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The Impact of Turkey's Actions on the Growing Energy Security Conflict in the Eastern Mediterranean⁽¹⁾

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ABSTRACT

There are many proofs that we have a state of “Hyper-dynamic” in the Eastern Mediterranean region, accompanied with a noticeable shift in the power structures in the region. Although Cairo traditionally maintained a key role in the Mediterranean basin, the balances of power shifted away towards other Arab and non-Arab powers in the region. This created significant impacts on the interactions of the regional system, as well as on the interactions among Cairo, Greece, Cyprus, Ankara, Israel, and other states within what we can call the “Lebensraum.”

Based on the “Lebensraum” theory, the hypothesis of “Security Disorder” in the region. This can be evidenced by the increasing “militarization of interactions,” in parallel with Turkish threats against many actors in the Eastern Mediterranean in multiple specialized files. This pushed other countries to accelerate their efforts in drawing their direct or indirect defensive policies, as a reaction to the change in the Turkish foreign policy through one-side re-positioning in the region, with focus on “sovereignty” and “Energy” files.

Keywords: Eastern Mediterranean, Energy Security, Lebensraum theory, Eastern Mediterranean Gas Organization EMGO.

المُلخَص

ثمة جُملة من المشاهدات ترجح أننا إزاء حالة من "الديناميكية المفرطة" حظت بها منطقة "شرق المتوسط"، صاحبها تغير ملحوظ في هياكل القوة بتلك المنطقة، فبعد أن ظل للقاهرة دور تقليدي في حوض المتوسط، اختلفت موازين القوى لصالح قوى إقليمية أخرى عربية وغير عربية، مما أوجد تداعيات ذات تأثير واضح على تفاعلات النظام الإقليمي من جهة، وبين القاهرة واليونان وقبرص وأنقرة وإسرائيل عدد من الدول الأخرى من جهة أخرى في إطار ما يُعرف بـ "المجال الحيوي". وانطلاقاً من نظرية "المجال الحيوي"، فثمة ما يؤسس لفرضية "الفوضى الأمنية" بالمنطقة، يُستدل عليها بتصاعد نمط "عسكرة التفاعلات" بالتوازي مع التهديدات التركية لعدد من الفواعل بشرق المتوسط وفقاً لعدد من الملفات النوعية، تتسارع معها الدول لتفعيل خطواتها في ترسيم سياستها الدفاعية سواء عبر سياسات مباشرة، أو غير مباشرة. مقابل التغير في السياسات الخارجية التركية وسعيها نحو إعادة التوضع الأحادي بالمنطقة استناداً لمفهي "السيادة" و"الطاقة".

الكلمات المفتاحية: شرق المتوسط، أمن الطاقة، نظرية المجال الحيوي، منظمة غاز شرق المتوسط

. EMGO

INTRODUCTION

The International System, in its modern version, was established in the 17th century after Westphalia Treaties, which ended the Thirty Years' War in Europe. These treaties established the principle of mutual recognition of national sovereignty and the concept of “Nation-State.” Moreover, both World Wars also helped re-coining the terms of “sovereignty” and “interests” and extended their definition beyond the borders of the nation-state, re-linking them to the “Lebensraum” of the states participating in the international system.

Accordingly, this led to the emergence of what is called “behavior determinants,” as all regional powers rushed to acquire all physical and ideological resources they can reach to lead their respective regions and behave in a way that enhances and represents the interests of the whole region, while protecting the region from the interference of external powers. These countries adopt preemptive foreign policies to assert their leadership. They are also keen that their regional policies gain the recognition of other powers inside and outside their respective regions. Hence, these “regional powers” are considered key players in their regional sphere, as they define its nature, establish its balance of powers, own cards through which it can negotiate with superpowers and prevent them from direct interference in the territories they control, however; neither will they be able to build effective alliances within the international sphere, nor make a materialistic change in the structure of the international system (Rigaux, G. , 2015 : 306-307)

Based on the above, there are many proofs that we have a state of “hyperdynamic” in the Eastern Mediterranean region, accompanied with a noticeable shift in the power structures in the region. Although Cairo traditionally maintained a key role in the Mediterranean basin, the balances of power shifted away towards other Arab and non-Arab powers in the region. This created significant impacts on the interactions of the regional system, as well as on the interactions among Cairo, Greece, Cyprus, Ankara, Israel, and other states within what we can call the “Lebensraum.”

Based on the “Lebensraum” theory, the hypothesis of “Security Disorder” in the region. This can be evidenced by the increasing

“militarization of interactions,” in parallel with Turkish threats against many actors in the Eastern Mediterranean in multiple specialized files. This pushed other countries to accelerate their efforts in drawing their direct or indirect defensive policies, as a reaction to the change in the Turkish foreign policy through one-side re-positioning in the region, with focus on “sovereignty” and “Energy” files.

FIRST: THE STRATEGIC SIGNIFICANCE OF THE EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN

The Eastern Mediterranean is located in a vital strategic location within the Middle East. This attracts the interest of both regional and global powers and led to many conflicts between different players, as many countries were trying to put this region under their control to take advantage of its rich natural resources and its strategic location. The strategic significance of this region can be summarized in the following points (Zahran, E., 2020):

- **A center for Maritime Trade:** Eastern Mediterranean is an important location for trade in the Middle East. Its basin is highly crowded with shipments, representing 30% of the total global maritime trade. This region also accounts for around 25% of the maritime oil trade. From this perspective, Eastern Mediterranean represents an important passageway for trade and transportation that connects to the Indian Ocean through Suez Canal, in addition to the re-positioning of different global and regional power in the region to search for new resources, in parallel with the growth in Gas exploration and excavation activities that resulted in the discovery of many fields, especially: “Zohr, Tamar, Levithan, Gaza Marine, Aphrodite, and Calypso”. This might lead to an escalation of conflict between global and regional powers, based on the map of the recently discovered gas field, which intersect with “conflict zones” between the countries of the Eastern Mediterranean basin, as per the following map:

Main recent gas discoveries in offshore eastern Mediterranean

Gross mean resources (bn cubic metres)



Source: (Ward, A., 2018).

- **A center for Security Support:** Eastern Mediterranean has a security significance, as the basin is considered a buffer -for the European countries- from terrorist threats. The Eastern Mediterranean Basin acts as a “defensive wall” against the terrorist groups’ geographical engagement in the region. Hence, this affects the instability in Middle East, whether by increasing or decreasing the numbers of the refugees. The arch extending from Afghanistan to Sub-Saharan Africa suffers from instability, illegal trade of all types, cross-national organized crime, poverty, inequality, religious fundamentalism, and failed states, as well as the region’s critical importance in protecting the southern flank of the NATO. However, this point might need a special review, in lieu of the diminishing US hegemony in the region and NATO’s inactivity, in comparison to the repositioning of other players in international community, e.g., the repositioning of Russia in Eastern Mediterranean region.

SECOND: “ENERGY SECURITY” PROBLEM IN EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN

The increasing demand for oil and gas resources in both developed and developing countries highlights the significance of including the concept of “Energy Security” within the national, regional, and global security systems. Foreign policy strategies at many countries are now looking to issues

such as “Energy Security,” “Energy Infrastructure Development,” and “Forming Shared Energy System” as key geopolitical factors. Some researchers even went to assert that the concept of “Energy Sector” emerged as result to the conflicting and rivalry interactions between countries that realized the importance of securing their national needs of energy.

Hence, the relationship between the state of rivalry, competing, and power exertion, and resources developed what is called: the “Trap of Resource Determinism.” Consequently, Energy assumed a prominent place in international discussions, while the international and emerging powers’ “hegemony policies” and exertion of powers are being linked to energy security. The “Energy Dilemma” has become one of the top priorities in the foreign policy of different countries, as well as an important factor in securing their powers, and consequently, the continuous pursuit to control the energy production sites in multiple ways. This is evident through the following two points:

- **THE CONCEPT OF “ENERGY SECURITY”**

Energy security issues emerged since the early 20th century; however, the “Energy Security” concepts were not included in the research until 1960s. The interest in energy security were developed through different waves, as follows:

1. **First Wave:** The “Energy Security” term was developed during 1970s and 1980s, which witnessed the prioritization of oil flows stability. Despite of the price restrictions and manipulations by the exporting countries, priority was given to better management and governance of the energy organizations, including the SOEs, which leads to more energy technology efficiency (Hay, J. L. , 2009 : 142-149) .
2. **Second Wave:** Started in the first decade of the 21st century, as focus was given to ensuring equal access to safe energy sources to all social segments, as well as reducing the negative impact of the energy sector on the environment and climate (Nyman, J. , 2018 : 118-145) .

WITHIN THIS FRAMEWORK, A NUMBER OF PROBLEMS AROSE REGARDING THE DEFINITION OF “ENERGY SECURITY,” AS FOLLOWS:

1. **First Problem:** Lies in the difference in the interpretations of the concept of “Energy Security” among different exporting and importing countries, as the definitions were based on the weights of interests and benefits.

2. **Second Problem:** Lies in the multi-interpretations of “Energy Security,” as well as the discrepancy among some of them, in addition to many obstacles that prevents the establishment of one global approach in coining and adopting a definition for “Energy Security.” This is because every state or non-governmental player has its own understanding of the issue, which might change based on different reasons or due to the economic, political, and security developments that are related to “Energy Security”. Governments and organizations elect to adopt the “Energy Security” concept that justifies their own policies, actions, and agendas. This causes manipulations in the term and prevents the adoption of one unified concept for everyone.
3. **Third Problem:** Relates to different approaches of International Relations schools of thought in discussing the definition of “Energy Security,” especially among neoliberalism, neorealism, constructivism, and political economy schools, which led to coining multiple interpretations of the concept (Proskuryakova, L., 2018: 223, 203-214).
4. **Fourth Problem:** Lies in the inconclusiveness of the academic studies on analysis of different aspects of “Energy Security”. For example, many studies depend on “one-sided definitions” of “Energy Security” with focus on technical or economic aspects, while ignoring social and political aspects. On the other side, many “Energy Security” studies focus on a certain sector, individual country, or specific technology, hence, the definition will not be comprehensive and applicable in any country (Bompard, E., Carpignano, A., Erriquez, M., Grosso, D., Pession, M., & Profumo, F., 2017 : 130, 144-154).
5. **Fifth Problem:** Arise from the idea that many of the “Energy Security” concepts are based on old security models that do not reflect the new energy trends or the modern technological developments in the fields of energy industry or renewable energy resources (Nyman, E., 2017: 106, 310-314).

BASED ON THE ABOVE, THE DEFINITIONS OF “ENERGY SECURITY” CAN BE CLASSIFIED INTO DIFFERENT CONCEPTUAL GROUPS, BASED ON THE FOLLOWING CATEGORIZATION (RASHAD, S., 2022: 128-129):

1. CONCEPT GROUP THAT IS BASED ON THE STATE INTERESTS:

In this group, the concept of Energy Security is explained by different country groups based on the scope of their interests. The energy importing

countries focus on long term energy flows that are safe and low-cost, while the importing countries focus on ensuring the stability of energy flows with high prices and supporting the efficiency of oil and gas sector in their economies to use the financial and economic potentials to build a modern economy. Dayer and Tronmbetta claim that Energy Sector implies the continuous access to different types of energy with enough quantities and reasonable prices. This definition is similar to the understanding of the International Energy Agency regarding the definition of the long-term Energy Security, which entails continuous availability of energy sources with affordable prices, and the ability of the energy system to quickly respond to sudden changes in the equilibrium of supply and demand. Therefore, the energy security includes three different aspects of state interests, which are:

- First: Securing the supply for exporting countries with low prices and stable flows and quantities.
- Second: Securing the demand for exporting countries that are interested in achieving stable financial income from energy sales.
- Third: Securing the energy passages and maximizing benefits and profits for countries, through which the energy is passing.

2. CONCEPT GROUP THAT IS BASED ON THE ENERGY GOALS:

This group of concepts focus on economic, environmental, and social goals of “Energy Security.” It defines “Energy Security” as the trust in the energy supplies within the determined quality and quantity, and the context of the current economic requirements, to ensure protecting the citizens, state, and society from lack of energy (deficiency), electricity outage, and providing high-quality energy resources. Energy Security here can be understood as the state of protecting the critical energy interests of individuals, society, and state from internal and external threats. It is a state of protecting the state, its citizens, and society from the threats against the sustainable energy flows to the economy. One of the main characteristics of this approach is the ability of the energy system to withstand the internal and external, political, and economic, and human and natural threats (Harris, S. , 2010 : 166-185) .

3. GEOPOLITICAL CONCEPTS GROUP:

It is a group of concepts that define Energy Security through evaluating key four criteria for energy resources, including the energy availability, transportation, security, affordability, and acceptability. The availability and affordability of energy are among the main elements of

energy security that are often included in the definition of the term “Resource Nationalism” (Childs, J. , 2016 : 539-546). Moreover, ensuring affordable energy supplies, diversifying its resources, securing their transportation, and infrastructure, as well as the potential threatening geopolitical and market changes that are caused by it or impacting energy supply chains, are all included within the concepts of national security, human rights, personal security, energy justice, and sustainable development. The geopolitical aspects of energy security, especially in the oil and gas sector, are becoming more evident in the energy-rich regions, due to the escalation of conflict of interests among major powers, and the competition that turned into a regional standoff. In addition, the geopolitical characteristics of the energy order is becoming more apparent and energy security is becoming more relevant to the countries’ efforts in building coalitions and mutual cooperations in this regard. Researchers iterate that the geopolitical approach focuses on the countries that struggle to have access to energy resources, as different states impose a direct or indirect control over certain fossil fuel reservations or energy transportation routes, as well as enhance the geographical diversification of importing or exporting energy resources to ensure national security. Pascual and Zambetakis, who are proponents of energy geopolitics, argue that the biggest energy importers focus on oil and gas and seek to diversify their suppliers. They also acknowledge the geopolitical aspects of the national energy strategies and cite economic rationales for politicizing the global energy sector.

- **ENERGY SECURITY DETERMINANTS:**

There is a number of determinants that push states into defining their policies and other different tools to deal with the concept of “Energy Security,” which are:

1. The current imbalances between supply and demand in the global energy market, as demand is expected to increase by 56% between 2010-2040. (U.S. Energy Information Administration, 2013).
2. Limitations on energy supplies, which include compulsory limitations due to the depletion of energy sources, internal conditions in the exporting country, or limitation on exporting due to an agreement among producing countries to control the supply.
3. Terroristic attacks on energy sources and infrastructure in the producer countries of oil and gas, in order to damage the major consumer

countries, such as Al Qaeda attacks after 2001, where it started targeting energy supplies and economic interests of its “enemies”.

4. Challenges faced by oil international companies that limit their capability and efficiency in the producer countries, including the security threats it may face during any drastic shifts in the security or political environments of the producer countries, as well as the political fluctuations that may threaten the contracts of these companies.

- **“ENERGY SECURITY” PROBLEM IN EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN:**

The significance of the Eastern Mediterranean region has increased lately, due to the offshore gas field explorations in the countries of the eastern coast, which may turn the region into a zone of competition, hegemony, and conflict among different regional and global powers in their pursuit for securing energy sources. Also, the region is destabilized due to its long-term conflicts, such as: Arab-Israeli Conflict, Lebanese Israeli border conflict, Cyprus Problem, etc. This intensified the regional tensions and increased the geopolitical threats to energy security in the Eastern Mediterranean. This is evident when considering the key conflicts in the region and their direct and indirect consequences on the energy security, as follows:

1. **THE CONFLICT BETWEEN TURKEY AND CYPRUS:**

The conflict between Turkey and Cyprus is centered around several issues and disagreements, including Aegean Sea, the continental shelf, the territorial waters status, and the conflict over Greek air space. All of these factors increase the tension over excavations in Eastern Mediterranean. The division of Cyprus is specially reflected on the search for natural resources in the Eastern Mediterranean, especially oil and gas offshore excavations. Greek Cypriots managed to utilize the oil resources below the sea surface and entered into many partnerships and agreements to utilize these resources. However, Northern Cyprus is still unrecognized state except by Ankara. This made Turkey realize that Greek Cypriots do not have the right to use the Island's resources, because the Island is not unified, as per the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, which defines the territorial sea of the country as the space covering 12 nautical mile from the baseline, while the Exclusive Economic Zone stretches over 200 nautical miles, and beyond that range is the international waters or the “high seas”, as illustrated in Figure (1).

Figure (1)
United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea



Source: (FELIPE, S. T. ,2019).

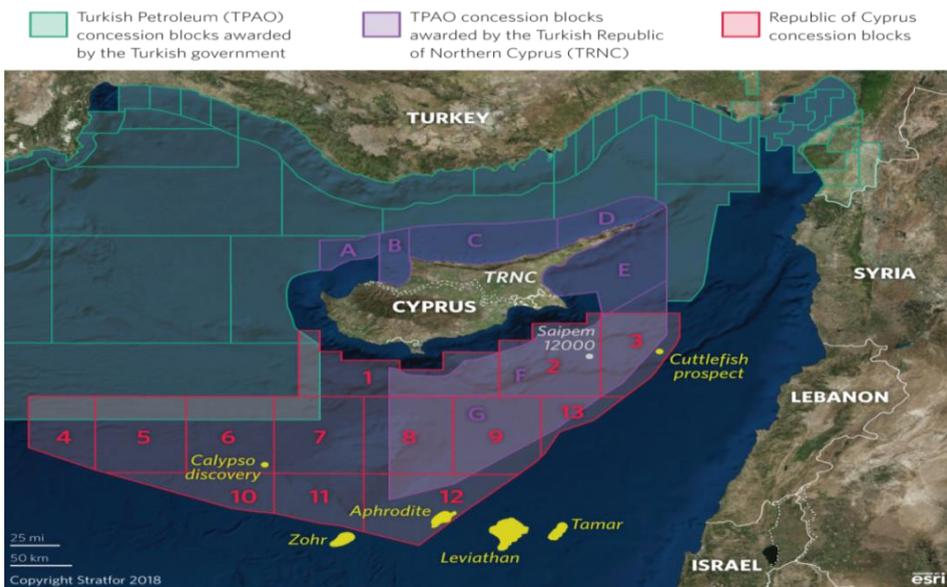
Based on the above, there are some contested parts of the sea between Cyprus and Turkey. Considering the energy security problem in Eastern Mediterranean, there are certain challenges in terms of the border perspective in outlining the geopolitical characteristics of “Turkey-Greek Cyprus”, as it has two dimensions: The first is the direct relationship between the two states, and the second is the relationship between Turkish Cyprus, which is not recognized except by Turkey, and Greek Cyprus, which has international recognition and is a member in the European Union. This challenge is projected in a myriad of dimensions, including (Zahran, E., 2021 : 97- 98) :

- **“Turkish Cyprus - Greek Cyprus” File:** This is one of the complicated files that is highly threatening to the security of the Eastern Mediterranean and hinders the operations of the forum. Turkish Cyprus claims that the resources of the island shall be owned by all of its inhabitants, and it must not be used by one party without the others. In return, Greek Cyprus ignored this claim and established its exclusive economic zone borders with: Egypt-2003, Lebanon-2007, and Israel-2010. This pushed Turkish Cyprus to react with similar steps, where it established its maritime borders and signed The Continental Shelf Delimitation Agreement with Turkey in 2011 (Press Statement on The Continental Shelf Delimitation Agreement Signed Between Turkey and the TRNC, 2011) . Hence, there is an overlap between the borders

established by both the Turkish and Greek Cypriots. This caused an escalation in the demands of Turkish Cyprus for sharing the resources in the regions no. 1, 2, 3, 8, 9, 12, and 13, as per the following map:

Figure (2)

Map of Gas Blocks in Eastern Mediterranean



Source: (The Eastern Mediterranean's New Great Game Over Natural Gas, 2018).

- **“Turkey-Greek Cyprus” File:** This is the second file relating to “the borders perspective,” which resulted from the Turkey’s non-membership in the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, due to its conflict with Greece on the Aegean Sea. Turkey claims that the exclusive economic zone outlined by Greek Cyprus overlaps with the Turkish continental shelf and its own exclusive economic zone in the blocks 1, 4, 5, 6, and 7,(Turkey’s MFA, 2012). Consequently, Ankara does not recognize the agreements made by Geek Cyprus to outline its exclusive economic zone with Egypt, Israel, and Lebanon. It also claims that tendering and awarding oil and gas exploration and excavation rights to foreign companies in this region is illegal and violates Ankara’s rights (Erciyes, Ç., 2012). Moreover, Turkey supports the Turkish Cyprus’s claims, which increases tensions in the region, and hinders the Eastern Mediterranean Gas Organization.

2. THE CONFLICT BETWEEN TURKEY AND EGYPT:

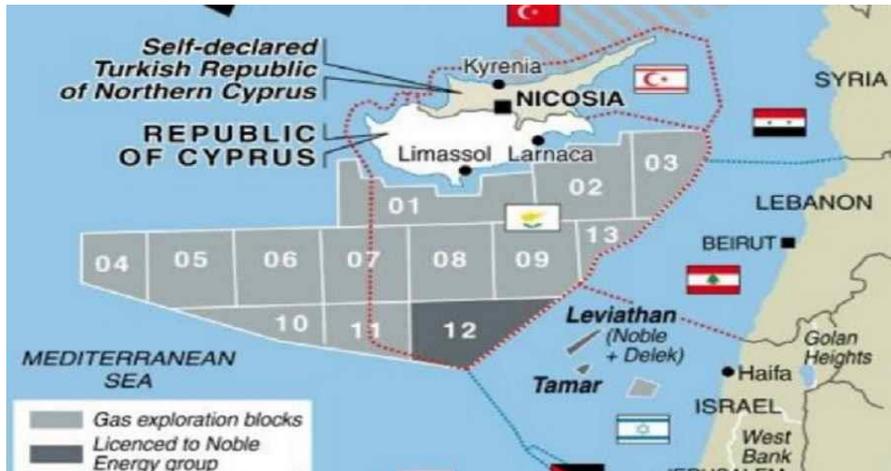
One of the key factors leading to the conflict between these two states, besides that the total regional circumstances are pushing for more tension, is the idea that most of the Eastern Mediterranean countries were not ready with a proper legal structure for investments in energy. Perhaps one of the key indicators of the escalated tension between the two countries is what happened after the Agreement between Cyprus and Egypt on the Delimitation of the Exclusive Economic Zone, where Turkey announced that it would challenge the agreement signed by and between Egypt and Cyprus in 2013, claiming that it is illegal and violates the Turkish continental shelf. It declared that no foreign country or corporate can conduct research or excavate for oil and gas in the Turkish continental shelf and other overlapping regions. These claims were rejected by Egypt, as it confirmed that no party can challenge the validity of the Agreement especially that it is in harmony with the rules of international law, and was registered as an international agreement with the United Nations. Hence, the Agreement shall be considered valid and obligatory.

3. THE CONFLICT BETWEEN LEBANON AND ISRAEL:

Maritime border disagreements between Lebanon and Israel are one of the outstanding and most complicated issues between the two parties, especially after the Israeli gas discoveries in Eastern Mediterranean since 2009. These discoveries encouraged other countries in the region to intensify their efforts to explore for natural gas. This led to more escalation regarding maritime borders disagreements in the region and added an additional dimension to a decade-long struggle.

The disagreement between Lebanon and Israel revolves around an area of around 860 km² split into 10 blocks. The biggest conflict is about block no. 9, as well as the different perspectives regarding delimitation methods. Israel sees that delimitation must be made on 90 degrees from the maritime borders, while Lebanon believes that it should be a continuum of the Lebanese land borders.

Figure (3)
Disputed Gas Blocks between Lebanon and Israel



Source: (Vogler, S. and Eric V. Thompson, 2015) .

The disagreements between the two parties were based on the delimitation agreement between Lebanon and Cyprus in 2007, and the delimitation agreement between Israel and Cyprus in 2010, which included some territories that are within the Lebanese EEZ as per the Lebanese-Cypriot Agreement, which led to a conflict regarding the rights to these parts.

To bring the two parties to a middle ground, the United States of America pursued some mediation efforts to achieve a breakthrough that would reduce tensions between the two sides, but the mediation efforts did not bear fruit. During 2012, Frederic Hof proposed the division of the disputed 860 km², so that Lebanon is granted about 500 square kilometers, in exchange for Israel getting 360 kilometers, but this initiative, which was known as the "Hof Line", did not find acceptance on both sides.

In 2018, Lebanon signed the first contract to explore for hydrocarbon resources in its waters, including the disputed part with Israel, through an alliance of three companies, namely, France's Total, Italy's Eni, and Russia's Novatek. The alliance was to explore in "Blocks" 4 and 9. Lebanon began drilling and excavation operations in February 2020.

For a whole decade, the American mediators (Frederic Hof, Amos Hochstein, David Satterfield, and David Schenker) failed to achieve any progress in this matter. However, this mediation was resumed afterwards in October 2020, under the supervision of the United Nations, in The UNIFIL headquarters in Naqoura, southern Lebanon. A number of rounds were held

before the talks halted in May 2021, due to the differences between the two sides, especially after the Lebanese side proposed a maritime area of around 1430 km², which made it difficult to reach consensus and dispute resolution, as this widened the area of dispute to about 2,290 km² instead of 860 km², and means that Beirut claims the Karish and Tanin fields, which Israel considers within its sovereignty.

4. THE CONFLICT BETWEEN PALESTINE AND ISRAEL:

The conflict began in 2000, when British Gas discovered the Marine gas field, where the Palestinian Authority at that time signed an agreement for development and exploration in the field for a period of four years with a number of companies, led by British Gas and the Consolidated Contractors Company. However, Israel blocked the agreement by insisting to control the paths of gas flow from the field to the outside world and that the field's supplies should reach Ashkelon first to satisfy its gas needs, and then to Gaza, as well as its stipulation to buy gas at prices lower than international rates, which was rejected by companies.

THIRD: TURKISH DETERMINANTS AND ACTIONS IN EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN:

There are several trends that promotes tension in the overall interactions of the Eastern Mediterranean region, given the following points:

The recent geopolitical changes in the Eastern Mediterranean region imposed a state of "uncertainty," along with the disruption and re-production of new the balances and alliances in the region. In 2010, The American Geological Survey estimated the existence of approximately 122 trillion m³ of undiscovered gas resources in the Eastern Mediterranean, off the coasts of Syria, Lebanon, Israel, Gaza, and Cyprus, in addition to approximately 107 billion barrels of oil that can be extracted. This established a new transformation in Turkish foreign policy realizations based on the geopolitical and geo-security transformations of the region's map. This invoked Ankara to reshape the Eastern Mediterranean balances into a regional system under its leadership. However, the stakes of the Mediterranean countries, which are based on the shifting political, economic, and security conditions, overthrew the three Turkish theoretical pillars of foreign policy: "Strategic depth, zero-problems, and soft power" which led to a gigantic new change in the Turkish

foreign policy that reformed its turbulent actions in order to balance the following contexts:

- Re-engagement in regional issues, especially in Egypt, Syria, the occupied Palestinian territories, and Libya.
- The desire to divert attention from the state of tension in the internal policy files, especially in relation to the events of "Gezi Park" in June 2013, the corruption charges against the government and the ruling party (Vela, J. and Sullivan, K. ,2013) , the resumption of PKK military operations, the failure of the reconciliation efforts with the Kurds since July 2015, and the weak results in the presidential and parliamentary elections in Turkey.
- The isolation that was imposed on Turkey as a result of its positions on several issues in the region, especially its position towards "political Islam" and its relation to the "neo-Ottoman" project. In addition to its complete misalignment with its Western allies in NATO and the European Union, especially the Western pressures on Turkey to try to "re-contain" it after showing some extorting moves in its foreign policy, as well as accusing it of supporting "terrorism".
- The gas discoveries in the Mediterranean region, and the ensued escalation that may lead to a "potential conflict" between various players in the Eastern Mediterranean region "locally, regionally and internationally."

CONSEQUENTLY, THE TURKISH ACTIONS ARE SKEWED TOWARDS ESCALATION IN THE EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN, WHICH CONSTITUTES AN ATTEMPT TO BESIEGE AND UNDERMINE THE REPOSITIONING OF ITS REGIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL COMPETITORS IN THE REGION, AND TO ACCOMPLISH THE FOLLOWING TARGETS:

- Containing the efforts aimed at strengthening the regional position and strength of the Cypriot state, and terminating any attempts to reinstate the negotiations to reunify the island, which have been stalled since 2017, as the Turkish escalation came in the wake of the Cypriot government's refusal of a proposal by the government of Northern Cyprus to enter into talks on sharing the gas resources without considering that the priority in talks should be given to the "reunification of the island".

- Containing the Egyptian-Cypriot convergence regarding Eastern Mediterranean gas, which culminated into the signing of an agreement in September 2018 on establishing a pipeline to transfer the natural gas produced in Aphrodite Field in Cyprus to the Egyptian liquidation plants on the Mediterranean shores to be re-exported afterwards. This move was followed by the establishment of the Eastern Mediterranean Gas Forum, which was launched in Cairo in January 2019 with the participation of Cyprus and Greece. This overthrew the Turkish ambition to make Ankara a major hub for energy transit from east to west, and a central route for hydrocarbons from the Middle Eastern and Asian markets to Europe.
- Undermining the Egyptian actions towards becoming a center for energy transit, based on its favorable environment that contributes to transforming Egypt into a regional hub for oil and gas trading, by producing this energy from Egypt's fields in the eastern Mediterranean or by importing it from Israel, Greece, and Cyprus, and then transferring it to international markets. This was expressly stated in the European Parliament report of 2017: "It seems Egypt controls the future of Eastern Mediterranean gas" (Salim, R. , 2018).
- Balancing out the Western aversion to Turkey due to the conflict over certain files, the latest of which is related to Turkey's possession of the Russian "S-400" missile system despite the strong opposition from the United States and NATO, which reflects a transformation in the geopolitical and security positioning of Turkey and its regional role, as per its "neo-Ottoman" project.
- Bargaining the security of the Eastern Mediterranean region in exchange for obtaining international support to help mitigating and overcoming the deteriorating economic crisis inside Turkey, especially the hike of public debt to GDP ratio, and the exploding inflation rate, especially after the Turkish Lira lost one-third of its value before the US dollar.

FOURTH: STRATEGIC AND SECURITY ARRANGEMENTS FOR EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN ENERGY SECURITY:

As the Turkish challenge to energy security is escalating in the Eastern Mediterranean region, there has become a need to create strategic and security arrangements for the Eastern Mediterranean ecosystem, which is reflected in the cooperative establishment of organizations among the countries of the

region, by launching the “Eastern Mediterranean Gas Organization EMGO”, which aims at enhancing regional cooperation in the development of offshore gas explorations in the region, enabling them to achieve joint benefits from the gas resources in the region, in addition to the founders’ desire for the organization to become an effective pressure tool in front of any hostile or conflicting projects to the objectives of the organizations.

Hence, on 22 September 2020, the Egyptian Minister of Petroleum and Mineral Resources, Tarek El-Molla, and the ministers of the Eastern Mediterranean Gas Forum signed a charter for transforming the Eastern Mediterranean Gas Forum into a regional organization based in Cairo. These steps reflect, in the functional context of “regional establishment,” a set of implications of relevant strategic and security dimensions regarding the Eastern Mediterranean energy, the most important of which are:

- **Legalization of Establishment:** Giving the forum a "legal status" by transforming it into a specialized organization that manages various gas issues in the Eastern Mediterranean, and allow its members to pursue various areas of cooperation at this level, as the legal formulation of relations between the countries of the Eastern Mediterranean region can create common spaces between the members, including, Exchanging technical expertise among the participating countries, creating opportunities for cooperation between partners in the field of training, preparing and qualifying specialized staff, etc.
- **Integrative Functions:** The organization contributes to strengthening regional cooperation by creating an organized systematic dialogue, and formulating joint regional policies on natural gas, including regional gas policies, as well as deepening awareness regarding interdependence and the benefits that can be derived from cooperation and dialogue among members, in accordance with the principles of international law. Moreover, Supporting members with gas reserves and current producers in the region in their efforts to benefit from their current and future reserves, enhancing cooperation among themselves and with consumers and transit parties in the region, taking advantage of the current infrastructure, developing more options to accommodate current and future discoveries, and helping the consumer countries in securing their needs and allowing their participation with transit countries in setting

regional gas policies. This would allow the establishment of a sustainable partnership between the all the players across all steps of gas value chain.

- **Cooperative Formulations:** This can be achieved through institutional work to establish a regional gas market that serves the interests of its members, secures supply and demand, optimizes resources development, rationalizes the cost of infrastructure, offers competitive prices, and improves trade relations, in parallel with ensuring sustainability and taking into account environmental considerations in gas exploration, production and transportation, and in building infrastructure, in addition to promoting the integration of gas with other energy sources, especially renewable energy and electricity networks.
- **International Coordination:** It is represented in the support of major countries such as the United States and France, as the organization reflects an opportunity for the Western/European side to diversify its exports, especially with their growing needs of gas. Despite the realization of the importance of Russian gas to the European side in terms of being cheaper and more available through multiple supply routes, European countries still need a room for maneuvering that would enable them to achieve their goal of diversifying their gas exports, and not to remain hostage to the possibility of supply interruption in case of any political disruptions, such as, the historical recurrences of tension between Russia and Ukraine.
- **Cairo Centralism\Regionalism:** The choice of Cairo as the headquarters of the new organization means that the participating countries appreciate Egypt, which is an addition to its regional and international presence in general, and supports its centrality in the face of competing regional powers, especially since Egypt possesses all the ingredients that make it a regional hub for energy and a major producer of gas in Eastern Mediterranean, such as (Shoukry, H. ,2020):
 - 1- Egypt has the necessary infrastructure to liquefy natural gas, which guarantees an appropriate and relatively cheap price for gas exported to European countries, which makes it competitive with Russian gas in the European market.
 - 2- Egypt's strategic location and its balanced policy, which has resulted in establishing good relations with all the countries in the region, and in particular with the European Union countries, which are a major

trade partner to Egypt. This ensures that Egypt will not exploit the gas trade to extend its influence or pursue policies that would harm the interests of the countries of the European continent, unlike Israel, which faces criticism and sanctions from the European Union due to its practices towards the Palestinians and its repeated violations of international laws and resolutions, and the consequent tension in its relations with the European countries.

- 3- Egypt owns an extensive network of pipelines with Israel and Jordan, and owns the 16th biggest gas reserves in the world, which amounts to 77 trillion cubic feet.
- 4- The possibility for European countries to rely on Egyptian gas in order to reduce Turkish and Russian influence on the European continent. Russia seeks to strengthen its influence on the continent by exporting gas through Turkey. Then, it exploits that to put pressure on the European Union countries. This prompted the European countries to search for diversified sources of gas.

It is worth noting that the outbreak of the Ukrainian crisis in February 2022 negatively affected the energy file, when Russia banned the exports of gas to the European Union, which prompted the European countries to search for available alternatives. Accordingly, the European Union signed a memorandum of understanding with Egypt and Israel to increase gas exports to Europe.

HENCE, SEVERAL OPPORTUNITIES EXIST THE PROMOTES THE SIGNIFICANCE OF EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN STRATEGIC AND SECURITY ARRANGEMENTS. THIS IS EVIDENT DUE TO:

1. **The Increasing Geopolitical Importance of the Eastern Mediterranean Gas:** The Mediterranean gas has a special importance that increases the significance of the existing strategic and security arrangements, perhaps the most important of which are: First, Eastern Mediterranean region accounts for 47% of global oil reserves, and 41% of global gas reserves. This importance is enhanced by the openness and the location of the Mediterranean Sea at the intersection of Asia, Europe and Africa, and its connection to global trade routes through Suez Canal, Bosphorus and Gibraltar straits. Second, the geo-political, geo-economic, and geo-security aspirations of the neighboring countries, which are invoked by the gas explorations in the region, and their reflections on the

political and economic realities of the countries in the region. Third, the rise of the organization's member states as "emerging powers in the field of energy and gas", especially with the growing conflict over the exploitation of hydrocarbon wealth, the competition over export routes, and the scramble for shares in foreign markets. This, in turn, was reflected on the growing exploration movement for gas fields in the region, which is shown in the following table

2. **Legalization of the EEZ Delimitations among Eastern Mediterranean Countries:** The maritime delimitation agreements signed between the countries of the region constitute the legal framework of the strategic and security arrangements, for example: Maritime delimitation agreements were signed between Egypt and Cyprus in 2003 and 2014, between Egypt and Israel in 2005, between Cyprus and Lebanon in 2007, between Cyprus and Israel in 2010, between Italy and Greece in June 2020, and between Egypt and Greece in August 2020.
3. **Superpowers' Support to Strategic and Security Arrangements in the Region:** This is established upon the achievements and successes of the Eastern Mediterranean Gas Forum, which invoked global powers to apply for the Forum's membership. For example: France officially applied for membership in January 2020. After announcing the establishment of the organization, the United States expressed its desire to join the organization as a "permanent observer".
4. **Increasing Demand in Global Markets:** The European/Western powers are seeking to adopt a "diversification of energy sources" strategy, in order not to rely on a single source of gas and energy. For example, The historical recurrence of the deterioration of European-Russian relations, due to the political fluctuations between Russia and Ukraine, which negatively affected the policies towards obtaining Russian gas, which, in turn, pushed the Western/European powers to reconsider diversifying sources of gas and expanding safe supply lines from other regions, such as the Eastern Mediterranean, in addition to the growing importance of gas as a source of energy all over the world. This importance is expected to grow globally as a source of energy until 2040 AD, according to estimates by the International Energy Agency.

CONCLUSION

Based on the above. There are a number of challenges that the Turkish side invokes to undermine stability in the Eastern Mediterranean region, and thus threatens energy security in that region, by employing what is known as “threats of necessity”, which can be made by reproducing crises in gradual escalations according to the changes in the regional and international geopolitical capabilities, in order to serve its “neo-Ottoman” agenda, and its strategic vision of “Blue Homeland - 2023”.

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