGCA, Greece, Israel, Egypt, and Lebanon. These tensions can potentially escalate into military conflict, as illustrated by recent clashes between Türkiye and Greece over maritime borders. It is essential to be familiar with key legal terms and concepts to understand these disputes' legal frameworks. In addition; the continental shelf is explained in UNCLOS.

A coastal state's continental shelf is defined by UNCLOS as the seabed and subsoil of the submarine areas that are outside of its territorial sea and follow the natural extension of that state's land territory to the outer edge of the continental margin (Haozhe, 2015), excluding any areas that are less than 200 nautical miles from the baselines from which the breadth of the territorial sea is measured. Internal waters are the waters on the landward side of the baseline from which territorial water breadth is measured. The coastal state has full sovereignty over its internal waters, just as if they were part of its land territory. Foreign flag vessels must have the right to enter in cases of distress, but innocent passage does not apply to internal waters. These include rivers, canals, and lakes (Noaa.gov, 2023).

Last but not least, about the territorial water: every country has the right to determine the length of their territorial sea in accordance with the Convention's principles, which are 12 nautical miles long (UNCLOS, Article 3). The outer boundary of the territory is the line separating every point along it from the nearest point on the base line by a distance equal to the maritime area of the territory (UNCLOS, 1982, Article 4).

UNCLOS, or the 1982 Convention on the Law of the Sea provides legal protection and is regarded as a "Constitution for Oceans.". Its framework for the regulation of oceans covers more than a hundred issues. It is viewed as a turning point in the regulation of the marine environment, which has historically been fragmented and governed by a number of international legal treaties. The 1972 Stockholm Conference on the Human Environment, which was regarded as a turning point in the evolution of international environmental politics, had a significant impact on the content of UNCLOS provisions pertaining to the marine environment (Güneş, 2007).

The United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) is the legal framework of international law that regulates maritime frontiers and the use of ocean resources (Ioannides, 2021). Historically, Türkiye's regional strategy did not pay much attention to the maritime borders of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus. This can be attributed to the fact that the idea of exclusive economic zones did not become official until the early 1980s, which means it was not taken into account when the Northern Cyprus takeover took place. A €6 billion agreement for a gas pipeline project known as the East Mediterranean Gas Forum energy initiative was signed by Israel, Greece, and Cyprus, signaling a change in this situation. Bypassing Türkiye, which promotes itself as an energy hub, the project hopes to eventually supply up to 10% of Europe's natural gas needs. Ankara believes that the East Mediterranean Gas Forum represents an effort to keep Türkiye out of the Mediterranean region's hydrocarbon boom (Cohen, 2020).

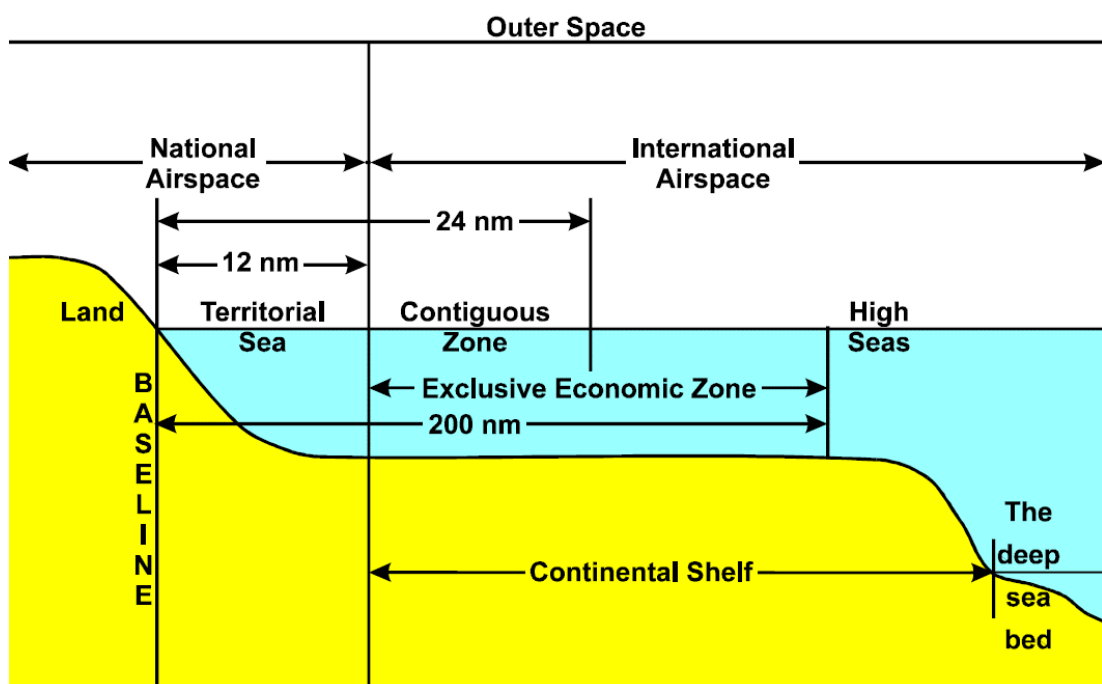


Image 1: EEZ & Continental Shelf Retrieved from: byjus.com

Article 56 of the UNCLOS lays out a coastal state's rights, jurisdiction, and duties in an exclusive economic zone (EEZ). An EEZ includes activities for economic exploration and operation as well as sovereign rights over natural resources. A coastal

state must adhere to the terms of other agreements in order to exercise its rights and carry out its obligations within the EEZ, according to Article 56.2. The baseline where territorial waters meet the sea, which is regarded as being at a distance of 0 nautical miles from land, serves as the measurement point for their width states (Kansu, 2020).

However, UNCLOS also permits states to make special arrangements for the delimitation of maritime boundaries, provided they are reached by mutual agreement and are not prejudicial to the rights of other states. The legal disputes in the Eastern Mediterranean center on the interpretation and application of these principles in a highly contested and politically charged context (Yiallourides, 2021).

The actors involved, including states, international organizations, and oil and gas companies, have competing interests and conflicting claims that must be addressed through ongoing negotiations and legal mechanisms. Historical and cultural tensions and the ongoing conflict in Syria further complicate the situation.

All parties involved must prioritize the peaceful resolution of disputes and collaborate to find mutually beneficial solutions. This requires a commitment to international law and respect for the rights of all regional states and peoples. As such, the Eastern Mediterranean presents challenges and opportunities for regional cooperation and economic development, and it is up to the actors involved to work toward a stable and sustainable future for the region. Liberal institutionalism theory specifies that states are more concerned with absolute gains. Absolute gain is the benefit that a particular policy or action brings to states, regardless of its impact on other states (Heywood, 2011).

From this point of view, the East Mediterranean Gas Forum members united around such an absolute gain that is directly related to natural gas. Effective diplomacy and international cooperation will be critical to resolving these disputes and promoting regional stability and prosperity. Therefore, when they establish the East Mediterranean Gas Forum and become members of it, they already collaborate for a common interest.

Legal context The United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea provides the generally accepted international legal framework for the maritime sovereignty of states. Most of the UNCLOS' substantive provisions are incorporated into international law. They, therefore, apply to the decreasing number of states that do not. We must

comply with it under by treaty law. The UNCLOS and established international law apply to countries with sovereignty over land, including continental and island territories. Such land territory may make maritime zone claims against continental or island territory. The low-water mark line along the coast is the baseline for measuring these maritime zones among the countries that share the Eastern Mediterranean's border. Egypt, Lebanon, Greece, Cyprus, and the Sea have all ratified the UNCLOS. In the meantime, claims to the sea made by Türkiye, Libya, and Syria are generally in line.

States have the authority to explore, exploit, conserve, and manage the resources of these areas under UNCLOS maritime jurisdiction, which includes territorial seas, EEZs, and continental shelf rights (UNCLOS, Article 73, pp. 52).

However, the semi-enclosed nature of the Eastern Mediterranean and the presence of multiple coastal states with overlapping claims have led to frequent convergence and overlap of maritime claims (Yiallourides, 2021). Territorial disputes, like the status of the "Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus" and disagreements over questions of sovereignty between Greece and Türkiye, add to the complexity of determining maritime boundaries (Yılmaz, Ertürk, 2020). Rich seabed energy resources have further exacerbated tensions between Eastern Mediterranean states, although the potential for these resources has also motivated regional diplomatic efforts to establish maritime jurisdictional areas. Maritime boundary delimitation is crucial for creating a stable and secure environment for seabed energy activities. While UNCLOS and customary international law serve as guidelines, states are free to define their borders however they see fit where their maritime zones overlap. Article 15 of the UNCLOS provides guidelines for defining the territorial sea boundary in the absence of agreement between competing states. Ultimately, resolving maritime boundary disputes in the Eastern Mediterranean requires effective diplomacy, cooperation, and adherence to international law. By establishing clear and mutually agreed-upon boundaries, coastal states can create a framework for the sustainable and peaceful development of the region's valuable resources.

Unlike neighboring states, the border must be a center line, with each point equidistant from the points closest to the baseline. The boundaries of the EEZ and continental shelf between the coasts of opposing and adjacent states are defined in Articles 74 and 83,

respectively. Both articles stipulate that to achieve a "just solution", the demarcation must take place through an agreement based on international law (Beckman, Schofield, 2009).

The negotiations that resulted in UNCLOS were among the last to reach an agreement on articles 74 and 83. States disagreed over whether based on should be the preferred delineation rule. The result was a compromise that did not use either group's preferred language.

The articles do not describe recommended demarcation methods or techniques but simply propose an "equitable solution," which is the desired outcome in demarcation under international law. Since the adoption of UNCLOS, many international tribunals have established its delimitation clauses as valid. According to Burn, Tyler, Zadkovich, and Loftis (2015), the concepts found in Articles 74 and 83 are the same as those in international customary law. To define specific delimitation methods and strategies, they have taken action. These include—and perhaps the most important—the three-stage delimitation strategy proposed by the International Court of Justice (ICJ) in the Black Sea Case. This is now the "standard approach." It requires drawing a provisional line of equidistance between the nearest base points of two states that are either next to or opposite one another and modifying it for equity in accordance with the requisite proportionality requirements and the relevant conditions. However, this is not possible.

During the verification stage, the adjusted line is examined to ensure it does not result unfairly. The ratio of each state's relevant maritime area to its coastal length is out of balance. This approach has been applied since then. This method is also used in cases involving islands in the delimitation area where customary international law rather than UNCLOS is applied, such as in the Nicaragua v. Colombia ICJ case (Yiallourides, 2021).

2.2. Maritime Disputes Between Türkiye and Greece

The Mediterranean Sea, a semi-enclosed body of water dividing North Africa and Southern Europe, serves as an important shipping route, particularly for cargo moving through the Suez Canal from the Red Sea. The Greece-Türkiye maritime dispute in the Eastern Mediterranean is an interstate dispute. Since the natural gas discovered in the region; Greece and Türkiye have hydrocarbon interests in the eastern

Mediterranean. It brought a different type of dispute between two states. There are still problems in the Mediterranean and Aegean Seas.

Under international law, coastal states have the sovereign right to explore, exploit, protect, and manage living and non-living resources in the EEZ, which is defined as the area extending up to 200 nautical miles from the baseline of one coastal state. They also have jurisdiction over the construction of artificial islands, marine scientific research, and the conservation and protection of the area's marine environment (Article 56, 1982 UNCLOS). The existence of islands, such as those in Cyprus and the Greek Islands of Crete (Girit), Kasos (Çoban Adası), Karpathos (Kerpe), and Rhodes (Rodos), makes it difficult to determine maritime border lines in the Eastern Mediterranean. The term "Eastern Mediterranean" is frequently used, but there is no formal agreement on its precise boundaries. Israel, Lebanon, Syria, Libya, Egypt, and the GASC are the six countries that have proclaimed the EEZ. Other countries, like Türkiye have continental shelf areas because there is no obligation to declare them. Some states have decided not to sign an EEZ delimitation agreement with the declaration. Türkiye and Libya agreed to a Memorandum of Understanding on November 17, 2019, which includes the EEZ. So, at least in relation to Libya, Türkiye does apply an EEZ in the Eastern Mediterranean. On February 17, 2003, the GASC and Egypt signed a delimitation treaty, which set off the first dispute over the definition of maritime borders. With the claim that the treaty infringed on its potential continental shelf territory, Türkiye immediately objected to it. The GASC persisted in appointing similar treaties despite these objections. In response to these delimitation treaties, Türkiye not only voiced official opposition but also carried out exploration activities and implemented preventative measures against foreign vessels that were granted GASC licenses. It was not surprising that GASC frequently voiced opposition to Turkish actions. Türkiye and the TRNC agreed to a Continental Shelf Delimitation Agreement on September 21, 2011, which established the two countries' shared continental shelf in the island's northern region. In accordance with the terms of the agreement, the TRNC government granted Turkish Petroleum Corporation (TPAO) exploration permits for the island's north and south.

Since the signing of the first area delimitation agreement between Egypt and the Greek Administration of Southern Cyprus (GASC), Türkiye has made a number of official declarations and engaged in activities related to the energy. Türkiye has

developed a comprehensive legal plan to determine maritime boundaries in the Eastern Mediterranean, based on the idea that maritime delimitation must be worked out to achieve a fair outcome. To support its claims to the continental shelf and the EEZ, the Turkish government recently handed over a map to the United Nations. Before taking any action, it is important to carefully review the allegations made by Türkiye and the corresponding legal justifications (Acer, 2021).

Currently, the most contentious area of demarcation is between the coast of Türkiye and the Aegean islands. Greece maintains that the demarcation should cover all Greek islands, with the exception of the small Aegean Island of Kos. However, Türkiye maintains that the delimitation that it regards as equitable does not extend beyond the territorial waters of the Greek islands. This is the crux of the dispute between Greece and Türkiye. Türkiye submits that the delineation in the Eastern Mediterranean Sea should be established on the basis of an agreement between the associated states in the region based on the principle of "equity". However, it is clear that all Egyptian GASC treaties, as well as subsequent GASC treaties, were drawn up and signed without any input or consideration from Türkiye. The related states should participate in the delineation of the eastern Mediterranean Sea on the basis of "equitable principles" and "all relevant or special circumstances" within the overall equity framework. The geographical features of the eastern Mediterranean are referred to in Türkiye as a semi-enclosed sea. All enclosed and semi-enclosed seas require consideration of any pertinent or unique circumstances. The length of Türkiye's coastline, which is considered to be "the longest" in the eastern Mediterranean, should be the first consideration in delineating the area, according to Türkiye. The longer coastline should be respected and taken into account as a relevant or unique circumstance.

The second important factor to consider concerns the territorial borders of the Turkish mainland. According to Türkiye, the size and location of the Greek islands should not be affected by a possible truncation effect, as this would disrupt the geographical balance between the two continents. According to Türkiye, which has the longest continental coastline in the Eastern Mediterranean, the islands cannot have a "cut-off effect" on the country's coastal projection. According to Türkiye, the Greek islands should be completely ignored in this situation because granting maritime areas outside of their territorial waters would result in a cutoff from the Turkish mainland

and an unfair outcome. Türkiye adds that numerous decisions of the International Court have either completely ignored or only partially taken into account the islands that are still outside the median line when defining maritime areas (Acer, 2021). The situation in Cyprus is distinct from that of the Greek islands. Unlike the other coastal states of the region, Cyprus is a political entity distinct from any mainland state. As far as Türkiye is concerned, there is a significant difference between the coastal lengths of the two islands. Consequently, Türkiye considers it equitable to allocate a lesser amount of maritime area to Cyprus than to Türkiye. This approach is reflected in the delegation agreement between Türkiye and the Turkish Republic of Cyprus (TRNC) as well as the official map presented to the United Nations by Türkiye in support of the Turkish Continental Shelf Border Claim.

In the context of the Aegean Sea maritime demarcation dispute, Türkiye has a unique perspective on the political status of the island. The delineation of the continental shelf, in accordance with Türkiye, is a crucial step in finding a solution to the Cyprus problem, and the subsequent maritime demarcation should be established through negotiations. Türkiye further asserts that no single entity is legally or factually qualified to represent the Cypriot people and, consequently, the entire Cypriot community. Additionally, Türkiye argues that the Greek community cannot assert jurisdiction, sovereignty, or authority over the Cypriots, who are entitled to equal rights, or over the entire island of Cyprus. Political unrest is a result of the ongoing maritime boundary disputes in the Eastern Mediterranean Sea. All associated states' political, legal, and practical strategies with regard to any settlement process are significantly impacted by this. As outlined above, Türkiye's legal defenses focus on both the maritime demarcation law as a whole and how it applies to the specific circumstances of the Eastern Mediterranean Sea. The most striking geographical factor highlighted in Türkiye's arguments is the difference between the coastal length of Türkiye and that of its neighbors. According to Türkiye, this is a geographic factor that should be taken into account when determining the allocation of larger maritime areas to Türkiye within its continental shelf/Extensive Economic Zone. Türkiye's legal approach to the Eastern Mediterranean case is characterized by a strong emphasis on the principle of equity and the principle of 'equitable solution'. This is a fundamental principle of maritime demarcation, laid down in customary international law as well as in the corresponding articles of UNCLOS.

The Cyprus Island case is regarded as unique in some ways. The Turkish part of the island asserts that all of these treaties are null and void because they were all signed by the General Secretariat of the Council of the European Union and because they were carried out in a manner that ignored the rights of the Turkish part of the island, which also has a claim to the waters surrounding it.

2.3. The Delimitation of the Continental Shelf in the Mediterranean Sea

At the beginning of the 1960s, when Greek activities commenced in the Sea of Aegean, a series of disputes and an intractable issue emerged. The dispute over the continental shelf between Greece and Türkiye, which has been ongoing since 1976, is a result of the lack of a demarcation agreement between the two nations. It has a significant impact on the overall balance of claims and interests in Aegean waters, as it relates to the areas to be allocated to Greece and Türkiye beyond the 6-mile territorial sea. In the past, this issue has caused tension between the two states. In response to scientific research conducted by Türkiye, Greece has taken legal action before both the UNSC and the Court of Justice. On August 10, 1976, Greece sent a communication requesting an urgent session of the Council, claiming that the repeated violations of Greece's sovereignty in Aegean by Türkiye had created a dangerous situation that threatened international peace. The same day, Greece filed a unilateral application before the ICJ in the dispute, seeking to define the continental shelf belonging to Greece and Türkiye, as well as their respective legal rights to explore and use the continental shelf of the Aegean (MFA, 2023).

The Security Council called on the parties to "re-negotiate their differences" on August 25th, 1976. They appealed to Türkiye and Greece to do their best to find a solution. The Council also asked them to consider how the ICJ could help settle any legal issues they may have. The International Court ruled on September 11th, 1976, that Greece did not have the right to file an application for interim measures. It also ruled that areas outside territorial waters were in dispute. The Court later ruled in 1978 that it had no jurisdiction to hear the Greek application.

Following the Security Council's decision and after the Court of Justice ruled against Greece's arguments, Türkiye and Greece signed the Bern Agreement in Bern on November 11, 1976. The Bern Agreement stipulated that the two countries would negotiate to decide on the continental shelf and that Türkiye and Greece would abstain

from any action or initiative related to it. The 1976 Bern Agreement still stands today, and its terms and conditions still apply to both countries (MFA,2023).

Since the discovery of hydrocarbon resources, the Eastern Mediterranean has grown in importance from a geopolitical standpoint due to its potential oil and gas reserves. The changing global and regional environment has worsened this dispute between states over maritime jurisdiction areas in the basin. In essence, the area that was once important from a geopolitical and historical point of view has now acquired significant geo-economic relevance on account of research into the characteristics of hydrocarbons (Kırval, Özkan, 2021). Following these investigations, the local state started looking into developing and marketing hydrocarbon resources and the area was designated as a geostrategic region. Conflicts arise from disagreements between states regarding sovereignty and the allocation of resources in fields of study potentially relevant to interstate problems. Of course, when studying hydrocarbon reserves, the conflict over ocean sovereignty has powerfully manifested itself, and several nations have appeared in the outcomes of various agreements. The region's landlocked states are parties to this dispute and have legal, economic, and political issues. The importance of the Eastern Mediterranean as a new region of strategic cooperation has increased due to the changing global and regional situation following the end of the Cold War. The relationship between the jurisdiction of the sea and certain regions of the Eastern Mediterranean coast is currently the most significant of these relationships. In particular, Egypt and Türkiye have disagreements on maritime jurisdiction areas, complicating Türkiye's possible EEZ declaration (Kırval, Özkan, 2021).

In recent decades, the year 2000 has quickly become one of the most important issues in the region. The manifestation of this conflict has direct consequences for other states. It also affects the political and economic interests of major world powers such as the United States, Russia, and the EU. The oil and gas potential in the eastern Mediterranean makes this conflict over maritime jurisdiction crucial. The region's exclusive economic zones (EEZs), including those of Cyprus (Aphrodite, 2011), Israel (Tamar, 2009; Leviathan, 2010), and Egypt (Zohr, 2015), contain 2.5 billion barrels of oil and 7 trillion cubic meters of oil. This led to a reevaluation of the significance of the region (Kırval, Özkan, 2021).

2.4. Exclusive Economic Zone Agreements in the Eastern Mediterranean

The Eastern Mediterranean basin has high potential energy resources that are of geopolitical and geostrategic importance in terms of military, commercial, and transportation. "Despite the fact that the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea contains an agreement on the limitation of the Exclusive Economic Zone" (EEZ) in the framework of international law under the principle of equity, states in the eastern Mediterranean have declared their EEZs unilaterally and concluded bilateral treaties with a view to sharing marine energy resources, without prejudice to the rights of third states in the region (Ece, 2017).

If the states that have declared an EEZ have adjacent or opposite coasts, delimitation is required. If one coastal state has declared an EEZ but the other has not the delimitation between these two states concerns the continental shelf. The 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea's Article 74 provides the fundamental guidelines for EEZ delimitation. In accordance with this article, the EEZ must be defined mutually and in accordance with international law in order to achieve an equitable outcome. Until an agreement is reached, a provisional application is possible, and this application does not affect the solution. The important point here is that the agreement between the two states must also be made in a way that reaches a solution in accordance with international law. Naturally, states only delimit their own coasts against each other; if there is a third state or states in the region, they must not harm their rights (Dayıoğlu, 2013).

The littoral states in the Eastern Mediterranean Region have started to declare EEZs and conclude delimitation agreements in order to benefit from the rich resources of the region. The Greek Cypriot Administration of Southern Cyprus' (GASC) unilateral declaration of EEZs in the Eastern Mediterranean and its drilling activities in field number 12, which is among the 13 fields for which it issued exploration licenses in 2007, constitute the basis of the jurisdictional dispute in the region. On the other hand, the delimitation of the Eastern Mediterranean by Greece, another littoral state of the Eastern Mediterranean, based on the islands in violation of the principle of equity, appears as a result of Türkiye's efforts to confine Türkiye to a limited area in the region. The delimitation agreements signed by the countries in the region, especially the SCGA, and the recent rapprochement between Israel, Greece, and the

SCGA, which was finalized with the signing of the Eastern Mediterranean Gas Pipeline Agreement, point to the need for Türkiye to increase its cooperation with the countries in the region (Alper, 2020). The beginning of the EEZ debates and problems in the Eastern Mediterranean Region can be traced back to the unilateral EEZ policies of the SCGA since the early 2000s. In 2004, the SCGA, on behalf of the "Republic of Cyprus" declared a 24-mile contiguous zone and a 200-mile EEZ, and it stated that the midline would be used as the basis for delimitation until the delimitation agreements were signed with the states in the area. The "Republic of Cyprus", has a 12-mile territorial sea (Kaya & Kütükçü, 2016). In support of its EEZ-related initiatives, the SCGA signed its first EEZ delimitation agreement with Egypt on February 17, 2003, and signed new EEZ agreements with Lebanon on January 17, 2007 and Israel on December 17, 2010. The SCGA also announced 13 natural gas and oil exploration fields in the region south of the island of Cyprus in 2007 (Allı & Arıdemir, 2019). In 2011, exploration activities started in Parcel 12 named Aphrodite, one of these fields. These searches, which were initiated by the US company Noble Energy in September, were later joined by the Israeli company Delek (Mızrak & Örnek, 2016). Another point that draws attention here is that five of these fields are located within Türkiye's continental shelf, and the TRNC also has rights to the remaining parcels (Başeren, 2010). In this way, the SCGA acted on behalf of the entire island without the need for reconciliation with the TRNC and ignored the rights of Türkiye and the TRNC in the region (Yaycı, 2019a).

With a law passed in 2003, Syria, another coastal nation in the area, declared 12 nautical miles of territorial waters, a 24 nautical mile contiguous zone, and a 200 nautical mile Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) starting from baselines. Syria also informed the UN of these declarations. Following this law, within the framework of the agreement it made with a US company, Syria granted and said company a temporary permit for seismic research and new resources on the coasts under its jurisdiction. On the other hand, the northern part of the areas declared by Syria for exploration activities includes some of Türkiye's maritime jurisdiction areas. When the delimitation agreements signed by the SCGA with the countries in the region are analyzed, it is seen that the Greek Cypriot Administration violates not only the rights of Türkiye and the TRNC but also the rights of the countries in the region. With the above-mentioned delimitation agreements, Israel, Lebanon, and Syria have fewer

rights than they should have. Also, it means that the SCGA has some of the maritime jurisdiction areas of these countries (Yaycı, 2012).

Greece, the other littoral state of the region, has a 6-mile territorial sea and a 200-mile wide and deep EEZ in the Eastern Mediterranean (Başeren, 2010). Greece has also signed delimitation agreements with Egypt and the SCGA in the region (Kaya & Kütükçü, 2016). When we look at the policies regarding Türkiye and the islands in the Eastern Mediterranean Region, it is seen that Greece aims to start the delimitation from these islands by accepting the islands of Crete, Rhodes, Meis, Kerpe and Kaşot as the coastal border. Thus, by confining Türkiye to the north of the median line between the islands of Rhodes and Meis and Anatolia, Greece pursues a policy of delimiting the continental shelf and EEZ in the vast sea areas in the south between the southern coasts of the islands of Crete, Rhodes, Kerpe, and Kaşot and Meis and the coast of Egypt (Başeren, 2010). Greece's argument that delimitation should be based on the midline principle leaves Türkiye with a very small EEZ and continental shelf area, and this argument is incompatible with the principle of equity.

In fact, in the framework of international arbitral and judicial decisions, the principle of the mainland coast as the basis for delimitation is in question.

In addition, the effect of islands on delimitation is evaluated by criteria such as population, size, and location, and the effect of the islands in determining the demarcation line is a very rare situation. On the other hand, this practice in Greece is also contrary to the principle of non-closure. In delimitation, each country is left with the areas close to its coasts, and therefore its coasts should not be closed (Yaycı, 2012). Such a practice would be harmful to Türkiye's blocking its coast in that area and thereby denying it access to the high seas (Allı & Arıdemir, 2019).

Türkiye's biggest achievement in terms of its Eastern Mediterranean policies at this point is the EEZ delimitation agreement signed with Libya. Türkiye and Libya signed the "Memorandum of Understanding between the Government of the Republic of Türkiye and the Government of the State of Libya on the Delimitation of Maritime Jurisdiction Areas in the Mediterranean Sea" in Istanbul on November 27, 2019. This memorandum was ratified on December 6, 2019, and entered into force after being published in the Official Gazette on December 7, 2019. The Memorandum was ratified and entered into force by Libya on December 6, 2019, and was also notified to the UN,

making the arrangement known to the whole world. As the first EEZ delimitation agreement signed with a littoral state in the Eastern Mediterranean Region, the Memorandum is very important. The Memorandum also provided a legal basis for our existing rights in the region. In addition to the fact that the western border of our maritime jurisdictions in the region has been determined in accordance with international law, the fact that the maritime jurisdiction strip delimited between the two countries is located as a shield between Greece and SCGA-Egypt is another success of the agreement (Yaycı, 2019b).

As a result, the unilateral declaration of EEZs by the littoral states in the Eastern Mediterranean Region and the EEZ delimitation agreements signed by some of the countries in the region with each other, combined with the unresolved political situation on the island of Cyprus, are currently emerging as a conflict of interests in the extraction and sharing of maritime jurisdiction areas and energy resources in the region. On the one hand, the existence of a large number of states with rights and authority in the region makes cooperation among these states obligatory; on the other hand, the fact that these cooperations are realized in a way that excludes Türkiye and the TRNC increases the conflict of jurisdiction in the region and perpetuates the unresolved dispute. In order to resolve the issue of sharing and processing of energy resources and all kinds of living and non-living natural resources, especially hydrocarbon reserves in the continental shelf and EEZs in the Eastern Mediterranean Region, in accordance with international law and taking into account all special circumstances, especially geographical factors, an agreement should be made in accordance with international law.

This will be possible only if Türkiye develops its policy in the Eastern Mediterranean region in accordance with national interests by establishing good relations with the littoral states and pursuing a more active and long-term strategy in the region in terms of both political and economic context and security. As the country with the longest coastline in the Eastern Mediterranean Region, it is of great importance for Türkiye to establish good relations and sign new EEZ and maritime jurisdiction delimitation agreements, especially with countries such as Libya, with which it has mutual coasts and side borders. At this point, a side-border agreement should be signed with Syria and even with the TRNC, as they have mutual borders. An alternative cooperation that could also be considered on a delimitation agreement between Syria can be mentioned.

In addition, the delimitation agreements to be signed by Türkiye with Egypt and Lebanon, Türkiye has mutual coast agreements can also create a favorable situation in terms of its influence in the region. Another point that is as critical as the cooperation with the countries in the region for Türkiye to benefit from its rights arising from international law in the region is to explain to both the littoral countries in the Eastern Mediterranean and the international public opinion that Türkiye and the Turkish Cypriots have a positive attitude towards the solution of the Cyprus problem. From this point of view, it will be stated that Türkiye has a solution-oriented approach in the context of disputes in the region. A permanent solution to the Cyprus problem is important for Türkiye and the TRNC both in terms of their rights over the energy resources in the Eastern Mediterranean region and for the security of the Eastern Mediterranean and thus Türkiye.

CHAPTER 3: ENERGY SECURITY IN THE EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN AND THE EAST MEDITERRANEAN GAS FORUM

As a result of the integration of power in international relations, world powers have started a race for energy in an effort to dominate the international system. With the discovery of numerous hydrocarbon resources in the Middle East and North Africa over time, this rivalry has transformed into an energy-based conflict and has become one of the main focal points of international relations. For significant energy market players, neighboring nations, and outside players, the area has evolved into a crossroads. The countries in the Eastern Mediterranean are undergoing a series of changes in their energy landscapes. While the population of this region and its economic development are expected to further increase its energy demand in the following decades, the lack of sufficient energy resources poses a threat for the future (Biresselioğlu, 2019).

For centuries, people have searched for energy resources. Most of the time, they have found the energy and its resources. For instance, the sun, wind, and coal are some of them. However, in the present, the world has experienced such an extreme increase in population and consumption of resources. So, this situation has brought us new energy resources. Therefore, today's main international conflicts and disputes are related to energy; states cannot share energy resources, and there can be conflicts because of that. The IEA defines energy security as affordable and uninterrupted access to energy sources (International Energy Agency, 2022). Energy security has

many dimensions. Long-term energy security is the key to making timely investments in the energy supply based on economic growth and environmental needs. In contrast, the ability of the energy system to react quickly to unanticipated changes in the balance between supply and demand is the focus of short-term energy conservation (International Energy Agency, 2022). Energy security is an essential issue for the economies of many countries. Economic expansion, population growth, new energy use, and income growth demand are increasing rapidly, yet this energy is needed to strengthen needs. Resources are limited and, in most cases, insufficient. Therefore, the energy security issue is a significant concern for states. Looking at the past, we can easily understand that the Mediterranean has a huge geostrategic role. It is basically in the middle of three continents. Historically, the Mediterranean was one of the most important trade and maritime routes. The Eastern Mediterranean has regional importance with economic, social, and political developments. Recent hydrocarbon and gas reserve discovery in the Eastern Mediterranean has brought such different kinds of disputes between the Eastern Mediterranean littoral countries; the current global energy struggle has caused alarming developments in the policies of countries seeking to implement in these regions, which are still relevant today. In this regard, all parties in the Eastern Mediterranean, especially in the Middle East and North Africa, have sought opportunities and successes in the energy market. The community has contributed to policymaking and the agenda, mainly through labor, fishing, and shipbuilding.

They are especially considering that the Eastern Mediterranean has essential ports such as Tripoli, Damietta, Iduk, İskenderiye, Jaffa, and Cyprus and reliable transit routes, which are of great significance to the smooth supply of energy from the Middle East to the world. The hydrocarbon resources discovered in the 2000s off the coast of Cyprus have significantly increased the geopolitical significance of the Eastern Mediterranean. There are currently some issues between the riparian countries due to the new energy basins that have been discovered or still need to be discovered. The Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) Delimitation Agreements with Egypt, Lebanon, Israel, and the Greek Cypriot Administration, as well as the TRNC and Türkiye, that were signed without consulting the TRNC or Türkiye, were the primary cause of the diplomatic disputes between the Ankara government and other nations that had also declared their EEZs (Kedikli, Çalağan 2017).



Image 2: Eastern Mediterranean Map Retrieved from: (Vectorstock).

In order to promote the growth of a sustainable regional gas market and maximize the use of gas resources in the Eastern Mediterranean, Egypt established an initiative in 2018 to create the East Mediterranean Gas Forum. This forum will serve as a forum for structured gas policy dialogue (Knews, 2021).

After that, on November 2019, between Libya and the Republic of Türkiye, the Agreement of Delimitation on the Maritime Jurisdiction was signed (Özşahin, Çakmak 2021).

Concurrent with these developments, following the result of negotiations begun in early 2019, the East Mediterranean Gas Forum was established on September 22, 2020, with the participation of Egypt, Israel, Palestine, Greece, Cyprus, Italy, and Jordan, headquartered in Egypt. Türkiye is not a member of this forum. The forum was unofficial. After that, in 2021, the East Mediterranean Gas Forum became an international organization. France later joined the Forum as a full member (Segell, 2022). The USA, the European Union, and the World Bank joined the Forum as observers.

This agreement led to the mobilization of the countries with a coast in the Eastern Mediterranean and the countries that wanted to influence the region and get a share of the gas and oil tenders to be extracted from the sea and to increase their relations with each other, especially Greece, which led to an aggressive policy (Ashwarya, 2018). So, with the mediation and imposition of the USA, the Greece-Egypt Maritime Demarcation Agreement was signed on August 6, 2020. The line formed by the coordinates in this agreement ignores and contradicts the line in the Libya-Türkiye agreement. The importance of the agreement for particular regional nations cannot be overstated. The agreement has angered the US, Russia, France, and the European Union because it would restrict their ability to use the region's energy resources and aggravate Türkiye in the Eastern Mediterranean. (Kansu, 2020). Whereas the EU condemned Türkiye and Libya for this agreement, Greece and the G.C.A. suspect the E.U. of not responding adequately to Türkiye's actions.

The goal of the East Mediterranean Gas Forum was to create an energy organization that complied with international law and upheld the natural resource rights of its members. The organization was designed to help members monetize their reserves, utilize their current infrastructure, promote the welfare of their people, develop a regional gas market, ensure security of supply and demand, encourage cooperation, support developing countries, help consumer countries get what they need, and protect the environment (Reich, Klotsman 2023).

The East Mediterranean Gas Forum pipeline, which transports gas extracted from the southeastern Cypriot waters to Europe via the Greek Cypriot regime and Greece. Egypt can sell the extracted gas through its pipelines and LNG facility. Israel also sells the gas it produces to Egypt. If the Greek-Cypriot government can withdraw it, it will go the Israeli way. This situation has caused the East Mediterranean Gas Forum project to fail from the beginning. Nevertheless, it is used as a lever in forming a partnership or alliance with Türkiye. Unfortunately, it succeeded. The Greek Cypriot regime had refineries to purchase the LNG and even had the LNG center at scale in Alexandroupoulos, Greece, indicating that the East Mediterranean Gas Forum was not alone (Dilek, 2022). So, how will LNG proceed? Egyptian LNG and SEGAS LNG both operate LNG export terminals at Idku, in addition to an FSRU at the SUMED port. Egypt is able to ship domestically produced LNG and LNG piped in from Israel to regions like Europe with the aid of its two export terminals. Once its fields are

producing, Cyprus intends to utilize the Egyptian LNG infrastructure. On the island of Revithoussa, Greece's lone FSRU is currently in service. In 2007 and again in 2018, the Revithoussa FSRU's storage capacity increased. In response to a potential interruption in its Russian natural gas supply, Greece declared in April 2022 that it is looking to increase the terminal's capacity. Israel can diversify its sources of energy supply thanks to one FSRU (Excelerate Excelsior FSRU), which is currently in operation. The FSRU is currently stationed at the Hadera port, which is close to Sharon. The ship's owner, Excelerate Energy, however, announced that it would be transferred to Albania's Vlora LNG terminal by 2023 and that its charter would not be renewed after that. The charter is set to expire in October 2022. A floating storage facility and an on-land regasification facility would reportedly take the place of the FSRU in Jordan. Jordan would be able to cut costs thanks to improved LNG import flexibility and efficiency, as well as potential pipeline re-export to other nations. LNG infrastructure is lacking in Lebanon. The Lebanese government announced a tender for the provision of FSRUs close to Beddawi, Zahrani, and Selaata for the importation of natural gas for present or future energy facilities in 2019. The only FSRU located in the Eastern Mediterranean is the Dörtyol FSRU, despite the fact that Türkiye operates two LNG regasification terminals and two FSRUs. A FSRU and LNG regasification facility called "İzmir Aliğa" is located nearby in the Aegean Sea. ". The Aegean and Black Seas are connected by the Sea of Marmara, where the Marmara LNG port is located. The BOTAŞ oil and gas company, which is owned by the Turkish government, is constructing a new FSRU in the northern Aegean Sea's Gulf of Saros. It will take longer for the FSRU to get going (EIA, 2022).

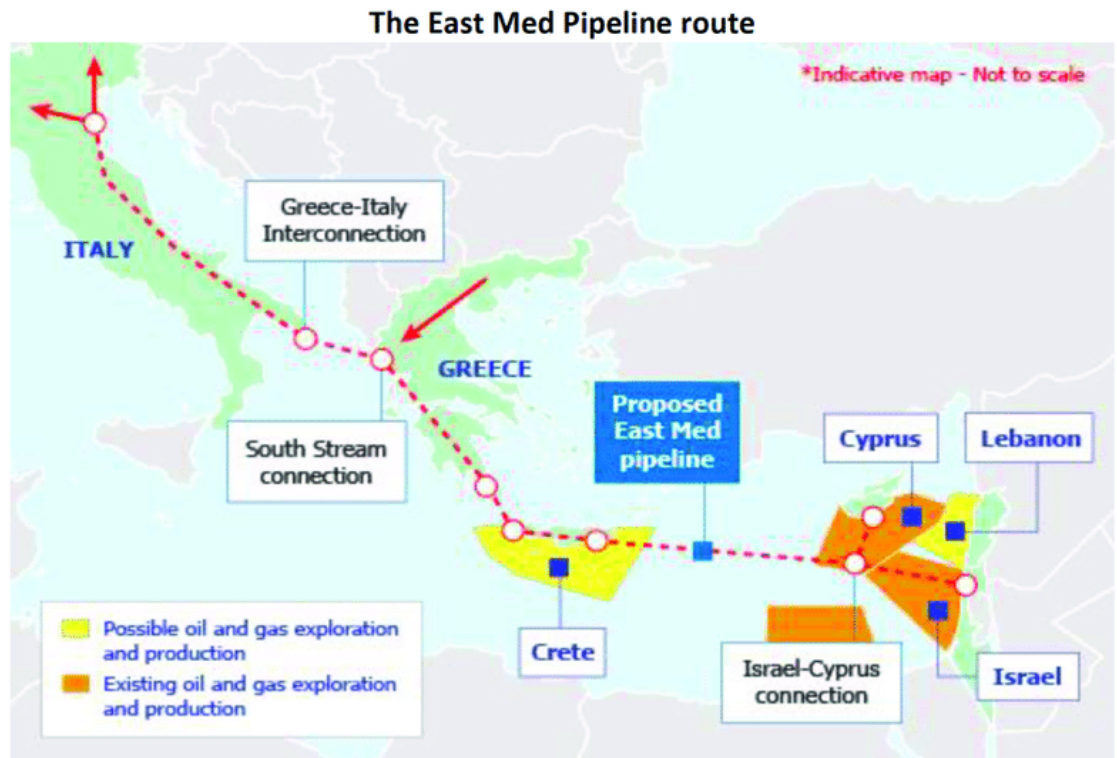


Image 3: The East Med Pipeline Project. Retrieved from: <https://greekreporter.com/>

The European Union (EU) and the United States (US) are actively promoting the Eastern Mediterranean Pipeline as they consider it to be essential for Europe's energy diversification objectives, particularly in light of Europe's current dependence on Russian resources. However, it remains challenging to accurately transport gas from the drilling site into Western Europe. The project, currently under discussion, involves the construction of a pipeline of 1,900 kilometers (1,181 miles) beneath the Eastern Mediterranean Sea. In terms of the Eastern Mediterranean's energy security, natural gas has been looked into recently, as have key locations. Significant attention has been paid to the potential of hydrocarbon resources on a global scale. The creation of these resources follows a set process. The Mediterranean region's energy growth has the potential to significantly alter the map of carriers. On the one hand, there is this potential for security, economic well-being, and regional business promoting unity, which, on the other hand, becomes the main component of the geopolitical struggle (Colombo & Soler i Lecha, 2020). There are existing disputes fueling various frictions in the region. Natural gas reserves in the Eastern Mediterranean are providing economic yield to the region, Mediterranean riparians, and energy from third countries that will benefit from their companies revised international policies.

This energy discovery in the region brings both geopolitical and geoeconomic importance, and advantage, as well as a sense of insecurity that negatively affects interstate relations. Exclusive Economic Zone Agreements, as riparian states Israel, Egypt, Greece, Cyprus, and Syria, between Lebanon, Libya, Tunisia, and Türkiye developments, as well as affecting the region's tension, play an essential role in shaping the energy map. In addition, political and transforming economic developments are bilateral in the context of energy security which affects relationships. Energy literature and oil-production by the authorities of consuming countries on the energy security explanations show that the concept is difficult to understand. Energy security has been accepted as national security recently. So, threats to energy security can be understood as threats to national security. A global crisis for energy supply has the potential to unbalance all international politics. The Cyprus-Greece-Israel and Cyprus-Egypt-Greece trilateral partnerships they established have become central elements of the emerging security architecture in the Eastern Mediterranean, which is seen as a balancing act given Türkiye's regional power projection (Tziarras, 2019).

3.1. Establishment of the East Mediterranean Gas Forum

Among the projects that will carry the Eastern Mediterranean natural gas resources to international markets, Egyptian LNG facilities stand out. It also stands out in terms of cost and the ability to be implemented quickly (Alibabalu, Sarkhanov, 2023). One of the most critical projects regarding the region's natural gas resources is the Eastern Mediterranean pipeline project, which is envisaged to extend to Italy via the island of Cyprus, Crete, and the Greek Peloponnese. If the project is realized, there is a possibility of providing Israel with a secure sales market due to the link to the EU. According to Israeli Energy Minister Steinitz, the assignment will deprive Arab nations of the possibility of putting Israel under political pressure. However, the Eastern Mediterranean needs to be accepted into the EU gasoline market by Israel, Cyprus, and Greece. These may also have a destructive impact on the monetary and political manageability of the frequent gasoline market in the Eastern Mediterranean, which is trying to be finished with the East Mediterranean Gas Forum (Wolfrum, 2019).

Benefiting from existing infrastructure between Israel and Egypt, it took little time for an initiative to emerge. After strengthening relations between Egypt and Israel, a 15-billion-dollar gas export agreement with Israel from Mediterranean Gas in 2018 was considered within this scope (Reuters, 2018). Egypt, Greece, and Cyprus decided to establish an The East Mediterranean Gas Forum in October 2018. According to this decision, The Forum, headquartered in Cairo, will be the center of the "Eastern Mediterranean gas". It means the countries producing gas in the Mediterranean and all importing and transiting countries. Following the decision taken in October 2018, upon the invitation of the Egyptian Minister of Petroleum and Mineral Resources Tarek El Molla, Greece, Israel, Italy, Jordan, and Palestine held a meeting in Cairo on January 14, 2019, to discuss the establishment of the East Mediterranean Gas Forum; they have come together (Daily News Egypt, 2019).

Ministers agreed that significant offshore gas discoveries in the Eastern Mediterranean would significantly affect the region's energy and economic development and that the discovery and exploration of key gas fields are essential to the security of the region's energy supply. Additionally, the Eastern Mediterranean countries' shared energy concerns and interests are based on international law to foster mutual understanding and awareness among them. The Eastern Mediterranean countries confirmed the need for cooperation between gas producers, buyers, and transit countries, producers. Any Eastern Mediterranean country with gas reserves, a gas producer, consumer, or transit country that shares the common interests and objectives can become a member of the Forum. There is a fact that only Greece was invited to the meeting as a transit country, and Jordan and Italy were invited to the meeting within the scope of the receiving country. Also, consumer and transit countries were included in the scope of the East Mediterranean Gas Forum, apart from the producing countries. It is clear that the forum is part of a specific strategy. Indicating that the countries likely to participate later will be included in the forum if they accept the rules determined at the beginning means they do not have a say in determining them. This situation is mentioned in the forum's statement, revealing that it was designed to implement a predetermined plan rather than use the region's gas potential efficiently. In this first meeting to establish the East Mediterranean Gas Forum, while their intention to establish the East Mediterranean Gas Forum was declared, their intention to use their existing infrastructure and build the necessary ones was also

emphasized. It is understood that Egypt's LNG and pipeline facilities are meant here by existing infrastructure. The meeting notice discussed some important topics, including supply and demand in the territorial gas market. This market is designed to help members by providing security, efficient resource development, and improved trade relations.

The second Ministerial Meeting on establishing the East Mediterranean Gas Forum was held in Cairo on July 25, 2019, upon the invitation of the Egyptian Minister of Petroleum and Mineral Resources. A decision was made that the ministers responsible for energy issues in Israel, Cyprus, Egypt, Italy, Palestine, and Greece, and the representative of the Jordanian Minister, who attended the meeting, would be referred to as the founding ministers. The support given to the formation of the East Mediterranean Gas Forum is essential to show. The Founding Ministers also set up the Gas Industry Advisory Committee to allow for private sector participation, and it was approved at the meeting. At the meeting, ministers discussed ways of cooperating to leverage existing infrastructure and develop infrastructure to facilitate the exploitation of existing Eastern Mediterranean gas reserves and future exploration (Sukkarieh, 2021). In the meetings that Türkiye and Lebanon did not attend, a commitment was made to raise the forum to the level of an international organization. Representatives of the European Union and the World Bank participated in the third The East Mediterranean Gas Forum ministerial meeting held in Cairo on January 16, 2020, while representatives from the USA and France were invited (EMGF, 2021). On March 9, 2021, ministers discussed the creation of a gas market designed to unlock the full potential of gas resources in the Eastern Mediterranean region while fully respecting the rights of its members under international law over their natural resources. The East Mediterranean Gas Forum's chairmanship was extended by Egypt until the end of 2021, and Mr. Osama Mobarez, the Egyptian undersecretary of the ministry of petroleum and mineral resources, was chosen to lead the forum. These topics were covered during the summit's discussion of the forum's organizational structure. The Ministers decided to hold the following ministerial meeting in Cairo in the fourth quarter of 2021. They also noted the progress made in producing a report on "Gas Supply and Demand in the Eastern Mediterranean." (Ministry of Petroleum & Mineral Sources, 2021).

The peculiarity of the Third Ministerial Meeting is that a severe threshold has been crossed towards the Forum's official establishment with the East Mediterranean Gas Forum Regulation's approval. The meeting's statement noted that the East Mediterranean Gas Forum had been founded as an international intergovernmental organization; it would serve as a venue to stimulate a structured dialogue on gas and set the agenda for creating common strategies and regional gas policies. The East Mediterranean Gas Forum Ministers' Meeting reiterated their commitment to working together to achieve the East Mediterranean Gas Forum objectives while fully respecting the East Mediterranean Gas Forum Members' rights to their natural resources. The East Mediterranean Gas Forum HQ Agreement was also signed at the conference, which was an important milestone. The Ministers unanimously decided to select Osama Mobarez as Secretary General of the East Mediterranean Gas Forum for a three-year term beginning in January 2022. Tarek El Molla was designated as the alternate president, and Natasa Pilides was named as the meeting's president. Mr. Marios Panayides was chosen as the Executive Board's Chairman for that year. The Ministers offered their congratulations to Tarek El Molla, Minister of Petroleum and Mineral Resources of the Arab Republic of Egypt, for hosting the East Mediterranean Gas Forum and for his invaluable work as President of the Ministerial Meeting over the previous three years (EMGF, 2021).

As mentioned above, The East Mediterranean Gas Forum members are sharing a common interest and absolute gain, which is seen in liberal institutionalism theory and its features in this paragraph. According to Keohane (2012), there is no international organization that can oversee pipeline regulations, set the necessary rules, and bring together producers, consumers, and transit countries. Keohane observes that because of power imbalances, conflicting interests, and the challenges of influencing domestic politics in democracies, the coherence of international regimes tends to deteriorate. All nations, as transit, consumer, and producer countries, are, however, represented in the East Mediterranean Gas Forum. September 22, 2020, has been registered as the date of the official establishment of the East Mediterranean Gas Forum with the signing of the agreed Forum Charter at the virtual meeting held in Cairo. Increasing the number of members of the East Mediterranean Gas Forum, expanding its sphere of influence, and making it an international organization are among the future goals. However,

considering the amount of discovery and possible reserves, it is not possible now to get a result from such an organization as OPEC activity (Kökyay, 2021).

3.1.1. Regional Countries Excluded from East Mediterranean Gas Forum

Cyprus and Greece are founding members of the Forum. It is understood that Türkiye was not invited to participate in the forum due to the division of responsibilities. Kökyay (2021) said that it is considered that Türkiye was not invited to the forum due to Cyprus and maritime jurisdiction sharing problems, Greece, which is the founding member of the Forum. In addition, the tension in Türkiye's relations with Israel due to the Mavi Marmara incident and with Egypt due to the coup d'état in 2013 also contributed to the fact that Türkiye was not invited to the Forum. There is a fact that, if their aim is really to have such cooperation between the Eastern Mediterranean countries; Türkiye would be a member of the Forum; because after Egypt, Türkiye has the longest coastline in the Eastern Mediterranean.

So, its effect can also be observed (Sever, Almog, 2019). Any initiative in the Eastern Mediterranean that will not include Türkiye and the Turkish Cypriots is indicated to be unsuccessful. Türkiye sees the formation of the Forum as a political project aimed at excluding itself, as well as the EEZ delimitation agreements and energy transmission projects related to the region. Belladonna (2019) evaluated that, in her study, which deals with the geopolitical dimensions of the region's energy resource, Türkiye still needs to include the East Mediterranean Gas Forum as a deficiency.

The Eastern Mediterranean means something for Türkiye beyond the energy or maritime jurisdictions' perspective. Within the framework of the Africa Action Plan adopted in 1998, it is time for Türkiye to cross the Mediterranean and develop a vision for the African continent. For Türkiye, the Mediterranean is the natural waterway of the open-up policy toward Africa. Türkiye has strengthened its economic, political, diplomatic, and cultural relations in Africa with a study spanning many years. The East Mediterranean Gas Forum, which is trying to exclude, in this context, a challenge for Africa, it is a bridgehead. Therefore, it is possible to evaluate Türkiye's elimination from the Eastern Mediterranean and related organizations as a reaction against the African expansion policy. The TRNC, one of the countries in the region, is not recognized by other states including Libya, and it is considered that Syria was not

invited to the Forum due to the ongoing civil war. Türkiye, TRNC, Lebanon, Syria, and Libya, excluded from the Forum, are seen as the first counter-reaction that comes to mind. There are strong indications that all five countries have hydrocarbon resources in their maritime jurisdictions. Political instability is the biggest obstacle to the emergence of a common approach among these countries in Lebanon, Syria, and Libya.

3.1.2. Non-Regional Actors in the East Mediterranean Gas Forum

Before the establishment of the East Mediterranean Gas Forum, the USA was within the scope of regional cooperation and regional mediation, strengthening the economic and physical security of its allies. The USA is integrating the region with global markets and ensuring the security of its citizens and the USA (Zemach, 2016). It was evaluated that it will benefit from several aspects, such as ensuring the success of the companies (Zhukov, 2013).

Within the scope of this view, which gives clues about the support of the USA to the East Mediterranean Gas Forum, the USA strongly supports the formation of a democratic bloc in the Eastern Mediterranean, the linking of Israel, Cyprus, and Greece, and the dialogue between Israel and Egypt. Except for Greece and the Greek Cypriot Administration, the other countries are not as democratic as they seem. Jordan is ruled by a dual monarchy. After 30 years of Hosni Mubarak's rule, Egypt has entered the democratization process. However, it needs time. Also, Israel has a parliamentary system, but there is an Israeli occupation of Palestine. So, for these countries, it cannot be said to be democratic.

Through private and public cooperation initiatives and technical transfer in the East Mediterranean, the USA intends to increase Egypt's electricity generation, storage, and distribution capabilities. The fact that gas is a component that will diminish the European Union's reliance on Russia is also deemed crucial by the USA (Belladonna, 2019).

As mentioned earlier, it is considered to have both a mediator and a guiding effect in forming the East Mediterranean Gas Forum, which the USA sees as a platform for its goals. From the East Mediterranean Gas Forum final declarations, it is understood that political concerns beyond expectations are also a factor. As a requirement of the classical support policy of Israel, the United States also applied for the East

Mediterranean Gas Forum. For that reason, they are helping to create a platform on which Israel will meet the Arab world. It is also stated that the USA will use the East Mediterranean Gas Forum as a tool to distance Sisi-ruled Egypt from Iran and maintain contact with USA allies (Navon, 2019).

In order for the EU to deliver safe and economical energy, supply sources must be diversified. It makes sense to create a natural gas hub for this purpose in the Eastern Mediterranean, which is near Europe. As a result, the European Union and the countries of North Africa have been engaging in political energy dialogue for a long time. The European Union established the Mediterranean as being in southern Europe in the 2014 European Energy Security Strategy paper, which also increased political and commercial cooperation with its partners in North Africa and the Eastern Mediterranean. Its objective is to establish a natural gas center. The objective is to strengthen supply security, diversify Europe's energy sources, foster regional competition, and reduce the dependence on Russia's gas supply. The EU is also open to collaborating on renewable energy projects in North African countries (European Commission, 2014).

In addition, on April 23, 2018, Egypt and the EU signed a Memorandum of Understanding on the strategic energy partnership between them (Memorandum of Understanding, 2018). Included in the Memorandum of Understanding is the EU's aim to diversify its energy supply sources, and the fact that both sides support Egypt's role as an oil and gas hub in the Mediterranean and maintain it is considered necessary in terms of demonstrating the EU's support for Egypt's position in the East Mediterranean Gas Forum (Kökyay, 2021).

The EU needs to provide safe and affordable energy. It is reasonable to establish a natural gas center in the Eastern Mediterranean which is close to Europe. The European Union and North African countries have been talking about energy for a long time. The EU entered into an intensified political and commercial dialogue with its North African and Eastern Mediterranean partners, and the goal is to establish a natural gas center.

The EU maintains closed collaboration, cooperation, candidacy, or membership contacts with the countries in the region. In this regard, it is ideally positioned to contribute to the development of a framework for coordination and

collaboration, such as the East Mediterranean Gas Forum. It envisions the established mechanism as a tool for defining mutual interests and reducing conflict linked to oil and gas activity in the Eastern Mediterranean. Thus, the EU values reliable and accessible energy sources, less reliance on specific countries for energy, and a more stable environment (Öğütçü, Jones 2015).

The Eastern Mediterranean has proven that its current gas reserves align with Russia's EU gas reserves, which provides assurance to EU consumers. It is considered possible to affect its share of the supply a little. The formation of the Forum is closely followed by Russia. It is possible to evaluate the activities of Russian companies operating in the maritime jurisdictions of Lebanon and Egypt within this scope. In addition, Russia's Syria and Libya policy offers the potential to have an increasing say in the energy resources in this region. Therefore, in the long run, it will prevent possible regional export losses. Russia is expanding pipelines to Europe with Nord Stream-2 and Turk Stream projects and has yet to express a clear view on the East Mediterranean Gas Forum. However, Nord Stream-2 is not active. Also, France was an observer at the East Mediterranean Gas Forum meetings and has set a mission beyond protecting the rights of its companies in the Eastern Mediterranean. France sees the East Mediterranean Gas Forum as a suitable platform to unite the region's countries around this goal. France strives to increase its presence in the field to support its policy in this direction. France, which did not react to the overthrow of Egypt's first elected President Mohamed Morsi in a coup, avoided calling the developments a "coup" and ignored the massacre of thousands of people in the streets who opposed the coup. Moreover, France soon established close relations with the putschist dictator Sisi and sold Rafale warplanes, which it had difficulty exporting, to Egypt for the first time. Thus, contrary to what French Foreign Minister Juppe said, after dragging Libya into civil war and sacrificing the freedom hopes of the neighboring Egyptian people to a putschist dictator, the next step of the Paris administration was to support the maximalist demands of Greece and the Greek Cypriot Administration in the Eastern Mediterranean. Greece and the Greek Cypriot Administration of Cyprus argue that maritime jurisdiction areas should be determined according to the "midline" principle and that the islands also have their own territorial waters. Thus, efforts are made to limit the continental shelf of Türkiye, which has the longest coastline in the Eastern Mediterranean, to only the Gulf of Antalya (Lika, 2020).

3.2. In the Axis of Energy Security; the East Mediterranean Gas Forum

The increasing need for energy in every field due to technological developments, has also increased the importance of their existence. However, the most important part of the energy used in the world is oil and natural gas, which we call fossil fuels. When the distribution rates of these resources around the world are examined, it is seen that they are concentrated in limited areas. This situation makes countries that lack energy resources dependent on other countries that have energy resources. In this context, it is of great importance that these resources are operated and transferred to the countries in need continuously and safely, without interruption. The main reason why conflicts and instabilities are generally seen in areas where energy resources are located around the world is the problem of sharing these resources. Energy, which is one of the requirements, is also vital for other countries in the world. Countries energy hydrocarbons in land and sea areas under their sovereignty in order to meet their needs for resources, especially renewable energy sources, including all kinds of energy sources. Today, with the contribution of technological developments, hydrocarbon deposits both on land and in the very depths of the seabed can be identified and exploited.

Almost most of the hydrocarbon deposits on land have also decreased or been depleted. Therefore, countries are moving towards previously unexplored deep-sea areas to meet their energy demands. With the discovery of hydrocarbon resources in the Eastern Mediterranean at the start of the twenty-first century, the struggle for regional energy dominance has begun. Littoral nations in the Eastern Mediterranean proposed the area as a maritime jurisdiction area in an effort to share in the region's rich hydrocarbon deposits. They have started to claim the parcels they have declared on the continental shelf and the EEZ. Ongoing energy conflicts and the axis of energy security problems in the Eastern Mediterranean are the subject of this part of the East Mediterranean Gas Forum's energy policy is going to be elaborated. The main aim of the foundation of the East Mediterranean Gas Forum is sustainable energy, of course. It is possible for the East Mediterranean Gas Forum to provide political coordination among the member countries through common natural gas infrastructures. With the discovered energy resources, it is expected that an atmosphere of cooperation rather than competition will prevail in the Eastern Mediterranean and that the East Mediterranean Gas Forum will bring the countries of the region closer to each other in

this sense, making a significant contribution to EU energy security. Thanks to the East Mediterranean Gas Forum, cooperation between developing countries will be able to reduce some costs and risks in natural gas investments, encourage investors who lack confidence, and increase the competitiveness of gas, which will have consequences such as improving the profitability of investors. It is expected that the countries in the region, which have political and cultural problems among them, will increase trade in other areas after the natural gas trade. This, in turn, will provide a favorable atmosphere for the development of new projects that will increase prosperity in the region.

It is thought that a win-win based approach to the energy resources discovered in the Eastern Mediterranean is possible. The fact that Türkiye is a country with a dynamic and growing economy, the increasing need for imported gas by the European Union in the medium and long term, the desire to monetize the resources of the countries in the region, and the importance of multiple export options for Israel and other countries. In order to compete in the global market, it seems inevitable to pursue economies of scale, especially when compared to cheaper Russian and Qatari gas, and it is reasonable to sell the gas at the regional level, reduce transmission and storage costs, and benefit from the increasing energy demands of Türkiye and Egypt, the two largest markets in the region. Despite this, Türkiye is excluded from the East Mediterranean Gas Forum, and it is considered that turning the East Mediterranean Gas Forum into a political alliance platform and supporting member countries against Türkiye, TRNC, and Lebanon in determining maritime jurisdiction areas puts the energy security of the region at increasing risk. Türkiye's exclusion from the eastern Mediterranean energy resources regional cooperation dialogue, can be seen as a major obstacle to the full utilization of the energy resource potential in the basin (Belladonna, 2020).

Greek Foreign Minister Nikos Dendias said that the decreasing tension between Ankara and Athens could be an opportunity for energy cooperation. He stated that it is a suitable environment to develop a common strategy, especially regarding the transportation of Eastern Mediterranean natural gas. Dendias said that there is an opportunity for cooperation in the current rapprochement process between Greece and Türkiye. He emphasized the importance of not wasting money. The Greek Minister stated that the situation could easily become more volatile again, which could negatively affect the political atmosphere. Both countries stand out as important stops

in the transportation of natural gas extracted from gas fields in the Eastern Mediterranean to Europe (NTV, 2023).

3.3. Impacts of the East Mediterranean Gas Forum on the Energy Security

Through the common natural gas infrastructure of the East Mediterranean Gas Forum, coordination seems possible. It is expected that the atmosphere of cooperation rather than competition in the Eastern Mediterranean with the discovered energy resources and the East Mediterranean Gas Forum bringing the countries of the region closer together will make a significant contribution to the EU energy security. Due to the East Mediterranean Gas Forum, cooperation between developing countries reduced some costs and risks in natural gas investments, encouraging investors with a lack of confidence and promoting the Eastern Mediterranean. There will likely be results, such as improving the profitability of investors by increasing the competitiveness of gas. Due to the natural gas trade of the countries in the region, among which there are political and cultural problems, it is expected that they will increase trade in other areas after this period. This will provide a suitable atmosphere for developing new projects to increase regional welfare. A win-win-based approach to the energy resources discovered in the Eastern Mediterranean is possible. The reasons include the fact that, Türkiye is a country with a dynamic and growing economy and the increasing need of the European Union for imported gas in the medium and long term (Korkmaz, 2021).

According to a recent explanation by President Erdogan, 58 billion cubic meters of natural gas reserves have been explored in the Black Sea region. President Erdogan also stated that the total amount of the reserve has increased to 710 billion cubic meters in the Black Sea region (Bbc.com, 2022).

Desire of the countries in the region to turn their resources into money, and the importance of more than one export option for Israel and other countries form the basis of this idea.

For competition in the international market, the economic situation must be followed, especially in light of cheaper gas from Russia and Qatar. Comparatively, it seems necessary to keep track of economic conditions. Selling the gas at a regional level would be a viable approach to lower the cost of transportation and storage and capitalize on the rising energy needs of Türkiye and Egypt, the two biggest markets in

the area. Despite this, Türkiye is excluded from The East Mediterranean Gas Forum and has high-cost projects. For instance, Sinop Nuclear Energy Central its cost according to the official sources, is 20 billion USD. It was considered that turning the East Mediterranean Gas Forum into a political alliance platform and supporting member countries against Türkiye, TRNC, and Lebanon in determining maritime jurisdiction areas puts the region's energy security at increasing risk. The exclusion of Türkiye from the Eastern Mediterranean energy resources regional cooperation dialogue is a significant obstacle to fully exploiting the energy resource potential in the Eastern Mediterranean Basin (Belladonna, 2020). The East Mediterranean Gas Forum members and observer participants already founded such a regional organization, and meanwhile, it turned into an international organization. From this point of view, there is a common interest and mutual gain between these members; it is undeniable. However, if Türkiye were a member of the East Mediterranean Gas Forum, cooperation and action could be much better. Such a country as Türkiye; in the middle of the three continents, could be beneficial geopolitically for the outgrowth of the East Mediterranean Gas Forum.

The primary purpose of the forum is energy. Scientists define energy as “the ability to do work”. Human beings have learned how to convert energy from one form into another. Energy can be divided into two categories: potential, or stored energy, and kinetic energy, or work. For example, food contains chemicals that your body stores until they are used as energy at work or in at play. Energy stored in the form of coal or natural gas, as well as the kinetic energy of the water flowing in rivers, can be converted into electricity, which can be used for a variety of purposes, including walking, cycling, moving cars and boats, cooking on stoves, lighting up homes and offices, and sending astronauts into space. Energy can also be stored as heat, light, electricity, chemicals, or gravity (EIA, 2023).

Although they mentioned cooperation issues, it is also true that more comprehensive geostrategic processes that reflect the common perception of the importance of the region's states for their national security have an emphasized impact (Winter, Lindenstrauss, 2019). However, some of the region's countries are founding members; while participating as a member, it will be expected that some countries excluded from the Forum would negatively affect energy security and other security concerns.

Shama's (2019) review of the core of the Forum answers many questions. There should not be much relief in Israel's relations with Jordan, Lebanon, and Egypt, and there is anger in Jordan about the Israel-Jordan gas deal. On the other hand, the development in Egypt-Israel relations is only at an official level, and the public still widely dislikes Israel. Shama states, " The East Mediterranean Gas Forum regionally rather than alleviating tensions, perpetuates existing problems and polarizations." (Shama, 2019).

In light of all these developments, the East Mediterranean Gas Forum, beyond commercial cooperation, creates an image of an anti-Türkiye political alliance. Closer cooperation with Eastern Mediterranean countries is beyond the aim of preventing the anti- Türkiye policies from being carried out based on the East Mediterranean Gas Forum, preventing Türkiye from having a more extensive maritime jurisdiction, and stopping it in a region limited to the Gulf of Antalya. It will have effects on preventing the establishment of mechanisms and establishing a greater sphere of influence in Africa.

Ögütçü and Jones (2015) propose a regional Eastern Mediterranean Energy Community to advocate integration and partnership, conflict resolution, data sharing, analysis, and engagement with key stakeholders in an informal setting, free from political hostilities and tensions. It referred to the fact that politics in the Eastern Mediterranean has long been an obstacle to developing energy resources. The East Mediterranean Gas Forum, implemented with the understanding that it will create regional polarization, is the key to enabling the existing resources to develop as soon as possible. It can potentially be a new political obstacle rather than a role. Despite the positive expectations created by the East Mediterranean Gas Forum, considering the reserves and annual export estimates of the countries in the region, it is thought that the natural gas trade, which is expected to last for decades, may have a limited effect on the East Mediterranean Gas Forum solving the problems. In addition, liberal institutionalism is the critical theory that the East Mediterranean Gas Forum is an international organization that provides cooperation and will continue to cooperate in the region. When liberal institutionalism analyzed that, liberal institutionalism has historically emphasized the need for institutional arrangements to start and maintain interstate cooperation. International organizations and foundations can be established only with the states' authorization and consent. It means that states allow that

establishment of international organizations (Çakmak, 2014). The theory sparked much interest in the potential and capabilities of international institutions, particularly the United Nations, for long-term peace and cooperation in the post-Cold War world.

As it can be seen above, more than the Eastern Mediterranean energy reserves are needed to solve the world's energy crisis at a level that can meet its needs and then be exported. In addition, low-population countries in the Eastern Mediterranean can change the balance. The Greek Cypriot government and the energy supply have sufficient power over the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus. A significant portion of the hydrocarbon resources in the Eastern Mediterranean are found inside of Türkiye's continental shelf and exclusive economic zone (McLaughlin, 2008). Türkiye also has claims in the area. Due consideration must be given to Türkiye's rights under international law, which it claims other nations have violated by keeping it out of these benefits (Schaller, 2022).

In addition, energy companies from advanced countries are conducting searches in disputed maritime areas. These companies are motivated by the potential profits from the oil and gas reserves in the Eastern Mediterranean, which are estimated to be significant. However, these activities have also contributed to the tensions in the region, as they are seen as provocative by some countries and have led to legal disputes.

It is essential for all parties involved to approach these disputes with a willingness to negotiate and find mutually acceptable solutions. This will require a commitment to international law and respect for the rights of all regional states and peoples. Only through peaceful cooperation can the potential benefits of the region's resources be realized while avoiding conflict and instability. A security problem arises for Türkiye. Whereas, when international companies search these areas, they have their own areas. They emerge with the power of their states. This may cause Türkiye and the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus to become even more isolated in the Eastern Mediterranean. Despite Türkiye 's rights under international law, in southern Cyprus the Greek Cypriot Administration has agreed on the maritime areas with Egypt, Israel, and Lebanon. They have designed according to the line unilaterally. In this case, the rights and interests of the Republic of Türkiye and the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus were ignored. The United States of America, the European Union, and the

Russian Federation supported this unilateral initiative of the Greek Cypriot Administration. On the other hand, Greece is trying to keep the Eastern Mediterranean predominantly under its control by trying to make agreements with Egypt, Libya, and the Greek Cypriot Administration.

Last but not least, the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea's Article 300 is been violated by the East Mediterranean Gas Forum Project. States Parties are required to fulfill their obligations under this Convention in good faith and to exercise the rights, jurisdictions, and freedoms recognized in this Convention in a way that does not amount to an abuse of rights, according to Article 300 (UNCLOS, 1982). As regards freedom of use on its territory, Article 79(1) applies to all states, even if they are authorized to lay submarine cables and pipelines on the continental shelf (Stanič , Karbuz, 2020). The laying of such pipelines must be subject to the permission of the coastal states (Ateşoğlu, 2018). However, Türkiye does not give such permission like that (Peker, Oktay, Şensoy 2019). The proximity to the world's energy production centers and the Eastern Mediterranean's importance in significantly altering the energy policies of the region's states concerning energy resources will maintain its place in international politics for decades. The division of energy resources in the Eastern Mediterranean based on international law is also essential to avoid adding new problems to existing problem areas, such as the Middle East region, which currently has political, humanitarian, and legal problems. Therefore, the division of maritime rights in the Eastern Mediterranean is not included by the Forum, Türkiye, or even the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus. Due to this, the scenario will, at best, exacerbate already-existing issues in the area. There are unresolved and escalating issues with the continental shelf and the exclusive economic zone of the Eastern Mediterranean. Multilateral cooperation and agreements, not hydrocarbon resources, are the solution to the security problem of countries with coasts in the Eastern Mediterranean.

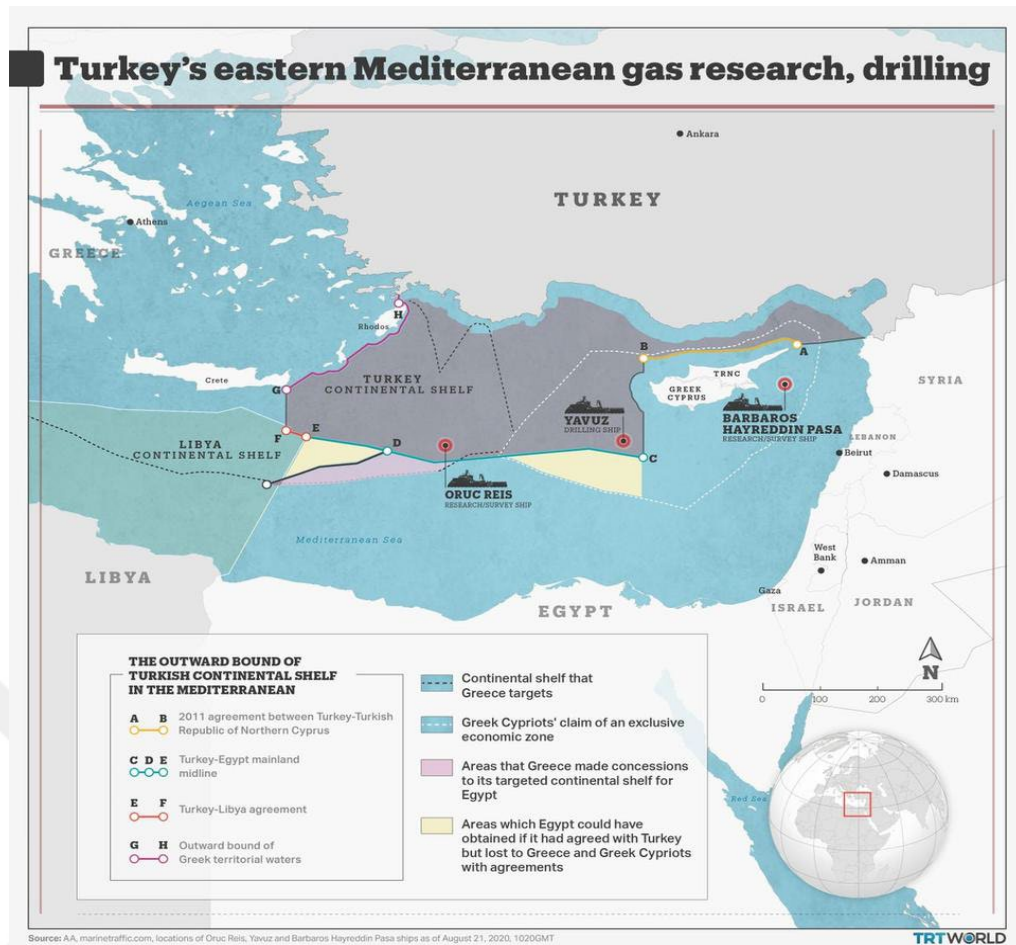


Image 4: Türkiye 's Eastern Mediterranean gas research. Retrieved from: Trtworld.

3.4. Development of the EMGF between 2019-2023

The Cairo Declaration of January 14, 2019, issued at the conclusion of the first Ministerial Meeting, stated that the East Mediterranean Gas Forum would serve as a platform for cooperation and the establishment of a systematic and structured policy dialogue in the field of natural gas, with the aim of eventually leading to the establishment of a sustainable regional gas market. The purpose of the forum is to facilitate dialogue and coordination between the participating countries of the region and between them and their respective stakeholders, such as companies in the Eastern Mediterranean region, financial institutions, potential customers, and investors. Various bodies and committees have been established by the East Mediterranean Gas Forum throughout the year to further the forum's mission. These include the Ministerial Committee, which is composed of the energy-related ministers of each of the Forum's member states and is the highest-ranking body of the EMGF, responsible for defining the organization's policies. The Ministerial Committee has met on three

separate occasions in Cairo in 2019, 2020, and 2021. In September 2020, a foundation charter was signed by the members. The High-Level Working Group was made up of representatives from all the forum's countries and was in charge of running the forum and making sure everyone got the information they needed. They met for the sixth time in May 2021. The GIAG is a group of experts who provide advice to the forum. It's made up of regulators from the member states, companies from the private sector, and financial institutions from around the world. It had its third meeting in May. There are also subcommittees made up of technical, economic, and organizational experts. These have their own plans of work that follow the guidelines of GIAG and are part of the overall GIAG working program. At the end of the day, the East Mediterranean Gas Forum's goal is to make the most of the natural gas reserves in the Eastern Mediterranean by using existing infrastructure and encouraging future exploration since most of the region's resources are still untapped. It is important to get the private sector and financial institutions involved in order to improve monetization capabilities. Improving monetization prospects is key to getting investors and stimulating future exploration. This is one of the main ways the East Mediterranean Gas Forum can help. A World Bank-funded study was presented at the third ministerial meeting in Cairo, which took place in January 2020. After that, there have been several ministerial meetings. As a result of these ministerial meetings, they recognized that its use is vital for the energy security of the region. Mutual understanding and common energy problems and interests among Eastern Mediterranean countries in order to raise awareness about the potential in the region in the Eastern Mediterranean on the basis of international law cooperation between gas producers, buyers, and transit countries, including producers, confirmed its necessity. Sharing the common interests and objectives of the forum, any eastern Mediterranean country, a gas producer, consumer, or transit country with it was also included in the declaration that may participate in the future. In the declaration, apart from the producer countries, recipient and transit countries are also included within the scope of the East Mediterranean Gas Forum. Although only Greece is a transit country and Jordan and Italy are recipient countries, being invited to the meeting within the scope of the forum is part of a certain strategy. It gives an impression. The rules determined at the beginning for the countries that are likely to join later state that they will be included in the Forum if they accept; determining the rules means that they do not have a say in the matter. This situation, again in the declaration of the Forum last, is rather than using the gas potential of the

region efficiently. It reveals that it is designed to implement a determined plan. In this first meeting towards the establishment of the East Mediterranean Gas Forum, we decided to establish the East Mediterranean Gas Forum. While their intention is declared, their intention to use their existing infrastructure and build the necessary ones is also highlighted. From the existing infrastructure, it is possible to see Egypt's LNG and pipeline opportunities. The meeting statement also highlighted supply- and demand-related issues. It is intended to create security, cost-effective resource development and infrastructure, competitive pricing, and a regional gas market that benefits members through improved trade relations. The ministers responsible for the issues and the Jordanian Minister representative are referred to as founding ministers, it has been decided. US Secretary of Energy, European Union Energy Director General, France, and the World Bank representatives as special guests in the meeting demonstrated the support given to the formation of the East Mediterranean Gas Forum. The formation of the Gas Industry Advisory Committee (GIAC) was approved at the meeting, with founding ministers allowing participation from the private sector. At the meeting, ministers talked about how to use current infrastructure to facilitate the exploitation of upcoming discoveries as well as how to work together to develop infrastructure. They also discussed the current gas reserves in the Eastern Mediterranean (Press and Information Office, 2019b). Again, in the meetings that Türkiye and Lebanon did not attend, the Forum was used as an international organization. A commitment was also made to raise it to the next level (Anadolu Agency, 2019). The third The East Mediterranean Gas Forum ministerial meeting was held in Cairo on January 16, 2020. While representatives of the European Union and the World Bank attended, representatives from the USA and France also attended as guests. As a feature of the Third Ministerial Meeting of the East Mediterranean Gas Forum, a serious threshold has been crossed towards the official establishment of the Forum by approving its statute. In the statement published after the meeting (Ministry of Petroleum and Mineral Resources, 2020), while it is stated that the East Mediterranean Gas Forum was established as an international intergovernmental organization, gas will serve as a platform to create a structured dialogue on the subject, and it is emphasized that it will set the agenda to create strategies and regional gas policies. On September 22, 2020, the agreed-upon Forum Charter was held in Cairo. With its signing at the virtual meeting, it was recorded as the date when the East Mediterranean Gas Forum was officially established. The

meeting, which took place in a video conference environment due to the pandemic, was attended by Egypt, Greece, Israel, Italy, Jordan, the USA, the European Union, and France as observers (Reuters, 2020). As a founding member in previous meetings President Mahmoud Abbas's decision to cut relations with Israel by the Palestinian authorities, he did not attend the meeting as per his decision, but it was not possible for him to withdraw from the forum (Anadolu Agency, 2020). By increasing the number of the East Mediterranean Gas Forum's members, its area of influence will be expanded. Expanding it and gaining the status of an international organization are among the future goals. However, considering the amount of discovered and possible reserves, such an organization Getting a result from the OPEC event is not considered possible at this stage (Kökyay, 2021). In addition, one of the last meetings was in December. The Ministry of Energy and Mineral Resources of Egypt announced on December 7, 2022, that the Eighth Ministerial Meeting was held in Cairo. The meeting was hosted by Secretary-General Osama Mobarez and attended by Heads of Delegations from Greece, Italy, Jordan, Israel, and France, as well as the observer members of the forum, including the United States, EU Commission, and World Bank. The Ministry further stated that the President of the EMGF for 2023, Tarek el Molla, received the Presidency of the session from the current President of the Forum in 2022, Natasa Pilides of Cyprus. In his opening address, El Molla highlighted the significance of the initiative taken by the EMGF in light of the current global circumstances. He also highlighted the fact that the Forum presented an important study on the reduction of emissions and the decarbonization of the gas industry, which was first discussed at the COP27. This also provided an insight into the current global energy landscape, which is facing a number of difficulties.

Pilides, the chairperson of the forum's current session, declared that she would be handing over the chair of the forum's 2023 session to Mr. El Molla. She expressed her gratitude for the support of Egypt during the Cyprus presidency of the Forum and the work being done to reach the forum's objectives, wishing Mr. El Molla the best of luck during his term as Chairperson for 2023. Pilides presented the results of the forum's activities in 2022, as well as the presentation of relevant studies, particularly in relation to the energy transition and carbon removal. He noted that the Forum's main objectives for the year 2022 were to achieve energy security and the Energy Transition, and that the difficulties encountered during this year necessitated the Forum engaging

in more dialogue and collaboration with all parties in order to reach shared objectives. Zafer Milhem, President of the Palestinian Authority, expressed the Authority's gratitude to the President and Government of Egypt for their support and commitment to the development of the Gaza marine gas field and the agreements they have signed with the Eghaz Gas Holding Company. He stressed the importance of ensuring that Palestine's resources are managed and developed in accordance with international standards, which was the purpose of joining the Forum in the first place.

El Molla noted that the signing of the Egyptian-Palestinian MoU, which initiated the start of work on the development of the Gazan marine gas field, was one of the most significant achievements of the East Mediterranean Gas Forum. The Heads of the Delegations stressed the importance of the forum and its adoption of equitable objectives, such as the promotion of the right of countries to use their own resources, the provision of part of the world's energy supply, the openness to the use of new and renewable energy sources, the enhancement of the global energy mix and the presentation of significant initiatives and studies on reducing emissions (Samir, 2022).

CHAPTER 4: EAST MEDITERRANEAN GAS FORUM: CAN BE A POSSIBLE SOLUTION SOLVING THE ENERGY CRISIS?

As Europe scrambles for alternatives to meet its energy requirements and Gulf oil and gas companies have said they cannot significantly boost output to help ease the continent's energy shortages further, the E.U. and each member state have turned their relevance to gas finds in the Eastern Mediterranean.

In recent years, there has been a surge in the production of large-scale natural gas in the Eastern Mediterranean region, particularly in Egypt and Cyprus. This has attracted the attention of European leaders, who are now cognizant of the potential for the region to provide an alternative supply of Russian gas to European countries, thus altering the energy supply chains for the European Union. The recent discoveries of large-scale offshore gas in the eastern Mediterranean and Levant Basin have the potential to transform the region into a major hub and supplier of oil and natural gas production. Several countries in the region have national programs for the exploitation, development, and export of seabed resources, ranging from Egypt, Israel, and Cyprus to Greece. With the exception of Türkiye, the majority of the Eastern Mediterranean nations established the East Mediterranean Gas Forum in 2019 to facilitate

coordination and cooperation on gas-related issues among participating nations. Türkiye is one country that should be added to the East Mediterranean Gas Forum and regional energy cooperation, despite the fact that it is where gas is provided to Europe. Türkiye is not a member of the Forum because of the Justice and Development Party's policy of opposition to the East Mediterranean Gas Forum. The JDP government has dispatched Turkish naval boats on numerous occasions to hinder gas exploration in Cyprus' exclusive economic zone, and the JDP government has dispatched Turkish aircraft to the Greek islands on a daily basis to aggravate relations with Greece (Helsinki Times, 2022). In addition, Turkish-Israeli diplomatic relations have been frozen for four years. Ankara's participation in the East Mediterranean Gas Forum is only possible if Türkiye comes into conflict with Greece, Cyprus, Israel and Egypt. On June 15, 2022, it was announced at the East Mediterranean Gas Forum that the EU, Egypt, and Israel, have agreed to supply natural gas to the EU. According to the agreement, Israeli gas will be piped to an LNG terminal on Egypt's Mediterranean coast before being transported on tankers to European coastlines (Greenpeace). Israel, through a consortium of Italy's Eni and France's Total (Demiryol, 2019), is projected to be able to export 500 billion cubic meters of natural gas to Europe in the Eastern Mediterranean over the next 20 years (Israel and Stuff, 2012). The discovery contains an estimated 2.5 trillion cubic feet of natural gas, making it his second reservoir discovered in the region.

Cyprus does not currently have any LNG facilities. A recent agreement to construct pipelines connecting these significant gas discoveries to Egypt's LNG export facilities has given it access to Egypt's infrastructure. Although production might be years behind schedule, they hope to obtain it. As previously mentioned, the establishment of the East Mediterranean Gas Forum responds to the demand from Forum members for a coordinated regional effort to maximize the potential of offshore gas in the Eastern Mediterranean. Involving the private sector and financial institutions will increase the possibility of developing gas reserves successfully (Jimenez Garcia-Carriazo, 2021).

The East Mediterranean Gas Forum provides a platform for regional collaboration aimed at improving the competitiveness of offshore gas resources. Regional conflicts have prevented this from happening, but the establishment of the forum has had a geopolitical dimension as Türkiye's relationships with its neighbors

have been strained or difficult. Despite these disagreements, the East Mediterranean Gas Forum offers numerous benefits, including potential revenue-generating opportunities, deterrence to investment, and an effect on future exploration attempts (Sukkariyeh, 2021).

Europe could meet its energy needs and break its dependence on Russian gas by importing Israeli and Egyptian quantities. There are limits, however, such as Egypt's need to increase the capacity of its LNG plants in Damietta and Iduk. However, European LNG terminals have sufficient capacity to handle a significantly increased natural gas supply (Stergiou, 2022).

Moreover, every effort carries political risks, and pulling Europe away from Russian gas is challenging and achievable in months. Other political risks for Europe relate to disruptions to its LNG supply and attacks on drilling infrastructure in the Eastern Mediterranean. Even before it is firmly established as an alternative to Russian pipelines, the Eastern Mediterranean gas infrastructure will present a long-term threat to the energy security of European supplies." (Helsinki Times, 2022).

Europe is cascading high-gas expedients into the Eastern Mediterranean as a result of the effects of the Russian-Ukrainian War in order to protect itself from an energy crisis that will likely worsen as a result of downtime. A prestigious position in the production, processing, and export of gas was once held by Egypt. Therefore, it was emphasized at the Cairo meeting, which was held in conjunction with the East Mediterranean Gas Forum and was attended by Egypt, Cyprus, Greece, Israel, Italy, France, Palestine, and Jordan, as well as the US, the EU, and the World Bank as observers, as well as the EU Energy and Climate Commission, that this forum and its mechanisms must provide a solution to the gas extremity in Europe, whether it is resolved now or in the distant future (Tziarras, 2022). Egyptian gas and its logistics facilities were given a good and crucial opportunity to fill the void left by Russian regulations for gas transportation to Europe, allowing Egypt to establish itself as a reliable and consistent source of gas, at least for countries in southern Europe. The country of Egypt has succeeded in its goals of developing into a major exporter of energy. To meet the expanding gas demands of Europe, Cairo is prepared to steer the energy ship and collaborate efficiently with other The East Mediterranean Gas Forum members. In Western European countries, natural gas consumption is falling. The EU's

objective has been to create a reliable, transparent, and interconnected market. The EU imports more than 60% of its natural gas (Yesevi, 2018). The European Union has tried to solve Russia's energy dependence. After 2050, differentiation in the natural gas sector is expected. As predicted by the European Commission in 2010, the demand for natural gas for heating in Northwestern Europe is expected to decrease, facilitated by the development of alternative energy sources and the implementation of energy efficiency measures. The European Union will try to diversify its sources of supply by modifying the configuration of transport and factories (Diekhöner, 2012). The East Mediterranean Gas Forum's significance and role in securing specific energy supplies have been brought to light by recent global changes, especially in light of the region's potential for increased gas production and exports to Europe. In addition, Germany launched three projects right away to put LNG plants, in place even though it wasn't a top priority. To connect Europe to Eastern Mediterranean gas, which was discovered in significant quantities 20 years ago off the coasts of Israel and Cyprus, another line has been restarted. The search for new natural gas sources has led to the creation of a new natural gas map of the world, but the good news is that Egypt has surpassed them all and will be assigned a specific location on the map depending on who wins the Mediterranean gas race (Sadek, 2022).

Last but not least, Türkiye is not a member of the East Mediterranean Gas Forum. Türkiye does not want to be a member. However, it is understood that the East Mediterranean Gas Forum cannot reach its full potential and goals without Türkiye. That is why bilateral relations have extreme importance here. Türkiye's cooperation process is going to be possible through high-level meetings with talks on the table.

Only with bilateral relations and cooperation do negotiations seem possible. As explained above, the East Mediterranean Gas Forum has several ministerial meetings during certain periods. There can be technical and political meetings. Technical meetings could take place over shorter periods of time. Political meetings are top-level meetings that include the ministers of the member states. High-level conversations with the persons selected by the parties can be transmitted through the reports of managers. Continuity is essential for the meetings as well.

The dash for gas in the Eastern Mediterranean

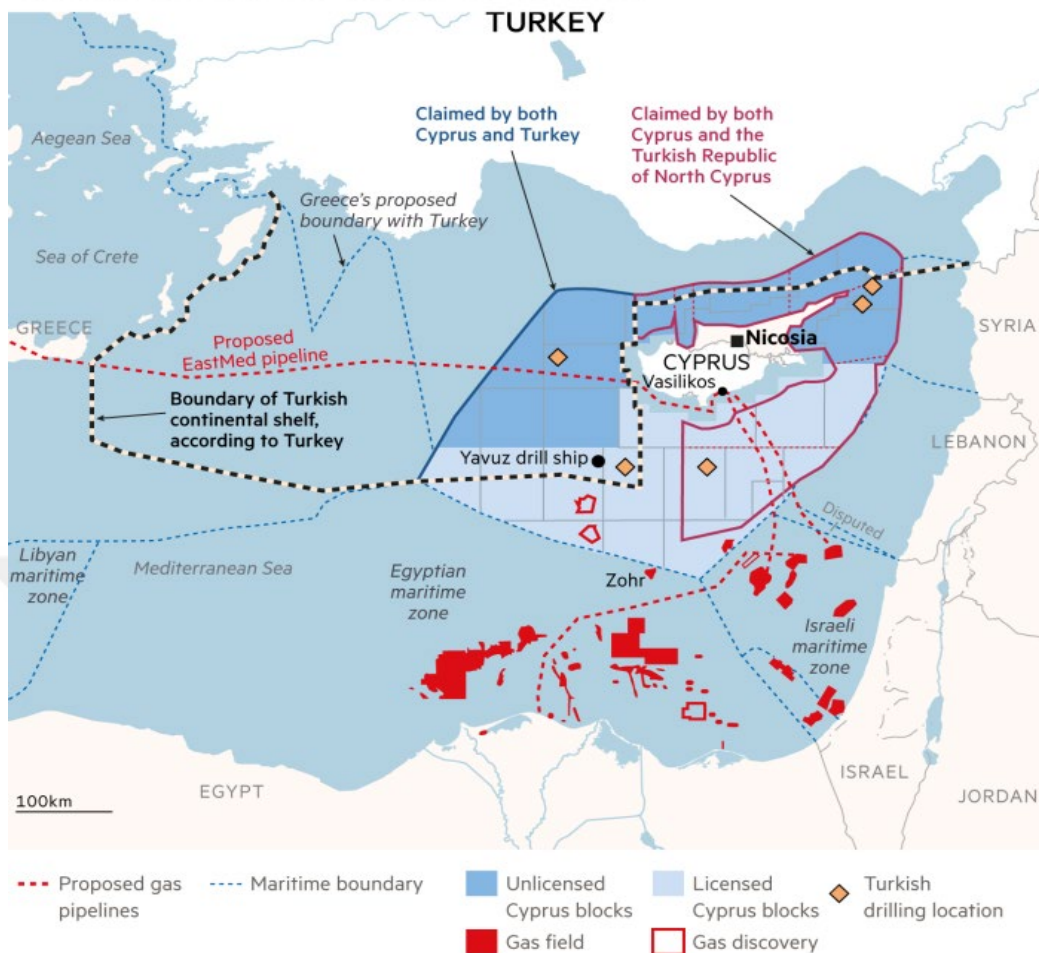


Image 5: The Dash for Gas in the Eastern Mediterranean. Retrieved from: (Dayan, 2022)

The Eastern Mediterranean is spotlighted as the EU revamps its gas strategy. The energy crisis, soaring natural gas prices, and the EU's new energy policy to end the continent's dependence on Russian gas as soon as possible open up more excellent prospects. For the Eastern Mediterranean Gas Pipeline, whose development will affect Greece's role in the energy sector, rising gas prices have improved the viability of the East Mediterranean Gas Forum project. This potential 2,000-kilometer gas pipeline will transport natural Gas to Europe via Greece, Cyprus, and Europe (Colombo & Soler i Lecha, 2020). The United States withdrew its support for the project in January, citing technical and commercial sustainability issues. Many analysts expect gas prices to remain high for an extended period, which could make the East Mediterranean Gas Forum a viable investment for companies building and operating the pipeline.

Recently, the European Commission announced its ambitious Repower EU roadmap, which prioritizes finding alternative sources of natural gas and supply routes to end the continent's dependence on Russian gas.

Gas fields in the Eastern Mediterranean are well positioned, close to European markets. It is still determining whether it is cheaper to transport these volumes of gas in the form of LNG or via the East Mediterranean Gas Forum given the increased bargaining power of gas producers and LNG exporters, the EU would be better off pursuing a pipeline solution. Shell's forecast of an LNG shortage in international markets starting in 2025 should also be considered (Energy Press, 2022).

President Nicos Anastasiades, on the other hand, spoke at the start of the East Mediterranean Gas Forum Energy Transition Conference. He stated that the Cyprus summit underlined the cooperative attitude of the East Mediterranean Gas Forum's member nations. **Anastasiades stated in 2022:**

Your participation confirms our combined efforts to deepen our collaboration in energy-related areas, both as a way of establishing long-term stability and peace in our volatile region and of improving Europe's energy security through alternative energy channels. "EMGF has proven to be effective in bringing together the different countries of our region, as well as different people, from gas producers and investors to traders. The EMGF provides money, as it contributes to the sustainable development of the region. The gas market is reducing the technical, financial, and political risks", the president continued (Nicolaou, 2022).

The EU Energy Commissioner, Kadri Simson and Egypt, Jordan, and Greece Energy Ministers, as well as the Secretary General of the Forum, Osama Mobarez, participated in the conference, which was hosted by the Energy, Commerce, and Industry Ministry of Nicosia and the Cypriot Hydrocarbons Company, at the Presidential Palace. According to the forum's president, the fundamental tenet of the forum is the full respect of independent states' sovereign rights, which includes granting them the right to utilize their natural resources while following international law fully. The East Mediterranean Gas Forum has been successful in "fostering cooperation through structured and systematic dialogue on natural gas issues, including on the path to green transition," according to Anastasiades.

A summary of the East Mediterranean Gas Forum activities, including the advancement of the work prioritized by Cyprus' presidency, will be covered in the most recent edition of the conference.

The Eastern Mediterranean Natural Gas Decarbonization Initiative and the findings of a study on the region's contribution to the energy security of the European Union are included in this, especially at a time when the ongoing conflict in Ukraine has caused particular turbulence. Examining the region's potential contribution to the EU's efforts to diversify its energy sources and routes is the study's goal, which the EU funds (Knews, 2022).

According to Anastasiades, he stated that:

"This may be done by transferring gas from the Eastern Mediterranean, whether LNG or through a pipeline, hydrogen that will eventually be produced in the region, and clean energy from renewable energy exporting to Europe through energy links." He continued to say that the Eastern Mediterranean can play an important role in this (Knews, 2022).

The president referred to the June 2022 signing in Cairo of the trilateral Memorandum of Understanding between the EU, Egypt, and Israel for the export of natural gas to the EU.

"This development represents another concrete step toward strengthening EU energy cooperation with the Eastern Mediterranean countries, as well as a new encouraging development in strengthening energy planning between the region's countries," he said.

The East Mediterranean Gas Forum authorities think it can be a solution for exiting the energy crisis in Europe, but it is more challenging than they thought. As long as they exclude Türkiye from the forum and its developments, they cannot achieve success regarding the forum's aim. Such member countries and other actors should consider the Republic of Türkiye's condition and the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus's (Cyprus Mail, 2022).

International regimes, according to Keohane and Victor, are institutions that have legally enforceable norms in the energy industry. The chance to profit from pipelines that are nominally built by elites representing governmental interests. There are institutions that are decentralized and scattered. The prominent participants in this industry are multinational corporations, national energy businesses, infrastructure service providers, and various government entities (Keohane, Victor 2013).

Potential suppliers must act quickly in order to capitalize on the challenging conditions in Europe. The EU is facing a severe energy crisis and is seeking immediate solutions. In the near future, the impact of this MoU on the new gas contracts and

investments of multinational oil companies in the region will become increasingly evident. At this juncture, it is essential that key stakeholders remember three key points: first, the authorities of the Eastern Mediterranean should be cognizant of the fact that this opportunity may not last forever; second, they should temper their expectations and the expectations of their citizens for significant prosperity in the wake of the crisis (Haytayan, 2022). Authorities should maintain attention on desalination projects and domestic gas needs for electricity, in any case. Leaders in the area should take advantage of the chance to foster cooperation and enforce current institutions like the East Mediterranean Gas Forum to maximize the use of already available resources and develop projects not just for gas but also for renewable energy and clean energy.

The current crisis in Ukraine, combined with the EU's requirement for new suppliers, may encourage authorities in the eastern Mediterranean to reach an agreement. For instance, Lebanon has proposed a maritime border agreement with Israel after a 12-year period of conflict, with the aim of creating opportunities and encouraging companies to search for natural gas in its waters. Could the prospect of wealth from natural gas exploration encourage Greek-Cypriot reconciliation? Furthermore, the EU-Israel MoU and Egypt agreement should cover more than just natural gas. Moving beyond the current emergency and decreasing dependency on fossil fuels may open the way for increased cooperation and partnership among the countries in the eastern Mediterranean. This would lead to improved electrical connections, especially those generated from renewable energy sources, and would transcend the current emergency. However, this is only a short-term solution (Haytayan, 2022).

Until now, the development of cross-border links in the Eastern Mediterranean region has largely followed the trends of pre-existing regional blockages. For example, energy issues are seen as a potential source of economic and security cooperation between the European Union (EU), Greece, Egypt, and Israel, as well as other countries. On the other hand, Türkiye has been isolated due to the regionalism policy of the East Mediterranean Gas Forum, which has been in place since July 2021. The East Mediterranean Gas Forum is a key component in this process. It is composed of members of including Cyprus, France, and Greece, as well as Italy and Egypt, as well as Israel, Jordan, and the Palestinian Authority. Türkiye has been granted observer status by the European Commission. From this point of view, the members of the East

Mediterranean Gas Forum share common identity. Their common interest idea can be seen in liberal institutionalist theory. Furthermore, liberal institutionalists do not attach an identity value to international organizations; they care about their existence but consider them important to the extent that they serve the common interests of states. International organizations can lose their existence if common interests disappear (Oğuzlu, 2014). Creating and expanding a regional natural gas market is listed as the Forum's primary objective in its founding document, signed in January 2019 and established by the Forum. Now, the East Mediterranean Gas Forum's summit agendas also include promoting renewable energy sources. The Forum was established in response to Ankara's confrontational approach to neighboring nations. The Turkish government has now made a complaint regarding its exclusion. However, the other coastal states' plans can be thwarted by Türkiye because it is a regional power with the military power to do so.

Türkiye continues to be a crucial, though challenging, actor in the EU's desired energy transition because it has influenced regional politics and the economy. Coordination of the energy economy transformation would be in the best interests of the EU and Türkiye. If not, there is a chance of high political costs and roadblocks to achieving energy goals. In theory, Türkiye also depends on EU cooperation because it urgently needs financial assistance to develop a sustainable energy infrastructure.

These reflections offer the EU three main recommendations (European, Commission, 2019).

Concerning fossil fuels, the EU should consistently urge foreign corporations and the Eastern Mediterranean region's littoral states to halt natural gas exploration off Cyprus and in the Aegean. It has been demonstrated in recent months that the suspension of exploration due to the pandemic defuses the situation and creates fresh opportunities for conversation. The European Commission should also stop investing in new fossil fuel infrastructure, particularly the East Mediterranean Gas Forum project, in light of its climate goals and instead concentrate on creating transportation routes for renewable hydrogen. This would be a clear message to the area and dispel rumors of a gas boom off the coast of Cyprus.

The EU should focus its strategy toward these nations on investing in sustainable energy infrastructure to increase the use of renewable energy sources

(Knodt, Kemmerzell, 2022). This will allow it to capitalize on the existing ecological and economic pressure on Greece, Türkiye, and Cyprus to take action. Developing connections, offshore wind energy, and producing renewable hydrogen should all be prioritized. The EU would have the chance to further the leadership position it strives for in the hydrogen and sustainable energy sectors. Greece, Türkiye, and Cyprus could become more environmentally conscious and less reliant on imported fossil fuels while improving their environmental and climate records (Knodt, Kemmerzell, 2022).

In order to prevent any negative effects on the region's energy transition from the unresolved disputes between Greece, Türkiye, and the two communities in Cyprus regarding maritime boundaries, territorial sovereignty, and political influence, exclusive economic zones should be set up. In order to create a politically advantageous framework for building Euro-Asian and Euro-African interconnections, the EU should involve Ankara in a constructive dialogue and use the already existing high-level climate dialogue between the EU and Türkiye. As a result of Türkiye's power grid being synchronized with continental Europe, it could join a larger power network that uses green electricity. In contrast, if Türkiye makes it difficult for the interconnectors to be built, it might thwart Türkiye's efforts, as well as those of Israel, Egypt, and others, to normalize diplomatic relations. The EU should also have a distinct strategy for dealing with Ankara. When Türkiye anticipated negative economic repercussions from its aggressive policies in the past, it recanted. Based on this experience, the EU should clarify that any disruptive actions that obstruct the interconnector construction between Greece and Cyprus would also meet with economic countermeasures (Rau, Seufert, Westphal 2022).

Last but not least, coordination on a regional and global level will be needed for the Eastern Mediterranean's energy transition. A suitable multilateral framework is necessary for this situation, and the East Mediterranean Gas Forum is only partially appropriate. The relationship between the Forum and non-member Türkiye continues to strain even though The East Mediterranean Gas Forum summits are increasing, including natural gas issues, the fight against climate change, and energy transition on their agenda. Consideration must be given to a new inclusive regional format as a result of this and as part of an energy transition-driven remapping of the Eastern Mediterranean (Rau, Seufert, Westphal, 2022). Also, Danis said that:

“If Türkiye sets up its energy policy correctly, it could soon become a powerful gas trading hub and a vital energy mediator between Russia and Europe” (Danis, 2022).

From this point of view, it can be understood that Türkiye can be a mediator between Europe and Russia, but it has to apply the right energy policy (Danis, 2022). Greece is nonetheless exploring options to transport local gas to Europe, as its eastern Mediterranean pipeline project may prove too costly and impractical to carry out. Hydrogen and renewable energy have the potential to transform Europe over the next two decades. Additionally, the EU can help Eastern Mediterranean countries develop resources currently hampered by unresolved maritime disputes that can be resolved through face-to-face discussions or other means such as mediation. Gas and hydrogen projects in the Eastern Mediterranean are at the heart of EU energy security, achieved through a rapid energy transition. This is one way the Eastern Mediterranean and Europe are working together to reform the energy industry and create a zero-carbon future for current and future generations (Dimou, 2022).

Inserted into the world energy agenda through the discoveries of the 2000s, the Eastern Mediterranean has been a geographical area at the center of political, economic, and cultural conflicts for many years. Although the hydrocarbon resources discovered in the Eastern Mediterranean are not game changers on a global scale, they are of great importance for developing the countries in the region (Kavaz, 2021). Benefiting from joint infrastructure investments for the exploitation of these hydrocarbon resources in the Eastern Mediterranean is a factor that will increase the profitability and courage of investing companies and will facilitate the participation of resources in the economy in the shortest possible time (Farah & Tremolada, 2015). Joint infrastructure investments can be essential in increasing the profitability of hydrocarbon resource exploration and facilitating the participation of these resources in the economy. Such investments can reduce costs, increase efficiency, and provide greater access to markets for the extracted resources.

Moreover, joint infrastructure investments can promote regional cooperation and stability by encouraging countries to work together towards common goals. This can have additional benefits beyond the economic ones, including building trust and confidence among states and contributing to regional peace and security.

However, for joint infrastructure investments to be successful, all parties involved must be willing to engage in constructive dialogue and cooperation. This can be challenging in a region where historical and cultural tensions and conflicting claims to territory and resources exist. Nevertheless, if all parties can find common ground and work together towards shared goals, joint infrastructure investments can be a powerful tool for promoting regional development and economic integration. However, the fact that political approaches prevail over financial requirements in planning natural gas export projects leads to consequences that negatively affect energy security. The East Mediterranean Gas Forum implements as a common platform for the operation of energy resources.

On the one hand, it is a mechanism that hegemonic powers support to increase their dominance, and on the other, they use it to control other possible powers. From this point of view, the East Mediterranean Gas Forum is essential not only in economic terms but also in terms of its effects on the international systemic balance. Reducing the EU's dependence on Russia for natural gas is seen as supporting the Forum to support its allies and companies. However, Türkiye is also against its policy towards the region. In this regard, the US-backed The East Mediterranean Gas Forum is part of the political alliance the US is trying to build in the region. The region's energy resources should draw EU attention to the region. Regarding energy security, the EU will inevitably impact the East Mediterranean Gas Forum in both respects. With its current structure, the East Mediterranean Gas Forum presents a picture that increases regional polarization rather than solving the problem. Against the background of this situation, sharing the opposition to Türkiye is the main argument in forming the Forum. Based on the East Mediterranean Gas Forum, developing politics with an understanding that is anything but equitable and that does not reflect power configurations causes excludes actors from addressing power gains with a defensive reflex. The evolution of the East Mediterranean Gas Forum towards a structure that will include all the actors of the region will be a transformation that will benefit energy security. Otherwise, a company that does not respect the balance in the region. The economic contributions of the Forum will remove, and significant problems may arise.

CHAPTER 5: CONTRIBUTION OF EAST MEDITERRANEAN GAS FORUM'S TÜRKİYE'S EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN POLICY

Since the 1980s, the acceleration of Türkiye 's efforts to integrate into the global system, albeit slowly, has made it possible for liberal thought to become more visible in the political and social fields in the coming years, especially in the economic field. It is seen that the social, legal, economic, and political transformation that Türkiye has been going through in the EU membership process has started to be compatible with the basic lines of a liberal perspective. The emphasis on the rule of law, the fact that the relationship between the elected and the appointed is being defined more and more in favor of the elected, civil society comes to the fore and, social and economic interest groups have started to have a greater say in the definition of the national interests of the country, which shows that liberalism has started to spread in Türkiye with a lag (Oğuzlu, 2014).

Türkiye has set itself the objective of avoiding developments that could have a negative impact on its energy security. In light of the increasing global demand for exploration of marine hydrocarbon resources, as well as the substantial reserves located within the Eastern Mediterranean basin, Türkiye will continue to explore new regions and expand production, as it has already done within the Black Sea basin. Over the medium to long term, this policy will enable Türkiye to transition from a fuel importer to an energy supplier (Pirinçi, 2021).

Furthermore, it is essential to ensure that Türkiye is involved in meeting the region's energy surplus. The signing of the agreement for the East Mediterranean Gas Forum project is the latest example of unnecessary steps aimed at excluding Türkiye and the TRNC from the region. However, the eastern coast of the Mediterranean has a long coastline, except for the Turkish Cypriots, who have the same rights to natural resources in Cyprus as Türkiye, which has a small strip of land there (Theodoropoulou, 2022).

Despite this being evident, the project cannot be successful as many of the East Mediterranean Gas Forum members refuse to cooperate with Turkish Cypriots and Türkiye. This indicates their lack of genuine interest in joining forces instead of bickering amongst themselves.

A pipeline connecting Turkish territory with other countries in the Eastern Mediterranean is an advantageous and affordable option, and serious negotiations are underway to make it a reality. Meanwhile, various indirect attempts were made to

challenge the Republic of Türkiye 's rights and requests in the nautical area east of the Mediterranean. Türkiye is reacting in three ways to ensure its energy security in the Eastern Mediterranean (Vogler, Thompson, 2015); by establishing a national research and drilling network to secure its resources and strengthen ties with neighboring countries. After the GSCA-TRNC peace talks failed in 2014, Türkiye 's oil and gas exploration activities in the region increased rapidly (Carpenter, Kostianoy, 2018).

Türkiye has deployed the seismic survey vessels Oruc Reis and Barbaros Hayrettin Pasha to survey the area. This move was met with strong opposition from Cyprus, Greece, and the European Union, which sees Türkiye's actions as violating international law. The region in question is believed to have significant reserves of natural gas, which could provide the Turkish economy with a much-needed boost (Dimitras, Peppas, Tsalakos, 2020). However, the dispute between Türkiye and Cyprus over the ownership of the region has been ongoing for decades, with Türkiye refusing to recognize Cyprus as a sovereign state.

As tensions increased in the region between Türkiye and Greece, NATO intervened and called for negotiations. The Turkish side responded positively to the call made in this context. However, the Greek side first rejected the call for negotiation and then announced that they would only sit at the table to state their terms. Oruç Reis, carrying out seismic surveys in the Eastern Mediterranean, returned to Antalya Port within the framework of the NATO negotiations between Türkiye and Greece. Greece has announced that it is pleased with the return of the Oruç Reis ship. In the tension between Türkiye and Greece in the Eastern Mediterranean, the diplomacy page was opened with the intervention of NATO. After the negotiations between the two countries, the Oruç Reis ship, which carried out seismic research in the Eastern Mediterranean, returned to Antalya Port on Sunday. The return of Oruç Reis, who is expected to work in the region until September 25, was welcomed by Athens (Euronews, 2020).

The escalation of tensions in the region has led to an increased military presence, with both Cyprus and Greece conducting joint military exercises in response to Türkiye 's actions. The EU has also imposed sanctions on Türkiye to pressure them to withdraw their vessels from the area. The situation remains tense, with no clear resolution in sight. The continued exploration and extraction of natural resources in

the region will likely be a vital issue in the ongoing dispute between Türkiye and Cyprus, with potential implications for the wider region. In 2018, Türkiye deployed its navy to protect its seismic vessel following a Greek military assault on a Turkish research vessel (Daily Sabah, 2018).

Additionally, Türkiye operates two of its vessels, the Fatih and the Yavuz, in the coastal areas served by the TRNC. These actions have further escalated tensions between Türkiye and Cyprus, as well as with Greece and the EU. The Greek Cypriot administration and the EU have condemned Türkiye's drilling activities as illegal and violating Cyprus' sovereign rights. In reaction to these acts, the EU placed further penalties on Türkiye, which Türkiye has refused, claiming that it has the right to safeguard its own interests as well as the interests of the Turkish Cypriot community. (Morris, 2018). The continued dispute over the exploration and exploitation of natural resources in the Eastern Mediterranean remains unresolved, and tensions between Türkiye and Cyprus show no sign of easing. The situation can escalate further and have broader implications for regional stability and security (Gürçan, 2019).

Türkiye's regional offshore exploration campaign has drilled about 17 wells on the continental shelf. Significant research and analysis of the political and security implications of Türkiye's offshore exploration activities in the Eastern Mediterranean have been done. More research needs to be done on the potential impact on entrepreneurship and economic development in the region (Karbuz, 2019).

However, it is possible to make some assessments based on existing knowledge of the region and the oil and gas industry more broadly. If significant reserves of natural gas are discovered and successfully extracted, this could provide a significant economic boost for Türkiye, as well as for Cyprus and potentially Greece. Developing a robust oil and gas industry in the region could also provide opportunities for entrepreneurship in related fields, such as transportation, logistics, and services supporting the industry.

On the other hand, if tensions continue to escalate and the situation remains unstable, this could harm entrepreneurship and investment in the region. Companies may be hesitant to enter into business ventures in a politically uncertain environment, and the potential for conflict or disruption could make it difficult to establish a stable business environment. Overall, while there is still much that is uncertain about the

impact of Türkiye's offshore exploration activities on entrepreneurship and economic development in the Eastern Mediterranean, it is clear that the outcome of the ongoing dispute will have significant implications for the region's future (Karbuz, 2019).

Türkiye deployed the research vessels Barbaros Hayretin Pasha and Oruc Reis with these ships in 2013 and 2015, respectively. In addition, in 2017, 2018, and 2020, respectively, Türkiye added the drilling vessels Fatih, Yavuz, and Kanuni to its oil exploration fleet.

Türkiye has rented expensive drilling ships from energy companies and even stated that it will buy a fourth drillship in 2021. In the Eastern Mediterranean, only Israel and Türkiye are shipowners of research and drilling vessels, with Türkiye possessing the most extensive and cutting-edge fleet among coastal states.

In its second response, Türkiye made it clear to Greece that it would not accept its overly optimistic expectations and that it would send a survey vessel along with warships to conduct seismic surveys in the regions that the GCA had unilaterally identified and that overlapped the TRNC's continental shelf. This is a subliminal warning to companies operating in cleared GCA-designated areas that also touch the TRNC continental shelf. The island of Cyprus and other interested parties are mentioned in Türkiye's third response. In this context, President Recep Tayyip Erdogan called for a comprehensive energy cooperation forum bringing together all relevant parties, including Turkish Cypriots, in the Eastern Mediterranean. On the one hand, Türkiye's response can be interpreted as an open call to reduce tensions and resolve regional disputes over common energy distribution. From another perspective, this could be seen as an attempt to reverse efforts to exclude Türkiye (and Turkish Cypriots) from the Eastern Mediterranean energy equation. Indeed, the East Mediterranean Gas Forum was established in 2019 by Egypt, Israel, Greece, Cyprus, Jordan, Palestine and Italy. Before the call from Türkiye, as was previously mentioned, this initiative quickly became a recognized institution (Pirinççi, 2021).

The main reason why the EU supports the East Mediterranean Gas Forum could be the effort to reduce excessive dependence on Russian gas. On the other hand, Europe is still trying to free itself from coal and greenhouse gas energy sources. Despite several lines reaching Europe, such as the Trans Adriatic Pipeline (TAP) or the transportation of liquefied natural gas (LNG), there seems to be a gap in the

European gas market that needs to be filled, and efforts are being made in this regard. This is one of the factors that led the EU to support the Eastern Mediterranean gas pipeline. The pipeline, approximately 1,900 km long, is expected to deliver up to 20 billion cubic meters of gas per year. It has the potential to diversify Europe's gas supplies and reduce its dependence on Russia (Stutland, 2013). The Eastern Mediterranean Pipeline project is a joint venture between Israel, Cyprus and Greece, with Italy expressing interest in joining the project. However, the project has faced opposition from Türkiye, claiming it violates its regional maritime rights. Türkiye also supports the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus, which is not recognized by the international community, and has been conducting exploration activities in the region despite objections from Greece and Cyprus.

The East Mediterranean Gas Forum Project will cost roughly €6 billion and be finished by 2025. Supplying information to the local oil and gas market operators to enable their research of preferred export routes, among other things, is critical. The European Commission sponsored a £2 million pre-FEED (feasibility study) for the East Mediterranean Gas Forum, which included a thorough examination of the project's technical and economic viability. The research identified that the project is technically possible, but it also identified certain problems, such as the project's high cost, the need for political and regulatory backing, and the region's complex geopolitical situation in the Eastern Mediterranean (Gür, 2020). Furthermore, Varol (2020) explains that the East Mediterranean Gas Forum project has the potential to solve Europe's energy crisis, but there are two critical factors that pose risks to the Forum's future. Türkiye is an external risk element, whereas the Israel-Palestine conflict is an internal risk factor. As we all know, Türkiye is not a member of the Forum, whereas Israel and Palestine are. Despite these challenges, the East Mediterranean Gas Forum project is a strategic project that could enhance energy security in Europe and strengthen economic ties between the countries involved. The project is expected to create new opportunities for local producers and gas market operators, providing them with a new export route for their natural gas. Overall, the East Mediterranean Gas Forum project is an important initiative that could have significant implications for the energy sector in the region and beyond. While the project faces several challenges, it is expected to proceed as it is a critical strategic priority for the countries involved and the European Union (Commission, 2018). It

estimates that pipelines transport 8 to 10 billion cubic meters of natural gas annually (Tagliapietra, 2017). That estimate refers to the existing pipelines in the Eastern Mediterranean region, which transport natural gas from various fields to different destinations. For example, the Arab Gas Pipeline runs from Egypt to Jordan, Syria, and Lebanon, while the Trans-Mediterranean Pipeline connects Algeria to Italy via Tunisia and Sicily (Sahiounie, 2021).

The East Mediterranean Gas Forum pipeline, if completed, would add significant capacity to the existing infrastructure. As mentioned earlier, the project is expected to deliver up to 20 billion cubic meters of gas per year, which would more than double the current capacity of the regional pipelines.

The estimate may have changed since the report's publication in 2017 as new gas and existing fields have developed (Tagliapietra, 2017). Despite EU funding, the project's commercial viability remains to be determined. The installation of deep pipes in deep waters is technically complex and expensive.

Other estimates value the project at around 6 billion euros. Indeed, the developer of its IGI Poseidon project, the merger of the Greek-listed company Depa and the Italian gas company Edison, has yet to take a final investment decision. Final investment decisions are expected within the next two years (Carpenter, 2020). Greece, the SCGA, and Israel continue to push for the project, despite the estimated pipeline project cost being between \$6 billion and \$20 billion. Thus, in January 2020, the countries signed an agreement to build 2,000 kilometers of their line. The Eastern Mediterranean gas pipeline is a significant infrastructure project connecting the Eastern Mediterranean region to Europe. The pipeline is expected to have a length of 1,900 kilometers and will be one of the world's longest and deepest subsea pipelines (Stanič, Karbuz, 2020). The project is estimated to cost around €6 billion and is a joint venture between Israel, Cyprus, Greece, and Italy. The East Mediterranean Gas Forum Project could feed 20 billion cubic meters of natural gas to a growing European market or approximately 10% of the EU's annual gas consumption (Times of Israel, 2018). The gas will be extracted from offshore gas fields in Israel and Cyprus and transported to Greece, Italy, and other European countries.

The pipeline is expected to provide a secure energy source for Europe and will help reduce the region's dependence on imports from Russia. It will also be a

significant step towards creating a regional energy hub in the Eastern Mediterranean, which could promote economic growth and stability.

Yesevi (2018) pointed out that BP's Statistical Review of World Energy (2015) notes that Russia and Europe are considered interdependent when it comes to energy policy. Europe has become dependent on Russia for its oil and gas supplies. One of the most important and essential reasons for the creation of the East Mediterranean Gas Forum is to reduce Europe's dependence on gas from Russia. However, the project faced a number of challenges, including concerns about the cost and feasibility of the project as well as geopolitical tensions in the region (Stergiou, 2022). Despite these challenges, the project has received support from the EU and the governments of the countries concerned, and construction is expected to begin soon (Euronews, 2020).

Therefore, Türkiye argues that the current EEZ agreements between Cyprus, Greece, and other neighboring states do not consider Türkiye's geographical position and its long coastline along the Eastern Mediterranean. The country asserts that it should have a say in the sharing of resources in the region and that any agreement that does not consider its interests is unfair and inequitable.

Second, Türkiye claims that its continental shelf extends far beyond its shores and overlaps with the EEZs of neighboring states. Therefore, any agreement that limits Türkiye's access to the resources in these areas is illegitimate and violates its rights under international law.

Third, Türkiye argues that the EEZ agreements between neighboring states are politically motivated and aimed at excluding Türkiye from the region. The country claims such agreements are part of a broader strategy to deny Türkiye its legitimate role as a regional power and undermine its security and stability.

Türkiye has raised a number of objections to the Eastern Mediterranean Exclusive Economic Zone agreements, primarily in order to safeguard its territorial integrity, access essential resources, and assert its sovereignty in the region. These objections have, however, also caused tension and disputes with its neighbors and raised anxieties about the future of the Eastern Mediterranean region. Türkiye is of the opinion that a multilateral approach is the most effective way to ensure the sovereignty of coastal states, as opposed to bilateral agreements between them. Furthermore, Türkiye fears that a unilateral delineation agreement in the East Mediterranean could

also affect its sovereignty over the Aegean, where there is a long-standing maritime dispute between Türkiye and Greece (Gür, 2020). Third, Türkiye is acting as a quarantine station for the Turkish Cypriot community, declaring that the area's natural resources belong to the island's Greek and Turkish communities and any prior agreement with Türkiye as part of Türkiye. Unilateral actions should be avoided (MFA, 2019; Erciyes, 2019). Conflicts in the Eastern Mediterranean are not just about demarcating maritime boundaries. Establishing a framework for cooperation between littoral states has been particularly difficult due to the historical conflict between Türkiye and her SCGA and Greece.

The current state of relations between Türkiye and Israel, as well as Egypt, has had a significant impact on the strategic environment in the Eastern Mediterranean region. The situation began in 2010, when the Israeli military conducted a fatal assault on a Turkish aid shipment to Gaza, resulting in the deaths of several Turkish citizens. This incident caused a breakdown in diplomatic relations, further exacerbating the existing regional tensions. In 2011, the onset of the Arab Spring revolutions in the Middle East led to a significant alteration in Egyptian foreign policy. The overthrow of former Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak and the rise of a new government led by the Muslim Brotherhood raised concerns in Israel and the West about the future of the peace treaty between Israel and Egypt. The deterioration of relations between Egypt and Israel was further exacerbated by the 2012 attacks on Israelis in the Sinai Peninsula and heightened tensions over the control of Gaza.

Against this backdrop, Greece and Israel began to forge closer ties, driven by shared concerns over Türkiye 's growing assertiveness in the region. The two countries signed a series of agreements on defense cooperation, energy, and tourism and began to conduct joint military exercises. They were also joined by Cyprus, which shared its concerns about Türkiye 's maritime claims in the Eastern Mediterranean.

These developments led to the formation of a new strategic alliance in the Eastern Mediterranean, known as the Eastern Mediterranean Energy Corridor (EMEC), comprising Greece, Cyprus, Egypt, Israel, and possibly Italy. The aim of the alliance is to promote energy cooperation and security in the region and to balance Turkish influence in the Eastern Mediterranean. EMEC is seen as a potential

counterweight to Russia's growing influence in the region, particularly in the energy sector (Tziarras, 2016).

Tracing the origins of Türkiye-SCGA, Türkiye-Israel, and Türkiye-Egyptian political and economic ties will explore how material factors and idealistic forces shaped the process of regionalization and the formation of the East Mediterranean Gas Forum. Despite the high economic benefits of cooperating to develop hydrocarbon resources in the Eastern Mediterranean, rising tensions related to drilling activities in the disputed EEZ and continental shelf regions are likely to lead to shifts in regional power, and it has brought about a new wave of regional cooperation among several riparian states.

In January 2019, The East Mediterranean Gas Forum representatives from seven countries met in Cairo to discuss cooperation on gas reserves in the Eastern Mediterranean (Shin, Kim, 2021). The East Mediterranean Gas Forum provides an institutional framework for cooperation between countries interested in developing resources responsibly and consistently with international law (Gür, 2020).

The Eastern Mediterranean Forum has been identified as one of the steps to establish a regional order based on the area's most effective exploitation of natural gas supplies. However, this forum is restricted to only a few countries, which has prevented it from benefiting economically. It is reported that membership in the East Mediterranean Gas Forum will soon be open to additional countries willing to accept its governing rules. However, at present, the membership structure of the East Mediterranean Gas Forum excludes several Mediterranean countries, such as Türkiye, Lebanon, Syria, and Libya. This deprives them of meaningful opportunities and detrimentally affects their development. Türkiye plays a significant role in resolving the Cyprus dispute and promoting regional stability and cooperation in the Eastern Mediterranean.

Additionally, Türkiye provides an excellent means for transporting and financing gas from the region to the export market. Notably, excluding Türkiye and Lebanon from the forum indicates the regional geopolitical landscape. The East Mediterranean Gas Forum needs to achieve regional coordination, demonstrating the impact of energy security in the region.

5.1. The USA's Approach to the East Mediterranean Gas Forum

Such a fact relates to the USA; the USA withdrew support from the East Mediterranean Gas Forum Project, and there are two main reasons. The first one is; an inevitable question that must be answered: why did the USA withdraw its support for the East Mediterranean Gas Forum project in the context of the transportation of energy resources in the Eastern Mediterranean? (Badarin, Schumacher, 2022). An explanatory answer to this vital question is that it is possible to identify specific elements. The first of these reasons is the need for a rapid shift towards green energy. In order to fulfill the obligations and targets of the Climate Change Treaty (COP21), it had to change its priorities. The future of fossil fuels, including natural gas, is still being determined globally after 2030.

Moreover, the USA has stated that Europe's energy security is still a fundamental issue, perceived as a national security issue, and the secure supply of energy is the basis for deepening regional relations and promoting clean energy. Technologies will focus on electricity interconnections supporting natural gas and renewable energy sources. In this context, the focus has shifted to electricity interconnections supporting natural gas and renewables. The second reason the U.S. withdrew support for the East Mediterranean Gas Forum project is that the pipeline is economically costly. According to some experts, the construction cost of the East Mediterranean Gas Forum pipeline is tough to afford (Badarin, Schumacher 2022). The third reason for the USA is that the project has become one of the significant sources of tension in the region. The USA administration's focus on tensions with Russia and China is to spend its energies on regional tensions, such as the Eastern Mediterranean, when it feels obliged.

Finally, it is worth noting that, according to some assessments, the USA supports for the East Mediterranean Gas Forum Project. Its withdrawal is also based on commercial considerations. In this context, the USA produces L.N.G. resources in European markets. This is also a reason for the USA to develop the East Mediterranean Gas Forum project further as a commercial element that makes it meaningless to support manifests itself. Greece's support for Türkiye on Eastern Mediterranean issues means the loss of an essential element of the bloc that; it aims to create and maintain against the USA. Even more critical for the Athens administration is the possibility that the era of comfort for Greece and the SCGA in receiving USA support in Eastern Mediterranean issues is over. Given the issue's importance, these developments were

also characterized within Greece as a major foreign policy failure of the government which has been the subject of criticism. This development is a welcome development that Türkiye can expect. Ankara has some other tensions with the Washington administration. In a counter-bloc with the USA on the Mediterranean, it is important to see that the opposition to the JDP will not go away. This new situation may also mean that this kind of opposition will soften.

In general terms, this development has impacted issues in the Eastern Mediterranean on the one hand. Türkiye, Greece, Egypt, and the SCGA, on the other hand, have had a productive start to the process and serve as a basis for closer negotiations on the Eastern Mediterranean issues. The long-standing emphasis on the negotiation method in Eastern Mediterranean issues is another positive development that will mean progress for Türkiye. Another critical repercussion of the USA withdrawal of support for the project in its current form (if the Eastern Mediterranean pipeline project is to continue) is Türkiye, a much more economical route with the option of transit through it. At a time when there are doubts about the future of natural gas, the best way to use this resource efficiently is to make it as cheap as possible. This situation likely shows that Türkiye involvement in a joint pipeline project is at least commercially mandatory.

The East Mediterranean Gas Forum's legitimacy was called into question by Türkiye's absence. Türkiye is a NATO member, has one of the most diverse armies in the region, one of the largest economies in the world, and has a growing need for affordable energy. Türkiye's participation in the East Mediterranean Gas Forum would have been more feasible ten years ago. Nevertheless, Türkiye has a long history of reciprocity, just like Israel and Lebanon. Although differences in energy policy and cooperation for a brief period in 2016 brought Israel and Türkiye closer together, the two sides could not reach a deal or resolve the geopolitical issues of the Cyprus conflict and the Turkish-Cypriot dispute over maritime rights. Ultimately, their differences over Israel's Gaza policy and the Trump administration's decision to relocate the US Embassy to Jerusalem again caused them to become estranged (Sever, Almog, 2019).

Cairo and Ankara's bilateral ties declined in 2013 due to Erdogan's backing for the ousted president of Egypt, Mursi. It would be challenging to envision how Türkiye could accomplish this, even in ideal conditions. Participate in the East Mediterranean

Gas Forum before negotiating a deal with the primary members. Ankara's political and military elites viewed the establishment of a regional forum as a targeted effort to contain Türkiye strategically, and Türkiye reaffirmed itself in response.

In order to stake out and contest its maritime claims to the sovereignty of Greece and Cyprus, regional policy involved positioning naval warships and reconnaissance ships in critical locations in the Eastern Mediterranean. A group of former military leaders has recently popularized Mavi Vatan, also known as "Blue Homeland," a strategic doctrine that calls for defending Türkiye's continental shelf and territorial waters. Turkish analysts claim these ships are for purposes other than purely political ones. Türkiye works to reduce its reliance on Russian gas by diversifying its supply. However, most players in the Ankara region see the East Mediterranean Gas Forum as a political gambit and have political motivations similar to those in Türkiye. All two countries—Cyprus, Greece, and the European Union—have condemned it.

Türkiye has strengthened its support for UN-supported organizations following this new regional strategy through its actions. Ankara and the GNA signed a memorandum of understanding at the end of November 2019 that defines the maritime borders between Türkiye and Libya. The agreement complicated the region's situation even more by jeopardizing Greece's maritime borders and pitting Turkish interests in Libya against those of Egypt, France, Russia, and the United Arab Emirates (Papakostas, 2020).

Regional actors have once again criticized Türkiye. Unborn Turkish participation in the unrealistic forum has been complicated by the numerous disputes between Türkiye and the four prominent The East Mediterranean Gas Forum members. Türkiye does not seek membership in the East Mediterranean Gas Forum, and in some respects, it might even say that the country wants the forum to cease to exist. The East Mediterranean Gas Forum needs more motivation and individual members due to Türkiye's prolonged practices and pressure. Türkiye's marine area is small compared to its neighbor in the Eastern Mediterranean.

However, Ankara's current act of walking a tightrope while pretending to have nothing to lose has hardened its neighbors' positions and raised the likelihood of conflict. Türkiye's challenge was too much for the East Mediterranean Gas Forum to

handle. Securing energy policy in the Eastern Mediterranean has a steep price; it may harm upcoming international investments. Instead of pursuing an independent policy towards Türkiye, The East Mediterranean Gas Forum member states should consult with the European Union and the United States to maintain a balanced political approach that offers opportunities for communication and less native integration in exchange for resolving conflict throughout the region. Many countries in the region are better positioned to argue for a more pragmatic approach than Israel (Mitchell, 2020).

Türkiye's natural gas resources are limited. Natural gas exploration in the Eastern Mediterranean region began in the early 1960s, but commercial exploitation only started in the 1970s. The Turkish government, however, continues to support improving the natural gas sector in the region through various investment projects. Among these projects is the South Stream pipeline project, which aims connecting Russia and Bulgaria with Türkiye via the Black Sea.

The reliability of Russia and Iran in terms of natural gas supply would provide Türkiye with the opportunity to negotiate a lower price with Russia, potentially altering the market. The implementation of hub pricing could also affect the market. Furthermore, Türkiye's growing energy requirements and its strategic positioning in Western markets also contribute to energy issues. Future generations in Türkiye are projected to experience an increasing trend. Currently, Türkiye needs to negotiate with a range of energy suppliers in order to reduce its dependency on external energy resources, as current relations with Türkiye's main energy suppliers are weak. Many Turkish officials have emphasized that Türkiye can only be among the world's top ten economies in line with the 2023 targets if it diversifies its energy resources and increases its energy security. As a result, each energy source represents a chance for Türkiye to diversify its energy sources. Eastern Mediterranean hydrocarbons can be viewed as a new supply source. Eastern Mediterranean hydrocarbons provide Türkiye with a new energy supply while also assisting Türkiye in meeting its energy transit objectives. Potential energy exchange, on the other hand, may suggest economic advantage and the possibility of resolving political disagreements between Türkiye, Israel, and Cyprus. At this point, one wonders how much the Eastern Mediterranean's resources may affect Türkiye 's energy supply. Furthermore, how much profit can it generate in Türkiye? Furthermore, Eastern Mediterranean resources have the potential

to generate significant revenue through transit delivery charges while also strengthening Türkiye's political position. In short, Eastern Mediterranean hydrocarbons can assist Türkiye in meeting its energy objectives, increasing energy security, and becoming an energy transportation hub. The material situation of Türkiye is linked to its prospective economic and political advantages. The resources of the Eastern Mediterranean can deliver a lot to Türkiye if Türkiye manages the process correctly. On the contrary, Türkiye may lose significant economic and political gains. Furthermore, Türkiye may obstruct the achievement of its energy policy objectives. According to the study, Türkiye might benefit from Eastern Mediterranean hydrocarbons if it takes a cooperative and conciliatory stance. Adopting a negative stance, on the other hand, will have bad ramifications for Türkiye. In this regard, Türkiye's foreign policy should take a more comprehensive approach in the case of the Eastern Mediterranean in order to achieve some of Türkiye's energy policy goals, to take a new step toward the resolution of existing differences through the cooperative role of energy, and to strengthen Türkiye's geostrategic position in the consolidated region (Tanrıverdi, 2013).

5.2. Türkiye-Israel Relations

While there were various reactions to the establishment of Israel in the Middle East and Islamic countries, the Tel Aviv administration preferred to isolate itself from the region and improve its relations with Europe and the USA. While military relations developed between Türkiye and Israel in the 1990s, there was no doubt that Greece's army strengthening efforts have also been effective. After years, this time, Greece and Israel came together on the issues of Türkiye's influence and the discovery of natural gas in the Eastern Mediterranean, and began to take more consistent steps to develop relations.

With the deterioration of Turkish-Israeli relations following the Mavi Marmara incident in 2010, Greece-Israel relations entered a process in which efforts were made to establish solid foundations and envisage cooperation on many issues. Israel's efforts to be active in the Middle East and Greece's efforts to be active in European politics have led both countries to seek cooperation. The power revealed by the theory includes not only military or economic power but also political power. The deterioration of relations between both countries and Türkiye and the change in Turkish foreign policy

after the 2010 Arab Spring in the Middle East, problematic relations with the countries in the region, Greece and Egypt, the Greek Cypriot Administration, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, and Russia, led by Israel. It has enabled the formation of various collaborations, including in France, Italy, and the USA. The only reason for non-Turkish cooperation in the Mediterranean is not the problematic relations of the mentioned countries with Türkiye. Each country also tries to maximize its national interests, based on the theory that the state is a rational structure. When political power is supported by military and economic power, the state will have an effective structure in both domestic and foreign politics. The two countries' tendency towards cooperation in military, political, economic, and commercial relations is that they follow the path of external balancing put forward by the theory. In other words, in the external balancing of Greece-Israel, the Greek Cypriot Administration of Southern Cyprus followed a path compatible with Greece's Eastern Mediterranean policy, with its policy of following suit. An important factor in the development of Greece-Israel relations was the discovery of natural gas resources in the Eastern Mediterranean. While this development revealed the need for countries to determine EEZ, it gave rise to a controversial issue in the Eastern Mediterranean.

Problems arose between Türkiye-TRNC/Greece-GCASC due to the Cyprus issue, and between Palestine and Israel due to the Palestine issue. This situation has contributed to the issue becoming more complex, as it also concerns countries such as Egypt and Libya.

Greece claims a different EEZ due to its acceptance of a single state on the island as the Republic of Cyprus and Meis Island, while Türkiye claims a different EEZ due to the presence of the TRNC. While Türkiye has made agreements on maritime jurisdiction areas with the TRNC and Libya in 2020, Israel, the Greek Cypriot Administration, Egypt, and Greece have made agreements among themselves.

In this region, there are multiple external balancing factors, including power and national interests. The emergence of a coalition of states aiming to increase the number of states in the region. The presence of extra-regional states and private or public institutions supporting both sides have been observed. In natural gas exploration activities, the US and occasionally Russia supported the Greece-Israel group, while Italy was more active with its private institutions. Türkiye-TRNC cooperation

Although there was no strong support for foreign policy, various countries made statements in order to reduce tensions.

Both countries, especially Israel, have relations with Türkiye, it is discussed that if relations improve, the possibility of Tel Aviv-Athens relations returning to their previous course is discussed. If Türkiye's relations with Israel and Egypt are normalized, the bloc that includes Greece-GCASC may lose its influence. However, as the theory reveals, the rational state will begin to follow a new road map to protect its national interests and power in case this possibility occurs.

The announcement of the East Mediterranean Gas Forum project has revealed that an initiative in which Türkiye is excluded is an option. However, the costly transportation of the natural gas found in the Eastern Mediterranean to Europe over the sea makes Türkiye a serious option. All these realities aside, the East Mediterranean Gas Forum countries (Egypt, Cyprus, Greece, Israel, Jordan, and Palestine) signed an agreement in 2020. However, in the process leading to this agreement and the structure to be formed by the relevant countries, they will achieve both internal balancing and coming together. It has been seen that they aim to achieve external balancing with the support of other countries. The contribution of a strategic resource such as natural gas to the national interests and powers of the relevant countries is that it will be effective in changing the balance. However, the cost of the line and the fact that Türkiye is not in this group cause cost criticism from both Ankara and the countries themselves. Although the diplomacy of the countries in the Eastern Mediterranean currently ensures that the peace environment continues within the framework of the diplomacy put forward by Morgenthau, it should also be stated that war is a distant option. The fact that Palestine, Egypt, and Israel, the parties to the Arab-Israeli wars in the Middle East, came together despite all the debates, shows that new balances are aimed at being established in the future. The strained relations between Türkiye and Israel, the historical problems in Türkiye-Greece relations, and the fact that Turkish foreign policy began to experience problems with the Eastern Mediterranean countries in the post-2010 period led to the development of Athens-Tel Aviv relations, while Egypt, the Greek Cypriot Administration, Lebanon, and Egypt came together around these countries. Countries like Palestine are new countries in the Eastern Mediterranean. led to the emergence of cooperation and between 2011 and

2018, Türkiye and TRNC were the only ones in the region, so it has evolved into a process where attempts are made to abandon it (Arslan, 2020).

5.3. Türkiye-Greece Relations

The relationship between Türkiye and Greece is of primary importance to both countries. The two countries, which have a land border and a maritime border, are affected by historical factors, such as the Cyprus issue on one side and the geometrical structure of the Mediterranean Sea on the other side. The two nations have been living side by side in the same geographical area for approximately ten centuries, and this unity and geographical proximity have enabled them to share many similarities over time. However, it has also led to a high level of mistrust between the two countries, which is now obsolete. There are no other two nations in the world who have both won and defended their independence against one another and celebrate Independence Day as a day of victory. Greece, on the other hand, has largely relied on its foreign policy since independence in 1833 to assert that it is the "aggressor" in the relations between the two countries. Türkiye is of the opinion that Greece's foreign policy since 1833 has been based on an ultra-nationalist ideology that disregards history and seeks to expand its borders and territory, and that this has had a detrimental effect on bilateral relations. The bilateral relationship between Türkiye and Greece is predicated on the principle of Aegean balance, which was established by the Treaty of Lausanne in the 1920s. In the period between the World Wars (I and II), Greece implemented a significant adjustment to its territorial waters, increasing them from 3 miles to 6 miles and its airspace from 3 miles to 10 miles. Furthermore, following the Paris Agreement, Greece was able to reclaim its Aegean islands, which had been ceded to Italy by the Ottoman Empire in the war of 1833. In the past, it has been observed that Türkiye-Greece relations have been rapproched in periods when both countries perceived common external threats from other directions. This Türkiye-Greece rapprochement dates back to the 1930s, when Italy was still part of the Mediterranean, and after World War II, when the Soviet Union posed a direct threat to both countries. Even though the threat from Italy didn't end until the 1940s, it was the Soviet threat that helped create a period of cooperation and friendship in the early 1950s when both countries wanted to be part of the Western safety net.

Greece and Türkiye have five major issues in their relationship. The biggest one is Greece's proposal to expand its territorial waters to 12 miles in the Sea of Aegean. This is the maximum size that countries can claim for their own waters under international law, but it does not take into account the special geography of the sea. Türkiye has said that it won't accept this, which would turn a big chunk of the sea into Greek waters and stop Türkiye from using the high seas in the sea to get to the Mediterranean. Türkiye will see this as a cause for war and will use it as a bargaining chip. In addition to the size of their waters, Greece and Türkiye cannot agree on how they should share the continental shelf. Greece argues that the islands belong to the continental shelves, while Türkiye argues that they belong to the Aegean Continental Shelf. Türkiye wants to share the continental shelf with the median line between the continents of both countries. Another issue is that Greece continues to create a 10-mile area in the Sea of Crete, even though international law says the widths of the waters and the airspace should be the same. Türkiye doesn't accept the 4-mile extra airspace that Greece is claiming. Entry of Turkish planes into this extra 4-mile of airspace, which they're trying to create outside of the 6-mile limit of Greece's territorial waters, is seen by Türkiye as a violation of their airspace. Türkiye sees these areas as part of their international airspace and doesn't accept the claim that they've violated their airspace.

The two foreign ministries of Türkiye and Greece have been engaged in exploratory talks for a considerable period of time in an effort to resolve the Aegean issues. However, no tangible progress has been achieved in these confidential negotiations. The way in which the two countries view the Aegean challenges renders it impossible to submit them to the arbitration process of the ICJ. Greece proposes to the IJU that the only Aegean issue is the issue of the division of the Continental Shelf, while Türkiye wishes to draw attention to any other issues that arise from Greece's position, which is in breach of international law or disregards the fundamental principles of rights and justice. In this regard, Greece proposes to submit only the issue of the continental shelf to the ICJ, while Türkiye proposes to submit all Aegean issues to ICJ.

The situation between Türkiye and Greece has become more complex due to the Aegean's geographical configuration, the presence of numerous islands in a small, semi-enclosed ocean, and the proximity to the Turkish coast of many of the eastern

Aegean islands that have been ceded to Greece. In the 2000s, Türkiye, which was facing a major external security issue in Syria, and Greece, which had been subject to internal economic crises, managed to maintain a good relationship by "frozen" the Aegean issues, in a sense. However, the events of January 2017 have demonstrated that both countries have not forgotten the events of the 1996 Kardak Crisis and that the issues in the Aegean are likely to recur. Therefore, Türkiye is determined to prevent further deterioration of the existing balance between the two countries in Aegean Sea in order to ensure that access to and use of the sea are of utmost importance to Türkiye. By adhering to the correct policy, Türkiye and Greece have successfully frozen the issues that they had between them, which they were unable to resolve and which hindered the growth of their political and economic ties. Greece's internal economic difficulties and Türkiye's attention to the threats originating in the Middle East had contributed to the strengthening of their relationship, which had begun in 1999. A good political relationship and the development of economic cooperation is in the mutual interests of both parties. Recent events have highlighted the complexity of the resolution of the Cyprus issue and the potential for hot conflict in the Aegean Sea. However, the best course of action for Türkiye and Greece, in addition to attempting to resolve these issues through negotiations, would be to respect the sensitivities of both parties and to remain committed to the development of their bi-regional political and economic ties by freezing the issues between them. The two essential elements for sustaining the atmosphere for political and economic cooperation, which was established between Athens and Ankara in the post-earthquake policy of the 1990's and 2000's, are mutual respect for one another's sensibilities and the capacity to maintain existing issues (without creating new ones) in the background. (Çelikkol & Karabel, 2017)

5.4. Türkiye-Egypt Relations

Egypt, as a country with a history of oil and gas production, can export gas through two pipelines connecting it to Israel and Jordan, declining production and increasing domestic demand have recently made the country a net importer of gas. The current situation has been changed in favor of Egypt following the discovery in 2015 of a gas field, the Zohr, which is believed to be the largest ever gas discovery in the Mediterranean. Türkiye, with its ambition to become a regional energy hub, has both a rapidly expanding gas market and potential transit routes. It has adopted a strong

foreign policy stance, utilizing a variety of instruments, including diplomacy and military deterrence, to safeguard its strategic interests in regional political conflicts. This stance of Türkiye will have an impact on the exploitation of the gas discoveries. The new Egyptian government, formed after the July 3, 2013 military coup, has distanced itself from Türkiye following the deterioration of relations after the coup. This has led to a shift in Egypt's policy towards maritime areas in the eastern Mediterranean. The opportunities arising from gas production bring with them various economic and diplomatic initiatives between different countries. In this process, two triple alliances have emerged, one between Greece, the Greek Cypriot Administration of Southern Cyprus and Egypt, and the other between Greece, the Greek Cypriot Administration of Southern Cyprus, and Israel. While these alliances and rapprochements have adversely affected Egyptian-Turkish relations, they have improved Egyptian-Israeli relations. At the same time, it is an indication that Türkiye, which has discourses on the way to becoming a regional and global leader, is trying to be isolated from the Eastern Mediterranean. The exclusion of a country like Türkiye, which has an axis position between the Middle East, the Caspian region, the Black Sea, and Southeastern Europe for energy transportation, with the alliances established has also affected the geopolitical balances (Karbuz & Baccarini, 2017).

In addition to gas discoveries, it is essential to convert these reserves into productive capacity and deliver them to international and domestic markets in a timely manner. Three potential routes for transportation can be envisaged: the East Mediterranean Gas Forum Pipeline, which connects Israel and Cyprus with European markets through Greece and Italy; the two Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) export terminals located in Egypt; or a combination of both. However, with the Exclusive Economic Zone agreement signed with Libya, Türkiye has made a strategic move by taking control of the sea borders where the East Mediterranean Gas Forum Pipeline will pass. In addition, the USA's decision to withdraw its support from the project was a factor that prevented the project from being realized without Türkiye.

Thus, it is said that the East Mediterranean Gas Forum project has been shelved under current conditions. Therefore, the possibility of gas pipelines in the Eastern Mediterranean region offering a path to peace seems unlikely as long as Türkiye is excluded. Proposed pipeline projects should be carried out on a solid political basis and supported by compatible policies. Tripartite alliances should design natural gas

projects that can take into account Türkiye's foreign policy concerns regarding energy rather than options that exclude the interests of Turkish Cypriots and Türkiye. A route that will enable the transfer of gas to Europe via Türkiye, which is the shortest, cheapest, and fastest option, is an alternative that will provide mutual benefit and regional stability not only for Türkiye but for all parties.

At present, the capacity of Zohr to satisfy all of Egypt's domestic natural gas requirements would necessitate Israel's recourse to Türkiye as a source of natural gas exports. Furthermore, with the establishment of the southern gas corridor, which consists of the trans-Anatolian natural gas pipeline, which will transport natural gas through Türkiye to the Greek frontier, and the trans-Adriatic pipeline, which will subsequently transport natural gas from Greece to the EU markets. This access to Türkiye has enabled Israel to sell its natural gas to EU markets through its exports (Tanchum, 2015).

The relations between Türkiye and Egypt, developed independently of third parties, took a different path after the Cairo talks, which were the first high-level contact since 2013. The first round of talks, led by Türkiye's deputy foreign minister Sedat Önal and Egypt's Hamdi Loza, took place in May 2021. Egypt and Türkiye, seen as rivals in the Eastern Mediterranean, said that they agreed to continue negotiations aimed at stabilizing relations after the end of the second round of negotiations. In a joint statement, it was stated that after a two-day meeting in Ankara, an agreement was reached to extend the negotiations, confirming the desire to make progress in the areas discussed and the need for additional steps that will facilitate the normalization of bilateral relations (AP News, 2021).

Additionally, Türkiye's continental shelf was taken into account in Egypt's hydrocarbon tender in the Eastern Mediterranean in March 2021. This development not only had a positive impact for both countries but also disrupted the plans of Greece and the Greek Cypriot Administration, who wanted to ignore the rights of Türkiye and the TRNC by taking advantage of the stagnation of relations between Egypt and Türkiye. The Egyptian government's moderate approach to the issue contributed to the normalization of relations between Türkiye and Egypt. The written statement that the Türkiye-Egypt talks in Cairo were in a friendly atmosphere and broad in content, and the fact that the two countries made statements regarding the creation of an

environment of peace and security in the Eastern Mediterranean, made us think that these talks would accelerate the rapprochement process between the parties.

The Eastern Mediterranean is a region where, under current conditions, many voices are raised but a final decision has not yet been taken. Since the issue of energy security is of great importance for all states, not only economically but also politically, the issue of gas discoveries in the region and how to deliver them to new markets has changed the balances between all party states. Türkiye is a player that wants to take an active role in gas transportation due to its location and the energy policies it follows. Some decisions taken by other actors in the region, ignoring Türkiye, have negatively affected Egypt-Türkiye relations. However, with the recent developments, the two countries, which are following moderate policies again, have been in close contact. If these contacts are concluded with an agreement on maritime areas, both countries will benefit. Every strategy established not only by Egypt but also by other influential countries such as Israel, without Türkiye in it, will increase Türkiye's efforts and moves to take precautions. Therefore, no state will benefit from such a vicious circle. The normalization of Egyptian-Turkish relations and the thawing of relations between Israel and Türkiye are significant for the preservation of stability in both countries and the Eastern Mediterranean region. An agreement that has been negotiated and concluded in accordance with international law and riparian nations' rights appears to be a viable option that can be utilized by all nations in the region when it comes to energy production and transit (Kalyoncuoğlu & Kalyoncuoğlu, 2022).

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION

Throughout history, the Eastern Mediterranean has been one of the most significant routes. The Mediterranean region is significant from a geopolitical standpoint for three reasons: first, it is at the intersection of three continents (Europe, Asia, and Africa); second, its international sea lanes and straits are significant; and third, it has the potential to be a source of both oil and natural gas. This likelihood has only been strengthened by recent discoveries of natural gas in the Eastern Mediterranean (Prontera, Ruszel, 2017). They have influenced some important geoeconomic choices regarding the growth of gas flows and exchanges. Because it is a reasonably clean, low-carbon energy source, natural gas is a desirable alternative for reducing carbon intensity while maintaining energy security and accessibility. The

development of natural gas resources in the Eastern Mediterranean also benefits governments in the region, promoting growth and new economic opportunities (McMonigle, 2023).

The East Mediterranean Gas Forum is a new regional initiative that brings together a number of countries from the region and beyond. The World Bank, EU, and US are involved as observers, as are the Republic of Cyprus, the Government of Israel, the Government of Greece, the Government of the State of Palestine, the Government of Jordan, the Government of Italy, the Government of France, and the Government of Egypt. The aim of the East Mediterranean Gas Forum was to bring together countries with common views on interdependence in the energy sector and to remove political impediments to further exploration and infrastructure development in the region, including pipelines and liquefied natural gas (LNG) facilities. Initially, the East Mediterranean Gas Forum was intended to be a regional organization, but it has since expanded to encompass countries from all over the world. The forum is now comprised of eight different states that are working together to create an infrastructure for gas distribution in the region and with external markets. It could become a significant natural gas provider to Europe, which is in search of new sources to replace the lost volume from Russia. It also provides a chance to diversify the world's energy mixture (McMonigle, 2023). Related to liberal institutionalism theory, these countries are seeking a common interest about Eastern Mediterranean gas. Their establishment aim indicates that member states share an absolute gain in reducing their dependence on Russian gas. It is understood that the East Mediterranean Gas Forum, which emerged as a regional gas forum, could turn into the Eastern Mediterranean Energy Forum because France was the last member to join the forum, apart from the regional states that were members. In addition, the United States, and the European Union, and the World Bank maintain their positions as observer members in the forum. It is clear that, except for the Eastern Mediterranean countries, there are other countries from different regions. So, it makes sense to argue that the East Mediterranean Gas Forum can expand beyond its potential. There are many reasons why the East Mediterranean Gas Forum could impact energy security in the region. The forum aims to promote cooperation among its members in the gas sector, which could lead to increased energy security. The discovery of significant gas reserves in the Eastern Mediterranean region provides an opportunity for the member countries to develop a reliable and secure

energy source for the region and beyond. Additionally, the forum could contribute to the diversification of energy sources for the member countries and reduce their dependence on a single source of energy. However, there are also concerns that gas development plans may hinder the transition to renewable energy sources, which are essential for long-term energy security. The East Mediterranean Gas Forum must ensure that its goals and objectives are aligned with reducing greenhouse gas emissions and transitioning away from fossil fuels (GreenBiz, 2021). The disruption to Europe's energy supply caused by the Ukraine crisis has forced a significant rethinking of the EU's energy policy. In order to reduce its reliance on Russian fossil fuels by 2030, the European Commission has designed a patchwork approach that includes the United States, Algeria, Qatar, and numerous African nations.

The Eastern Mediterranean region has been incorporated into the European Union's energy policy. A Memorandum of Understanding was recently signed between the European Commission, Egypt, and Israel, which served as the foundation for the MoU. This is partly due to increased Israeli natural gas exports to European markets via Egypt's LNG plants in Damietta and Idku on the Mediterranean coast (Haggag, El Nashar, 2022). Last but not least, the forum structure and its activities were examined in this study. However, it is such a clear fact that the East Mediterranean Gas Forum cannot illustrate its potential without Türkiye and it has brought a different kind of point of view. Türkiye is one of the excluded countries in the region. Its coastline, after Egypt, is the longest one, and its geopolitical and strategic location in the Eastern Mediterranean have massive importance. Türkiye, although not a participant in the East Mediterranean Gas Forum, plays a crucial role in its development and success. Despite not actively seeking membership, Türkiye's involvement is essential for the forum to achieve its objectives and maximize its potential. Therefore, bilateral relations hold significant importance in ensuring Türkiye's cooperation, which can be facilitated through constructive high-level negotiations and discussions.

Negotiations appear feasible only when there are bilateral relations and collaboration. As previously mentioned, the East Mediterranean Gas Forum convenes numerous ministerial meetings periodically, including both technical and political discussions. Technical meetings are usually shorter in duration, while political meetings involve the participation of ministers from member states. High-level discussions between individuals chosen by the involved parties can be communicated

through managerial reports. Consistency is crucial for the seamless progression of these meetings.

Considering all of these circumstances, if members and Türkiye agree to compromise on cooperation in the region with bilateral relations, the East Mediterranean Gas Forum is going to reach its potential.

Also, there are strengths and weaknesses in the Eastern Mediterranean; the East Mediterranean Gas Forum has strengths and weaknesses as well. It is important to explain these strengths and weaknesses. First of all, the East Mediterranean Gas Forum possesses a lot of potential to promote energy diplomacy and regional stability through economic cooperation among its members. The members share a common interest and an absolute gain at the same time. As mentioned in previous chapters, common interest and absolute gain are the main concepts of liberal institutionalism theory. From this point of view, the members are sharing a common interest that belongs to the natural gas, and they all endeavor for that mutual gain. Another strength of the East Mediterranean Gas Forum is that it can support the development of the necessary infrastructure for gas exploration and production in the region (Matalucci, 2020).

One of the main weaknesses that The East Mediterranean Gas Forum has is the absence of Türkiye. This could hinder the forum's ability to address regional energy challenges effectively (Mitchell, 2020). Geopolitically, when we look at the map, it is crystal clear that the Republic of Türkiye is one of the most essential countries in the Eastern Mediterranean. Its location and geopolitics are undeniable. However, the East Mediterranean Gas Forum does not want to take Türkiye as a member, and regional cooperation without Türkiye is not possible. Also, as an Eastern Mediterranean country, Lebanon is in the region but it is not a member either. Türkiye wants to expand its EEZ in the Eastern Mediterranean and stop the realization of the East Mediterranean Gas Forum project, which goes against its energy interests. Therefore, potential weaknesses of the East Mediterranean Gas Forum may include political tensions between member states as well as the impact of global events such as the COVID-19 pandemic on deepwater exploration efforts.

The East Mediterranean Gas Forum has the potential to contribute to Europe's energy security and solve its energy crisis. The discovery of large gas reserves in the Eastern Mediterranean offers the member countries of the East Mediterranean Gas

Forum the opportunity to develop a reliable and secure source of energy for Europe. Therefore, while the East Mediterranean Gas Forum has the potential to contribute to Europe's energy security, it is essential to develop a comprehensive strategy including a transition to renewable energy sources and the development of alternative energy sources in Europe to address the long-term energy crisis. Also, its contribution is possible by diversifying gas supplies, investing in new gas infrastructure, and developing a reliable and secure energy source for the continent. The East Mediterranean Gas Forum cannot deny Türkiye and Lebanon's presence in the region. Otherwise, they cannot achieve such a certain solution to Europe's energy crisis because Türkiye is a bio-continental country that has land on both continents: Europe and Asia. Türkiye is in the middle of three continents, and that makes Türkiye much more essential than before, geopolitically. In addition, potential developments in energy security in the Eastern Mediterranean are significant, but there are also challenges that need to be addressed in order to fully realize the region's energy potential (Pötzsche, Rinken 2022).

Despite all, the Greek minister of Foreign Affairs announced that they would be pleased to develop cooperation with Türkiye, including in the field of energy, after the elections. Stating that the East Mediterranean Gas Forum, which was established in the Mediterranean between Greece, Cyprus, Egypt, France, Israel, France, Israel, Italy, Jordan, and the Palestinian Autonomous Authority, is also open to Türkiye, Dendias said, "I would like to state that we would welcome the participation of other countries in this forum. However, there is a clear condition for this: respect for international law and international maritime law." (Milliyet, 2023).

The East Mediterranean Gas Forum has a key role to play in contributing to the energy security of the Eastern Mediterranean region. This forum brings together countries with significant natural gas reserves with the aim of encouraging cooperation and the development of natural gas resources. This could lead to a greater diversity of natural gas sources as well as a decrease in reliance on one single supplier. This has a number of implications for the role of the East Mediterranean Gas Forum in contributing to energy security. One of these is the enhancement of cooperation between member countries in the fields of natural gas exploration and production, as well as transportation. Developing new energy projects: the East Mediterranean Gas Forum gives a platform for member states to participate in developing new energy

projects, such as the planned The East Mediterranean Gas Forum. This could increase investment in the region and create new jobs.

Disputes of resolution: The East Mediterranean Gas Forum provides a forum for Member States to resolve disputes over maritime boundaries and ownership of gas reserves. This can decrease tensions among regional states and promote stability.

Promoting sustainable energy: The East Mediterranean Gas Forum has the ambition to promote the development of sustainable energy resources in the region, such as renewable energy. This reduces greenhouse gas emissions and promotes environmental sustainability. Overall, the East Mediterranean Gas Forum has the potential to play an important role in promoting energy security in the Eastern Mediterranean by promoting cooperation, resolving disputes, and promoting sustainable energy. However, the success of the East Mediterranean Gas Forum will depend on the willingness of member states to work together to address the region's challenges. The East Mediterranean Gas Forum faces both challenges and opportunities in promoting energy security in the Eastern Mediterranean. Below are some of the main challenges and opportunities for the East Mediterranean Gas Forum going forward. The challenges are; geopolitical tensions, maritime disputes, and the COVID-19 pandemic. Geopolitical tensions: ongoing geopolitical tensions between countries in the region, such as the conflict between Israel and Palestine, Cyprus and Türkiye could pose challenges to the East Mediterranean Gas Forum's efforts to promote cooperation and development of natural gas resources in the region. Maritime disputes: Disputes over maritime boundaries and ownership of gas reserves could also pose challenges to the East Mediterranean Gas Forum's efforts to foster cooperation and development. COVID-19 Pandemic: The COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in lower energy demand and prices, impacting the development of energy projects in the region and potentially affecting the East Mediterranean Gas Forum's efforts to promote investment and development. Furthermore, there are opportunities for diversification of energy sources, the development of new energy projects, and the promotion of sustainable energy. Energy diversification: the development of gas reserves in the Eastern Mediterranean presents an opportunity to diversify Europe's gas sources and reduce dependence on a single supplier. Developing new energy projects: The East Mediterranean Gas Forum's efforts to foster cooperation and development may lead to the creation of new energy projects, such as the proposed The East Mediterranean Gas

Forum, bringing economic benefits and promoting energy security. Promoting sustainable energy: the East Mediterranean Gas Forum focuses on promoting sustainable energy, such as renewable energy, which presents opportunities to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and promote environmental sustainability. The Energy Security Forum for the Eastern Mediterranean faces significant challenges in terms of energy security in the region. Furthermore, there are potential opportunities to enhance existing energy initiatives and promote sustainable energy practices. The success of the Energy Security Forum will depend on the willingness of international stakeholders to come together and address the challenging circumstances in the region. As mentioned earlier, the Energy Security Forum could be transformed into the Energy Mediterranean Energy Forum in the future (Varol, 2020).

The implementation of the East Mediterranean Gas Forum has had a considerable influence on the development of regional cooperation in the Eastern Mediterranean region. The following are some of the primary implications of the East Mediterranean Gas Forum:

Stronger political ties: The East Mediterranean Gas Forum contributes to stronger political ties among member countries, which may lead to increased cooperation in other areas beyond energy security (Tanchum, 2021). Such as, Israel and Palestine memberships prove that the East Mediterranean Gas Forum has strengthened the political ties. Because they have ongoing conflict but, for a common interest, they can be seen together as members of the East Mediterranean Gas Forum. Promoting regional stability: the East Mediterranean Gas Forum's efforts to promote cooperation and resolve disputes over maritime borders and ownership of natural gas reserves have the potential to contribute to regional stability and reduce the risk of conflict in the region.

Last but not least, the East Mediterranean Gas Forum has had significant impacts on other aspects of regional cooperation in the Eastern Mediterranean. By promoting cooperation, economic integration, stability, and sustainable development, the East Mediterranean Gas Forum has the potential to contribute to a more prosperous and peaceful region.

In addition, Türkiye 's contribution policy to the East Mediterranean Gas Forum has positive and negative aspects. The East Mediterranean Gas Forum has had

both positive and negative contributions to Türkiye 's Eastern Mediterranean policy. While the forum promotes regional cooperation and multilateralism, its exclusion of Türkiye and failure to address the underlying maritime disputes could contribute to further tensions and instability in the region. From this point of view, the exclusion of Türkiye and maritime disputes in the Eastern Mediterranean show that the negative aspects of Türkiye 's contribution policy are quite essential.

It is clear that the East Mediterranean Gas Forum can play a significant role in addressing the energy crisis in the European Union, as it has substantial natural gas reserves in the region. This could be achieved through the development of projects such as the East Mediterranean Gas Forum pipeline, which could potentially contribute to the diversification of energy supply in Europe. However, it should be noted that the energy crisis in Europe is a complex issue that necessitates a multi-faceted approach. To meet its decarbonization objectives, the European Union has set ambitious targets that necessitate a significant decrease in fossil fuel consumption, such as natural gas, as well as the promotion of sustainable energy sources.

Future approaches for the East Mediterranean Gas Forum, which has been implemented as a common platform in the operation of energy resources, can be seen as a mechanism that they support to increase the dominance of the hegemonic powers and a mechanism they use to prevent other possible powers, on the other hand. In this respect, the East Mediterranean Gas Forum is important not only economically but also in terms of its effects on the international systemic balance. It is seen that the USA supports the Forum in order to reduce the EU's dependence on Russia for natural gas and to support its allies and companies in the region. However, it is understood that Türkiye is also absent regarding its policies towards the region. In this respect, the East Mediterranean Gas Forum, supported by the USA, is considered to be part of the political alliance that the USA is trying to establish in the region. The energy resources in the region are seen as a tool that will enable the EU to penetrate the region, as well as attract the attention of the EU to the region. In terms of energy security, it is inevitable for the EU to establish an effect on the East Mediterranean Gas Forum in both respects. The evolution of the East Mediterranean Gas Forum into a structure that will include all actors in the region will be a transformation that will serve energy security. Otherwise, the economic contributions of a forum that does not observe the balances in the region will be deprived, and perhaps even bigger problems will arise.

In addition, many negotiations and projects are underway to integrate energy markets in the region, connect to Europe and expand gas cooperation. From this point of view, as Varol (2020) said, the East Mediterranean Gas Forum can expand beyond its region. France became a member, and the United States was granted permanent observer status.

The East Mediterranean Gas Forum has the potential to address the European energy crisis through the provision of new natural gas resources to the European market. However, the exclusion of Türkiye as a key partner in the region could limit its capacity to contribute to the region's energy security. As mentioned above, Greek minister Dendias explained that they are open to agreeing with Türkiye on cooperation for the fate of the forum. It seems that the East Mediterranean Gas Forum will not be able to successful without Türkiye. Despite the conflicts in the region, the members should agree to compromise with Türkiye for the next development of the forum.

To address the energy crisis in Europe, a comprehensive approach must be adopted that includes the promotion of sustainable energy sources, the resolution of geopolitical tensions and disputes, and the involvement of all relevant parties in the region. As a result, the East Mediterranean Gas Forum project is not going to continue without Türkiye. It is important to note that the agreement between Türkiye and Libya for delineation on the Continental Shelf is a strategic step, and according to the agreement, Türkiye has the coasts through which the Eastern Mediterranean pipeline is to pass, and Türkiye is not going to give the permission for the pipeline. Despite all these developments and disagreements, if Türkiye agrees with the members of the forum by using bilateral relations and compromise, it seems that cooperation is going to solve all the conflicts related to energy in the Eastern Mediterranean region. So, the fate of the forum will be possible thanks to cooperation and compromise.

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