

Forum: ECOSOC

Issue: The issue of regional instability in the eastern Mediterranean due to overlapping EEZ claims

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Introduction

Humanity has always needed water as a basic necessity. Apart from its essential function of providing food for life, water also acts as a conduit for the discovery of many important resources, including fish. But there is much more to humanity's interaction with this essential resource than just survival. Numerous valuable resources, such as coal, natural gas, and oil, have been discovered beneath the surface of water. Despite their great advantages, these resources almost always lead to conflict. Conflict is rarely absent when a resource of significant utility is present.

"Whoever rules the waves rules the world " once said a professor historian Alfred Thayer Mahan. Oceans have created empires, colonies, and much more. Therefore, it has always been a trouble for countries to share this crucial source of authority. However, nations could agree on basic standards about the law on the sea.

On 10th December 1982 168 countries and all the European Union countries agreed and they all signed the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS).

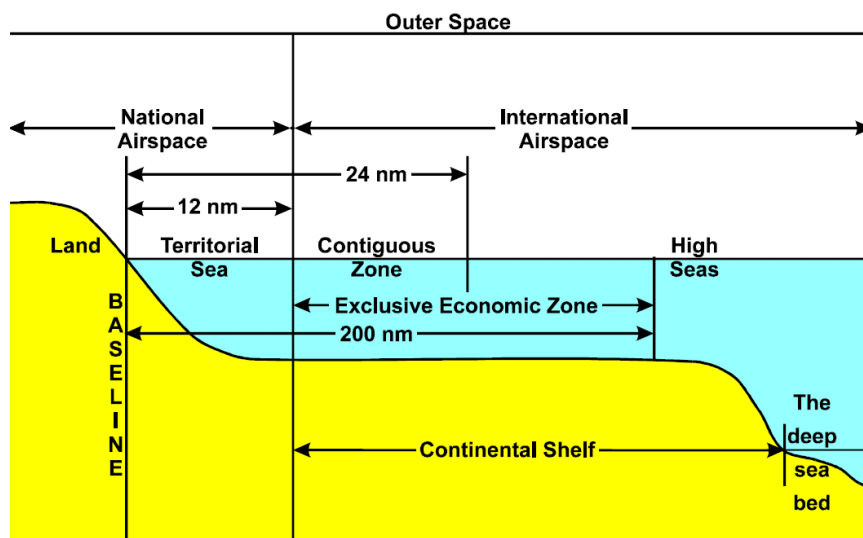




THE LAW OF THE SEA

Logo of the Convention

With this convention, all signing countries agree with the 76th Article that every nation will possess a 200 nautical miles external economic zone (EEZ) while possessing 12 nautical miles of territorial sea. According to the Convention, countries shall search for natural resources and use the ones in their EEZs. Additionally, nations are also able to conduct scientific research and they can construct other facilities if the nation decides to do so. This country is responsible for the protection of the environment in the zone. Nations can interfere with crimes in their EEZs under certain conditions indicated in the 27th Article of the UNCLOS.



Clarification of the EEZs according to UNCLOS

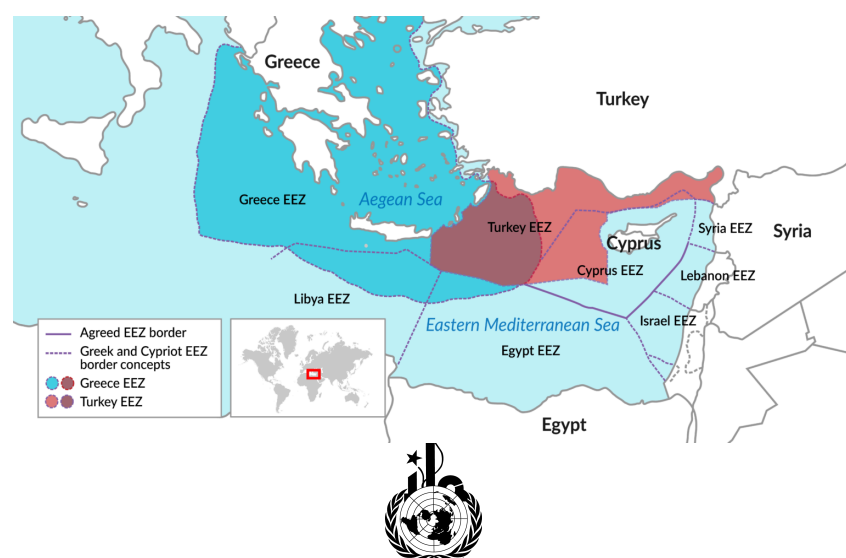


Although these rules apply to the signing countries there are still conflicts regarding EEZs. One of the most controversial conflicts concerning EEZs is in the Mediterranean Sea. There are several disputes in the region.

Greco-Turkish Conflict

On 24th July 1924, the newly founded Turkish Republic and Entente powers signed the Lausanne Treaty, and the Aegean Sea islands were shared among Greece and Türkiye. Nevertheless, most of the islands in the sea were given to Greece, and that made the sharing of the territorial sea zones a complete mess. Thus a huge dispute among the Greeks and Turkish people has started. On the 8th of June 1995, the Turkish Grand National Assembly passed a conclusion that Türkiye owns a *casus belli* against Greece since the country had increased its territorial sea from 6 nautical miles to 12 nautical miles illegally. Türkiye proclaimed that the act of Greece was against the Charter of the United Nations and according to Article 51 of the charter since the actions made by Greece were interfering with Türkiye's territorial sea. This was the reason why the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) passed resolution 395 on the 25th of August in 1976 to reduce the tensions between the two nations and increase negotiations among both parties. Additionally, the International Court of Justice (ICJ) in its ruling on 11 September 1976, determined the Aegean continental shelf beyond the territorial waters of the two littoral states as "areas in dispute" concerning which both Türkiye and Greece claim rights of exploration and exploitation.

No matter which measures international organizations take, both countries still dispute. Both nations still possess different claims about Greece's continental shelf and correspondingly their EEZs.

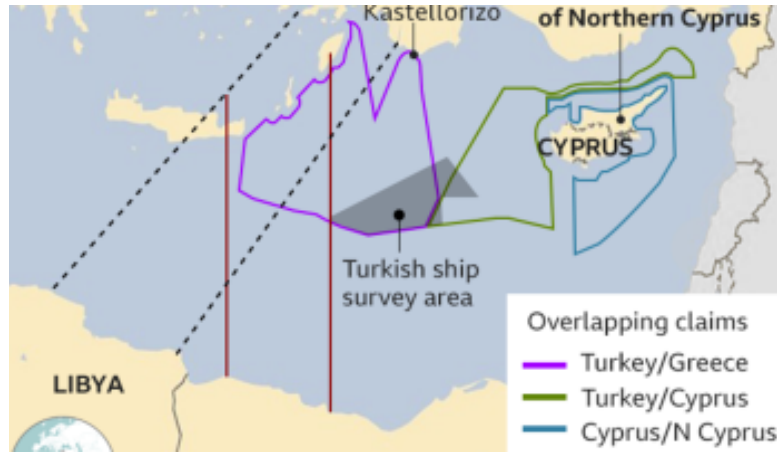


Both Countries claim about their EEZs

In the end, Türkiye rejects Greece's claims about its EEZ.

Turkish - Collaboration of Egypt, Cyprus and Israel Conflict

Türkiye's conflict in the Eastern Mediterranean EEZ has various aspects, including disagreements with Israel, Egypt, and the Republic of Cyprus (ROC). Cyprus's 1974 split into the Greek-controlled south and the Turkish-administered north gave opportunity to the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC), which is recognized just by Türkiye, to be founded. The root source of the issue is this division. Since the TRNC claims its own EEZ and it overlaps with the ROC's definition, tensions arise over EEZ territories.



TRNC's, Türkiye's and ROC's claims in the Eastern Mediterranean

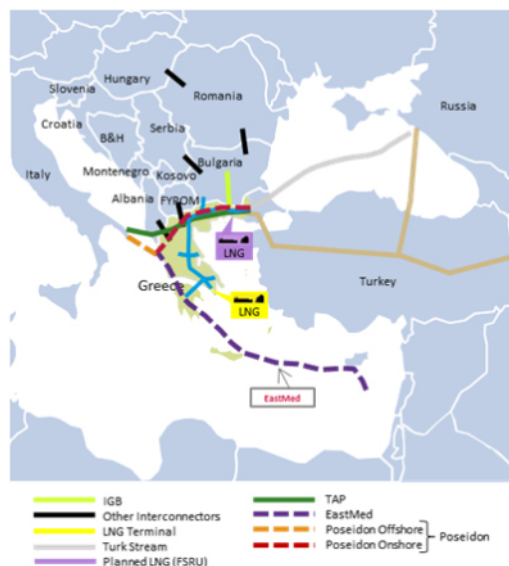
Türkiye disputes Cyprus's EEZ correlates with Egypt and Israel, claiming that they disregard Türkiye's maritime zones and the rights of the TRNC. Contrasting to Greece and Cyprus's positions under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), Türkiye proclaims that islands like Cyprus should not have the same EEZ privileges as mainland territories. As a result, Türkiye has begun drilling in regions that the Republic of Cyprus claims, which has enhanced tensions in the area.





Turkish Drill Ship 'Yavuz' in the region

Through agreements on energy exploration and infrastructure projects, such as the EastMed pipeline, which aims to carry gas from the Eastern Mediterranean to Europe, Egypt, Israel, and Cyprus have expanded their cooperation no matter what Türkiye states. These countries, which perceive Türkiye's actions as hostile and unlawful, work together diplomatically and economically to offset Türkiye's influence.



Projected EastMed Pipeline

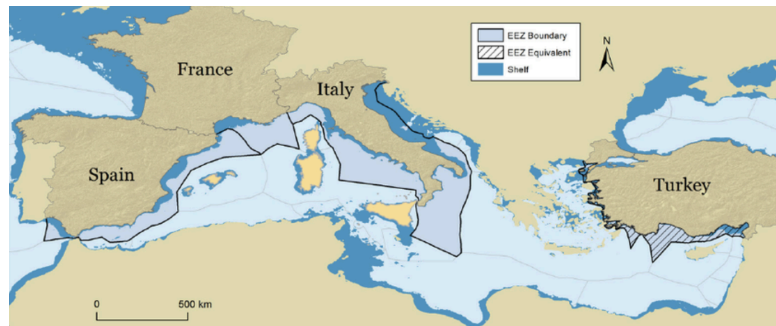


Türkiye opposes EU sanctions and rejects the EU's backing of Greece's and Cyprus's EEZ claims as part of its opposition to these partnerships. Furthermore, Turkey aims to capitalise on its strategic significance inside NATO and its connections with significant nations such as Russia, even though competing interests in Libya and Syria complicate its relationship with Russia.

Türkiye maintains a precarious status quo in the Eastern Mediterranean due to its forceful stance, rejection of some international legal interpretations, and the continued rift between the EU and neighbouring nations.

Definition of Key Terms

Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ): The concept of an exclusive economic zone (EEZ) was adopted through the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea. An "exclusive economic zone," or "EEZ" is an area of the ocean, generally extending 200 nautical miles (230 miles) beyond a nation's territorial sea, within which a coastal nation has jurisdiction over both living and nonliving resources.



Proclaimed EEZs by the countries in the Mediterranean Sea

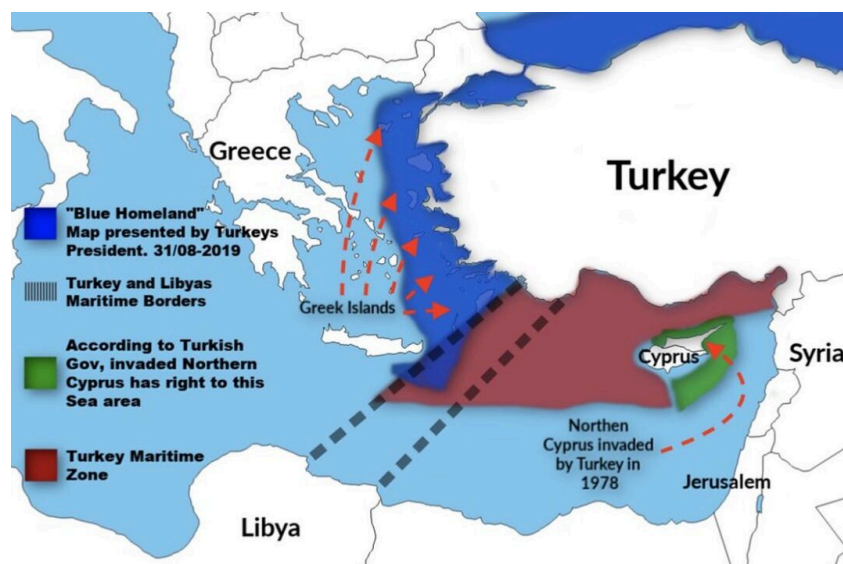
UNCLOS (United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea): UNCLOS is an international pact that creates the nautical and marine industry's legal regulations. It outlines nations' rights and obligations when it comes to using the oceans, intending to promote fair access, peaceful usage, and the preservation of marine resources.



UNCLOS Convention

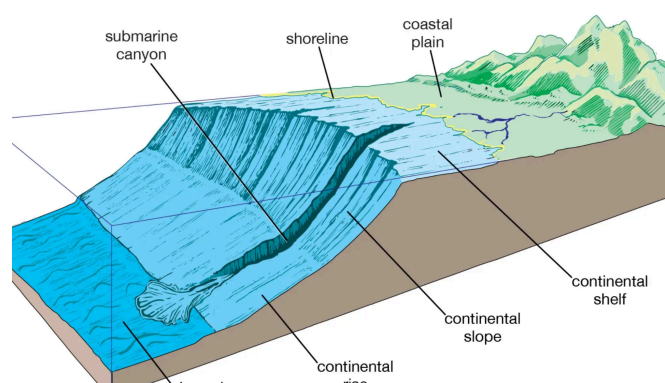
Blue Homeland :

The term "Blue Homeland" describes Turkey's maritime strategy, which includes disputed marine regions and energy resources, intending to establish control and grow its influence throughout the Eastern Mediterranean and Aegean Seas. To protect Turkish interests, there is a naval presence, drilling operations, and diplomatic manoeuvres. To defend Türkiye's rights and maritime security, the idea includes Türkiye's attempts to oppose perceived maritime incursions by Greece, the Republic of Cyprus, and other regional players.



Turkish Blue Homeland Claims

Continental Shelf: Continental shelf, is a broad, relatively shallow submarine terrace of continental crust forming the edge of a continental landmass. The geology of continental shelves is often similar to that of the adjacent exposed portion of the continent. Relevance: Eastern Mediterranean nations frequently expand their EEZ claims per their continental shelves, resulting in overlapping claims.



Background Information

The discovery of significant natural gas deposits has led to overlapping EEZ claims, which have turned the Eastern Mediterranean region into a focal point of geopolitical instability. The problem is made more difficult by the region's strategic importance, complicated geography, and historical conflicts. The Eastern Mediterranean generates lots of controversy because of its rich deposits of undersea hydrocarbons and the controversies they raise about how to distribute them equitably. Furthermore, ongoing controversies over control of the Middle East and North Africa, make the region ripe for conflicts. This is demonstrated by the presence in the region of warships from 447 countries. Joint exploitation of Eastern Mediterranean's gas resources could serve as the basis of a regional relationship, but the region's profound geopolitical rifts, such as those over Cyprus and Palestine, and disputes between Israel and Turkiye, Egypt, and Jordan, mean that political, juridical and economic disputes will unfortunately continue.

Historical Disputes: The discovery of natural gas reserves has exacerbated long-standing territorial issues, mainly between Greece and Turkiye. With its split and conflicting claims by the Republic of Cyprus and Northern Cyprus (recognized by Turkiye), the island of Cyprus also plays a significant role. Cyprus is the most important island in the Eastern Mediterranean both geopolitically and geostrategically because it controls access to the Middle East and the Eastern Mediterranean like a control tower controls aeroplanes at an airport. In military terms, it acts like a stationary aircraft carrier controlling access to all the countries of the Middle East: Turkiye, Syria, Lebanon, Israel, Jordan, Iraq, and, in part, Egypt.

Historical Background of the Greco-Turkish Conflict:

Greek-Turkish hostilities have their roots in the Ottoman Empire's fall in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Numerous ethnic and religious groups inside the Ottoman Empire yearned for independence or autonomy as the empire waned. After centuries of Ottoman domination, Greece declared its independence in 1821, setting off a lengthy independence war.



The Treaty of Constantinople, which set the boundaries of the new Greek state and acknowledged Greek independence, marked the conclusion of the war between Greece and the Ottoman Empire in 1832. These borders, however, continued to be a point of controversy, particularly with regard to areas like Crete and the Aegean Sea islands that had sizable Greek populations and were still ruled by the Ottoman Empire.



Greek Population after the W/W1 according to the University of Athens

Greece adopted an irredentist policy in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, aiming to unify all areas inhabited by ethnic Greeks under its control. Due to this, it frequently fought with the Ottoman Empire and, subsequently, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk's burgeoning Turkish nationalist movement.

The Turkish War of Independence, also known as the Greco-Turkish War of 1919–1922, was a crucial period in the history of Greece and Turkey's relationship. The Treaty of Sèvres (1920), which divided the Ottoman Empire, stipulated that Greek attempts to seize territory in Anatolia with Greek people would result in conflict. But Turkish nationalists, led by Atatürk, passionately opposed Greek expansionism, which resulted in numerous conflicts and atrocities on both sides.





A published map 'Anavatan' in 1927

At the end of the war, Greece was defeated, and the Treaty of Lausanne, which was signed in 1923, established the boundaries that exist today between Greece and Turkey. A population exchange between the two nations was also required under the treaty, which led to the forced migration of millions of Greeks from Turkey and Turks from Greece.



Migrating Turkish and Greek people

Tensions between Greece and Turkey continued despite the Lausanne Treaty, driven by disagreements over minorities' rights, Cyprus's status, and territorial disputes in the Aegean Sea. Numerous crises and incidents, such as military clashes, airspace violations, and maritime disputes, have occurred over the years.



There was one important agreement signed by 2 nations to lower the tensions in the region.

The Bern Agreement

To settle enduring disagreements over territorial claims in the Aegean Sea, Turkey and Greece signed the historic Bern Agreement on November 11, 1976. This agreement, which was signed in Bern, Switzerland, set the stage for bilateral talks by highlighting the values of international law and amicable conflict settlement.

13

GREECE-TURKEY: AGREEMENT ON PROCEDURES FOR NEGOTIATION OF
AEGEAN CONTINENTAL SHELF ISSUE*
[Done at Berne, November 11, 1976]

Berne Agreement on Continental Shelf

Following is the full text of the ten-point agreement reached in Berne between Greece and Turkey on the future procedural treatment of the Aegean continental shelf issue (see page 1). The agreement was signed in Berne on 11 November 1976 and released simultaneously in Athens and Ankara on 20 November.

1) Both parties agree that negotiations be sincere, devoted and conducted in good faith with a view to reaching an agreement based on mutual consent regarding the delimitation of the Continental Shelf.

2) Both parties agree that these negotiations should, due to their nature, be strictly confidential.

3) Both parties reserve their respective positions regarding the delimitation of the Continental Shelf.

4) Both parties undertake the obligation not to use the death of this agreement and the proposals that each will make during the negotiations in any circumstance outside the context of the negotiations.

5) Both parties agree that no statements or leaks to the press should be made referring to the context of the negotiations unless they commonly agree to do so.

6) Both parties undertake to abstain from any initiative or act relating to the Continental Shelf of the Aegean Sea which might prejudice the negotiations.

7) Both parties undertake, as far as their bilateral relations are concerned, to abstain from any initiative or act which would tend to discredit the other party.

8) Both parties have agreed to study, case practice and international rules on this subject with a view to elaborating certain principles and practical criteria which could be of use in the delimitation of the Continental Shelf between the two countries.

9) A mixed commission will be set up to this end and will be composed of national representatives.

10) Both parties agree to adopt a gradual approach in the course of the negotiations should after consulting each other.

*[Reproduced from an unofficial English translation provided by the Embassy of Greece at Washington, D.C. The translation appeared in *Greece, A Monthly Record*, Vol. II, No. 9 (November-December 1976).]

[The U.S. Security Council Resolution of August 25, 1976, concerning the dispute between Greece and Turkey, appears at 15 I.L.M. 1235 (1976). The I.C.J. Order of September 11, 1976, concerning the question of interim measures of protection in the Aegean Sea continental shelf case, appears at 15 I.L.M. 965 (1976).]

The Bern Agreement

Both Greece and Turkey agreed, as part of the deal, to abstain from taking any unilateral moves that would heighten tensions in the Aegean region. It created a forum for discussions on issues including airspace, marine boundary delineation, and territorial seas.

Nevertheless, after the Bern Agreement was announced, difficulties in putting it into practice were discovered. Greece's compliance with the terms of the agreement became a source of disagreement.

Furthermore, the accord's goals of progress were thwarted by Greece's unilateral activities, which included militarizing some Aegean islands and significantly



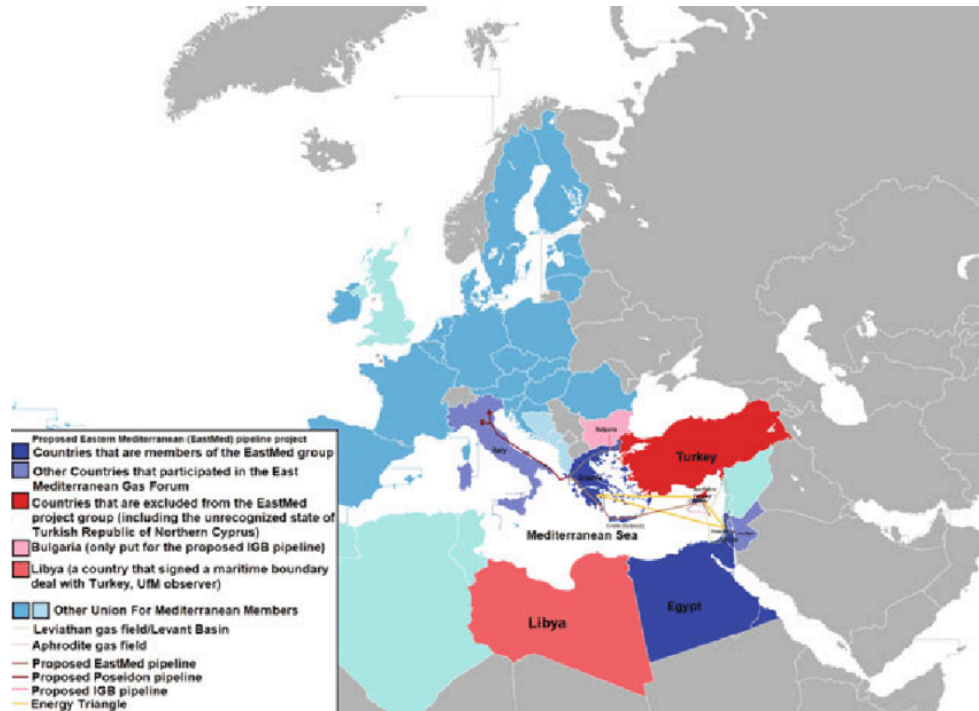
straining bilateral ties. These deeds increased hostilities between the two nations, sparking recurring skirmishes and diplomatic impasses in the area.

The Bern Agreement is still a pillar of Turkish-Greek ties despite its poor execution, underscoring the value of communication and diplomacy in settling complicated territorial conflicts. However, the lack of complete adherence to its tenets highlights the continued difficulties and the necessity of persistent work to bring about long-lasting peace and security in the Aegean.

Geopolitical Rivals and Alliances: As an example, Greece and Cyprus have established strong connections with Israel and Egypt. These partnerships have several components, covering a variety of topics such as political coordination, energy exploration, and military collaboration. The cooperative efforts of Greece, Cyprus, and Egypt to explore and exploit the natural gas reserves in the Eastern Mediterranean are especially noteworthy. Mutual concerns for the security and stability of the region as well as similar economic interests serve as the foundation for this cooperation. These nations' increased cooperation is a result of the game-changing discovery of significant hydrocarbon resources, which will guarantee the security and profitability of their energy projects. These relationships are further strengthened by cooperative military drills and defence agreements, which show a united face against possible threats and a commitment to mutual defence.

Similar to this, Greece, Cyprus, and Israel's alliance is motivated by both security and economic factors. Israel's military might and cutting-edge technological prowess combine with Greece and Cyprus' strategic locations to form a potent trilateral alliance. This relationship involves close collaboration in the areas of cybersecurity, counterterrorism, and intelligence sharing. In the fields of scientific research and technical innovation, there are also major cooperation initiatives, especially in the areas of energy and water resource management. These nations are part of the Eastern Mediterranean Gas Forum, which provides a forum for discussion and cooperation on energy-related matters, strengthening their alliance.





Eastern Mediterranean Gas Forum (EMGF)

Major Countries and Organizations Involved

NATO: NATO's southern flank presents an intimidating assortment of diverse challenges. The lack of a cohesive plan, public disapproval of NATO intervention in the Mediterranean, and insufficient resources and attention from NATO countries limit its ability to effectively combat them. Compared to potential side competitors, NATO still enjoys a strategic advantage in the Mediterranean, today and for the foreseeable future.

EU: Geographically and historically, the Mediterranean region has always been significant to the European Union (EU). Under the Global Mediterranean Policy in 1972, the Barcelona Process in 1995, and the Union for the Mediterranean Process in 2007, the EU's engagement with the Mediterranean region started to take form.

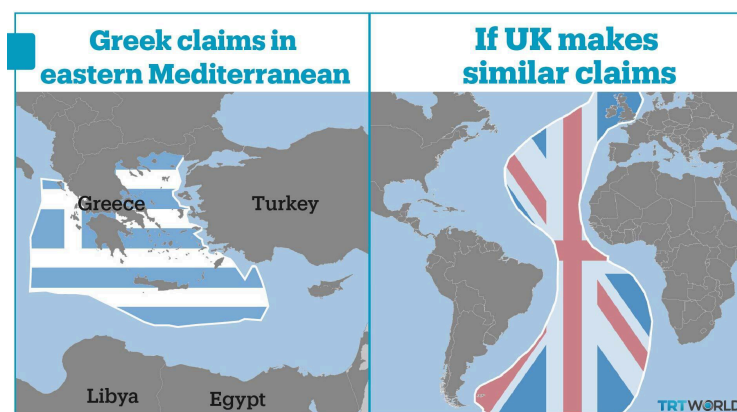
Türkiye: Türkiye is crucial for managing many of the security threats on NATO's southern flank, but at the same time poses a challenge in itself. The US-Türkiye crisis over the Syrian Kurdish People's Protection Units in the fight against the



Islamic State in Syria, coupled with Türkiye's purchase of the Russian S-400 missile defence system, has caused a serious rupture between the two NATO allies. A more existential threat is Türkiye's drift from NATO's core values of democracy, individual liberty and the rule of law. In the end, it is also a reality that the Turkish President's speeches are on TV and at public meetings in a line which is strictly contra-Greece and the EU. After the EU's anti-Turkish-Succession to the EU policy in 2019 Türkiye has started to slip into the Eastern bloc of the modern world which is mainly led by Russia and the People's Republic of China (PRC).

Greece:

Greece has a prominent geopolitical position in the Eastern Mediterranean due to its strategic location at the intersection of Europe, Asia, and Africa. It promotes the use of international law, mainly the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), to settle conflicts involving conflicting claims to the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ). As it asserts its rights alongside the EU and its regional allies, Greece highlights the necessity for communication and diplomacy to overcome regional instability in the Eastern Mediterranean. Through partnerships, it aims to balance out Türkiye's aggressiveness while also taking part in regional projects that advance collaboration, security, and peace. Nevertheless, the Turkish had the same aim against Greece. Both sides claim that they both try to soothe the region's high tensions. The Turkish Main Broadcasting Center Turkish Radio Television (TRT) published a map against Greek claims in the Mediterranean to affect public opinion that Greece is the aggressive side.



A jesting map published by TRT against Greece's claims in the region



Timeline of Events

August 10, 2019	Turkey announces plans to conduct seismic exploration in waters claimed by Cyprus for gas drilling, sparking tensions with Greece and Cyprus over territorial rights.
January 2, 2020	Turkey signed a maritime boundaries agreement with Libya, asserting claims over large swathes of the Eastern Mediterranean, including areas also claimed by Greece and Cyprus.
August 6, 2020	Greece and Egypt signed an agreement establishing an Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) between the two countries, triggering objections from Turkey.
September 10, 2020	Turkey sends research vessels accompanied by navy ships to explore for gas and oil in waters claimed by Greece and Cyprus, leading to a standoff with Greek and EU vessels.
October 9, 2020	The United States calls for dialogue to de-escalate tensions between Greece and Turkey in the Eastern Mediterranean.
December 23, 2020	Israel, Greece, and Cyprus signed an agreement for the construction of the EastMed gas pipeline to transport natural gas from the Eastern Mediterranean to Europe, bypassing Turkey.
January 25, 2021	Greece and Turkey resume exploratory talks to address their maritime disputes, with the EU urging both sides to engage in dialogue.
April 15, 2021	Egypt and Greece conduct joint military exercises in the Eastern Mediterranean amid ongoing tensions with Turkey over maritime claims.



June 8, 2021	Israel and Egypt agree to build a gas pipeline between their countries, further solidifying regional energy alliances and excluding Turkey from energy transit routes.
September 3, 2021	Turkey announces plans to conduct military exercises in the Eastern Mediterranean, raising concerns among neighbouring countries about further escalation.
November 22, 2021	Greece and Turkey hold another round of exploratory talks in Athens to discuss maritime disputes, but no significant progress is reported.
February 14, 2022	The United States hosts a summit with Greece, Cyprus, and Israel to discuss energy cooperation in the Eastern Mediterranean, reaffirming support for regional stability and maritime security.
April 7, 2022	Turkey and Greece agree to resume talks to address their maritime disputes, signalling a potential thaw in tensions.
July 19, 2022	Israel and Egypt begin construction on the EastMed gas pipeline, marking a significant milestone in regional energy cooperation and further isolating Turkey diplomatically.
October 28, 2022	Turkey and Greece signed a memorandum of understanding to establish a mechanism for resolving maritime disputes through dialogue and diplomacy, easing tensions in the Eastern Mediterranean.

Relevant UN Resolutions and Other Documents

UN Security Council Resolution 550 :

<https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/67600>

Adopted in 1984, Resolution 550 reaffirms the sovereignty, independence, and territorial integrity of the Republic of Cyprus. It condemns the purported secession of part of the Republic of Cyprus and declares it legally invalid. While not directly related to EEZ claims, it underscores the unresolved political situation in Cyprus, which has implications for maritime boundaries and EEZ claims.



UN Security Council Resolution 789

<https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/154294?v=pdf>

Adopted in 1992, Resolution 789 extends the mandate of the United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus (UNFICYP). It reaffirms previous resolutions related to Cyprus, including Resolution 550, and calls for the withdrawal of foreign troops. Like Resolution 550, it doesn't directly address EEZ claims but highlights the ongoing tensions in the region that can affect maritime disputes.

United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) :

https://www.un.org/depts/los/convention_agreements/texts/unclos/unclos_e.pdf

UNCLOS, adopted in 1982, establishes the legal framework for the use and conservation of the world's oceans and seas.

Especially the following articles are mainly about the main agenda which is overlapping EEZ claims, since they put a regulation on it:

Article 57: Defines the rights, jurisdiction, and duties of coastal states in the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ), extending up to 200 nautical miles from the baseline.

Article 76: Outlines the criteria for determining the outer limits of the continental shelf, which can affect the extent of EEZ claims.

Article 121: Addresses the rights of archipelagic states, which can be relevant in regions with island chains like the Eastern Mediterranean.

Previous Attempts to Solve the Issue

Countries have tried to solve the issue in the listed ways in several specific examples. Nonetheless, nothing could result in a complete agreement, so the tensions in the region are still high. It is as clear as the sun that Türkiye's President



Erdogan's speeches are mostly provocative and they are full of far-right wing populist slogans.



President Erdogan and Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis

Nevertheless, it cannot be forgotten that Türkiye has strong arguments against Greek claims like the UNCLOS. In the end, it is not a surprise that the agenda couldn't be solved with the following routes :

1. Diplomatic Negotiations: Diplomatic negotiations have been the primary method for addressing territorial disputes in the Eastern Mediterranean. These negotiations often involve direct talks between the countries involved or facilitated by third-party mediators, such as the United Nations or the European Union. However, reaching a mutually acceptable agreement has proven challenging due to the complex geopolitical dynamics and conflicting national interests.
2. International Arbitration: In some cases, countries have turned to international arbitration to resolve maritime disputes. This involves submitting the conflicting claims to an impartial tribunal or court for a binding decision. However, both parties must agree to arbitration, and compliance with the tribunal's ruling can be difficult to enforce, particularly if one party refuses to accept the outcome.
3. Bilateral Agreements: Bilateral agreements between neighboring countries have also been pursued as a means of delineating maritime boundaries and resolving overlapping claims. These agreements can establish



Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZs) and define the rights and responsibilities of each party concerning resource exploration and exploitation. However, reaching such agreements requires political will and compromise from all parties involved.

4. **Multilateral Dialogue:** Some initiatives have sought to address the Eastern Mediterranean disputes through multilateral dialogue involving all relevant stakeholders. These dialogues provide a forum for countries to discuss their concerns, explore potential areas of cooperation, and build confidence-building measures to reduce tensions. However, achieving meaningful progress in multilateral settings can be challenging due to differing priorities and agendas among participants.
5. **Regional Cooperation:** Efforts to promote regional cooperation and economic integration in the Eastern Mediterranean have also been proposed as a means of fostering stability and addressing maritime disputes. Initiatives such as energy partnerships, joint infrastructure projects, and trade agreements aim to create mutual interdependence and incentives for peaceful coexistence. However, progress in regional cooperation initiatives can be hindered by political distrust and security concerns.

Possible Solutions

The Possible solutions regarding the agenda are all the same as the previous attempts. Both countries' representatives should try to be more cooperative and they all need to understand each other's demands. Out of this, the house could ask Türkiye to implement the previous United Nations Resolutions regarding the Cyprus Question mark. The only way to solve the conflict and let all the parties be delighted with the agreement is by negotiating and being honest. Hence the United Nations could focus more on the region not just politically but also economically. The house needs to find a way to make both sides pleasant in the end but while making this it should also keep its all eyes on the region for a possible armed conflict. Finally, it could also be a solution for the UN to recognise the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus and try to be more understanding to the



Turkish side. Long said short, there is nothing the House can do to lower the tensions in the region by making both sides negotiate and track the progress in the region. Otherwise, both the Turkish and Greek sides are pretty ready for an armed conflict. This could be understood by the Turkish side's remaining casus belli against Greece since 1995.

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