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TURKEY'S ISOLATION IN THE EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN

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TURKEY'S ISOLATION FROM THE REGIONALIZATION PROCESS
IN THE EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN:
A CASE STUDY OF THE EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN GAS
FORUM (EMGF)

A Master's Thesis

by

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ABSTRACT

TURKEY'S ISOLATION FROM THE REGIONALIZATION PROCESS IN THE EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN: A CASE STUDY OF THE EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN GAS FORUM (EMGF)

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The recent offshore gas discoveries in the Eastern Mediterranean has highlighted new conflictual and cooperative dynamics in the region. The study investigates the dynamics of the regionalization process with a special focus on the emergence of the Eastern Mediterranean Gas Forum (EMGF). More specifically, the study questions how Turkey is isolated from the regionalization process, namely the EMGF, in the Eastern Mediterranean. A framing analysis is conducted to trace which ideas prevailed; and process tracing is used to explain how Turkish, Greek and Greek Cypriot ideas and material interests shaped the regionalization process between 2010 and 2020. It has been argued that conditioning effects of cognitive priors, redefinition of initial ideas and emulation of outside ideas combined with actor's material interests within the context of changing domestic politics have shaped Turkey's isolation from the regionalization process.

Key Words: Cyprus, Eastern Mediterranean, Energy, Regionalization, Turkey

ÖZET

DOĞU AKDENİZ’DEKİ BÖLGESELLEŞME SÜRECİNDEN TÜRKİYE’NİN SOYUTLANMASI: DOĞU AKDENİZ GAZ FORUMU ÜZERİNE BİR VAKA ÇALIŞMASI

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Son yıllarda Doğu Akdeniz’de bulunan doğal gaz kaynakları kıyı ülkeleri arasında yeni çatışma ve işbirliği alanları oluşturdu. Bu çalışma Doğu Akdeniz’de yaşanan bölgeselleşme sürecinin dinamiklerini Doğu Akdeniz Gaz Forumu üzerine yoğunlaşarak ele almıştır. Bu süreçte Türkiye’nin neden ve nasıl bölgeselleşme sürecinden soyutlandığı sorusuna cevap verme amacıyla veri analiz yöntemi olarak çerçeveleme (framing) kullanılmıştır. Veriler ışığında hangi tür fikirlerin bölgesel düzeni oluşturmada etkili olduğu incelenmiştir. Aynı zamanda süreç izleme metodu kullanılarak, 2010 ve 2020 yılları arasında Türkiye, Yunanistan ve Güney Kıbrıs Rum Yönetimi’nin fikirlerinin ve maddi çıkarlarının bölgesel düzeni ne şekilde biçimlendirildiği analiz edilmiştir. Bu bağlamda bazı bilişsel önceliklerin, bu önceliklerin yeniden tanımlanmasının ve dışsal fikirlerin şartlandırma etkilerinin, bölge ülkelerinin maddi çıkarları ve değişen iç politika dinamikleri ekseninde, Türkiye’nin bölgeselleşme sürecinden soyutlanmasına etkisi açıklanmıştır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Bölgeselleşme, Çerçeveleme, Doğu Akdeniz, Doğal Gaz, Enerji Politikası,

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Hasta la victoria siempre!

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT	i
ÖZET	ii
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	iii
TABLE OF CONTENTS	iv
LIST OF TABLES.....	vi
LIST OF FIGURES	vii
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS.....	viii
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION.....	1
1.1 Research Design and Methodology.....	5
CHAPTER 2: THEORATICAL FRAMEWORK	10
2.1 What are regions and regionalization?	11
2.2 Regionalism in International Relations Theories	14
2.2.1 Realism and regionalism.....	14
2.2.2 Liberalism and regionalism	19
2.2.3 Constructivism and regionalism	23
CHAPTER 3: OVERVIEW OF THE POLITICS OF HYDROCARBON	
DEVELOPMENT IN THE EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN	31
3.1 The Eastern Mediterranean as a “region” in the historical context.....	31
3.2 Natural Gas Discoveries in the Eastern Mediterranean	33
3.2.1 Israel.....	34
3.2.2 Southern Cyprus Greek Administration (SCGA)	34
3.2.3 Egypt.....	36
3.2.4 Lebanon and Syria	36
3.2.5 Turkey.....	37
3.3 Potential and Planned Infrastructure Projects to Export the Natural Gas	
Resources from the East Mediterranean region	39
3.3.1 The potential or planned pipelines:.....	40
3.3.2 Existing and potential LNG Terminals or FLNG projects	42
3.4 Global and Regional Energy Markets and Monetization of Energy Resources	
in the Eastern Mediterranean	44
3.5 Maritime Boundaries Delimitation Conflict	49
3.5.1 Continental Shelf, EEZ and the related articles of the UNCLOS.....	50
3.5.2 Turkey’s official position.....	55
3.6 Historical Relations in the Region	57
3.6.1 Turkey and the SCGA.....	57
3.6.2 Turkey and Israel	58
3.6.3 Turkey and Egypt.....	60

3.7 Militarization of the Maritime Dispute in the Eastern Mediterranean	63
CHAPTER 4: POWER RELATIONS AND IDEATIONAL FORCES IN THE REGIONALIZATION PROCESS: EXPLAINING THE EMERGENCE OF EMGF, STATE PREFERENCES AND TURKEY’S ISOLATION THROUGH POLICY ELITE FRAMES	66
4.1 A New Framework for Regional Cooperation: EMGF	66
4.2 Prominent Frames Used in States’ Preferences in the Regionalization Process in the Eastern Mediterranean	68
4.2.1 Turkish Foreign Energy Policy and Prominent Frames in its Approach to Eastern Mediterranean	68
4.2.2 Prominent Frames in the SCGA’s Approach to Turkey in the Eastern Mediterranean	76
4.2.3 Prominent Frames in Greece’s Approach to Turkey in the Eastern Mediterranean	78
4.2.4 Israeli Perception and Emerging Alliances in the Eastern Mediterranean	82
4.2.5 The European Union’s Stance on Turkish Activities in the Region.....	87
4.2.6 The Shifts in the U.S Approach	90
CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION	94
REFERENCES	101

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1: Major gas discoveries to date in the region by country and approximate reserve size.	38
Table 2: Bilateral trade between Egypt and Turkey between 2014 and 2018.....	63
Table 3: Number of Frame Occurrences in Turkey about the Eastern Mediterranean region between 2003 and 2020	70
Table 4: Number of Frame Occurrences in the SCGA between 2010 and 2020 about Turkey in the Eastern Mediterranean	76
Table 5: Number of Frame Occurrences in Greece between 2010 and 2020 about Turkey in the Eastern Mediterranean	79

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: Map of the Eastern Mediterranean region	13
Figure 2: Ideas and regional orders (Acharya, 2011, p. 195).....	26
Figure 3: Localization and subsidiarity (Acharya, 2011, p. 202).....	27
Figure 4: Ideas and Regional Order in the Eastern Mediterranean	29
Figure 5: Exploration zones by firms in the Eastern Mediterranean.....	36
Figure 6: Turkey’s drilling activities in the Eastern Mediterranean	38
Figure 7: LNG imports in the EU and its share in the total gas imports and consumption	45
Figure 8: US, European and Asian Natural gas Prices between 2008 and 2020.....	48
Figure 9: The scope of the continual shelves and EEZs:	51
Figure 10: Overlapping EEZ/CS Claims.....	54
Figure 11: Turkey’s framing of the Eastern Mediterranean between 2003 and 2020	72
Figure 12: The SCGA’s framing of the Turkish activities in the region between 2010 and 2020	77
Figure 13: Greece’s framing of the Turkish activities in the region between 2010 and 2020.....	80

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AKP (JDP):	Justice and Development Party
ASEAN:	Association of South East Asian Nations
BCM:	Billion Cubic Meters
East Med:	Eastern Mediterranean
EMGF:	Eastern Mediterranean Gas Forum
EU:	European Union
PM:	Prime Minister
SCGA:	Southern Cypriot Greek Administration
U.S:	Unites States

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The past few decades has been marked by geopolitical shifts at both the international and regional level. Particularly the 21st century, the post-Cold War era, has been a time, when scholarly discussions about the emergence of regional orders has taken place. Consequently, the study of regional transformation among the International Relations scholars became a common practice in response to these seemingly structural shifts. Within this context, there has been a growing body of literature, which treats the Eastern Mediterranean as a distinct geo-political region and aims to understand the dynamics of the regionalization process (Proedrou 2012; Evaghorou, 2018; Tziarras, 2016; Tziarras, 2019; Rubid and Eiran, 2019; Demiryol, 2020). This study also treats the Eastern Mediterranean as a distinct region and tries to understand and explain how certain actors, particularly Turkey, have been isolated from the regional-institution building process, Eastern Mediterranean Gas Forum (EMGF), despite mutual material incentives for cooperation. It has been argued that conditioning effects of cognitive priors, redefinition of initial causal ideas, and outside ideas together with material interests over maritime jurisdiction areas within the context of changing domestic politics have shaped Turkey's isolation in regionalization process.

Even though the Eastern Mediterranean region has long been an area of interest for great power politics¹, it is only a recent phenomenon that the Eastern Mediterranean has started to gain significance because of the regional dynamics stemming from the relations of the countries who constitute the region. Recent natural gas discoveries in the offshore fields of the Cyprus Island, Israel, and Egypt and related political, economic

¹ See Chapter 2.

and legal disputes between adjacent states have been major developments that triggered the regionalization process among several coastal countries. Contrary to liberal expectations that considered offshore natural gas discoveries as the catalyst for peace, these discoveries have intensified some of the existing rivalries between: Turkey-Southern Cypriot Greek Administration (SCGA)², Turkey-Greece, Turkey-Israel, Turkey-Egypt, Israel-Palestine, and Israel-Lebanon (Gurel and Le Cornu, 2014; Stergiou, 2017). Moreover, the current regional-institution building (EMGF) process led by the Egypt, Cyprus, Greece, and Israel reflects the geopolitical dynamics in the region rather than economic rationale for cooperation.

Therefore, this study considers two plausible theoretical perspectives on regionalism, realism and constructivism, to understand and explain the process that paved the way for Turkey's isolation from the regionalization process in the Eastern Mediterranean. First theoretical perspective I consider is the realist application of balance of power theory to regional level³, in which regional subsystems are viewed as an extension of larger international system that is characterized by anarchy and state preferences are determined according to security considerations. (Paul, 2011). Balance of power theorists argue that stronger states have the incentive to demonstrate aggression or use force against their weaker opponents to achieve hegemonic status. This also applies to regional level analysis, in which stronger regional states tend to achieve regional hegemony through domination of weaker states. In turn, weaker states cooperate over security concerns and balance against the rising hegemon (Levy, 2004). Within this context, source of regional order or cooperation (through alliances) is the external and

² I will use Southern Cypriot Greek Administration (SCGA) in this study instead of 'Cyprus' as this thesis will be published in Turkey and official Turkish position does not recognize the Greek Cypriots as the legitimate ruler of the island as a whole. See. Republic of Turkey Ministry of Foreign Affairs. (2020). CYPRUS ISSUE (Summary). <http://www.mfa.gov.tr/cyprus-issue-summary.en.mfa>

³ See Chapter 2.2.1 for details.

internal balancing strategies against rising hegemons. Accordingly, first hypothesis (H1) this study considers as a plausible explanation for Turkey's exclusion from the regionalization process in the Eastern Mediterranean is based on regional application of balance of power theory:

H1: Turkey's path to regional hegemony by gaining control over offshore energy reserves in the region has altered the littoral state's threat perception and led them to balance against Turkey.

Second theoretical perspective considered in this study to understand and explain the emergence of the regional order (EMGF) and Turkey's isolation of the process stems from the regional application of constructivist international relations theory.

Constructivist theorists emphasize the role of social mechanisms such as normative power, cognitive priors, shared ideas, and common political culture as the facilitator of regional order or cooperation (Archarya, 2004; Adler and Crawford, 2007; Archarya, 2011). Hence, lack of certain shared values with certain countries or existence of certain historical cognitive priors or about the current ruling political agency in some countries might be utilized to understand and explain the isolation of certain actors from the regionalization process. Therefore, the second hypothesis (H2) this study considers is the following one:

H2: The EMGF emerged as participant states' construction of a regionalization process in which ideas have been institutionalized through their cognitive priors about Turkey and its current political leadership and in response to outsiders' norms and material interests.

To this date, the study of the politics of the hydrocarbon resources of the Eastern Mediterranean region has been dominated by the realism-liberalism dichotomy. There

has been a growing number of studies since the first large offshore natural gas discoveries in Israel in 2010, which have questioned whether natural resources can facilitate regional cooperation particularly between Turkey, Israel and the SCGA (Bryza, 2013; Gürel and Le Cornu, 2014, Andoura and Koranyi, 2014; Grigoriadis, 2014; İşeri and Andrikopoulos 2014, Leigh, 2014; Giannakopoulos, 2016; Shaffer, 2016; Winrow, 2016) or not. These studies have emphasized the mutual economic incentives for developing common energy resources and market in the region. On the other hand, realist studies highlighted the security concerns as the main determinant of the state preferences in the region. Accordingly, the increasing instances of conflict in the region stems from either changing balance of power/threat dynamics (Tanchtum, 2015; Ozertem, 2016; Tziarras, 2016; Tziarras, 2018; Tzimitras, 2019; Demiryol, 2019) or decreasing American hegemony in the region (Ediger et al., 2012; Ulusoy, 2020).

The previous literature on the politics of the hydrocarbon resources in the region have neglected the role of ideational forces that seems to be part of the regionalization process in the Eastern Mediterranean. However, non-cooperative behavior of Greece and the SCGA between 2003 and 2016, when Turkey can hardly be considered as a threat to stability in the region cannot be sufficiently explained by the dynamics of regional balance of power or threat. Similarly, the failure of Turkish-Israeli reconciliation attempts in 2016 in light of severe diplomatic crisis between two countries in 2008 and 2010 cannot be adequately explained in response to changing materially driven power dynamics in the region. There is a clear need for further explanation of dynamics of the regionalization process in the region. Therefore, this research debouches as one of the first studies that underlines constructivist IR theory as a plausible explanation for the dynamics of regionalization process, which leads to Turkey's isolation in the Eastern Mediterranean.

This study is divided into four main chapters followed by a conclusion. This introduction chapter presents the research question and contextualizes the research design and methodology. The second chapter discusses the different theoretical approaches in international relations theory with regard to regionalization process in the Eastern Mediterranean. The third chapter reviews the development of the Eastern Mediterranean as a region and explains the political, economic and legal challenges related to discovery offshore hydrocarbon reserves with an emphasis on Turkey's preferences, legal position and historical relations with the coastal countries in the region. The fourth chapter examines the findings through a framing analysis of the collected data to explain the isolation of the Turkey from the regionalization process in the Eastern Mediterranean.

1.1 Research Design and Methodology

The adjacent states in the region pursue opposing foreign energy policies. This difference is particularly evident in the regional policies of EMGF member countries (Greece, the SCGA, Israel, and Egypt) and Turkey. Therefore, I examine the regional policymaking and state preferences in the Eastern Mediterranean mainly to understand and explain the process that led to Turkey's isolation from the regional-institution building process in the region. A framing analysis is used for Turkey (2003-onward), Greece (2010-onward), and the SCGA (2010-onward). Moreover, Israeli discourse (2010- onward) alongside with the EU and the U.S positions toward Turkey in the Eastern Mediterranean are also considered. There are number of reasons for my case and period selection to conduct framing analysis. First, these three countries forge the backbone of the dispute over the jurisdiction for maritime borders and related conflict over exploration of offshore energy resources in the region. Moreover, Greece and the SCGA have been the main drivers of regionalization process that isolates Turkey in the

region. Second, a framing analysis for the Israel has not been used in this study simply because Turkey has not been adequately mentioned in related Israeli MFA Press Room sources and Prime Minister's Office database in the context of Eastern Mediterranean due to Turkish-Israeli reconciliation attempts that continued until 2017. However, an official Israeli discourse has been examined through policy elite's major statements in the process. Third, despite being one of the core actors in the region especially after 2015, Egypt has also not been included in the framing tables due to lack of available English translated official sources. However, Egypt's role in the region and its rivalry with Turkey is briefly described in Chapter 3.

Even though the frame concept has originated in the cognitive sciences, it has by now gained a significant place among the both international and domestic level social science analysis (Goffman, 1974; Finnemore and Sikkink, 1998; Van der Veen, 2011). Various studies on frames has argued that people's conception of issues, particularly policy elite's conception, or how they frame the issue in their heads can have a significant impact on their respective policy choices. In other words, 'frame' concept has established that policy elite's framing of an issue and its reflection in the related official documents and speeches can have a profound impact on their attitudes and policy choices (Chong and Druckman, 2007).

These frames can be influenced by multiple considerations ranging from personal level thoughts (perspectives, beliefs, values, etc.) to national discourses. In its most straightforward explanation, frames are data interpretation units that helps to specify, classify, and prioritize certain sets of policy goals and interests (Chong and Druckman, 2007). A common problem with qualitative studies, in particular discourse analysis, is lack of 'systemic procedure' for obtaining and assessing data. It is almost possible to find certain quotations from policy elite in support of the selected argument. However, it

is difficult to prove that statement is representative of policy elite's beliefs. Thus, using certain frames to categorize the relevant policy documents over a long period of time (official statements, policy elite's speeches, etc.) helps to overcome/diminish this problem to a certain extent and enable researchers to more easily observe the patterns and shifts in the discourse (Van de Graaf, 2011, p. 34).

The study aims to make a novel contribution to the literature on regionalization and foreign policy analysis by using 'frames' as the data analysis units to identify how regional cooperation or conflict emerges and how certain actors are being isolated from the regionalization process. To that end, I generated five frames, security-conflictual, security-cooperative, economic interest-conflictual, economic interest-cooperative and socio-cultural frame, to identify policy choices through the examination of statements and speeches by the policy elite in the coastal countries of Eastern Mediterranean. These frames are based on realist and constructivist accounts of international relations theory on regionalization (See Chapter 2). Particularly Acharya's (2011) arguments on the emergence of regional order were helpful in generating these frames. First, statements and speeches that approach the Eastern Mediterranean from conflicting sovereign rights, distorting stability and security perspectives are coded under the security-conflictual frame. Second, speeches and statements that emphasize the common role of Turkey, Greece, Cyprus and other coastal states for the stability and security in the region are coded under security-cooperative frame. Third, speeches and statements that emphasize the conflicting preferences in development of hydrocarbon reserves between Turkey and EMGF bloc are coded under economic interest-conflictual frame. Fourth, statements and speeches that emphasize the role of cooperation for the prosperity in the region are coded under economic interest-cooperative frame. Finally, statements and speeches that

are referring to ethnic affinity, shared values and norms or lack of them are coded under the socio-cultural frame.

A total number of 134 statements by Turkish policy elite (President, Minister of Foreign Affairs, MFA spokesperson, Presidency spokesperson, Energy and Natural Resources Minister, National Security Council declarations) are examined from 2003 to 2020.

These statements exclusively refer to political, economic, and legal issues regarding the development of hydrocarbon resources or delimitation of maritime jurisdiction areas in the Eastern Mediterranean. Official Turkish Presidency Achieves and Ministry of

Foreign Affairs archives are used to formulate the dataset for the Turkish case. A total number of 75 statements regarding Turkey in the Eastern Mediterranean by Greek policy elite from 2010 to 2020 is also investigated. These statements are acquired from the official Greek Ministry of Foreign Affairs Archives (English). Similarly, a total number of 77 statements referring to Turkey in the Eastern Mediterranean by the Greek Cypriot policy elite from 2010 to 2020 is analyzed by using the PIO Achieves⁴. These relevant speeches are coded so that I created my database of frame occurrences for Turkey (2003-2020), Greece (2010-2020), the SCGA (2010-2020) policy discourses.

Arguments referring to cooperative and conflictual issues are considered according to frame occurrences as security concerns, economic interest and socio-cultural references in the selected actor's policy discourse.

Lastly, through process tracing, I examine how Turkey is isolated from the regionalization process through the formation EMGF. Process tracing helps me to infer the state preferences in the Eastern Mediterranean region by looking at the earlier rhetoric and actions of the coastal states and use these to explain subsequent policy

⁴ PIO is an abbreviation for Press and Information Office, which includes all of the official statements, speeches and press releases of the Southern Cypriot Greek Administration.

behavior that led to Turkey's isolation from EMGF (Bennett and Checkel, 2015).

Moreover, process tracing helps me to build a constitutive link between current Turkish political leadership's worldview, Turkey's historical relations with the coastal states, and its approach to the Eastern Mediterranean region (Mahoney, 2012).



CHAPTER 2

THEORATICAL FRAMEWORK

During the past few decades, regional transformation has become a major topic of research among the scholars of International Relations discipline. Particularly the 21st century has witnessed important geo-political changes in the post- Cold War order. The structure of the international system has changed from a bipolar to multipolar one (Walt, 1985). Western Europe has been transformed into pluralistic security communities alongside with efforts of security community building at the regional level in Southeast Asia, Latin America and the Middle East (Paul, 2011). This shift in the international system, the transition from global to regional level, has also given middle powers and relatively smaller states the opportunity to exert influence over particular regions. Moreover, since post-Cold War order has been relatively less characterized by global scale super power rivalry, states found a chance to securitize and de-securitize their policies according to region specific dynamics (Frazier and Ingersoll, 2010). Emerging powers have started to take more proactive stances in regional foreign policy making to acquire regional hegemony. Different states have based their policies on different principles in search for regional hegemony. For example, while Turkey utilized liberal principles in its search for regional influence, Russia appealed to more coercive strategies in its regional foreign policy (Kostem, 2018).

However, what is more dazzling is the failure of many regions to develop a cooperative framework and transform into peaceful security communities following the end of Cold War despite the initial attempts for cooperation. Paul (2011) highlights the importance of understanding when and how a region transforms into cooperative or conflictual order to develop successful policy initiatives. This is especially crucial for regions,

which are characterized by enduring rivalries that can influence the larger international system. Understanding why these regions remain conflictual despite the diplomatic initiatives both from within and outside the region is one of the most important questions that I seek to answer. Three major schools of International Relations Theories- realism, liberalism, and constructivism- have so far provided useful insights that can be utilized for the study of particular regions. Realism focused on power distribution dynamics within and outside the regions; liberalism put emphasis on the expected economic gain to foster regional cooperation; constructivism accentuated ideational mechanisms such as ideas, shared value systems and norms, diplomatic practices, etc. for regional cooperation. However, before going any further with regional-level analysis of different theoretical schools, it is particularly useful to understand what competing definitions of regions across different schools of IR are.

2.1 What are regions and regionalization?

Defining what regions are has been a challenging phenomenon in International Relations discipline. There are different perspectives in defining what a region actually is. While the first group primarily emphasizes the geographical contiguity and material factors as the main variables (realism in IR theory), second group focuses more on the ideational factors such as shared cultures, values and norms while identifying regions (constructivism in IR theory). Third group have mainly emphasized the importance of economic interdependence alongside with regime type and institutional structure while defining regions (liberalism in IR theory).

A prominent liberal scholar, Joseph Nye (1968) has defined international region “as a limited number of states linked by a geographical relationship and by a degree of mutual interdependence” and regionalism as “the formation of interstate associations or groupings on the basis of regions” (Nye, 1968, p. vi-vii). However, this type of

definitions have hindered the study of regions to a material and state-centric sphere. On the other hand, scholars such as Peter Katzenstein (2005) emphasized the ideational elements while defining the regions. Accordingly, regions were not seen as merely geographic constraints but results of changing political practices with distinct institutional structures. Moreover, some scholars with more eclectic approaches have identified Regional Security Complexes in which securitization and de-securitization processes of states are heavily dependent on each other, and their security concerns cannot be analyzed or resolved without each other (Buzan, 2003; Buzan and Waever, 2003).

Given the definitional ambiguity on regions and regionalism, T. V. Paul (2011) has proposed a more inclusive definition, in which both material and ideational approaches could be utilized. Accordingly, regions are defined as “clusters of states that are proximate to each other and are interconnected in spatial, cultural and ideational terms in a significant and distinguishable manner” (Paul, 2011, p. 4). This definition also makes it possible to identify sub-regions within the broader regions. Eastern Mediterranean basin could be identified as a sub-region of broader Mediterranean and Middle East region. Since this study seeks to apply both realist and constructivist arguments to understand and explain Turkey’s isolation from the regionalization process in the Eastern Mediterranean, Paul’s (2011) definition is useful to seek a plausible answer for my research question.

Within the scope of Paul (2011)’s definition, Eastern Mediterranean could be identified as a distinct region, in which states interact on the basis of economic interdependence, shares a common historical background, and have security implications with each other. Even though one might argue that the recent boom in both academic and policy literature about the Eastern Mediterranean as a distinct region emerged simultaneously

with the discovery of hydrocarbon reserves, the region's history as a broader region goes back to Roman and Ottoman eras. Historians have argued that the Mediterranean (including the eastern basin) was both economically and politically unified region for significant periods. Yet after the dissolution of Ottoman Empire (last hegemon of the region) to number of distinct national states with different security concerns, the region had fragmented (Abulafia, 2011, p.73). Moreover, great power rivalry on the region during the 20th century and region's status as a gateway to the Middle East region has further deteriorated the prospects of regional cooperation (Tziarras, 2018). However, decreasing hegemonic influence over the region alongside with the discovery of new energy sources and increased interaction among the states made it imperative to study Eastern Mediterranean as a distinct region with its own regional dynamics. Remaining part of this chapter reviews the three big schools of International Relations Theory for the study of regional cooperation while considering the Eastern Mediterranean politics.

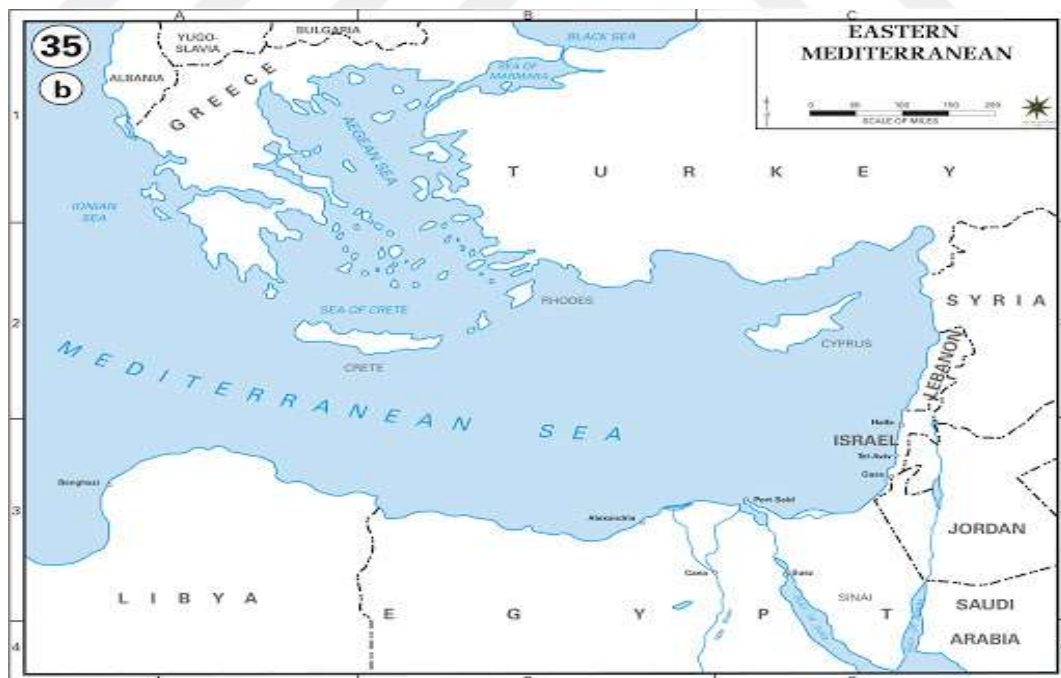


Figure 1: Map of the Eastern Mediterranean region. Source: Retrieved from Emerson Kent Achieve, 2020

2.2 Regionalism in International Relations Theories

2.2.1 Realism and regionalism

Various forms of realist theories- classical, structural and neo-classical- provide insights for the study of regionalism. Realism provides plethora of literature on both international and regional order and puts emphasis on the anarchic nature of the international system. Thus, positional differences between states matter. In other words, states' status are determined according to relative possessions of power within the international system (Özdemir, 2015).

Regional subsystems are viewed as an extension of larger international system, in which anarchy is the main determinant of state behavior. Thus, source of regional order depends on balance of power (Mastanduno, 1999). Accordingly, neo-realist theories tend to explain the formation of regions with an outside-in approach. Given the anarchical features of the international structure, openings or disequilibrium in power relations can lead to co-operation through alliance formation or conflict through geopolitical reasons. On the contrary, if the equilibrium in the power balance between major powers and leading states of the region is achieved, no conflict is likely to occur in the region (Söderbaum, 2011). According to this argument, while bipolarity at the international level enhances the regional stability, multipolarity leads to disorder (Waltz, 1979).

There are two fundamentally different realist approaches that can be applied to formation of regions and explaining the conditions for regional peace (co-operation) or conflict. First one is balance of power theory, which argues that two states or groups of states will not fight with each other as long as their power capabilities remain in equilibrium. They argue that stronger states have the incentive to demonstrate aggression to dominate their weaker opponents and strengthen their hegemonic status

(Paul, 2011). Yet, hegemony is perceived as a threat by other states particularly in multi-polar orders. Hence, it causes other states to engage in balancing policy against a rising power or hegemon (Levy, 2004). In other words, weaker states fearing from aggression tend to form alliances to counter-balance the threats from rising hegemonic actors (Pape, 2005). These actors create new social/power structures to advance their particular sets of interests, which are reflected in the relative possessions of power. Yet, over time, the interests of the actors might be shifting because of economic, technological, and other developments. Hence, some actors that aims to be the new dominant members start to pursue balancing strategies (Gilpin, 1981).

Balancing against a rising power can be accomplished either through internal (increasing domestic power capacity by investing in domestic resources) or external balancing (forming alliances). States do not only balance only in terms security based alliances and arms race but economic balancing (trading with allies, domestic economic growth) also plays a vital role. In fact, since the early 19th century, economic growth and national unification strategies have altered the distribution of power among states more than traditional balancing through alliance formation (Lemke, 2004).

However, balancing might not always be preferable for states. For weak states, balancing makes rarely sense since they are not able to provide enough power for effective balancing. Instead, they choose to bandwagon with the greater powers.

However, this also results with loss of their maneuver capacity. There are also two other policy options for greater power against a potential rising power. The first one is buck-passing whereby a great power chooses not to balance, when it anticipates that other states will balance to deter the newly emerging power from obtaining hegemonic power. The second one is appeasement. Great powers may choose to give concessions to ascending power to fulfill their aspirations for dominance (Brawl, 2004).

The logic of balancing can be expected to work, even though when it is applied in restricted domains such as regions. Yet, in some regions scholars found contradictory evidence. For example, Wohlforth (2004) has demonstrated that balance of power theory in Central Eurasia yields very weak results. He argued that hegemonic Russian power in the Central Eurasia is either not primary concern of states in the region or they are not willing to face the economic and political consequences of balancing against Russia. Moreover, energy dependency to Russia in the region heavily affects the strategic behavior of other states in the region and makes it very difficult to balance.

Second variant of realism is hegemonic stability theory (HST). Contrary to balance of power theory, HST argues that order can be achieved only through the presence of hegemonic actor, which has the power to impose peace. Underlying assumption in this approach is that states will only attempt to change the system if the expected benefits outweighs the expected costs (Gilpin, 1981). Thus, powerful states will act as a stabilizer due to high cost associated with acting against them. Contrary to balance of power theorists' assumptions, hegemonic stability theorists believe that if two states acquire almost the same amount of power relative to each other, both sides can foresee a victory and they will be more prone to engage in aggressive military action. Hence, preponderance of overwhelming status quo power is a necessary condition for stability; however, "even when major powers do not obtain preponderance, they may still intervene episodically or regularly in the affairs of a region" (Paul, 2011, p.9).

Moreover, Webb and Krasner (1989) and Snidal (1985) have studied the HST from a political economy perspective and argued that hegemonic distribution of power among states is the most conducive way for the establishment of an open and co-operative international economic system that fosters trade and enhances the world economic performance. However, empirical findings suggested that even though the U.S

hegemonic power is declining, world economy has performed relatively too well since mid-1970s despite disruptions at times (Webb and Krasner, 1989).

Hegemonic stability theory has been used also for explaining the emergence of regions and regional co-operation. To put it differently, scholars have argued that regional co-operation can materialize only in the presence of powerful states (hegemon) that are either endogenous or exogenous to the region, and are capable of acting as “regional paymasters, easing the distributional tensions and smoothing the path of integration” (Mattli, 1999, p.56). Especially the role played by United States as a hegemonic power during the creation of European Union (EU) and Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) have been used as an example to support to hegemonic stability theory’s application to regional subsystems. Accordingly, within the context of Cold War rivalry, relative stability provided by the U.S security umbrella and American presence in the Asian waters have arguably contributed to emergence of regional institutionalization (Paul, 2011). Conversely, lack of successful regionalism in Middle East and Asia has been attributed to the absence of external or regional hegemon. Moreover, presence of regional hegemonic power is not sufficient to initiate regionalism; these states must demonstrate will to act as hegemons. These regional powers facilitate regionalism with an objective of fulfilling their geo-political and economic aims such as security concerns, access to new markets, energy sources, cheap labor, etc. (Destradi, 2010; Börzel, 2016). For example Brazil, India and South Africa has demonstrated more ambivalent attitude towards regional institution building in their respective regions (Börzel, 2016).

In addition to applications of power balance of power theory and hegemonic stability theory on regional level, David Copeland (2011) has revisited one of the structural

realist theories (dynamic differentials theory⁵) to show how great power politics and regional power dynamics interact and affect the overall stability of the regional subsystem. His approach relies on the situations where extra systemic actors to regional disputes are not expected to intervene directly but through economic and military aid. Thus, regional version of DDT, similar to HST, expects that great powers that are supporting the dominant state within the region would help to avoid conflict in the region. U.S support to Saudi Arabia against declining Iraq is an example of this logic (Copeland, 2011).

Overall, realist explanations for the study of regionalism and regional transformation appear to have a limited scope especially in particular regional contexts with very different endogenous dynamics. Yet, particularly the ‘balance of power theory’ and its applications on ‘regional subsystems’ might has the potential to explain the foreign policy behaviors of certain states such as Israel, Greece, Egypt, and the Southern Cypriot Greek Administration (SCGA) in the Eastern Mediterranean region.

Accordingly, some scholars have argued that these countries have started to ‘form quasi alliances’ (Tziarras, 2016) or alignments to balance against Turkey in the region (Tziarras, 2018; Demiryol, 2019). In this context, the source of emerging regional order in the Eastern Mediterranean ⁶ can be explained through balancing acts, mainly alliance formation and internal balancing through naval reinforcements (Tanhcum, 2015; Rubin and Eiran; 2018), of certain states such as Israel, Egypt, Greece and SGCA, against Turkey.

⁵ “A structural realist theory designed to explain major wars at the level of the global great power system, can also be used effectively, with some qualifications, at the level of regional subsystems” see (Copeland, 2011, p. 49)

⁶ See, Chapter 3.6.3: Emergence of formal international institution in the region, Eastern Mediterranean Gas Forum (EMGF), in which Turkey, Syria and Lebanon are excluded.

This study tries to understand and explain how some countries, particularly Turkey, are excluded from the regionalism process in the Eastern Mediterranean. I have two competing arguments, which are based on either Turkey's intention to dominate over the offshore energy fields or ideational factors shaping states' practices, such as lack of certain diplomatic practices, shared values or security cultures. I apply these arguments to the case of Turkey's exclusion from the emerging regionalism process led to its exclusion from the emerging regionalism process, namely the emergence of Eastern Mediterranean Gas Forum (EMGF). Accordingly, I have the following realist hypothesis 1 (H1):

H1: Turkey's path to regional hegemony by gaining control over offshore energy reserves in the region has altered the littoral state's threat perception and led them to balance against Turkey.

Nevertheless, the Eastern Mediterranean region has a very complex structure, in which material considerations (expected economic benefits from offshore energy reserves), security concerns (over demarcation of maritime borders), and ideational factors (cultural values, ethnic ties, diplomatic practices, etc.) seem to shape the policy makers preferences. Thus, I also consider a competing argument that emphasizes ideational mechanisms influencing the regionalism process rather than materially driven balancing acts in the realist approach to establish a regional order or the emergence of in the Eastern Mediterranean.

2.2.2 Liberalism and regionalism

Contrary to realism's balance of power and hegemonic stability approaches, liberal perspective highlights the role of economic links between states, regime types, and institutions for the study of regional co-operation or conflict. The so-called Kantian

tripod consisting of democracy, economic interdependence, and international law and organizations formulates the foundations for peace and order (Barnett et al., 1998).

Driving their logic from liberal ideas, Liberalist scholars believe that if all of the three institutions were fulfilled, formation of regional security communities would become possible (Paul, 2011).

However, there has been a long tradition of skepticism about the liberal arguments about increased economic interdependence and trade leading to peace (regional or worldwide). Realists understood interdependence as a zero-sum game, in which interdependence aggravates the likelihood of conflict by making states more vulnerable. Marxists have argued that, contrary to what liberals suggested, interdependence within the global capitalism is highly asymmetric and exploitative. Thus, it will inevitably produce conflict. Nevertheless, liberal thought within the study of international political economy (IPE) have yielded important insights for explaining the emergence of international and regional-cooperation. Accordingly, liberal perspectives consider the material, political, and ideational gains states expect to get from the increased commercial links with each other as the main drivers of regionalism. These gains include more foreign direct investment, reduced transaction costs, economies of scale, technology transfer, more power in international institutions, etc. (Börzel, 2016).

Liberals have argued that trade among countries results in welfare gain and conflict hampers this gain through tariffs, quotas and other means. Thus, countries with significant trade relations would engage in less conflict due to welfare losses associated with trade. Moreover, type of traded commodity also matters. If countries are trading strategic commodities such as oil, any disruption in this trade due to conflict would create significant losses for the economy (Polachek, 1980; Hegre et al., 2010). Most of

the liberal approaches have analyzed the effects of commercial links and co-operation from dyadic perspective. Owen (2011) argues that, just as realist perspectives has to be adjusted when we go down from international system to regional order, liberal perspective has to be modified when we go up from dyads to regions. Accordingly, one must treat regions not as constructs of interdependence but exogenous to be able to study how economic links cause regional co-operation or peace. Theoretically, region wide trade agreements would also work effectively to promote co-operation and peace as well. However, while international trade causes peace argument has wide empirical support, much empirical work is still needed for unveiling the links on regional trade and co-operation.

As the second leg of Kantian tripod, relationship between regime type and regional integration has also been highlighted. Whether certain regime types have fostering or hindering effect on regional co-operation and integration agreements (RIAs) is discussed. Domestic institutions play a pivotal role for states preferences for the type of regional integration they choose to participate. Particularly country's regime type, number of institutional veto player's and homogeneity of preferences among these veto players are crucial in determining the conditions in which states choose to engage in regional co-operation. Even though the democracies are more inclined to engage in regional economic integration, they also diverge based on number of veto players. As number of veto players increases and their preferences diverge, likelihood of states engagement in institutionalized regional economic co-operation decreases dramatically (Mansfield et al., 2008)

Third leg of Kantian tripod (rule of law) has been emphasized more by neo-liberal institutionalism, which is the most similar strand of liberalism to realism. It is both rationalist and state centered as realist approaches. It also assumes that international

system is characterized by anarchy. Yet, Keohane (1984) emphasized the importance of institutions to capture the joint gain by reducing uncertainty and lifting the shadow of future. Regional institutions are particularly important because problems among states intensifies at the regional level. Geographic proximity within the regions leads to increased interactions between states, thus, more conflict of interests. To put it differently, contiguity is one of the most important sources of interactions among states; geographically contiguous states are more likely to engage in conflict (Vasquez, 1995). However, contiguity- conflict relationship is paradoxical to contiguity- trade relationship. Given the fact that geographical proximity increases the amount of trade between countries and economic links between countries decreases the likelihood of conflict. J. Robst et al. (2007) specifically focused on this paradox. They have concluded that while trade mitigates the already existing incentives for conflicts in closer countries, it has a greater positive effect on distant countries. Moreover, geographically closer states have already have an incentive to co-operate with each other.

Even though the expected material gain from energy co-operation (offshore natural gas fields) in the Eastern Mediterranean region is very high to promote institutional co-operation on the extraction and monetization of energy resources, no inclusive framework has been developed yet. Liberal hypothesis expects that the offshore energy resources and expected economic benefits from these resources will act as a trigger to foster regional co-operation in the Eastern Mediterranean. However, offshore natural gas discoveries have not led to inclusive regional cooperation so far. Instead, they have exacerbated the already existing conflicts particularly between: Turkey-Cyprus, Turkey-Israel, Turkey-Egypt, Israel-Palestine, Israel-Lebanon (Grigoriadis, 2014; Stergiou, 2017).

On the other hand, offshore energy discoveries in both Israeli and the SCGA's Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZs) have caused a cooperation in both military and energy sector between Israel and the SCGA in extension with Greece (Stergiou, 2015). Yet, rather than economic rationale, geopolitical developments in the region⁷ brought these countries together. The initial alignment between these countries has gained a more institutionalized form with the participation of Egypt, when Egyptian led initiatives resulted in the formation of the Eastern Mediterranean Gas Forum (EMGF) in 2019. Yet, the forum excludes almost half of the countries in the region, Turkey, Lebanon, Syria and Libya (Reuters, 2019). Thus, it reflects the current geopolitical dynamics and preexisting views in the region rather than being an attempt of regionalism on the basis of offshore energy wealth in the region (Macaron, 2019). It is clear that the energy wealth of the Eastern Mediterranean region has not led to co-operation among all coastal states in the region. Thus, the fundamental liberal argument on increasing commercial ties or economic potential for future investment and trade leading to co-operation. It has no explanation for particularly Turkey's isolation from the regionalization process in the Eastern Mediterranean given the existing and potentially high mutual economic benefits.

Within this framework, ideational perspectives that emphasize ideational and intersubjective factors such as shared value systems, diplomatic practices, and pre-existing ideas as the main drivers of regional co-operation, is my alternative argument for my research question.

2.2.3 Constructivism and regionalism

Contrary to realist and liberal approaches that grasps the regional-cooperation from a material interest perspective such as power and economic gain, constructivists put

⁷ See Chapter 3.

emphasis on the social mechanisms as the facilitator of regional co-operation such as normative power, shared identity and political culture (Adler and Crawford, 2007). However, role of shared identity, cultural similarity and, common values in the formation of regions have been emphasized by many long before the rise of constructivist approaches. Scholar have argued that successful regional integration necessitates some sense of community. Karl Deutsch (1957) and his associates argued that states which seeks peaceful resolution to conflict form security communities based on shared ideational factors. Compatibility of at least main values held by important actors is fundamental to formation of amalgamated security communities. William Thompson's survey work have also highlighted the role of shared perceptions of the regional sub-system as one of the most important attributes of regional integration alongside with geographic proximity and intensity of interactions (Thompson, 1973). At least some form cultural or ideological similarity is demonstrated as one of the conditions that are conducive to successful integration by non-constructivist approaches to regions (Russett, 1967; Haas, 1976).

However, none has given a constitutive significance to role of ideas. Ideas and shared perceptions only followed the material conditions that prompted regional integration. At best, they were taken as dependent variables and not treated as independent variables with causal significance prior to material conditions (Acharya, 2011). After these early studies, constructivists such as Adler and Barnett (1998) have also emphasized the role of common norms, values and meaning structures for the trust and regional identity building among actors. Further, Wendt (1999) have argued that order should not be understood as a mere function of material and structural conditions such as power distribution and economic gain, rather as the function of intersubjective ideas held by the agency. The same logic can be applied at the regional level, in which norms, ideas

and practices plays a crucial role in the formation, transformation and endurance of regions. It is important for a constructivist study to show that how prior beliefs about a region can act as the facilitator of the regional institutionalization and order.

For example, formation of the EU and the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN) are widely discussed from this perspective. Acharya (1998) has argued that regional co-operation could be facilitated by shared security culture and the ASEAN is an example of such formation. Parsons (2002; 2006) has argued that certain ideas that appeared in Western Europe after the Second World War and institutionalization of these ideas are at the center of European integration. But how certain ideas, norm and practices promote regional co-operation? What are the mechanisms of promoting regional cooperation through ideas, norms and practices? Or lack of them shape regionalization process? In short, social constructivism place its emphasis to two central questions on regional order and co-operation that are related to mechanisms of regionalization. To put it differently, it examines the ways in which ideas construct regions and the mechanisms of diffusion of these ideas and norms. While the first questions relates to how ideas matter, second one refers to which and whose ideas matter (Acharya, 2004).

Accordingly, Acharya (2011) puts a constructivist framework to understand and explain how regions are formed around different types of ideas: economic, political, security and, socio-cultural. While security communities, collective security co-operations, democracy building, free trade areas, custom unions are examples of economic, political, security oriented ideas, approaches like pan-Africanism are socio-cultural ideas or ideologies that can lead to formation of regions (Acharya, 2011). According to Acharya (2011), there are three ways that ideas shape regional orders. First one is cognitive priors can be the foundation of regional orders. Cognitive priors are simply

preexisting ideas of individuals and societies about the world. They have shown to have great impact on regional order making. Bolivar's ideas in Latin America, Monnet's in Western Europe, Nehru's in Asia have played important roles. The second one is conditioning effect in which initial ideas redefined and institutionalized. Diffusion of these ideas generally occur through regional-institution building. Diffusion of norms of the ASEAN to wider Asia-Pacific region can be an example of this. Third one is emulation of exogenous ideas. Locally produced ideas and preexisting beliefs serve as the lenses through which outside or international ideas are adapted. Figure II below shows how ideas affect regional order.

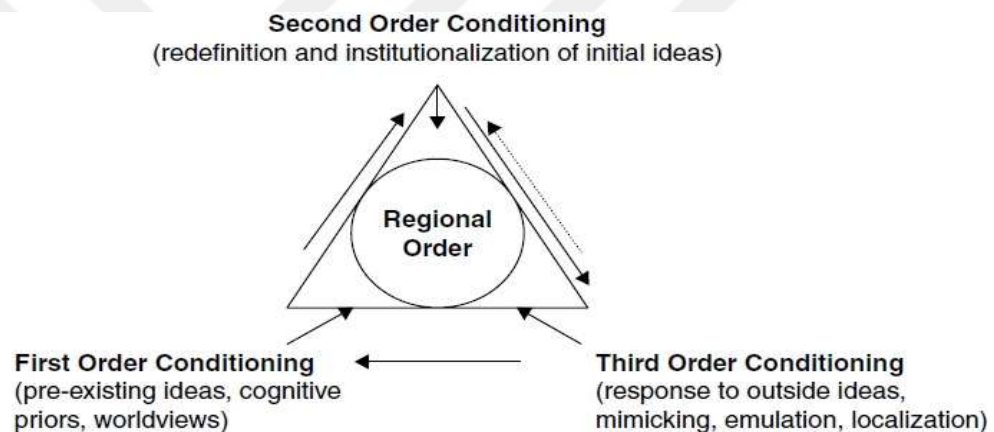


Figure 2: Ideas and regional orders (Acharya, 2011, p. 195)

Moreover, Acharya (2004, 2011) have demonstrated the relationship between power and norm diffusion. He argued that international ideas could penetrate into regional subsystems as well as the possibility of local ideas spreading and affecting the international structure. Figure III below shows the relationship between regional and international.

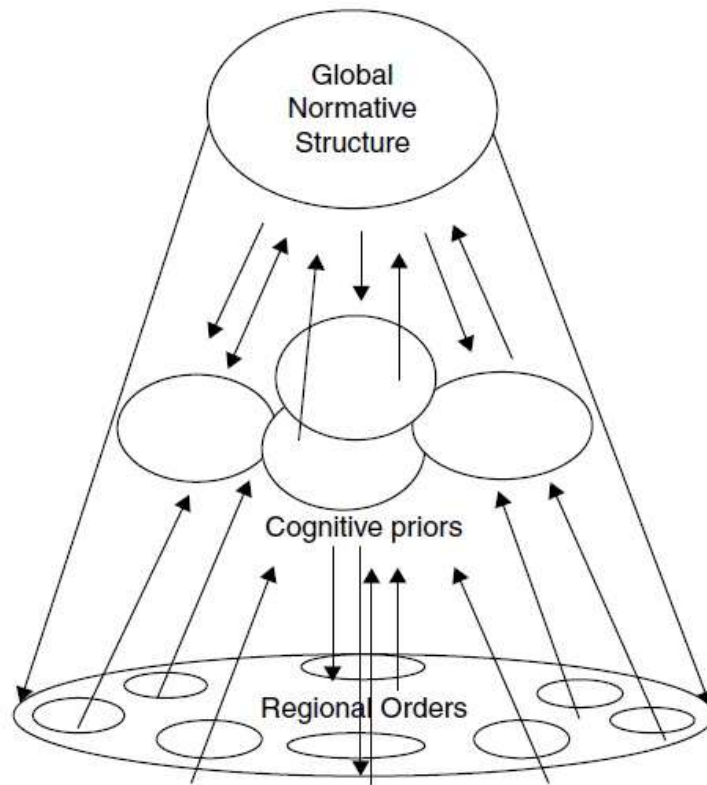


Figure 3: Localization and subsidiarity (Acharya, 2011, p. 202)

Lastly, non-rationalist epistemology is essential for understanding ideational perspectives. In some constructivist perspectives that are more reflectivist in their epistemology, regions are not considered as pre-givens. In other words, traditional explanations ‘treat regions simply as abstractions or as a priori spatial pre givens’, but instead they should be treated as a result of social processes that reflect and shape particular ideas about the world (Murphy, 1991, p.24). Regions should be treated as emergent and socially constituted phenomena. From this perspective, main duty of the scholarship on the regions is to understand the process in which regions come to existence and being consolidated, whereas, in liberal or realist perspectives, the aim is to understand and explain the interactions and form of actions within the pre-given regions (Hettne and Söderbaum, 2000). As a result, regions are not considered as natural places with specified material interests, but treated as dynamic settings for social integration in which reflective actors constantly construct regions. (Söderbaum, 2012).

Within this framework, as opposed to two big material schools of International Relations Theory, constructivism offers an alternative perspective to understand and explain the emergence of regional co-operation and order. The process of regionalization in the Eastern Mediterranean has not been an inclusive project despite the expected material gain from the participation of Turkey. Feasibility studies have confirmed that Turkish route offers one of the most commercially viable routings in the region particularly for the transportation Israeli and Cypriot natural gas reserves to the Europe. Moreover, Turkey's growing internal natural gas market is also one of the best destinations, which provide additional demand for the Eastern Mediterranean gas reserves (Bryza, 2013; Winrow; 2016; Ellinas, 2016). Yet, despite all these material benefits, Turkey was isolated, when the EMGF was formed. What this study investigates is why some states, particularly Turkey, have been left out from the regionalization process (EMGF) in the region. To understand and explain that, constructivist approach on regionalization offers a rich framework. Therefore, I adapt Acharya's (2011) framework to the Eastern Mediterranean region to develop my alternative argument:

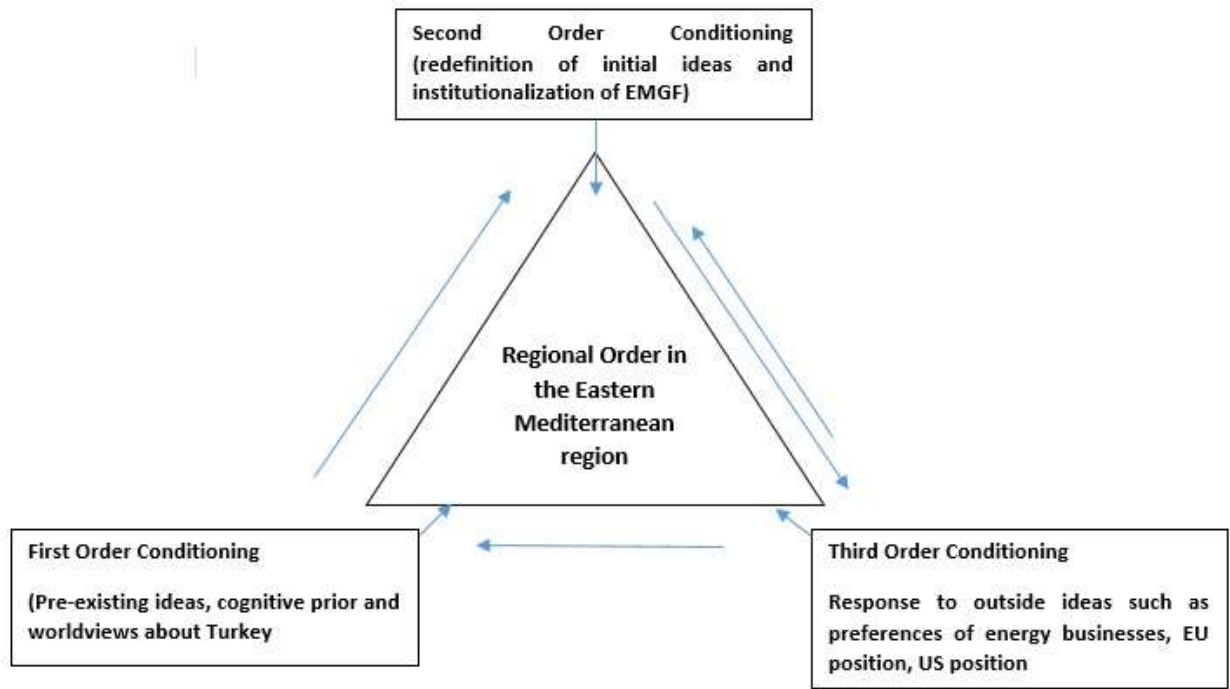


Figure 4: Ideas and Regional Order in the Eastern Mediterranean

First order conditioning (pre-existing ideas and cognitive priors) about Turkey has the potential to influence the second order conditioning (redefinition and institutionalization of initial ideas), in which EMGF was founded in 2019. Moreover, outside ideas such as the preferences of energy businesses, European Union and United States has the potential to affect the emergence of regional order as well as first and second order conditioners. Within this context, Turkey's foreign policy, on the basis of political Islam and regional activism, under the AKP government might have altered some of the countries' threat perceptions in the region, mainly Israel and Egypt, and contributed to Turkey's exclusion from the regionalization process. Moreover, enduring conflict based on ethnic/identity politics between the Turkey, Greece, and SCGA might also have influenced the dynamics of energy-based regionalization not in favor of Turkey in the Eastern Mediterranean. Accordingly, my second hypothesis (H2) is:

H2: The EMGF emerged as participant states' construction of a regionalization process in which ideas have been institutionalized through their cognitive priors about Turkey

and its current political leadership and in response to outsiders' norms and material interests.



CHAPTER 3

OVERVIEW OF THE POLITICS OF HYDROCARBON DEVELOPMENT IN THE EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN

3.1 The Eastern Mediterranean as a “region” in the historical context

Historically, Mediterranean Sea is among one of the world's t busiest waterways and it has wider systemic implications for different regions: Africa, Asia, and Europe. The eastern side of the sea has access to two strategic straits: Çanakkale (Dardanelles) and Suez Canal. Çanakkale connects the Mediterranean Sea, the Aegean Sea and the Black Sea. On the other hand, Suez Canal connects the Mediterranean Sea to the Red Sea. Moreover, almost fifteen percent of the total global shipping activity goes through the region that underlines the importance of the Mediterranean Sea for the formation of global transportation and commerce routes (Chysochou and Dalaklis, 2018). Thus, the area itself without the recent discoveries of hydrocarbon sources has been considered as a distinct region due to its geographical importance to maritime transportation and trade system.

Even though the Mediterranean (including its eastern part) region is currently very fragmented with a weak coordination and co-operation structure, historians have portrayed a both economically and politically coordinated geographical region during the Roman and Ottoman eras (Abulafia, 2011, p.571-537). However, following the WWI and with the dissolution of the last hegemon in the Eastern Mediterranean, Ottoman Empire, to a number of different nation states, region's unified structure has eroded. Many different nation states with their own maritime commerce and security agendas have emerged, which in turn hindered the potential for cooperation and coordination in the post-imperial era.

Using the term ‘Eastern Mediterranean’ to define a distinct geographical region is increasingly becoming common among the scholars of energy and regionalism. Yet the term’s history goes back to 19th and 20th century British Empire. Accordingly, British Empire archives cite the Eastern Mediterranean while referring to British activities over the wider region, particularly the Middle East. In 1910s, Britain has established the Eastern Mediterranean Special Intelligence Bureau (EMSIB) for its intelligence gathering activities in Syria, Cyprus and Turkey. The term also has been used interchangeably with the Middle East (Tziarras, 2018). More precisely, the term has been used to define the wider geo-strategic interests of hegemonic powers such as Britain and the United States particularly in the Middle East. For instance, the United States perceived the control over the Eastern Mediterranean as a key to deal with regional Soviet influence during the Cold War and terrorism problem in the Middle East (Indyk, 1987). That is to say, Eastern Mediterranean has not been emphasized as a distinct region but given a role within the broader strategic great power rivalry. In short, the term Eastern Mediterranean resonances very differently today compared to the 19th and 20th century.

However, following the end of the Cold War and decreasing great power involvement in the region, number of states such as Turkey, Israel, Egypt etc. found a chance to follow more independent economic and security policies over the Eastern Mediterranean region. Further, with the recent discoveries of hydrocarbon reserves, particularly natural gas, study of the Eastern Mediterranean as a distinct geo-political region seems to be re-constructed. Indeed, the region has become imperative for new/reoccurring rivalry with its own identity, stemming from the relations between countries who constitute it (Demiryol, 2019).

Within this framework, I use a geographical definition of the Eastern Mediterranean region that is commonly referred in the recent works on the hydrocarbon resources of the region. Accordingly, the Eastern Mediterranean by scholars and analysts is the area of 20 longitudinal degrees east of the Mediterranean shores including the littoral states of Israel, Turkey, Southern Cyprus Greek Administration (SCGA), Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC), Egypt, Lebanon, Syria, Greece and the Palestinian Gaza Strip.

This chapter aims to trace the political and economic developments in the region to put regionalization process in a historical context. To that end, I describe three main issues. First, I cover the development of hydrocarbon reserves and related challenges in the Eastern Mediterranean to demonstrate the expected material benefits from cooperation. The second part focuses on the re-intensification of the legal disputes over maritime borders following the development of hydrocarbon reserves. The third part briefly presents Turkey's other foreign policy disputes with littoral states that have offshore gas activities.

3.2 Natural Gas Discoveries in the Eastern Mediterranean

History of energy exploration activities in the Eastern Mediterranean region dates back to 1960s, when Egypt and Israel have started drilling the region in search of oil and natural gas reserves. With the developments in drilling technologies, Egypt have widened its exploration activities to the deep sea; and in 1990s, it started discovering many natural gas offshore fields in the region. These developments have led Israel to amplify its exploration activities. As a result, Israel carried out two sizeable discoveries in the west of Ashkelon region in June 1999 (Noa field) and February 2000 (Mari B field) (Karbuz and Baccarini, 2017).

3.2.1 Israel

A decade later than the first sizeable discovery, the American firm Noble Energy have made two major discoveries in Israeli national waters. In 2009 Tamar field, which contains approximately 280 billion cubic meters (bcm) natural gas has been discovered. A year later, a larger discovery, Leviathan field, which is estimated to contain around 532-bcm natural gas has been discovered by Noble Energy as well. The size of these discoveries are considerable since it can supply the present levels of Israel's gas demand for decades.

Yet, corresponding legal and political arrangements had to be completed for further development of the offshore fields. According to the Israeli constitution, natural resource exports were forbidden. Thus, intense domestic political and economic debates in Israel about whether to export natural gas or use it domestically has been considered for a long time. In 2013, after an inclusive political debate with the participation of the government, the Knesset, Supreme Court and the civil society, Israel has announced that up to 40 percent of its total reserves can be exported to foreign markets (Udasin, 2013). Nevertheless, due to political tensions and commercial considerations, no decision has been achieved about the type and routing of Israel's export strategy so far.

3.2.2 Southern Cyprus Greek Administration (SCGA)

The SCGA has conducted three international tenders for exploration licensing in the 13 exploration blocks. First licensing round was held on 15 February 2007, which covered total of eleven offshore blocks; however, it attracted less attention than anticipated. As a result, during the first licensing tender only one hydrocarbon exploration license was awarded to a relatively middle-sized American firm Noble Energy for block 12 on 24 October 2008 (Giamouridis, 2012). The SCGA proceeded with its second licensing round in February 2012. This round attracted more attention due to Noble Energy's

natural gas discovery in Block-12 (Aphrodite field) in 2011 as well as recent gas discoveries in Israeli territory. Fifteen companies showed interest and licenses were granted for block 2, 3 and 9 to ENI (Italy) and KOGAS (South Korea) consortium. For blocks 10 and 11, SCGA granted exploration licenses to TOTAL (France). The applications for the Third Hydrocarbon Exploration Licensing round was announced on 27 July 2016. Accordingly, ENI and TOTAL partnership were granted licenses in block 6, ENI was granted licenses in block 8, Exxon Mobil (U.S) and Qatar Petroleum partnership were granted licenses in block 10 (Ozgur, 2017).

Despite initial exploration and drilling activities on the Cyprus Island's continental shelf, no commercially sizeable discoveries have been made until September 2011, when Aphrodite field that is estimated to contain around 120 bcm, has been discovered by the Noble energy (Ratner, 2016). Then, seven years later than the first discovery in the Cyprus continental shelf, Italian ENI has announced that it discovered gas in block 6 (Calypso field) in 2018. A year later, in 2019, ExxonMobil and Qatar Petroleum partnership announced that they have discovered gas in block 10 (Glaucus field) (Kambas and Zawadzki, 2019).

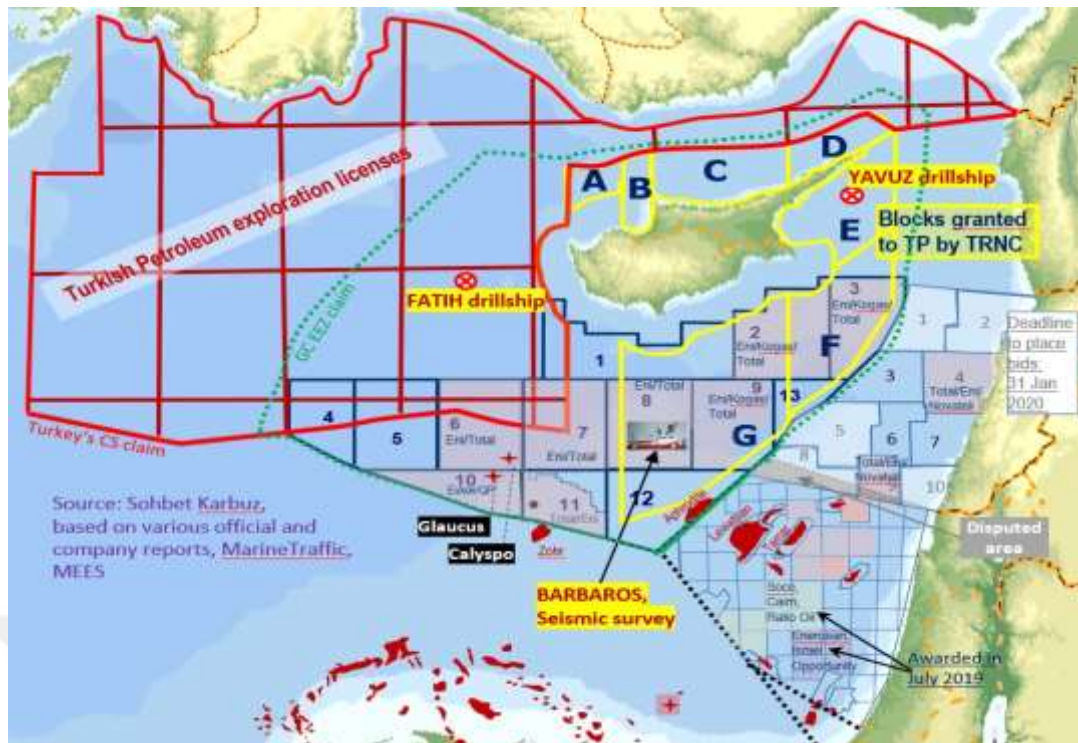


Figure 5: Exploration zones by firms in the Eastern Mediterranean. Source: Karbuz (2019). Retrieved from <https://twitter.com/sohbetkarbuz?lang=tr>

3.2.3 Egypt

August 30, 2015 was a turning point for the energy discoveries in the region. The Italian firm, ENI, discovered a giant energy field in the Egyptian waters, which is estimated to contain almost 850 bcm of natural gas. Karbuz (2015) argues that the discovery of Zohr field in Egypt was a major turning point in four aspects: First, it is the biggest discovery in the Eastern Mediterranean region. Second, its geological formation was different from other existing fields and played role in planning of upcoming exploration activities. Third, it shifted the geo-political balance in the region by boosting Egypt's role. Fourth, it led to increased exploration efforts in deep waters.

3.2.4 Lebanon and Syria

Other coastal states such as Lebanon have also tried to initiate exploration activities in the region; however, number of domestic and international developments hindered their potential for exploration and drilling activities in the Eastern Mediterranean. Lebanon

has opened up international tenders to grant exploration licenses in 2012, but political gridlock in Lebanon delayed the situation for five years. Not only the political crisis in Lebanese parliament but also the influx of Syrian refugees during the Syrian Civil War has prevented Lebanon from granting licenses for natural gas and oil exploration in its offshore blocks. (Ratner, 2016). In 2017, exploration licenses to Total, Eni and Novatek consortium have been granted in two blocks (Khraiche, 2017). Lebanese government also opened up its second international tender for five other blocks and final grants for winning firms are expected in April 2020 (OffshoreEnergyToday, 2019).

Syria has also announced international tenders for offshore natural gas exploration in 2011 but due to ongoing civil war and political crisis in the country, no development has been made. In 2013, Syrian Energy Ministry have announced a deal with Russian company, Soyuzneftegaz but no progress has been made so far (Karbuz, 2019).

3.2.5 Turkey

Turkey's hydrocarbon exploration activities in the region gained pace following the breakdown of 2014 peace talks between GSCA and TRNC. Turkey has deployed its seismic vessels, Oruç Reis and Barbaros Hayrettin Paşa, to carry out exploration activities in the region. In 2018, Turkey has also deployed naval forces to protect its seismic vessels following the Greek frigates harassment of Turkish research ship (DailySabah, 2018). Moreover, Turkey has been operating two drill ships, Fatih and Yavuz, in the offshore blocs granted by of the TRNC.⁸

Fatih started its drilling activities on 3 May 2019 in the western side of Cyprus Island within the Turkey's continental shelf. On the other hand, Yavuz has started its drilling

⁸ Turkey and the TRNC signed a continental shelf delimitation agreement on 21 September 2011. A drilling license to Turkish Petroleum Corporation was also issued by the TRNC on 22 September 2011.

operations on 7 July 2019 on the southern parts of the Karpaz peninsula (Gurcan, 2019). Turkey's offshore exploration activities in the region have so far resulted in opening up around 17 wells in its continental shelf. However, no commercially sizeable discovery has been made yet (Karbuz, 2019).

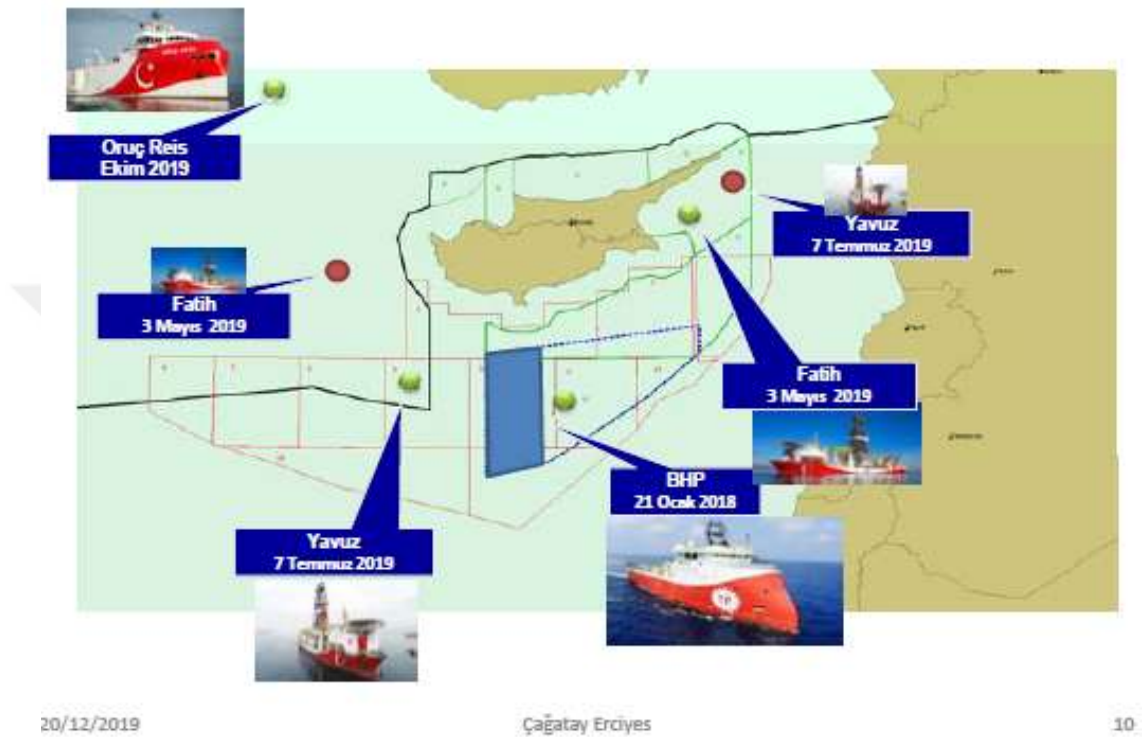


Figure 6: Turkey's drilling activities in the Eastern Mediterranean. Source: (Erciyes, 2019)

Nevertheless, Turkey has been determined to proceed with its exploration and drilling activities in the region. Turkey's Energy and Natural Resources Minister, Fatih Dönmez, announced in its speech at Turkey Energy and Natural Resources Summit that Turkey has bought the third drillship, Kanuni, and plans to conduct at least five offshore drillings in the Eastern Mediterranean and Black Sea in 2020 (AnadoluAgency, 2020).

Table 1: Major gas discoveries to date in the region by country and approximate reserve size

Discovery Date	Country	Field Name	Approximate reserve size (bcm)
1999	Israel/Palestine	Noa	1.2
2000	Israel	Mari B	30
2009	Israel	Tamar	280
2010	Israel	Leviathan	532
2011	Cyprus	Aphrodite	120
2012	Israel	Tannin	34
2013	Israel	Karish	50
2015	Egypt	Zohr	850
2018	Cyprus	Calypso	500
2019	Cyprus	Glaucus	140-220

Source: Author's own compilation from (Khadduri, 2012; Ratner, 2016; Karbuz, 2019)

Moreover, the region's energy potential is not limited to above-mentioned resources, according to geological study conducted in 2010 about the energy potential of the region in which; two big basins have been identified. First one is Levant Basin located mostly in offshore Israel, Gaza Strip, Southern Cyprus and Lebanon. The study estimated that almost 1.7 million barrels oil and 3.5 trillion cubic meters (tcm) natural gas potentially lies in the region. The second big resource area is called Nile Delta Basin, which is estimated to contain 1.7 million barrels oil and 6.3 trillion cubic meters natural gas (USGeologicalSurvey, 2010).

3.3 Potential and Planned Infrastructure Projects to Export the Natural Gas Resources from the East Mediterranean region

Commercial feasibility plays a key role for most of the energy companies before a final investment decision to start the construction of necessary infrastructure. There are three conditions that need to be satisfied for a firm to move ahead with the investment decision: (i) Sufficient volumes of natural gas; (ii) a profitable cost of extraction from the offshore fields; (iii) financial resources to build necessary transport infrastructure for

exporting natural gas from offshore fields either through LNG or FLNG terminals or pipelines, once conditions (i) and (ii) are satisfied.

Moreover, geopolitics and security concerns such as supplier reliability and political stability could prevent the realization of even financially viable projects (Ipek, 2019). Many natural gas export projects are shelved due to either commercial and/or political reasons in the Eastern Mediterranean. Accordingly, competing projects to transport natural gas resources from the region are described below.

3.3.1 The potential or planned pipelines:

The planned Eastern Mediterranean Pipeline project aims to transport gas to Europe via Cyprus, Crete and Greece to Italy. European Commission has listed the EastMedPipeline as a project of common interest (PCI). Thus, the project is entitled to some funding from Brussels. Project of common interests among other objectives has a major one, which is providing necessary information to producers and downstream gas market operators that could support the assessment of the preferred export routes. The European Commission has allocated £2 million funding for Pre-FEED (feasibility studies) of the EastMedPipeline (Commission, 2018). The pipeline is estimated to carry out 8-bcm to 10 bcm natural gas per year (Tagliapietra, 2017).

Despite the support of the EU, commercial viability of the project is still not clear. Routing of the project goes through deep waters and laying a pipeline in deep seas is both technically challenging and costly. According to some estimates, connection between Cyprus and Greece alone can cost up to 20 billion dollars (Gurel, et al., 2013). On the other hand, other estimates suggest that the project's cost will be around 6 billion euros. In fact, the project's developer IGI Poseidon, 'a joint venture consisting of Greek state-owned supplier Depa and Italian gas utility Edison', has not made the final

investment decision. The final investment decision will be announced within the next two years (Carpenter, 2020). No matter what has been calculated for the pipeline project, which has a quite wide range of estimated cost between 6 to 20 billion dollars, Greece, SCGA, and Israel continued to push for the project. Consequently, these countries have signed an agreement on January 2020 to construct a 2,000km long pipeline that is estimated to carry around 12bcm natural gas a year from offshore natural gas reserves between Israel and Cyprus to Greece, and then onto other European countries (Euronews, 2020).

Another project that used to be advocated by Turkey, Israel and particularly Turkish energy firms is Israel-Turkey Subsea Pipeline project, which connects Israeli offshore natural gas production to Turkey and via Turkey to European energy markets. Feasibility studies confirmed that the Turkish route offers the most economically convenient route for exporting both Israeli and Cyprus natural gas (Bryza, 2013). There are Turkish energy companies, such as Zorlu Energy and Turcas Energy Holding that lobbied to realize the Israel-Turkey pipeline project. Both have conducted meetings with the partners operating in the Leviathan offshore field to realize the project (Winrow, 2016).

However, there have been two major political obstacles in the way. First, even though Turkey and Israel are historically close allies, Turkish- Israeli relations have been in deteriorating phase since the Mavi Marmara incident on 31 May 2010, when Israeli commandos killed 10 Turkish activists carrying humanitarian aid on Mavi Marmara boat. The mission of the activists including some non-Turkish citizens was an attempt breach the blockade of Gaza (Uzer, 2013). Since 2010 despite several reconciliation attempts, Turkish-Israeli relations remained volatile.

Second, Israel-Turkey pipeline is planned to go through either Syrian or Greek Cypriot waters. Syria is not a realistic option due to ongoing civil war since 2011, it is virtually impossible to guarantee the pipelines security. On the other hand, the SCGA does not welcome the project due to its historical rivalry with Turkey. It is theoretically possible to build the subsea pipeline across Greek Cypriot's EEZ without the permission of Greek Cypriot government according to the articles 58 and 79 (2) of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), which implies that the coastal states does not have right to prevent other states from laying cables or pipelines in its EEZ. However, the article 79 (3) also states that routing of the pipeline is subject to coastal state's consent (UNCLOS, 1982). More importantly, Israel and Cyprus have developed a close political and economic alignment in the recent years and this might undermine the viability of the planned Israel-Turkey pipeline (Winrow, 2016).

3.3.2 Existing and potential LNG Terminals or FLNG projects

The Greek Cypriot Administration has been considering to build a Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) at Vasilikos in southern Cyprus. However, this project was shelved due to commercial considerations. The initial estimates of natural gas in Aphrodite field proven to be misrepresented because more drilling put the volume of potential natural gas reserves down below the initial estimated potential reserves. In short, the SCGA cancelled their initial plans to build a LNG plant at Vasilikos (Gureli and Le Cornu, 2014).

Israel has also considered building its own onshore or offshore LNG facility. Onshore pipeline option was rejected because of related security threats, as it would be the prime target of terrorist attacks. On the other hand, building an offshore unit remained a possibility but the project deemed not commercially viable due to its high cost (Grigoriadis, 2014).

An existing LNG terminal located in the Egypt has also been considered as an option to export the Leviathan gas. Unused gas liquefaction facilities at Egypt could provide an alternative cheap option to export Israeli gas from Leviathan field. Accordingly, Israeli gas can be pumped to south either through existing onshore pipeline across the Sinai Desert or through new offshore pipeline to Egyptian LNG terminals, where it can be re-exported to East Asia through the Suez Canal (Bryza, 2013). Initially this option seemed almost impossible due to political problems between Egypt and Israel and the changing dynamics in the natural gas market following the discovery of giant Zohr field in 2015. However, after 2015, improvements in political relations of Egypt and Israel have made their cooperation possible in the energy sector. As a result, Israel started to export natural gas to Egypt in 2020. Leviathan partners, Israel's Delek Group Ltd and Texas-based Nobel Energy Inc., are contracted to export 85 bcm of natural gas to Egypt over 15 years (Aljazeera, 2020).

The floating liquefied natural gas (FLNG) for the export of the Eastern Mediterranean gas is another option. Traditionally, liquefaction plants were designed as onshore terminals; however, technological developments have allowed the liquefaction process to operate in offshore areas. The FLNG option has number of advantages as it: (i) gives access to isolated and stranded gas reserves; (ii) permits authorizations more quickly compared to pipelines or land based LNG facilities; and (iii) diminishes to an extent the role of geopolitics by acting as a standalone LNG facility. But, its capital-intensive nature and relatively high cost undermines this option in the short run especially if available larger offshore fields are not pooled together for transporting from one designated FLNG terminal (Cornell, 2017). Nevertheless, Charles Ellinas, CEO of E-C Natural Hydrocarbons Co. Ltd, has stated that if other export options do not materialize

for the Cyprus and Israeli gas, FLNG option might be ideal for the Leviathan, Aphrodite, Calypso and other gas fields (Gas Processing News, 2018).

3.4 Global and Regional Energy Markets and Monetization of Energy Resources in the Eastern Mediterranean

The recent developments in the global and regional energy market also create new challenges for accessing the rich natural gas potential of the Eastern Mediterranean region. In other words, how major trends in global and regional oil and gas markets will correspond to new discoveries in the East Med must be evaluated as well as the geo-political landscape in the region. There are number of challenges coming from European and Asian markets negatively influencing the realization of the Eastern Mediterranean natural gas export hub.

For example, infrastructural problems in Southeast Asia diminishes LNG export options from the Eastern Mediterranean. On the other hand, most of the literature on the Eastern Mediterranean region's hydrocarbon potential demonstrates Europe as one of the major expected export destination especially for the natural gas (Ruble, 2017). However, whether Europe's gas market is a realistic destination has started to being questioned due to recent developments in the global and regional energy markets (Ellinas, 2019). These recent energy market assessments are given below.

First, energy mix of the EU member states, current major natural gas suppliers to European energy market, and overall energy policy developments within the EU affect the gas projects in the Eastern Mediterranean. Currently there is an abundance of natural gas in Europe due to Russian (pipeline) and U.S (LNG) supplies (Tzimitras, 2019). In addition, Trans Adriatic and Trans Anatolian (TAP/TANAP) pipelines, which will bring 16 bcm/year from Azerbaijan's Shah-Deniz Offshore field, became operational in 2020. The pipeline will supply 6 bcm/y for Turkish domestic natural gas demand and

remaining 10 bcm of natural gas will go to Europe. Moreover, the capacity of the pipeline is planned to increase to 22 bcm based on demand and to 31 bcm with additional investments (TANAP.com, 2020). Hence, Europe will already get additional quantities of non-Russian or diversified natural gas supplies from the Caspian region.

The European Union also aims to decrease the demand for fossil fuels annually for the next two decades. In light of the EU's 2020, 2030 and 2050 energy frameworks, projections estimate an increase in the share of renewables in Europe's energy mix and decrease in the share of conventional energy resources (Commission, 2012; Amanatidis, 2019). Thus, natural gas demand is expected to be steady if not decreasing overall in supply of the EU energy market in the long run. However, despite overall steadiness in EU's gas consumption in 2019, LNG imports showed a strong increase particularly in the fourth quarter of 2019 (Commission, 2019).



Figure 7: LNG imports in the EU and its share in the total gas imports and consumption. Source: Quarterly Report on European Natural Gas Market, 2019. European Commission

Further, lack of common European external energy policy and divergence of preferences within EU member states create collective action problems to coordinate

alternative and sometimes competing energy projects, such as a major pipeline to diversify natural gas suppliers (Demiryol, 2013). For example, the current debate on the Nord Stream 2 pipeline, which will bring more Russian gas bypassing Ukraine, demonstrate divergent preferences and material interests of involved energy firms. Thus, a similar problem has been observed in the case of the East Med pipeline, which is in fact the most expensive option compared to alternative means of transporting the natural gas resources from the East Mediterranean region.

Second challenge to exporting the Eastern Mediterranean natural gas resources is stemming from the demand driven developments in the Asian energy markets, particularly from the Chinese and the Japanese markets. Chinese economy is going through a period of economic slowdown and the US-China trade war has started to pose threats to global LNG trading schemes, which seems to increase energy vulnerability for China. In turn, Chinese government decided to change its energy policies in 2018. China has eased its costly clean energy policies that led to massive boost in its LNG demand during 2017 and 2018 and allowed regional governments to increase clean coal consumption (Ellinas, 2019). Moreover, ‘The Power of Siberia’ pipeline project, delivering gas from Russia to China, is expected to reach its full capacity in 2025 and estimated to supply China with approximately 38-bcm natural gas per year (FinancialTimes, 2019). Thus, if Chinese natural gas demand remains on a slower but steady growth rate, China has already secured additional natural gas supplies.

On the other hand, Japan recently decided to reemphasize the nuclear energy and decrease the share of natural gas in its energy imports. Accordingly, Japan aims to decrease its LNG imports from 84 million tonnes⁹ in 2017 to 62 million tonnes per year

⁹ Approximate conversion factor for 1 million tonnes LNG to billion cubic meters natural gas is 1.36 (BP Statistical Review of World Energy)

by 2030 (Ellinas, 2018). Similarly, gas consumption fell in South Korea as well mainly because of fuel switching policies that led to rerouting of LNG previously planned for the consumption of these countries (Tsafos, 2020).

Moreover, even though projections estimate an increased natural gas usage in India, existing infrastructural capacity in the country cannot handle additional exports beyond the 30 million tonnes per year terminal capacity. Since infrastructural development is costly, India continues to use coal and emphasizes the cheap renewables (Ellinas, 2018). Moreover, India went into lockdown to deal with Coronavirus pandemic and this hindered its potential to compensate for slowing down LNG demand in China (Tsafos, 2020). In short, these particular demand driven developments in Asian energy markets can hinder the prospects of LNG exports particularly from Egypt and Cyprus. In fact, these particular demand driven developments in Asian and European markets have already affected the global natural gas prices.

Lastly, the global prices for natural gas has been low due to decreasing demand because of the slowing economic growth rates and warm winters. On top of this, the recent coronavirus pandemic has caused a significant decrease for the demand for oil and natural gas worldwide, which resulted with the lowest crude oil prices since 1991 (S&P Global, 2020). In the past, international natural gas trade has been conducted through pipelines that are controlled by limited number of dominant actors. Thus, pricing the gas has been a challenge due to lack of competitiveness and oil has become a reference point for natural gas prices (oil indexing). Yet, technological advances in extraction methods such as hydro fracturing and liquefaction in recent years have caused a significant decoupling between oil and natural gas pricing. Indeed, the price of natural gas experienced a relatively less significant decrease compared to oil during Covid-19 pandemic. Similarly, Mikulska (2020) has argued that coronavirus pandemic might

slowdown the current trends towards a more competitive and liquid gas markets if; “(i) buyers turns back to oil indexing as the oil prices continue to fall and (ii) as highly flexible, market-based suppliers are discouraged and LNG projects cancelled or significantly delayed” (Mikulska, 2020, p. 6). These scenarios could significantly affect the future gas extraction schemes in the Eastern Mediterranean.

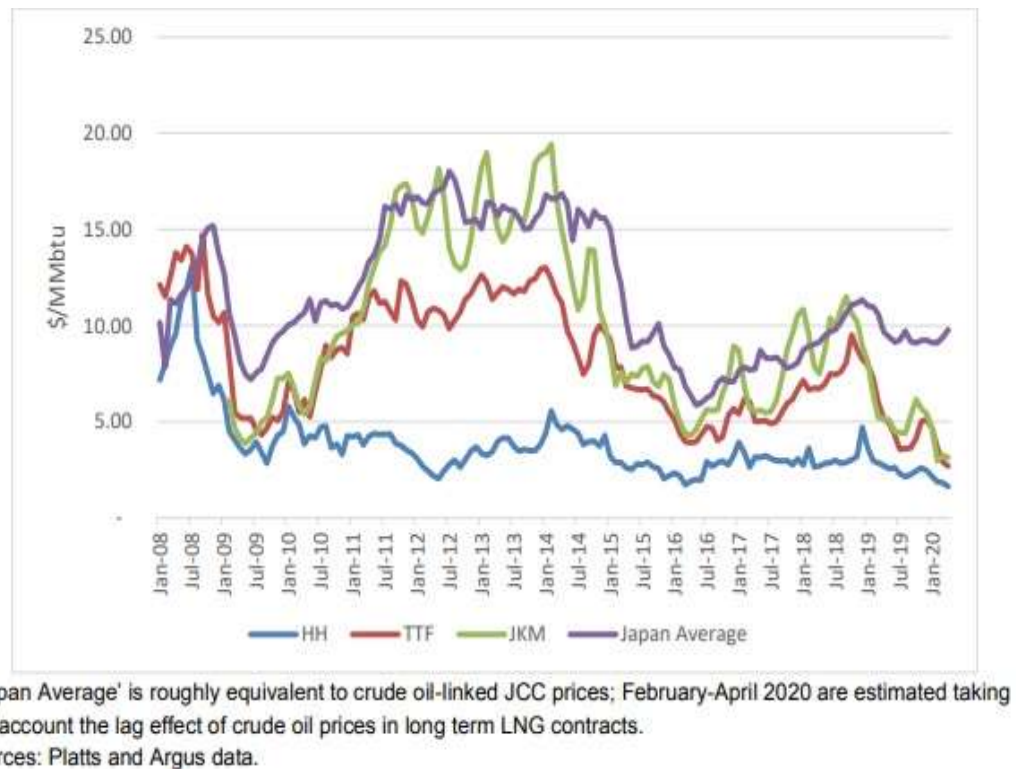


Figure 8: US, European and Asian Natural gas Prices between 2008 and 2020

Source: (Stern and Imsirovic, 2020, p.12)

In summary, competitive prices and commercial feasibility are necessary for almost every energy related project. Not only the demand driven developments in the world and regional natural gas markets, but also supply driven developments need to be considered. Accordingly, the geopolitics of energy; political instability in littoral states, geopolitical tensions in bilateral or regional relations, and legal disputes on demarcation of the maritime borders of the Eastern Mediterranean remain as important obstacles for

realization of natural gas exports and required infrastructure projects (pipeline and/or LNG) from the region.

3.5 Maritime Boundaries Delimitation Conflict

There is a serious legal conflict among some littoral states over the ownership rights to large segments of potential offshore hydrocarbon fields in the Eastern Mediterranean region. In 2003, when Cyprus and Egypt have declared that they signed an Exclusive Economic Zone delimitation agreement based on median line principle, the legal dispute on maritime borders demarcation has gradually risen top agenda of geopolitics of hydrocarbon resources in the Eastern Mediterranean region (Proedrou, 2013). At that time, Turkey only reacted with a ministerial note to the agreements. Yet, the competition over the energy potential of the region has gradually exacerbated, when the SCGA has continued to unilaterally sign Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) agreements. On 17 January 2007, the SCGA has signed a delimitation agreement with Lebanon and lastly, the SCGA has signed an EEZ delimitation agreement with Israel on December 2010. Distance from Cyprus to Israel is 230 nautical miles and the agreement used the median line method, in which both countries will acquire 115 nm area in the eastern Mediterranean (Kariotis, 2011)

While all of these developments in the region were happening, Turkey not only declared its protest via Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) notes but also started to take concrete action especially after 2010/2011. Accordingly, Turkey signed continental shelf delimitation agreement with the TRNC on 21 September 2011. In the same year, the TRNC granted exploration licenses to Turkish Petroleum Company (state-owned) for petroleum and natural gas exploration in its continental shelf. Turkish side has started its natural gas exploration activities in 2012, a year later from the continental shelf delimitation agreement (AnadoluAjansı, 2012).

Moreover, in December 2019, Turkey signed a delimitation and co-operation agreement with Libya's internationally recognized government. This development has altered the geopolitics of the dispute over delimitation of maritime borders in the region. Greece, Cyprus, the EU, Israel and Egypt heavily protested this agreement. As a response to this, Greece expelled Libya's Ambassador to Athens and filed a complaint to the United Nations. On the other hand, Egypt, Israel, the SCGA and the EU have expressed their concerns over the deal (Cohen, 2020; Baker et al., 2019). The self-declared EEZs in the region has worsened the already existing political disputes; mainly between Turkey, SCGA, Greece, Israel, Egypt and Lebanon (Ozertem, 2016).

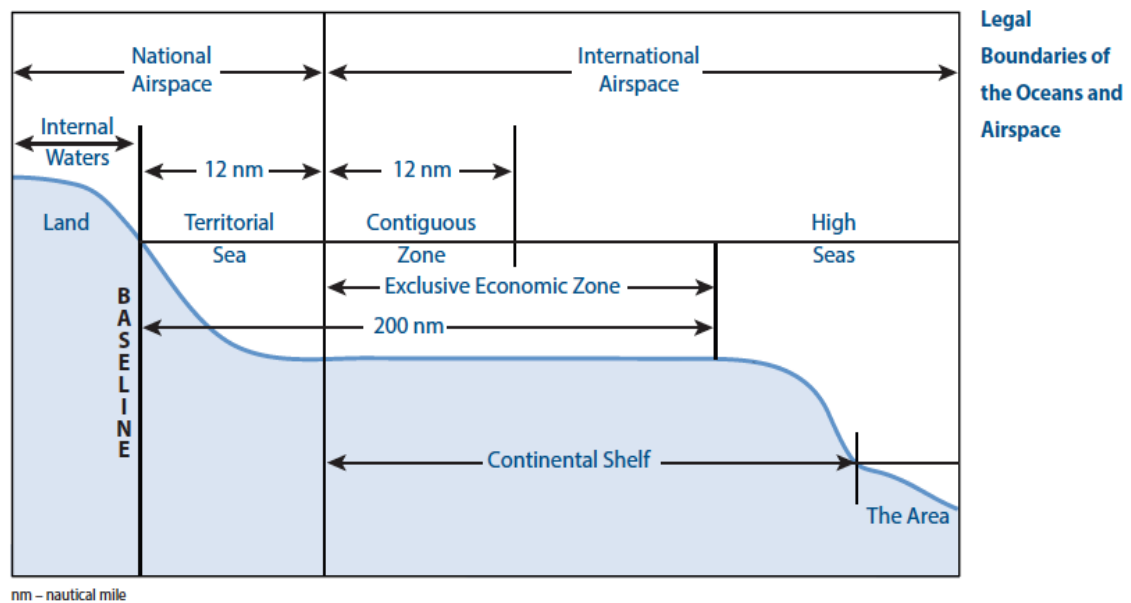
In the next section, I briefly define important legal concepts to elucidate the dispute over the related articles of the UNCLOS and its interpretation by related parties. Then, I present Turkey's official position against the Greece and SCGA's claims over the continental shelf and EEZs in the Eastern Mediterranean region.

3.5.1 Continental Shelf, EEZ and the related articles of the UNCLOS

Continental shelf is the part of the seabed in which coastal states exercise exploration of natural resources rights including oil and natural gas. The legal area can extend out to 200 nautical miles or further from the coast of the state. On the other hand, Exclusive Economic Zones are maritime areas, in which coastal states claim certain rights including the exploration of natural resources and marine resources under and above the ocean floor. States can exercise those rights from 12 miles from the coastline and up to maximum 200 miles off shore. Thus, Exclusive Economic Zones are more inclusive because it gives rights to coastal states both under and above the seabed and over fishery and live resources (Brown, 1992, p.362-363).

The concepts of continental shelf and EEZs originated first in the 1958 Geneva Convention on the Territorial Sea and the Contiguous Zone. However, it was ambiguous in determining the exact scope of the territorial waters. Hence, after a series of United Nations Conferences on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) between 1973 and 1982, UNCLOS has been declared and articles 55- 75 defined the exact scope of the territorial waters. Accordingly, EEZs extend out from coastal state's continental shelf to 12 mile width from coastline and 200 miles from the coast (Brownlie, 1995, p.225). Moreover, since these zones are established under the international customary law, regulations apply to all states even if they are not signatory to the UNCLOS. In that sense, Turkey and Israel are not signatory to UNCLOS and this further complicates the situation in the Eastern Mediterranean (Kütükcü and Kaya, 2016).

Figure 9: The scope of the continual shelves and EEZs:



Source: Law of the Sea: A Policy Primer, Chapter 2. The Fletcher School, Tufts University. Retrieved from <https://sites.tufts.edu/lawofthesea/chapter-two/>

There are two ways for determining the EEZs. First, states use their national legislation and self-declare their EEZs through government decrees. Second, states can sign

bilateral agreement with adjacent or other coastal states. The latter is what Cyprus have done in the Eastern Mediterranean Sea in 2003 with Egypt, 2007 with Lebanon and 2010 with Israel. After they sign bilateral agreements, states often send the coordinates of delimitation agreement to United Nations to establish a record of their claims. There are different geographical and scientific techniques and principles to determine the scope of EEZs such as principles of 'proportionality' 'equidistance', 'equity and equitable' and techniques like median line (Dundua, 2007; Baseren, 2010). However, in practical terms, these principles and techniques are difficult to implement. This is particularly the case in the Eastern Mediterranean Sea because of its status as an enclosed sea, in which 200 miles rule from the coast certainly create overlapping EEZs between states located at the opposing sides of the sea. Moreover, determining the precise boundaries for EEZs can harm the fishing rights in the respective states. One of the reasons why states refrain from announcing EEZs is to prevent such conflict that might harm the domestic economies (Baseren, 2015).

Additionally, political problems also prevent states from acting in such manner. For example, Turkey and Greece has refrained from determining precise EEZs in the Eastern Mediterranean due to their historical maritime dispute in the Aegean Sea (Siousiouras and Chrysochou, 2014). However, following the discovery of the natural gas in the region, this trend has shifted with the SCGA's efforts to delimitate its' EEZ through bilateral treaties with Egypt in 2003, Lebanon in 2007, Israel in 2010 and Greece (ongoing efforts) (Inan and Gozen, 2009).

The SCGA has proclaimed 200-mile EEZ and 24 miles adjacent territory in the Eastern Mediterranean. Following this, they started bilateral negotiations with Egypt, and reached an agreement in February 2003. However, Turkish Foreign Ministry has announced a note protesting the right of Greek Cypriot to unilaterally declare Exclusive

Economic Zones and conduct bilateral negotiations with other state's due to violation of the rights of Turkish Northern Cyprus (Turkey MFA, 2007). In fact, Turkey initially managed to halt the ratification of the agreement in Egyptian domestic law via intense diplomatic efforts.

The SCGA has responded Turkish protests with a following note suggesting that SCGA have issued a law demonstrating Cypriot continental shelf in 1974 and notified the United Nations with a map with coordinates in 1993. Thus, they claimed Turkish silence on the issue demonstrated an implied acceptance by Turkey.

Turkish Foreign Ministry has also launched its objection to 2007 agreement between Lebanon and the SCGA heavily. Further, Turkish warships were also deployed and conducted maneuvers to warn the respective states against a unilateral action in the region. However, the agreement has been ratified in 2011 despite the Turkish diplomatic efforts and to an extent its show of force to prevent it (Yaycı, 2012).

Moreover, following its 2007 agreement with Lebanon, the SCGA declared thirteen oil and gas exploration zones (blocks 1-13) within the area mentioned in its agreements with Egypt and Lebanon. The SCGA has initiated international tenders for oil and gas exploration licenses on eleven of the thirteen blocks. However, according to Turkish officials, five of the blocks (1,4,5,6 and 7) are overlapping with the Turkish continental shelf and eight of them are within the TRNC's share of the island's continental shelf (Baseren, 2010).

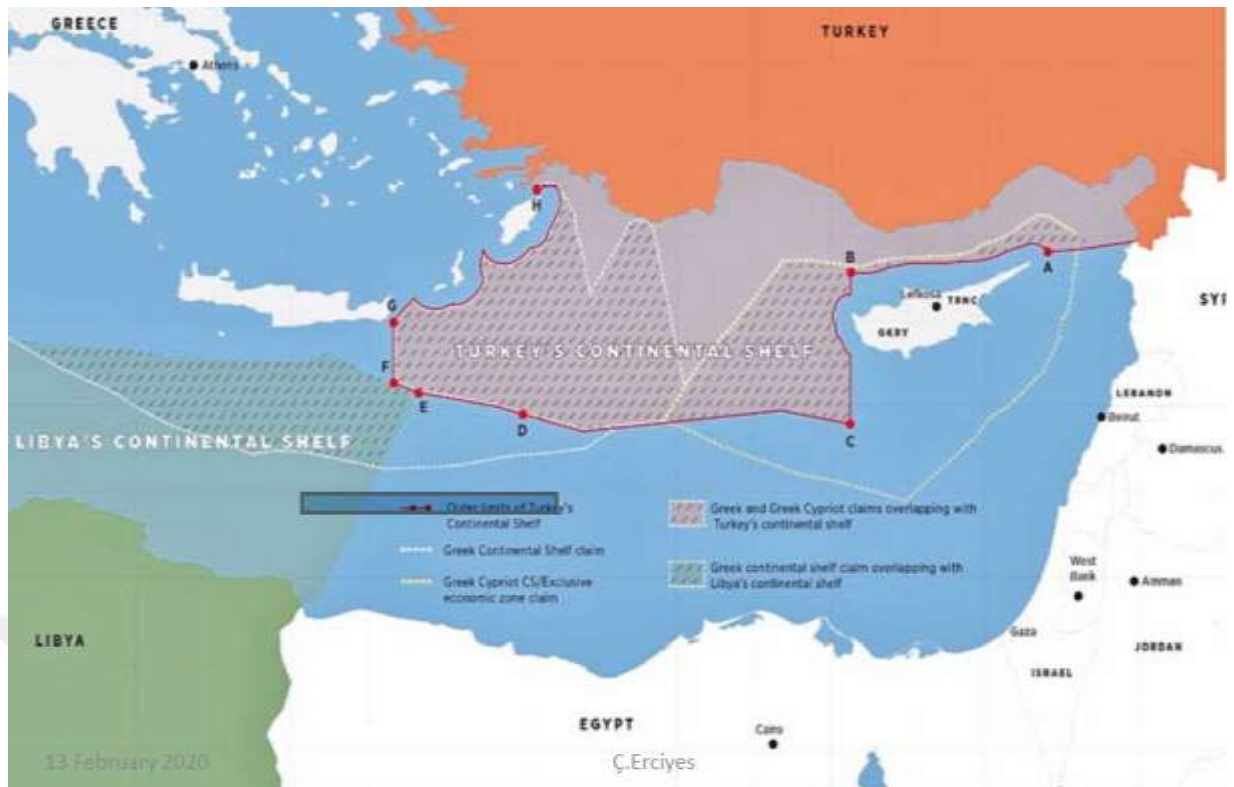


Figure 10: Overlapping EEZ/CS Claims. Source: (Erciyes, 2019)

Similarly, the Turkish authorities have not welcomed the 2010 agreement between the SCGA and Israel and sent letters to the UN Secretary General protesting the negotiations between Israel and Greek Cypriot Administration (UNDOCS, 2009; UNDOCS; 2010). Turkish authorities repeatedly argued that the unilateral actions of Greek Cypriot Administration would harm the situation in the island and hinder any efforts directed at reunification. On top of official letters sent to the UN, Turkish undersecretary of Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Feridun Ignelioglu invited Israel's Ankara Ambassador, Gaby Levy, to express official Turkish stance regarding the EEZ agreement between the SGCA and Israel (CNNTURK, 2010). The 2010 agreement not only attracted protests by Turkey but also by Lebanon. Lebanese parliament expressed their concerns about the Israeli claims about their gas discoveries, stating that their southern border extends to farther south than it had delineated in its EEZ agreement with the SCGA. Hence, some of the portions in which the natural gas discovered by Israeli consortium includes Lebanese territory. Lebanese government asked for the

United Nations mediation to solve this dispute in the context of the UN Interim Force (UNIDIL) in Lebanon. Yet, the UN response was negative and stated that it was not a mandate of UNIDIL (Stocker, 2012).

3.5.2 Turkey's official position

Turkey's official position regarding the delimitation of the East Mediterranean Sea has two main pillars: (i) Turkey's sovereign rights on its continental shelf and related acts to protect these rights; (ii) the protection of the equal rights of the Turkish Cypriots, who are co-owners of the Cyprus Island, over the hydrocarbon resources of the island (MFA, 2019).

Turkey attributes the legality of these pillars to UNCLOS and international law, particularly to the principles of 'equity' and 'equitable' stated in Articles 59, 74 and 83 of the UNCLOS. Article 59 and provisions of Article 74 regarding the EEZs and article 83 regarding the continental shelf between states with adjacent coastlines evidently underscores the equity and equitable principles (Erciyes, 2019).

"In cases where this Convention does not attribute rights or jurisdiction to the coastal State or other States within the exclusive economic zone, and conflict arises between the interests of the coastal State and any other State or States, the conflict should be resolved on the basis of equity and in the light of all the relevant circumstances, taking into account the respective importance of the interests involved to the parties as well as to the international community as a whole." (UNCLOS, 1982, Article 59)

"The delimitation of the exclusive economic zone between States with opposite or adjacent coasts shall be effected by agreement on the basis of international law, as referred to in Article 38 of the Statute of the International Court of Justice, in order to achieve an equitable solution." (UNCLOS, 1982, Article 74)

The role of islands has been widely discussed within this context since there are many small islands covering the Aegean Sea and Cyprus Island in the Eastern Mediterranean sea. Article 121 of the UNCLOS has construed the treatment and the regime of islands for the delimitation of maritime boundaries. One of the reasons why Turkey is not signatory to UNCLOS is due to its objections to Article 121. Turkish official stance has emphasized the islands distortive effects on the equity principles during maritime delimitation agreements. In other words, Article 121 does not underline any special circumstances, which has to be considered for an equitable solution during delimitation process (Ipek, 2019). In fact, there are examples of states practices and International Court of Justice decisions, in which islands have received reduced effects to achieve equitable principle and proportionality such as between Canada and French Saint Pierre & Miquelon in 1992, Romania and Ukraine in 2009, Nicaragua and Columbia in 2012, etc. (Gafarlı, 2019). Yet, the SGCA and Greece have been trying to apply the Articles 121 of the UNCLOS on the regime of islands to grant them with full effects during delimitation process.

Accordingly, Turkey's rationale in protesting the EEZ agreements among the coastal states are based on three main objectives. First, due to eastern Mediterranean having the status of semi-enclosed sea, maritime boundaries should be determined according to principle of equity. In line with principle of equity, Turkey promotes a multilateral approach instead of bilateral deals between coastal states to ensure the sovereign rights of third parties. Second, unilateral delimitation agreements in the Eastern Mediterranean might jeopardize Turkey's position in the Aegean sea as well, where there is historical maritime dispute between Turkey and Greece. Third, Turkey, as a guarantor to Turkish community in the Cyprus, holds the perception that any natural resource discovery in the area belongs to both Greek and Turkish communities in the island and any unilateral

action before an agreement guaranteeing Turkish share must be avoided (MFA, 2019; Erciyes, 2019)¹⁰.

The conflict in the Eastern Mediterranean is not limited to demarcation of maritime boundaries. Achieving a cooperative framework among coastal states have been particularly challenging due to historical conflicts between the Turkey and the SCGA and Greece. Moreover, Turkey's deteriorating relations with Israel and Egypt have also shaped the region's strategic architecture and paved the way for alignments between SCGA, Greece and Israel (Tziarras, 2016). Tracing the origins of the political and economic relations between Turkey-SCGA, Turkey-Israel, and Turkey-Egypt is necessary to understand how regionalization process and the formation of the EMGF has been fold out by material factors and/or ideational forces.

3.6 Historical Relations in the Region

3.6.1 Turkey and the SCGA

The antagonistic relations between the Turkey and the Greek Cypriot Administration dates back to 1960s. The Republic of Cyprus is founded in 1960 as a bi-communal state between Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriot. However, the constitutional structure in the country did not last very long, three years after its foundation; a violent conflict has erupted between Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots. As a result, two independent bodies have emerged, Greek and Turk, after the conflict in 1963

In 1974, following a quo attempt aiming to unite the Island by Greek armed forces; Turkey intervened military by invoking the 1960 Treaty of Guarantee. Thereafter, the island was divided into north and south. Turkish Cypriots started to govern northern part

¹⁰ Republic of Turkey, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Press Release Regarding the Conclusions Adopted by the EU Foreign Affairs Council, no. 206, 16 July 2019, < http://www.mfa.gov.tr/no_206_-ab-disiliskiler-konseyi-nin-aldigi-kararlar-hk.en.mfa> accessed on 29 July 2019

of the island under the protection of Turkish army. On the other hand, Greek Cypriot Administration controlled the southern part and remained as the internationally recognized governing entity of the island (Ozdamar and Erciyes, 2019). In 1983, Northern Cypriot Administration has declared independence and announced the foundation of Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC). However, TRNC is only recognized as an independent state by Turkey. Since then many attempts to reunify the island has been carried out but none of them yielded results (Hale, 2012). The EU supported Annan Plan failed after a majority referendum in 2004, when Greek Cypriot community voted against it (BBC, 2004). Despite the rejection of the Annan Plan by Greek Cypriots, the Republic of Cyprus became an EU member on May 1 2004, which further complicated the Greek Cypriot-Turkey relations and Turkish accession process to the EU. Since the Annan Plan, several peace attempts have failed in 2008-2012 and 2014. In 2015, after Mustafa Akıncı was elected as the president of TRNC, the peace talks restarted. However, negotiations broke down in 2017 after 10 days of meetings in the Swiss Alps (Reuters, 2017).

Historical animosity between Turkey, TRNC and Greek Cypriot Administration have intensified after the discovery of natural gas field offshore Cyprus Island. Turkish naval frigates accompanied Turkish exploration activities on behalf of TRNC following the 2013 agreement. Moreover, the conflict has particularly aggravated in June 2019, when Turkish drillship, Fatih, started drilling the southern part of the island. Despite increasing criticism by Greek Cypriots, the EU and the U.S, Turkey has launched its second exploration vessel, Yavuz, to start drilling in the overlapping SCGA EEZ (Reuters, 2019).

3.6.2 Turkey and Israel

Turkey's relationship with Israel dates back to 1950s and contrary to its relationship with Cyprus, it was characterized by amity. Israel has aimed to break down its isolation from Arab countries and Turkey being the first Muslim majority country to recognize Israel was an integral part of that vision. In 1950s, Turkey and Israel have signed commercial agreements that caused a significant increase in their both commercial and political ties. The commercial relationship gradually evolved and started to cover broader aspects ranging from security to education (Hale, 2012). The relationship have taken a more institutionalized form with relationship evolving into full ambassadorial status in 1991. In 1993, Turkey and Israel have signed a memorandum of understanding and guidelines on cooperation. Three years later, relationship has widened with a military coordination agreement in 1996. Accordingly, Turkey and Israel have signed several arms trade deals and cooperated on intelligence sharing (particularly on PKK). Moreover, trade volume between Turkey and Israel also increased significant during these years (Stergiou, 2016).

However, Turkish- Israeli relationship took a hit with the increasing role of political Islam in Turkish politics and foreign policy formulation under Justice and Development Party's (AKP) rule. Turkey's relationship with Israel particularly became really sensitive and responsive to Arab-Israeli and Israeli Palestinian conflicts. Scholars and analysts have expected a decrease in the intensity of Turkish-Israeli cooperation due to Turkey's new foreign policy aiming to return to Middle East on the basis of political Islam; however, the erosion of almost 20 years of close partnership in such rapid pace and rumble were not anticipated (Ayturk, 2011).

With the rapid intensification of Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the Ankara's new role as a protector of Muslim world under AKP government, deterioration of Turkish-Israeli relationship became unavoidable. The tension has escalated first in 2009 at Davos

World Economic Forum, when President Erdogan stormed out following a clash with Israeli president about the Israeli offensive, in which at least 1,300 Palestinians were killed (Guardian, 2009). Moreover, the tension turned into a crisis in 31 May 2010 with the Mavi Marmara incident, where Israeli commandos killed 10 Turkish activists who are carrying humanitarian aid and trying to breach the blockade of Gaza. Over this period, Turkish-Israeli relations have degraded to an extent that military and intelligence cooperation agreements was terminated, ambassadors were called back and vitriolic public accusations were made (Saltzman, 2015).

What strikes is that despite the political crisis, commercial relations between Israel and Turkey over this period expanded with a rapid rate. Bilateral trade between two countries have more than doubled between 2009 and 2014, from \$2.6 to \$5.62 billion dollars. Israeli ports continued be main conduit for Turkish exports to Middle East and Israel continued to use Turkey's Ceyhan port for bulk of its oil supplies (Tanchum, 2015).

Following the political crisis between two allies, United States under the presidency of Barrack Obama has assumed a broker role for Turkish-Israeli reconciliation, which resulted in Netanyahu's formal apology in 2013 for the loss of Turkish citizens in 2010 (Alsaftawi, 2016). Yet, the relationship between Turkey and Israel has remained volatile.

3.6.3 Turkey and Egypt

Egypt was part of the Ottoman Empire for almost three centuries, from 17th century to late 19th century. Thus, strong cultural, economic, religious and historical ties bind Turkey, successor of the Ottoman Empire, and Egypt. Yet, the diplomatic relations between the two countries have been volatile throughout their modern history. Turkey

and Egypt established diplomatic relations at the level of Charge d' Affaires in 1925 following the WWI. Then, the bilateral relations between these countries have evolved to Ambassadorial Level in 1948 (Öterbülbul, 2015). In 1950/51 United States attempted to create a regional alliance by bringing together Turkey and Egypt but idea did not spark much enthusiasm in either country. Particularly the Turkish diplomatic relations with Israel and Turkey's stance in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict have prevented the formation of Turkish-Egyptian coalition.

The increasing popularity of Arab nationalism in the years after 1955, during the Presidency of Gamal Abdel Nasser in Egypt, have also made it very difficult for rapprochement in Turkish-Egyptian relations. President Nasser's popularity increased significantly following the nationalization of the Suez Canal in 1956 and his triumph in the following the Suez Crisis. Soon after, Nasser's Arab socialist nationalism became very popular among the Arab Middle East. At that time, Turkey's western oriented Democrat Party (DP) government increasingly disliked Nasser and regarded him as a communist. In response, Egypt perceived Turkey and the Baghdad Pact countries (Iran, Iraq, Pakistan, Turkey and the U.K) as puppets of Western imperialism (Zürcher, 2017, p. 265).

During the Justice and Development Party (AKP) rule in Turkey, Turkey and Egypt have experienced a relatively new phase in their bilateral relationship especially between 2011 and 2013, when Mohammed Morsi was in power in Egypt. In fact, Egypt has become one of the Turkey's major commercial partners in the Northern Africa and cultural relations between two countries were advancing. For example, Yunus Emre Turkish Cultural Center in Cairo was operating on the basis of a bilateral agreement (Turkey MFA, 2019).

However, Turkish foreign policy towards Middle East has started to become highly assertive and proactive in the wake of Arab Spring during 2010/2011. Turkey, with the purpose of enhancing its regional influence in the Middle East, has started to support the political change and so-called democratization attempts during the Arab Spring.

Ideational factors were the main driver of the assertive Turkish foreign policy such as political Islam and Sunnism. Turkey often granted its support to certain groups with insufficient knowledge of the domestic politics of Arab states and at the expense of other groups, particularly secular ones, within the target country's political coalition.

For example, Turkey's support to Muslim Brotherhood and Morsi government between 2010 and 2013 was a clear example of this policy behavior (Onis, 2014).

The conflict between Turkey and Egypt has reinvigorated, when the Mohammed Morsi was removed from power with a military coup led by General Abdel-Fattah el-Sisi.

Turkish President, Tayyip Erdogan, has condemned the coup and continued to support the Morsi's supporters, particularly Muslim Brotherhood. In fact, the AKP government in Turkey provided safe havens to Muslim Brotherhood, where they operate their anti-Sisi media network and broadcast from Turkey. (Maher and Tsukerman, 2019). In 2013, Erdogan has called for ousted Mohammed Morsi to be freed. In response, Egypt has expelled the Turkish Ambassador in Egypt and asked him to leave the country in 48 hours (BBC, 2013). Turkey responded shortly after by declaring the Egyptian ambassador 'persona non-grata' (Reuters, 2013).

Within this late context, Turkish-Egyptian relationship is characterized by three key issues. First, continuing support of Turkey to Muslim Brotherhood; second, rivalry in the Eastern Mediterranean¹¹ and Libya¹²; third, the alliance between Egypt and Gulf

¹¹ Egypt is a part of Eastern Mediterranean Gas Forum (EMGF), which Turkey is excluded from. Geopolitical rivalry defines the two countries relationships in the Eastern Mediterranean.

Countries (Saudi Arabia and UAE) and Turkey's deteriorating relations with both of these countries particularly after 2015 (al-Anani, 2020).

Most recently, tensions between Egypt and Turkey have escalated once again because of two events. First, Turkey's EEZ delimitation agreement with Libya in 2019 have mounted harsh criticism by Egypt. Second, Egyptian security forces arrested four reporters of the Turkish official news agency, Anatolian Agency, and referred them to state security prosecution under the terrorism accusations (Al Monitor, 2020).

Yet, similar to Turkish-Israeli commercial relations, Turkey's economic ties with Egypt has also expanded despite the political tensions between two countries. The Free Trade Agreement signed in 2005 between two countries have remained intact and Turkey's exports to Egypt set a record by reaching \$3.005 billion dollars in 2018 (MFA, 2018).

Table 2: Bilateral trade between Egypt and Turkey between 2014 and 2018

Year	Turkish Exports (billion dollars)	Turkish Imports(billion dollars)	Trade Volume(billion dollars)
2014	\$3.301	\$1.437	\$4.738
2015	\$3.129	\$1.216	\$4.345
2016	\$2.733	\$1.443	\$4.177
2017	\$2.360	\$1.997	\$4.357
2018	\$3.055	\$2.190	\$5.245

Source: TUIK, retrieved from Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Republic of Turkey.

3.7 Militarization of the Maritime Dispute in the Eastern Mediterranean

Within the context of recent geopolitical developments and historical background of Turkey's bilateral relations with other littoral states that is presented above, in this

¹² Egypt supports the opposition group led by General Khalifa Haftar against Libya's UN recognized legitimate Government of National Accord (GNA). On the other hand, Turkey provides military and logistical support to GNA.

section, I will briefly describe these states' expansion of their naval capabilities and military build-up. Almost all states in the Eastern Mediterranean have focused increasingly on their naval capabilities in their approach to gas discoveries and disputed maritime boundaries. They have started to invest more in their naval capabilities, particularly Turkey, Israel, and Greece to reinforce their interests in the geopolitics of the Eastern Mediterranean region. Moreover, increasing migration flows in the region due to effects of Arab Spring and Syrian civil war have further enhanced the security dilemma in the region.

Turkey as the strongest naval power in the region have started to invest heavily on its naval capabilities and used its navy proactively for strategic signaling in the region. In 2008, Turkey have entered into contract to build German-designed submarines and started to construct assault ships. Erdogan also announced plans to build an aircraft carries in 2017 (Rubin and Eiran, 2019). In 2018, Turkey used its navy to deter Italian ENI's exploration ship operation in Greek Cypriot EEZ. Moreover, Turkey has conducted its largest maritime exercise in the Mediterranean Sea, Blue Homeland in 2019 (Kambas, 2018; HurriyetDailyNews, 2019).

Israel has been improving its navy since 1990s mainly for two reasons: to deter against realization of Iranian nuclear program and to boost its military capability against threats stemming from Arab-Israeli and Israeli-Palestinian conflicts. Particularly, threats from non-state actors, Hezbollah and Hamas, have contributed to Israeli military buildup in the sea. Recent gas discoveries and rising tensions related to maritime boundaries in the Eastern Mediterranean have also contributed to this process. For example, Israel recently purchased four Saar 6 class corvettes from Germany and Israeli military industry started to invest heavily on unmanned maritime vehicles to protect Israel's

energy infrastructure and Exclusive Economic Zone in the Eastern Mediterranean (Seker et al., 2019).

Similarly, Egypt has also been widening investment on naval capabilities due to two recent developments. First, the national project of widening the Suez Canal alongside with protecting newly discovered offshore gas fields in Egypt have influenced the country's naval policies. To that end, Egypt purchased new submarines from Germany and entered into contract with France for Landing Helicopter Dock vessels and missile frigates (Rubid and Eiran, 2019). Second, intensification of the Civil War in Libya and increasing Turkish military presence in the region are likely to push Egypt to invest more in its military capabilities.

Greece also joined the naval arms race mainly due to the refugee crisis following the Syrian civil war and its traditional rivalry with Turkey over the maritime jurisdiction zones in the Aegean Sea. Greece increased its maritime patrol capacity in order to balance against the rising Turkish assertiveness to use naval force in continental shelf and EEZ dispute over the Cyprus Island. On the other hand, Greek Cypriots and Lebanon maintain very small naval forces and Syrian and Libyan military capabilities are very limited due to ongoing civil wars (Rubid and Eiran, 2019, p. 992-993).

Thus, geo-political dynamics and increasing use of naval capabilities to balance against rising tensions or to stop the activities of multinational energy firms' drilling activities in the Eastern Mediterranean have hindered the viability of cooperation between all coastal states. In other words, politics have surpassed the economic rationale for cooperation.

CHAPTER 4

POWER RELATIONS AND IDEATIONAL FORCES IN THE REGIONALIZATION PROCESS: EXPLAINING THE EMERGENCE OF EMGF, STATE PREFERENCES AND TURKEY'S ISOLATION THROUGH POLICY ELITE FRAMES

4.1 A New Framework for Regional Cooperation: EMGF

Despite high economic benefits in cooperation for development of hydrocarbon resources, the rising tensions over the drilling activities in the East Mediterranean Sea's disputed EEZs and continental shelf have been accompanied by changing regional power balance and new forms of regional cooperation among selected littoral states in the observed regionalization process. In January 2019, the Cairo Declaration established the Eastern Mediterranean Gas Forum (EMGF), in which Egypt serves as the chair and host of its headquarters. The forum institutionalized cooperation regarding the development of natural gas reserves in the Eastern Mediterranean Sea among seven countries: Egypt, Israel, Cyprus (SCGA), Jordan, Palestine, Greece and Italy. Member states agreed to expand their cooperation to develop a common energy policy towards the establishment of a competitive regional gas market and infrastructure while respecting each other's rights over natural resources, protecting the environment and adhering to International Law (Harari, 2019; Widdershoven, 2019).

A short time after its foundation, the second ministerial meeting of EMGF took place in July 2019. In addition to member states, the U.S Energy Minister Rick Perry, the EU Commission Energy Director Dominique Rostori and representatives from France and the World Bank were also present in the meeting (Kucuk, 2019). During the meeting participant state representatives discussed to transform the forum into an inter-

governmental organization. The third ministerial meeting was convened in January 16, 2020 in Cairo. During the meeting, member states finalized their discussion to turn the EMGF into an internationally recognized body. The EMGF Statute would be initiated within twelve months and is currently under the review of European Commission for its compatibility evaluation with the EU Law. Once the compatibility is ensured, founding members of the forum will sign the Statute.¹³ Moreover, during the meeting, France officially requested to join the EMGF and the Deputy Assistant of the U.S Secretary of Energy has also expressed United States' desire to join the organization as a permanent observer (MiddleEastMonitor, 2020).

Even though the forum can be regarded as one of the most important steps toward a regional order based on optimal exploitation of natural gas in the Eastern Mediterranean, the exclusive nature of the EMGF hinders the forum's economic rationale. Although it is announced that the EMGF would be open to give membership to additional countries that are willing to accept its governing rules, current membership structure of the EMGF does not include certain littoral states in the Eastern Mediterranean such as Turkey, Lebanon, Syria and Libya. In other words, almost half of the countries of Eastern Mediterranean are not members of this regional institution.

Turkey and Lebanon are particularly important states for both the power equilibrium within Eastern Mediterranean and monetization of natural gas resources to export markets from the region. While Lebanese territory bears the potential for natural gas reserves, Turkey is a crucial country, which has the longest seashore territory in the Eastern Mediterranean. Nevertheless, both countries have maritime jurisdiction zone disputes with one or more of the littoral states in the region. More importantly, Turkey

¹³ DECLARATION OF THE THIRD MINISTERIAL MEETING OF THE EAST MEDITERRANEAN GAS FORUM (EMGF), January 16th, 2020.

is a key country for the resolution of the Cyprus dispute, a fundamental obstacle for regional stability and cooperation in the Eastern Mediterranean. Moreover, Turkey offers one of the most feasible routes for the monetization and transportation natural gas from the region to export markets. Thus, exclusion of Turkey and Lebanon from the forum surely reflects the geo-political dynamics in the region (Macaron, 2019). To understand how Turkey is excluded from the regionalization process through the EMGF in the region, I apply a framing analysis to analyze state preferences that shape regionalization process according to my first or second hypothesis. Framing analysis helps me to capture the occurrence of certain frames between 2003 and 2020 for Turkey, between 2010 and 2020 for Greece and the SCGA. Those frames are important to understand and explain how state preferences have been shaped in the emergence of the EMGF and what have been the driving forces for any shifts in these frames between 2010 and 2020 among Turkey, Greece and the SCGA.

4.2 Prominent Frames Used in States' Preferences in the Regionalization Process in the Eastern Mediterranean

4.2.1 Turkish Foreign Energy Policy and Prominent Frames in its Approach to Eastern Mediterranean

Energy security has been the essential part of Turkish foreign energy policy making over the years. Turkey is a country characterized by heavy import dependency particularly to a smaller set of countries such as Russia, Azerbaijan and Iran by pipelines, which have higher shares in Turkey's imported oil and gas sources (Ipek, 2019). Thus, diversification of energy suppliers and sources has been one of the top priorities of Turkish foreign energy policy over the years. In that sense, natural gas reserves in the Eastern Mediterranean would help Turkey to diversify its natural gas imports from Russia and unreliable Iranian gas. It would also give leverage to Turkey

to bargain for better prices against Russia in the future and can even transform the market into hub-based pricing (Bryza, 2013).

Moreover, in an attempt to utilize Turkey's geographical position, Turkish authorities have designated a role of being the energy hub where energy flows from various supplier regions such as the Caspian Sea basin, Russia, and the Middle East pass through Turkey and reach European energy markets (Winrow; 2009; Müftüler Bac and Baskan, 2010). Accordingly, over the years, Turkey has concluded several natural gas pipeline agreements with Azerbaijan and Russia. As a result of these agreements, Tap-Tanap and Turkish Stream, which carries natural gas to both Turkey and the EU, have become operational in 2020. Transporting the Eastern Mediterranean gas through Turkish territories is demonstrated as the third pillar of Turkey's pipeline strategy that aims to turn Turkey into a 'silk road of energy' (Turkish Presidency, 2020).

However, energy security and economic concerns are not the only determinants of Turkish foreign policy in the Eastern Mediterranean. Socio-cultural factors also significantly influences to the Turkish activism in the Eastern Mediterranean particularly in dispute over Cyprus Island's EEZs. Thus, I have developed five frames (See Chapter 1.1) to understand how Turkey approaches the Eastern Mediterranean problem and how Turkey is excluded from the regionalization process. These frames are important to analyze whether and how state preferences have been cooperative and/or conflictual about the regionalization process. Accordingly, whether material benefits driven balancing acts and/or ideational factors driven social practices have been shaping regionalization process can be explained through how states framed the issues regarding the development of the East Mediterranean hydrocarbon resources. In other words, what have been framed and how frames have been shifted in the case of the EMGF as a regionalization process is necessary to explain Turkey's isolation.

Year	Security- Conflictual	Security-	Economic Interest-	Economic Interest-	Socio Cultural	Total
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I focused on Turkey, the SCGA and Greece since the backbone of the conflict over the maritime jurisdiction zones in the East Mediterranean has been among these countries. Further, in terms of the monetization and transportation of natural gas resources from these countries, cooperation among these countries and Israel are essential to maximize economic benefits given that there would be no conflict over security issues. The table 3 below shows the number of frame occurrences regarding the issues related to the Eastern Mediterranean within the dataset of Ministry of Foreign Affairs Press Releases and Statements and related speeches of the President and Presidency Spokesman' in the Presidency of Turkey archives.

		Cooperative	Conflictual	Cooperative		
2003	0	0	1	1	1	3
2004	0	0	0	0	0	0
2005	0	0	0	0	0	0
2006	0	0	0	0	0	0
2007	6	2	2	4	3	17
2008	0	1	0	2	1	4
2009	0	2	0	2	1	5
2010	1	5	1	5	2	14
2011	0	0	0	0	0	0
2012	0	0	0	0	0	0
2013	0	2	1	4	1	8
2014	1	2	1	5	3	12
2015	0	2	0	3	3	8
2016	0	1	0	2	1	4
2017	3	5	3	3	2	16
2018	12	3	6	4	6	31
2019	26	3	21	3	17	70
2020	9	4	5	4	4	26
Total	58	32	41	42	45	218

Table 3: Number of Frame Occurrences in Turkey about the Eastern Mediterranean region between 2003 and 2020. Source: Author's own design. *Data extracted from Turkish MFA Press Releases and Presidency Achieves*

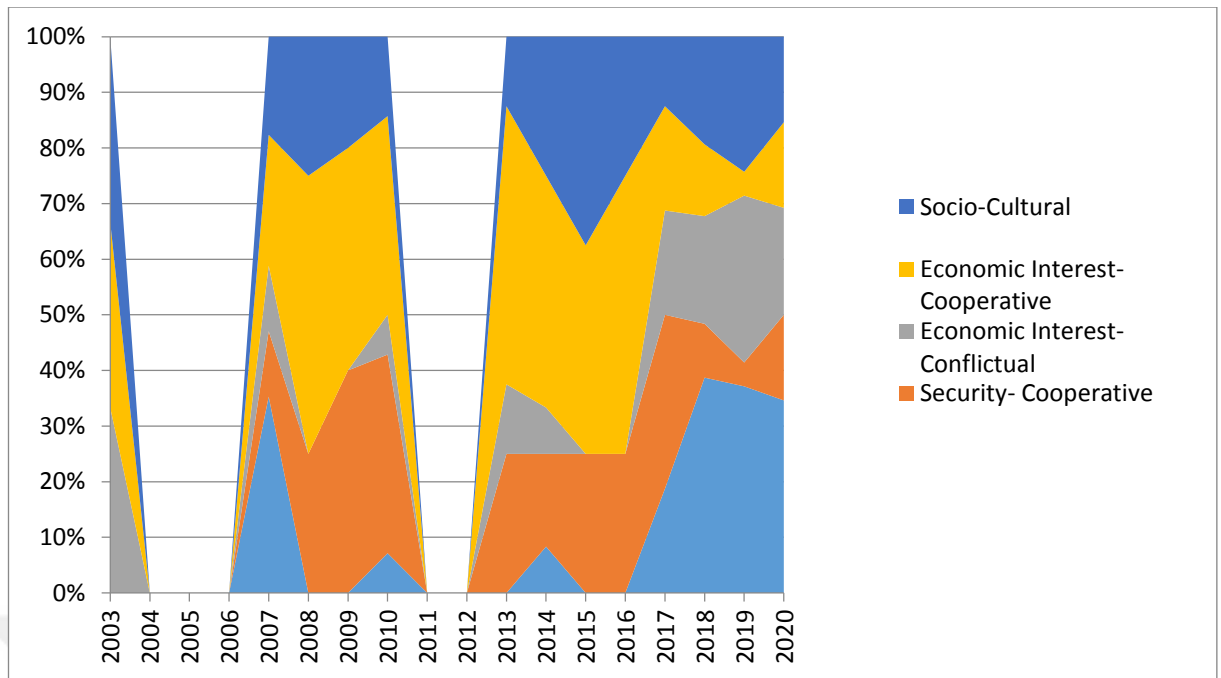


Figure 11: Turkey's framing of the Eastern Mediterranean between 2003 and 2020

The leading frame with 26.6% of the total number of 218 frames in statements by Turkish policy elite circles is 'security conflictual'. Yet, this has emerged later as a leading frame in the overall official discourse between 2003 and 2020. During 2003 and 2014, security conflictual frame was not apparent except in some certain key years when the SCGA has signed bilateral EEZ delimitation agreements with Egypt (2003), Lebanon (2007), and Israel (2010). It is not particularly surprising that Turkey did not perceive the developments in the Eastern Mediterranean as security threat until around 2010. At that time, Turkey did not perceive the SCGA's bilateral EEZ agreements as a direct threat to Turkish position in the region. This was mainly due to Turkey's increasing activism based on soft power projection in the broader region particularly with Arab countries, progress in its accession negotiations with EU, and its support to Annan plan to settle the Cyprus problem (Kanat and Hannon, 2017).

During this time, the prominent frames in Turkish policy were cooperative for both economic interest and security. Turkey have repeatedly stressed the importance of

multilateralism and cooperation within the region to achieve the goals of stability and prosperity. For example, the former Turkish President, Abdullah Gul, has stated several times “Turkey’s vision for the Eastern Mediterranean is to turn the region into an area of stability, prosperity and cooperation. It is essential to create a cooperative framework between Greece, Cyprus as a whole, and Turkey” (Turkish Presidency, 2009; 2010; 2013). Similarly, Ministry of Foreign Affairs Press Releases highlighted the importance of multilateralism, Turkey’s readiness for dialogue on several occasions (Turkey MFA, 2007). In fact, one can observe the relatively high number of both security-cooperative and economic interest cooperative frame occurrences in the above table 3 and figure 11 between 2003 and 2015.

However, we also observe clear shifts in Turkey’s policy from a cooperative discourse between 2003 and 2014 to a security conflictual position between 2017 and 2020 in the regionalization process. Several developments have altered Turkey’s position in the region: First, following the 2010 Arab Spring, Turkey’s influence among Arab countries started to shrink. Second, Turkey’s deteriorating relations with Israel have further alienated Turkey in the region. Third, failure of efforts to settle the Cyprus dispute and Turkey’s deadlock situation regarding the EU accession talks have led Turkey to follow a more proactive policy in the Eastern Mediterranean (Aydın and Dizdaroglu, 2018). Moreover, despite both Turkey and the TRNC’s emphasis on building a common framework and multilateralism, the SCGA’s reluctance to cooperate and unilaterally completing international tenders on oil and gas exploration licenses have further pushed Turkey to follow policies that are more assertive across the region.

Especially after 2016, the conflict in the Eastern Mediterranean has debouched as one of the core pillars of Turkish national security strategy alongside two major challenges for Turkey. First, the AKP government’s threat perception against ISIS and other sub-state

actors in Syria has changed particularly after the advancement of YPG forces¹⁴ in Syria and their capture of Tal Abyad, a strategic northern border town, from ISIS in June 2015. Although the political tension between Turkey and the US over the involvement of PYD forces in war against ISIS has continued since 2013, Turkey's disappointment with US vigilant policy to remove Assad regime in full force and as Turkey's containment policy against Kurdish groups' advancement in Syria became clear after 2015¹⁵ (Ipek, 2017, p. 412-413). Second, the coup attempt in July 2016 has altered domestic politics greatly and reshuffled security understanding in Turkey's threat perceptions. Indeed, low number of frame occurrences about the Eastern Mediterranean in 2016 can be associated with the July 15 Coup Attempt in Turkey carried out by Gulenist movement. Thus, between 2017 and 2020, a swift increase in the number of both the 'security conflictual' and 'economic interest conflictual' frame occurrences, which are clearly visible in the Table 3 above, should be also considered within the context of these two major developments that have shaped Turkey's overall assessment of its security environment.

Finally, the most consistently mentioned frame throughout the years covered in this study is 'socio-cultural'. 20.2% of the total 218 coded frames falls into 'socio-cultural' category, which is not particularly surprising given that Turkey's official position emphasizes Turkey's obligation to protect the rights of the Turkish Cypriots. This is

¹⁴ In Syria Democratic Union Party (PYD)'s armed forces of the People's Protection Units (YPG) are strongly interlinked with PKK and its militia HPG was training the YPG.

¹⁵ For details of disagreement and strategic differences between Turkey and US on Syria and the PYD see pro-government think-tank authors' article Kılıç Kanat and Kadir Üstün. "US-Turkey Realignment on Syria," Middle East Policy 22, no. 4 (Winter 2015), pp. 91-93; and "Kurds declare their own region in northern Syria," Washington Post, March 18, 2016; "Erdogan calls on West to recognize PYD as terror group," Anadolu Agency, February 16, 2016. Accessed May 22, 2016. <http://aa.com.tr/en/turkey/erdogan-calls-on-west-to-recognize-pyd-as-terror-group/522348>; "PYD can never be reliable anti-Daesh partner: Turkish FM," Anadolu Agency, March 12, 2016. Accessed May 12, 2016. <http://aa.com.tr/en/world/pyd-can-never-be-reliable-anti-daesh-partner-turkish-fm/536154>; and "Turkey warns US over 'Kurdish corridor' in Syria," Hürriyet Daily News, January 7, 2016.

apparent in the socio-cultural framing consistent in Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Turkey's Press Releases and the statements of the policy elite between 2003 and 2020 in Turkish Presidency archives. For example, Turkish President, Tayyip Erdogan, has referred to this issue multiple times by addressing Turkish Cypriot community as "our fellow Turkish brothers" (Turkish Presidency, 2016; 2018; 2019).

Overall, framing data for Turkey between 2003 and 2016 clearly shows that Turkey promoted a more cooperative and multilateral approach for the Eastern Mediterranean region. However, following 2016, Turkey has started to follow a more assertive policy towards the region, which is apparent in the rapid increase of 'security conflictual' and 'economic interest conflictual' frames between 2017 and 2020. The data between 2017-2020 supports the H1 arguing that Turkey's isolation from the regionalization process is a result of its Turkey's assertive statements and use of force to gain control over offshore energy reserves in the region, which in turn have altered the littoral state's threat perception and led them to balance against Turkey.

Nevertheless, despite Turkey's emphasis on multilateralism and dialogue between 2003 and 2016, Greece and the SCGA's framing of the politics of the East Mediterranean hydrocarbon resources through a consistent discourse of conflictual security relationship (57.7% of the total number of 104 frames and 53.6% of the total number of 97 frames, respectively) needs further elaboration. In other words, Greece and the SCGA's position against Turkey, which frames their relationship in dominantly security conflictual position through 2010 and 2020, cannot be solely explained by security dilemma or changing balance of power in the region. Indeed, the emergence of the EMGF in which Israel is a participant along with Egypt, Jordan and Palestine cannot be sufficiently explained by materially driven balancing acts against Turkey. Other ideational factors such as cognitive priors about Turkey should be looked at to understand the changes and

continuities in framing the policies of selected actors and more importantly Turkey's isolation from the regionalization process in the case of the EMGF

4.2.2 Prominent Frames in the SCGA's Approach to Turkey in the Eastern Mediterranean

Table 4 and Figure 12 below shows how Turkey's policy in the Eastern Mediterranean is framed within the SCGA's official statements between 2010 and 2020. The most frequently mentioned frame in the SCGA's policy elite discourse was 'security conflictual' with 53.6 % of all 97 coded frames. It is followed by 'economic interest conflictual' (28.9%), 'security cooperative' (10.3%), 'economic interest cooperative' (5.15%) and 'socio-cultural' (2.06%).

Year	Security- Conflictual	Security- Cooperative	Economic Interest- Conflictual	Economic Interest- Cooperative	Socio Cultural	Total
2010	2	0	2	0	0	4
2011	11	1	7	2	1	22
2012	8	1	6	1	0	16
2013	1	0	0	0	0	2
2014	0	0	0	0	0	0
2015	2	1	0	0	0	3
2016	3	2	2	1	0	8
2017	4	2	2	0	0	8
2018	3	0	1	0	0	4
2019	10	0	4	0	1	15
2020	8	3	4	1	0	16
Total	52	10	28	5	2	97

(5.15%) and 'socio-cultural' (2.06%).

Table 4: Number of Frame Occurrences in the SCGA between 2010 and 2020 about Turkey in the Eastern Mediterranean. *Dataset formulated by using PIO Archives*

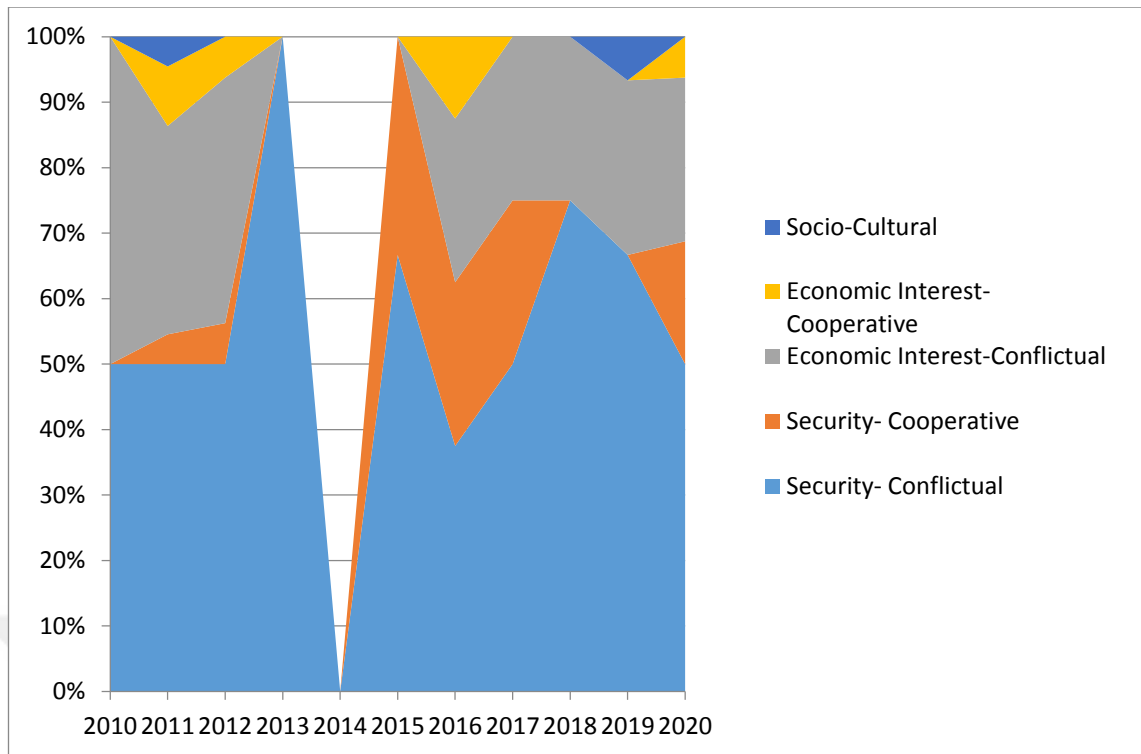


Figure 12: The SCGA's framing of the Turkish activities in the region between 2010 and 2020

It not surprising that 'security conflictual' frame leads the official Greek Cypriot discourse. The high number of security conflictual frame occurrences in 2011 and 2012 corresponds to times when TRNC licensed Turkey to search for oil and natural gas in Cypriot EEZ. Similarly, the high number of security conflictual frame occurrences between 2017 and 2020 corresponds to Turkey's inflamed rhetoric and assertive military maneuvers in the region. Overall, Turkish activities in the region have been highlighted as a threat to sovereign rights of the "Republic of Cyprus" and stability in the broader region. In similar vein, 'economic interest conflictual' frame has also shown a rapid increase contemporaneously with the 'security conflictual' frame due to newly discovered natural gas reserves in Block 6 in 2018, which overlaps with the Turkey's continental shelf claims as well as drilling activities in other overlapping offshore block 7 (See Figure 5 in Chapter 3).

Yet, what is striking in the SCGA's security conflictual framing is that certain cognitive priorities seem to guide the policy discourse about Turkey. These cognitive priors have resulted with the portrayal of Turkey as a historically aggressive and expansionist country due to the Cyprus conflict. Words such as "occupation force", "illegal Turkish occupation of the northern part of Cyprus", "freeing Cyprus from Turkish occupation", "being ravaged by the Turkish invasion" "*expansionist designs* on the basis of its '*well known*' behavior", etc. have been consistently evident in the policy elite statements in the SCGA between 2010 and 2020 (PIO Achieves, 2010; 2011; 2012). This explains why Turkey and the SCGA have not been able to form a cooperative framework for the resolution of the dispute despite Turkey's emphasis on cooperative frames between 2003 and 2015.

Moreover, both 'security cooperative' and 'economic interest cooperative' frames occasionally highlighted in the SCGA officials' statements. Turkey's key role in the resolution of Cyprus conflict and stability in the broader region has been acknowledged (PIO Achieves, 2015), but this did not influence the subsequent regional policymaking. Finally, 'socio-cultural' frame within the SCGA has appeared extremely low. In very limited number of appearances for socio-cultural frame, shared democratic values, EU values, and common history between Greece, Israel, and SCGA has been emphasized.

4.2.3 Prominent Frames in Greece's Approach to Turkey in the Eastern Mediterranean

Greece has followed a very similar discourse in its approach to Turkey's activities in the Eastern Mediterranean. Accordingly, the most frequently mentioned frame in Greek Ministry of Foreign Affairs' press releases is 'security conflictual' (57.7% of all 104 coded frames). This is followed by the 'economic interest- conflictual' frame (17.3%), 'security cooperative' (9.6%), 'economic interest cooperative' (7.7%) and 'socio-

cultural' (7.7%).

Year	Security- Conflictual	Security- Cooperative	Economic Interest- Conflictual	Economic Interest- Cooperative	Socio Cultural	Total
2010	1	0	0	0	0	1
2011	5	1	2	0	0	8
2012	0	1	0	1	0	2
2013	2	2	2	2	0	8
2014	5	1	0	1	2	9
2015	3	0	1	0	1	5
2016	2	2	1	1	1	7
2017	9	0	2	0	2	13
2018	8	0	3	0	2	13
2019	13	2	0	2	0	17
2020	12	1	7	1	0	21
Total	60	10	18	8	8	104

Table 5: Number of Frame Occurrences in Greece between 2010 and 2020 about Turkey in the Eastern Mediterranean. Data acquired from *Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Greece*, Press Releases and News

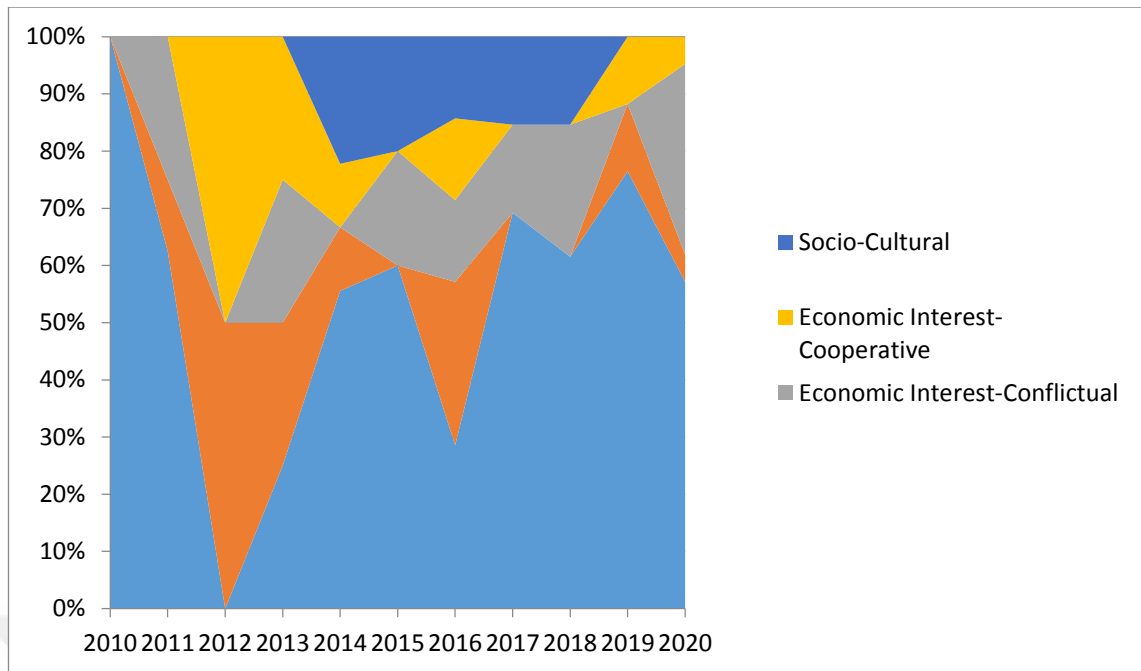


Figure 13: Greece's framing of the Turkish activities in the region between 2010 and 2020

Very similar to the SCGA's framing, there is a rapid increase in the number two leading frames, 'security conflictual' and 'economic interest conflictual', in certain years, when Turkey has started to follow more assertive policy options in the field. Consequently, in 2011, when Turkey signed bilateral EEZ agreement with the TRNC, which grants Turkish Petroleum Company (TP) the right to search for oil and natural gas in Cyprus offshore fields, number of coded 'security conflictual' frames have increased swiftly. Similarly, following the failure of reunification talks in Switzerland in 2017, Turkey has started to follow policies that are more aggressive¹⁶ between 2017 and 2020 and these policies have contributed to increasing occurrences of security conflictual frames and consequent external balancing against Turkey aiming to exclude it from the regional institution building (EMGF) process. However, similar to the SCGA's framing, certain cognitive priorities that portrays Turkey as a historically aggressive and expansionist

¹⁶ These policies are labelled as 'gunboat diplomacy' in various MFA press releases, policy elite speeches by Greece and SCGA, and some academic, newspaper, and policy articles about the Turkish activities in the Eastern Mediterranean region.

occupation force, particularly related to the Cyprus dispute, was also evident in Greece's 'security conflictual' and 'economic-interest conflictual' framing of Turkey.

The 'security conflictual' framing has reached the zenith after 2019, when Turkey strategically counter balance against EMGF countries , especially against Greece, SCGA, and Israel's plans to build the East Med gas pipeline, by signing an EEZ delimitation agreement with the internationally recognized (GNA) government in Libya. This strategic maneuver from the Turkish side has resulted with the intensification of security and economic conflictual frames about Turkey in Greece, SCGA, Israel, Egypt and the European Union. Most recent example of this is Greek Defense Minister Nikos Panagiotopoulos' response to a question about Turkish and Libyan drilling plans in the Eastern Mediterranean:

"Turkey's behavior lately is quite aggressive. I believe that the only way for Greece to deal with this behavior, which generally has an increasing tendency to aggression, is on the one hand to exhaust all its diplomatic weapons and on the other hand to ensure an increase in the deterrent power of the Armed Forces... Of course, military involvement is possible in all cases. We do not want to go there, but we want to make it clear that we will do whatever it takes to defend our sovereign rights to the fullest extent possible." (Antonopoulos, 2020).

Occasionally, Turkey's important role in achieving security and prosperity in the Eastern Mediterranean has also been highlighted. It is not particularly surprising that 'security cooperation' frame was more frequently mentioned than 'economic interest cooperative' frame. Given the fact that these countries have conflicting claims over maritime jurisdiction zones in the Eastern Mediterranean Sea and very different

preferences in terms of the extraction and transportation of the natural gas from offshore fields in this region.

Finally, ‘socio-cultural’ (7.7%) frame was one of the least frequently mentioned frames throughout the period covered in this study. Yet, Greece has occasionally referred to their relationship with Greek Cypriot in the context of ‘Hellenism’ and requested Turkey to respect the sovereign rights of ‘fellow Greek Cypriots’. Moreover, Greece has reminded Turkey’s candidacy status to the EU several times and requested Turkey to comply with EU values and principles with respect to its approach to Cyprus’ sovereign rights in the Eastern Mediterranean.

4.2.4 Israeli Perception and Emerging Alliances in the Eastern Mediterranean

The initial Israeli vision for the Eastern Mediterranean was particularly based on economic cooperation as former Israeli Prime Minister, Ehud Olmert, stated in his speech regarding the Mediterranean region in 2008: *“The foundation for good relations between peoples and the building of long-term interests is supported, in great part, by economic cooperation... I believe we must expand the framework for this cooperation, not only with the countries with which Israel already conducts economic and commercial ties, but also with those with whom we do not have ties.”* (Israel PM’s Office, 2008). With the discovery of natural gas in Israeli fields during 2010s, Israeli discourse has started to highlight the importance of these reserves not only for the Israeli economy and energy security but also for peace, stability, and prosperity in the broader region (Israel MFA Press Room, 2012; Israel PM’s Office, 2013). Even though Turkey has been one of the major political and economic allies of the Israel through 1990s, Turkish-Israeli relations took a downward turn starting from 2009 as explained in the Chapter 3. This has enforced Israel to construct new partnerships and alliances in the Eastern Mediterranean, particularly with the SCGA and Greece.

Historically, being an island in the Eastern Mediterranean gave Cyprus incentive to reap the benefits of Arab markets and utilize their support with their confrontation with the Turkey. Thus, Cyprus historically supported Palestinians and the Arab world visa vis. Arab-Israeli and Israeli-Palestinian conflicts. In return, Arab states recognized the Greek Cypriots in the Republic of Cyprus as the legitimate ruler of the island. On the other hand, Israel perceived its cooperation with the SCGA and Greece as one of the strategic opportunities to break its isolation from in the region the region, particularly in the absence of its military cooperation with Turkey as a non-Arab majority Muslim country in the region since 2011. Despite formation of a strategic cooperation between Turkey and Israel in 1996 that was led largely by the improvements in the Arab-Israeli peace process in the early 1990s and the mutual security threat perceptions particularly towards Syria (Tanchtum, 2015), bilateral relations between Israel and the SCGA have started quite later. Two countries' rapprochement has started in 1990s with the conclusion of series of bilateral agreements and Nicosia's decision to establish an embassy located in Tel Aviv in 1994 (Stergiou, 2016).

Further, following the Mavi Marmara incident in 2010, Turkey withdrew its participation from naval exercise, Reliant Mermaid in 2011, conducted routinely by U.S, Israel and Turkey in the Eastern Mediterranean. The United States and Israel invited Greece to join and renamed the occasion as Noble Dina. Within this framework, a window of opportunity for energy cooperation has emerged also for the development of hydrocarbon reserves in the Eastern Mediterranean. As noted before, two countries have signed an EEZ delimitation agreement in 2010, which Turkish Foreign Ministry responded 'as null and void' with a press release (Turkish MFA, 2010). Moreover, in January 2012, the SGCA's Defense Minister, Demetris Eliades, visited Israel, where two counties signed a security cooperation agreement. Following the agreement, Israeli

Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu have executed the first state level visit to Cyprus. During this visit, additional agreements granting Israel right to operate in Cypriot territorial waters and airspace for search and rescue missions were signed (Asianews, 2012).

In response to the SCGA's emerging security and economic cooperation with Israel, Turkey promulgated a new and more assertive naval doctrine in the Eastern Mediterranean (Tanchum, 2014). In March 2012, Commander of the Turkish Navy, Murat Bilgel, announced that Turkey's new naval objectives as to '*operate not only in the littorals but also on the high seas*'. Following these developments, military tensions between Turkey and Israel have continued in the Eastern Mediterranean, in which Turkish aircrafts forced an Israeli aircraft to leave TRNC's airspace. In 2013, the new Commander of Turkish Navy, Admiral Bostanoglu, indicated that Turkey's naval threat perception is '*energy-based*' and protecting Turkish interests in the Eastern Mediterranean as the navy's '*highest priority*' (Tanchum, 2015).

Israel's cooperation with the SCGA has expanded to include Greece. Starting with the first High-Level Political Consultations between Greece, Israel, and SCGA in 2013, energy security and cooperation with Greece and Cyprus in the Eastern Mediterranean have become part of official discourse of the Israel (Israel MFA Press Room, 2014). However, during the initial years of this new 'alliance', Israel refrained from mentioning Turkey in their political speeches regarding the Eastern Mediterranean due to ongoing reconciliation attempts. Indeed, in April 2013, following the US-led efforts to achieve a Turkish-Israeli rapprochement, Israel has sent an official apology to Ankara regarding the Mavi Marmara incident. Consequently, officials from both countries have

promoted the idea of transportation of Israeli gas to Turkey via an undersea pipeline as an attractive project for economic as well as political reasons¹⁷.

Moreover, in 2013, Israeli PM, Netanyahu, has regretted the recent deterioration of Turkish-Israeli relations and emphasized his commitment to overcoming differences to achieve peace and stability in the region (Israel MFA Press Room, 2013). Similarly, in December 2015 announcement of a diplomatic breakthrough between Turkey and Israel could pave the road for a possible normalization of relations between the two states in 2016.

Yet, as diplomatic efforts for Turkish-Israeli reconciliation have started to fail, Israeli discourse has started to be more open about its alliance with Greece and Cyprus. In 2016, a common trilateral summit declaration published by Israel, Greece, and Cyprus has emphasized the '*common democratic values*', '*principles*', and '*interests*', and "*agreed on the importance for closer cooperation and a coordinated set of policies*" (Israel MFA Press Room, 2016). During his speech in the trilateral summit in 2016, PM Netanyahu has emphasized again that the alliance between Greece, SCGA, and Israel is based on common democratic practices and values:

"First I have to say that we have common values. We are three democracies in the Eastern Mediterranean. There are not too many around here. But we share the ideas of pluralism, diversity, choice, debate – democracies. And that forms an immediate bond of friendship. But I think there is an even wider circle of states in the region that seek

¹⁷ Barkat, "Turkish official proposes gas pipeline from Israel", Globes, 21 November 2012, <http://www.globes.co.il/serveen/globes/docview.asp?did=1000800189> and "Turkey could be anchor customer for Israeli gas", Globes, 29 January 2013, <http://www.globes.co.il/serveen/globes/docview.asp?did=1000818049>; "Israel sees 'Med-Streams' in service of regional diplomacy", Hürriyet Daily News, 12 April 2013,

what we seek in terms of common interests: stability, security, prosperity and peace” (Israel PM’s Office, 2016).

This socio-cultural framing has been evident in Israeli discourse between 2016 and 2020. Moreover, the diplomatic crisis between Turkey and Israel have further escalated in December 8, 2017, when Israel declared Jerusalem as the capital of the Israel. This has resulted with vitriolic public speeches from both sides and Israel has started to denounce Turkish activities in the Eastern Mediterranean. As the tension escalates further following the Erdogan’s caustic statements about Israeli-Palestinian conflict, Netanyahu has started to respond with a similarly antagonistic manner. Consequently, on May 15, 2018, Netanyahu has responded to Erdogan and portrayed Turkey as the occupier of northern Cyprus: *"The man, who sends thousands of Turkish soldiers to maintain the occupation of northern Cyprus and invades Syria, will not preach to us when we defend ourselves against invasion by Hamas. A man whose hands are drenched in the blood of countless Kurdish civilians in Turkey and Syria is the last one who can preach to us about military ethics"* (Israel MFA Press Room, 2018). Similarly, on December 22, 2018, PM Netanyahu has stated *"Erdogan – the occupier of northern Cyprus, whose army massacres women and children in Kurdish villages, inside and outside Turkey – should not preach to Israel."* (Israel MFA Press Room, 2018).

As Turkish-Israeli diplomatic relations further collapsed, the initial alignment or ‘quasi alliance’ (Tziarras, 2016) between Greece, SCGA and Israel has turned into ‘alliance’ as PM Netanyahu has stated in 2018: *"We share deep histories and rich culture. We are all vibrant democracies. We all value pluralism, freedom, and peace. And we are all threatened by forces of terror and religious radicalism. Our ‘alliance’ is an anchor of stability and prosperity in the Eastern Mediterranean"* (Israel PM’s Office, 2018).

Similarly on January 2, 2020: *"This is a true ‘alliance’ in the Eastern Mediterranean*

that is economic and political, and it adds to the security and stability of the region. Again, not against anyone, but rather for the values and to the benefit of our citizens” (Israel PM’s Office, 2020).

Accordingly, the breakthrough for Turkey’s isolation in the regionalization process seems to be accelerated with two major geopolitical shifts in the region: (i) Failure of normalization of relations between Israel and Turkey in the aftermath of domestic politics with the July 2016 putsch incident; and (ii) Turkey’s use of military force in preventing further drilling in the offshore fields within the disputed continental shelf and the EEZs in addition to Turkey’s own drilling ships’ activities in these disputed maritime jurisdiction areas.

In short, within the process of creating an alignment between Israel, the SCGA, and Greece increasingly socio-cultural framing has been observed in Israeli’s official discourse between 2016 and 2020 rather than Israel’s purely materially driven threat perceptions against Turkey, while in response Turkey’s assertiveness by its naval force has increased balancing acts of the SCGA and Greece .

4.2.5 The European Union’s Stance on Turkish Activities in the Region

The European Union has followed a parallel discourse with Greece and Cyprus about Turkey’s activities in the Eastern Mediterranean region. In December 2010, Council of Europe has published the ‘Council Conclusion’, which urged Turkey to refrain from any kind of aggressive discourse and behavior that could negatively influence the peaceful resolution of border disputes. Similarly, in 2011, EU Commission has published the following statement in line with the December 2010 Council conclusions: *“the EU urges Turkey to refrain from any kind of threat, sources of friction or action, which could negatively affect good neighborly relations and the peaceful settlement of border*

disputes... Furthermore, the EU has stressed all the sovereign rights of EU Member States which include entering into bilateral agreements, in accordance with the EU acquis and international law, including the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea”.

(PIO Achieves, 2011). These initial statements made by different EU bodies have demonstrated the EU’s initial stance on the SCGA and Greece’s side on demarcation of sea boundaries conflict in the Eastern Mediterranean. Nevertheless, compared to later statements, the EU has followed a more cautious approach that did not accuse Turkey to violate international law or engaging in illegal and aggressive behavior.

However, following the failure of reunification talks in 2017 and deteriorating political relations between Turkey and the EU after a series of political crisis between 2016 and 2019, EU has also started to take more concrete stance about Turkish activities in the Eastern Mediterranean. In February 2, 2018, European Council (EC) President, Donald Tusk, has made the following statement about the Turkish activities in the Eastern Mediterranean:

“This evening President Anastasiades and Prime Minister Tsipras informed us about the latest developments regarding Turkey’s illegal violations in the Eastern Mediterranean and in the Aegean. On behalf of all the EU leaders, I would like to express our solidarity with Cyprus and Greece, and urgently call on Turkey to terminate these activities. I reiterate our support for the sovereign right of the Republic of Cyprus to explore and exploit its natural resources, in accordance with EU and international law, including the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea. These actions contradict Turkey’s commitment to good neighborly relations and their normalization with all Member States” (PIO Achieves, 2018).

A month later, in March 23, Donald Tusk has announced that the European Council strongly condemns Turkey's continued illegal actions in the Eastern Mediterranean and the Aegean Sea (European Council, 2018). Following these developments, in October 14, 2019, EU Council adopted new conclusions that addressed the issue:

“In light of Turkey's continued illegal drilling activities in the eastern Mediterranean, the Council reaffirms its full solidarity with Cyprus, regarding the respect of its sovereignty and sovereign rights in accordance with international law. It recalls its conclusions of 15 July 2019 in all its parts, and notably that delimitation of exclusive economic zones and continental shelf should be addressed through dialogue and negotiation in good faith, in full respect of international law and in accordance with the principle of good neighborly relations” (Council of the EU, 2019).

Three days later, in October 17, 2019, a new The European Council conclusion on Turkey has been published and Turkey has been asked to seize its illegal drilling activities and Council reaffirmed its solidarity with Cyprus (European Council, 2019). A month later, European council has adopted a new framework for sanctions in the light of Turkey's continued “unauthorized” and “illegal” drilling activities in the Eastern Mediterranean. Accordingly, EC has announced:

“The sanctions will consist of a travel ban to the EU and an asset freeze for persons, and an asset freeze for entities. In addition, EU persons and entities will be forbidden from making funds available to those listed”. Moreover, the Council has also decided to “suspend negotiations on the Comprehensive Air Transport Agreement and agreed not to hold the Association Council and further meetings of the EU-Turkey high-level dialogues for the time being. It also endorsed the Commission's proposal to reduce the pre-accession assistance to Turkey for 2020 and invited the European Investment Bank

to review its lending activities in Turkey, notably with regard to sovereign-backed lending”. (Council of the EU, 2019).¹⁸

In 31 January 2020, the EU High Representative has announced that the candidate countries Montenegro, Republic of North Macedonia, Albania, and Serbia, and the EFTA country Iceland, member of the European Economic Area, align themselves with the Council’s above-mentioned restrictive measures taken against Turkish activities in the Eastern Mediterranean (Council of the EU, 2020). Most recently, in May 15, the EU Foreign Ministers have made a statement on the situation in the Eastern Mediterranean, and reaffirmed their position in line with the previous Council and European Council conclusions. Moreover, importance of dialogue and good faith in negotiation for maritime delimitation between relevant coasts has been emphasized (Council of the EU, 2020).

4.2.6 The Shifts in the U.S Approach

The unease in the Eastern Mediterranean might has disruptive implications for the broader region. Thus, Washington D.C has an incentive to find a solution to maritime boundaries delimitation conflict in the region. At first, U.S avoided taking sides between Cyprus and Turkey. Accordingly, on February 5, 2007, the spokesperson for the U.S State Department has made the following statements in a response to question:

“U.S policy has not changed. Any dispute here is between Republic of Cyprus, those countries that have signed agreements with Cyprus, and Turkey. The United States is not a party to these agreements. The State Department has no recommendations as to whether American companies should participate in the bidding process. The

¹⁸ See Council of the EU, 2019. Turkey’s illegal drilling activities in the Eastern Mediterranean: Council adopts framework for sanctions <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2019/11/11/turkey-s-illegal-drilling-activities-in-the-eastern-mediterranean-council-adopts-framework-for-sanctions/> for more details of the sanctions.

controversy, however, points to the need for all parties to focus on re-starting the UN's good offices mission to forge a comprehensive Cyprus settlement that reunifies the island into a bi-zonal, bi-communal federation. The next step should be to implement the agreement brokered by the Under Secretary-General Gambari, July 8, 2006. A final settlement will enable all Cypriots to benefit from Island's resources" (Skordas, 2007, p.2).

As explained before¹⁹, the U.S has also pushed for Turkish-Israeli reconciliation after the Mavi Marmara incident in 2010, as the conflict between two countries would limit the effectiveness for U.S policy response to Arab spring (Ozertem, 2016). To that end, the U.S has continued to follow a more neutral stance until recent years. In 2012, The State Department spokesperson, Victoria Nuland, has been asked a question about Turkish threats to Cyprus and foreign companies operating in Cyprus' EEZ and gave the following response: *"we want to see those things go forward in a way that is transparent and is clear to all"* (PIO Achieves, 2012) and avoided making public statement on the issue.

However, series of political crisis between Turkey and the U.S has altered the United States' stance more in the favor newly emerging Greece, SCGA and Israeli alliance. In 2016, Turkey has arrested American Priest, Andrew Bronson, for alleged Gulenist movement and PKK connections. This crisis was one of the biggest downturns in the diplomatic relations between the United States and Turkey. The crisis expanded between two countries, when Turkey and the U.S has started experience more diplomatic problems over the U.S support for Syrian Kurds (YPG) and strategies to follow in Syria, and peaked with the Turkish decision to buy S-400 Missile Defense systems from the Russia in 2019 (Gulmez, 2020).

¹⁹ See Chaoter 3.6.2

All of these crises have altered the U.S.'s relatively neutral position in the Eastern Mediterranean. Consequently, in 2018, the U.S. Ambassador in Israel, Mr David Friedman, has made the following statement about the Eastern Mediterranean: *"USA supports the trilateral partnership between Israel, Greece and Cyprus. This partnership is an anchor of stability in the eastern Mediterranean and is based on common interests and common values that the three countries share together with the USA"* (PIO Achieves, 2018). Following these developments, in 2019, the first economic dialogue between the U.S and trilateral partners Republic of Cyprus, Greece and Israel has occurred. In this meeting, U.S Secretary of State, Michael Pompeo, underlined the U.S support for trilateral mechanism for peace, stability and prosperity in the Eastern Mediterranean (PIO Achieves, 2019). Moreover, in October 2019, during a visit to Greece, Secretary Pompeo has said, *"We've made clear that operations in international waters are governed by a set of rules. We've told the Turks that illegal drilling is unacceptable and we'll continue to take diplomatic actions to ... ensure that lawful activity takes place,"* (Brunnstrom and Maltezou, 2019).

Moreover, Secretary Pompeo has joined the sixth summit meeting between Israel, Greece and, SCGA in 2019. PM Netanyahu has emphasized the U.S support for their regional initiative with the following statement: *"The fact that we are joined in this meeting by the US Secretary of State, Mike Pompeo is significant. It signifies the fact that the United States supports this regional effort, and it has many, many facets that we're going to discuss. And I think that it says that this is something for the long haul"* (Israel PM's Office, 2019). Finally, The Deputy Assistant of the U.S Secretary of Energy has expressed United States' desire to join the Eastern Mediterranean Gas Forum as a permanent observer (Middle East Monitor, 2020).

Both of the shifts in the EU and the U.S approach towards the region has contributed to speeding up the regionalization process that resulted with the isolation of Turkey in the Eastern Mediterranean. To be precise, the U.S and EU positions favoring the EMGF bloc has acted as ‘third conditioning effect’ for the formation of an exclusive regional order in the Eastern Mediterranean. The increasing skepticism in the relationship between Turkey and the U.S over the Syria and Kurdish issue and suspected foreign intelligence role in the coup attempt of July 2016 (Anadolu Agency, 2016; BBC, 2016) has encouraged Turkey’s current political leadership to seek alternatives in security cooperation, while the EU accession process in stalemate further facilitated Turkey’s loneliness and questioning its place in the West. For example, the EU has requested several times from Turkey to comply with the EU values and principles in the region. As a result, the shifts in Turkey’s attitude towards the US and the EU have undermined Turkey’s status among coastal states as a cooperative actor. Particularly the shifts in neutral position of the United States starting from 2017 have encouraged Israel, Greece and, the SCGA to continue with their regional vision that isolates Turkey. Finally, EMGF Statue has been under review for its compatibility with the EU Law and this is a clear example of how the EU uses its normative power to transfuse not only its social values but also market principles (energy market regulations, etc.) to the EMGF.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

In recent years, there has been an increasing tendency between scholars and energy analysts to study Eastern Mediterranean as a distinct region (Tziarras, 2019). Exploring the dynamics of the ongoing regionalization attempts in the Eastern Mediterranean has guided scholars in their research agenda over the last decade. Most of the literature has approached the question of regionalization from the perspective of whether natural resources can act as an incentive for regional cooperation or facilitate peace (Grigoriadis, 2014; Gurel and Le Cornu, 2014; Demiryol, 2019). Competing insights from realist and liberal international relations theories have dominated the study of eastern Mediterranean politics. Almost all of these studies have argued that security considerations prevail over expected economic gains. In other words, economics cannot be separated from geopolitics in the context of the Eastern Mediterranean natural gas (Winrow, 2016). Only a very limited number of studies have touched upon the ideational forces behind the isolation of certain states from the regionalization process, namely the EMGF (Rubin and Eiran, 2019).

This study has attempted to reveal both the ideational mechanisms and material interests leading to Turkey's isolation from the regionalization process, particularly from the Eastern Mediterranean Gas Forum. To that end, two plausible hypotheses based on realist and constructivist schools of international relations theories have been considered: *1) Turkey's path to regional hegemony by gaining control over offshore energy reserves in the region has altered the littoral state's threat perception and led them to balance against Turkey by forming the EMGF. ; 2) The EMGF emerged as participant states' construction of a regionalization process in which ideas have been*

institutionalized through their cognitive priors about Turkey and its current political leadership and in response to outsiders' norms and material interests.

The evidence suggests that certain cognitive priors about Turkey particularly between 2003 and 2015 have guided Greece and the SCGA's alliance seeking behavior to balance against Turkish continental shelf claims in the region. Consequently, despite Turkey's initial regional vision based on cooperation, multilateralism, and dialogue between Turkey, Greece and, of the two communities in Cyprus, pre-held ideas portraying Turkey as an 'historical aggressor', 'occupation force', etc. by the SCGA and Greece have prevented the realization of a cooperative body between these countries.

On the other hand, Turkey's other foreign policy problems with particularly Israel and Egypt have created a window of opportunity for Greece and the SCGA to form trilateral partnerships with these countries. It is important to highlight that the ideational factors, such as political Islam were fundamental to Turkish foreign policy under the AKP's political leadership. AKP's support for Hamas and Muslim Brotherhood mainly acted as a trigger for deterioration of Turkish-Israeli and Turkish-Egyptian relations and paved the way for Turkey's isolation in the Eastern Mediterranean. On top of this, Turkish President Erdogan's vitriolic manner in his political speeches related to Israel and Egypt have further accelerated the downturn Turkish-Israeli and Turkish-Egyptian bilateral relations and brought the EMGF bloc closer. Moreover, shifts in the United States neutral position towards more in favor of the EMGF bloc, and the EU's both material and ideational support have acted as the 'third conditioning affect' for the formation of regional order in the Eastern Mediterranean region.

However, starting from 2016 it also evident that the Turkey has started to follow a more proactive and assertive policy towards Eastern Mediterranean. During this period, show

of military force and unilateral drilling programs were the main determinants of Turkish foreign energy policy in the Eastern Mediterranean. There is a clearly visible substantial increase in ‘security conflictual’ framing in Turkey particularly between 2016 and 2020. Especially after the failure of most recent Cyprus reunification talks in July 2017, Turkey has shifted its policy discourse about the Eastern Mediterranean region and started to follow more assertive policies, which are often labelled as a gunboat diplomacy.

Ultimately, the current regional order (EMGF) in the Eastern Mediterranean represents a geo-political approach even though they occasionally declare that the EMGF is not formed against any other country and are open to additional memberships including Turkey. My evidence suggests that certain cognitive priors about Turkey, particularly during the pre-2016 period, has guided the Greece and SCGA’ alliance seeking behavior to balance against Turkey. Similarly, Israel and Egypt’s approaches to Turkey about the politics of the Eastern Mediterranean have been heavily influenced by the AKP’s ideational foreign policy orientation based on political Islam. Thus, despite concurrence of material interests particularly between Turkey and the Israel, other political problems stemming from the cognitive priors about the Turkey’s current political leadership have prevented the cooperation between Turkey and the Israel. Therefore, the H2 explains Turkey’s isolation from the regionalization process between 2010 and 2017.

On the contrary, post-2016 period witnessed a shift in Turkey’s foreign policy discourse regarding the Eastern Mediterranean and the EMGF countries’ subsequent balancing strategies against Turkey. Turkey’s assertive policies based on show of force and unilateral drilling activities have escalated the tensions in the region. Although Turkey has the longest coastline to the Eastern Mediterranean Sea and is one of the largest markets for the monetization of offshore natural gas fields in the region, the shift in

Turkey's foreign policy approach accelerated already existing certain cognitive priors about Turkey and resulted in its isolation from the regional institution building process. Therefore, the H1 partially contributes to the explanation of Turkey's isolation from the regional institution building process (EMGF) particularly between 2017 and 2020.

Finally, a cooperative regional order inclusive of all of the coastal states in the Eastern Mediterranean seems not possible in the near future. Last three years (between 2017 and 2020) has witnessed a rapid escalation of the conflict among Turkey, Greece, the SCGA, Israel, and Egypt over demarcation of maritime borders and offshore natural gas fields in the region. The current structure of the EMGF reflects a balancing strategy against Turkey rather than being an inclusive region-building attempt. For example, the power dynamics and alliances in the Eastern Mediterranean has also been reflected in the Libyan civil war. While Turkey supports the Government of National Accord (GNA) in Libya, EMGF countries (particularly Egypt, France, Greece, and the SCGA) back the Haftar's militia. By supporting the GNA government in Libyan civil war, Turkey aims to maximize its EEZ in the Eastern Mediterranean and block the realization of the EastMed Pipeline project that conflicts with the Turkey's energy interests in the region. Similarly, the EMGF bloc support the Haftar's militia for their energy interests in the region. The outcome of the Libyan civil war will have serious implications for the regional order in the Eastern Mediterranean due to its relevance for the demarcation of the maritime borders in the region and routing of the natural gas to export markets.

Moreover, there are also fragile internal dynamics within the EMGF member countries. While the Israel, Greece and the SCGA, aim to include a normative aspects (principles such as democracy, human rights, free market, etc.) to the organization, it is not clear how authoritarian regimes like Egypt and Jordan will fit to this structure. Additionally, there has been a certain level of divergence, particularly between Egypt and the Israel,

Greece and the SCGA regarding the preferences for the transportation of the natural gas to the export markets. All of these disputes will have serious implications for the future of the regionalization attempts in the Eastern Mediterranean region.

Future Research Directions and Foreign Policy Recommendations

There has been a growing interest among both academic and policy circles regarding the politics of hydrocarbon resources development in the Eastern Mediterranean region. The most recent escalation of conflicts in the region following the November 2019 continental shelf delimitation agreement between Turkey and Government of National Accord (GNA) in Libya has turned Eastern Mediterranean into one of the most volatile regions in the world. Within this context, Turkey stands as a major actor in the region and its isolation from the regionalization process needed explanation.

The existing literature on the Eastern Mediterranean region has been dominated by mostly liberal and realist studies, which focus on either security concerns based on rational calculations or mutual economic incentives to explain state preferences and regional patterns. However, this study has emphasized Turkey's shifting policy discourse (2003-2020) from cooperative to conflictual especially following the 2016 compared to conflictual security dominated discourse in Greece and the SCGA between 2010 and 2020. Therefore, a competing argument has been presented that underlines the ideational mechanisms and material interests framing balancing acts to explain the regionalization process, EMGF, and Turkey's exclusion from it. However, the regionalization process in the Eastern Mediterranean is a relatively new and ongoing process; therefore, there are still multiple research areas that need to be addressed in the future. There are two major future research areas, which I found complementary to the development of my both work and broader literature on the Eastern Mediterranean region.

First, even though the study has touched upon the Turkish-Egyptian bilateral relations and ideational factors shaping it, Egypt's regional prominence has been increasing swiftly since the discovery of giant offshore Zohr field in 2015 and since then Egypt became a leading actor in the emergence of the EMGF. Therefore, a more detailed analysis, which focuses on how ideational factors (such as AKP's emphasis on political Islam, etc.) or rational material interest calculations shape the Turkish-Egyptian rivalry in the Eastern Mediterranean and Egyptian preferences regarding Turkey, is needed. Similarly, despite some changes in Turkey's foreign policy attitude after 2016 (ideational to threat oriented); Turkey failed to reconcile with both Egypt and Israel. All of these factors requires further explanation and have significant implications for the regionalization process in the Eastern Mediterranean.

Second, most of the literature has approached the politics of hydrocarbon developments in the Eastern Mediterranean from a state-centric perspective. However, state preferences are not the only determinants of the regionalization process in the Eastern Mediterranean. On the contrary, as noted before, final investment decisions are made by companies. Therefore, the role of multinational energy companies on coastal states' foreign energy policy making in the Eastern Mediterranean is a vital factor that needs further research. Moreover, this line of future research will be complementary to theoretical framework utilized in this study. Company preferences can act as third conditioning effects in explaining the emergence of regional order in the Eastern Mediterranean. For example, despite having no direct coastline to Eastern Mediterranean Sea, France has been heavily involved in the demarcation of maritime borders conflict in the region and one of leading states of the EMGF bloc against Turkey. This can be explained by the dense presence of French energy giant TOTAL in the Southern Cyprus' overlapping offshore blocks with Turkey. Thus, TOTAL's

presence in the region is a potential explanation to increasing Franco-Turkish rivalry in the Eastern Mediterranean.

Finally, the study gives two major foreign policy recommendations for Turkey to break its isolation in the East Med and for the emergence of regional order. First, Turkish political leadership's (AKP) foreign policy preferences based on political Islam has resulted with the rapid deterioration of Turkish-Israeli relations starting from 2008. Despite several reconciliation attempts, ideational factors seemed to prevent Turkish-Israeli re-rapprochement. Turkey immediately needs to focus on normalization of relations with Israel, which Turkey has mutual material interests in the region. Similarly, AKP's emphasis on political Islam has also caused a downturn in Turkish-Egyptian bilateral relations. Egypt as major actor in the region, especially within EMGF, plays a key role for Turkey to break its isolation in the East Med. In other words, Turkey should stop taking foreign policy decisions based on ideational factors such as political Islam and start building strategic partnerships based on common material interests.

Second, the study suggested that certain cognitive priors has guided policy makers in the region and resulted with the emergence of an exclusive regional order in the Eastern Mediterranean. However, these cognitive priors can be altered through new ideas (redefinition of causal ideas) and diplomatic initiatives that focuses on minimizing self-interested acts and encourage inclusive regional institutions, which would solve maritime jurisdictions disputes in the region through the principle of equitability in international law and the UNCLOS. Thus, all coastal states in the East Med, including outside actors, should pause their unilateral actions and assertive foreign policy moves and emphasize multilateralism for the resolution of the related disputes in the region.

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