



HAL
open science

Challenges of the World Ocean in a Changing Strategic and Energy Security Context: The Case of the Eastern Mediterranean

Aris Marghelis

► **To cite this version:**

Aris Marghelis. Challenges of the World Ocean in a Changing Strategic and Energy Security Context: The Case of the Eastern Mediterranean. Yannis Valinakis; Ioannis Stribis. SECURITY AND ENERGY ISSUES IN THE EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN SPACE, 2023, Jean Monnet European Centre of Excellence, University of Athens, 978-618-86114-1-2. hal-04448808

HAL Id: hal-04448808

<https://hal.science/hal-04448808>

Submitted on 9 Feb 2024

HAL is a multi-disciplinary open access archive for the deposit and dissemination of scientific research documents, whether they are published or not. The documents may come from teaching and research institutions in France or abroad, or from public or private research centers.

L'archive ouverte pluridisciplinaire **HAL**, est destinée au dépôt et à la diffusion de documents scientifiques de niveau recherche, publiés ou non, émanant des établissements d'enseignement et de recherche français ou étrangers, des laboratoires publics ou privés.



JEAN MONNET EUROPEAN CENTRE OF EXCELLENCE
NATIONAL AND KAPODISTRIAN UNIVERSITY OF ATHENS

SECURITY AND ENERGY ISSUES IN THE EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN SPACE

EDITORS

YANNIS VALINAKIS

IOANNIS STRIBIS



HELLENIC REPUBLIC
National and Kapodistrian
University of Athens

2023

Copyright 2023

JEAN MONNET EUROPEAN CENTRE OF EXCELLENCE
NATIONAL AND KAPODISTRIAN UNIVERSITY OF ATHENS

21-23 Marasli str., 106 76 Athens
Tel: +30 210 72 20 508 & 213 13 02 659
Email: jmcenter-athens@pspa.uoa.gr, www.jmce.gr

ISBN 978-618-86114-1-2

All rights reserved

The Jean Monnet European Center of Excellence does not adopt policies or other positions. In fact, it makes an effort to present in the context of its activities and as far as possible all the existing views. The analyzes and opinions published in all editions of the European Center for Excellence Jean Monnet should be attributed solely to the authors themselves and should not necessarily be construed as representing the views of the Center, its Board of Directors, management or, as the case may be, in any way cooperating bodies.

The European Commission support for the production of this publication does not constitute an endorsement of the contents which reflects the views only of the authors, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.

Professor Yannis Valinakis

President

Jean Monnet European Centre of Excellence
National and Kapodistrian University of Athens

Associate Professor Ioannis Stribis

Director

Jean Monnet European Centre of Excellence of the
National and Kapodistrian University of Athens

**SECURITY AND ENERGY ISSUES
IN THE EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN SPACE**



JEAN MONNET EUROPEAN CENTRE OF EXCELLENCE
NATIONAL AND KAPODISTRIAN UNIVERSITY OF ATHENS



HELLENIC REPUBLIC
National and Kapodistrian
University of Athens

NATIONAL AND KAPODISTRIAN UNIVERSITY OF ATHENS

ATHENS

2023

Contents

Acronyms and abbreviations.....	5
About the Jean Monnet European Centre of Excellence of the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens	7
Introduction.....	9
An Introduction to Eastern Mediterranean Security after 2/24: The elephant in the room, <i>Petros Savvides</i>	15
Assessing the EU's International Role in the Eastern Mediterranean: Europeanisation Limitations and Opportunities, <i>Petros Violakis</i>	35
The Eastern Mediterranean – a success story: what's next?, <i>Michael Harari</i>	59
(In)security in the East Mediterranean Sea and the case of Turkey, <i>Cengiz Aktar</i>	63
Third-party Involvement in Greek-Turkish Affairs: Germany's Evolving Role, <i>Ronald Meinardus</i>	73
Russia's Strategy in the Eastern Mediterranean: Between revisionism and pragmatism, <i>Andrew N. Liaropoulos</i>	81
Challenges of the World Ocean in a Changing Strategic and Energy Security Context: The Case of the Eastern Mediterranean, <i>Aris Marghelis</i>	95
The Jurisdictionalization of the East Mediterranean Sea, <i>Nathalie Ros</i>	121
Delimitation Challenges in the East Mediterranean Sea: An International Law of the Sea Perspective, <i>Nathalie Ros</i>	135
<i>Non pactum pactum est, quod vobis lubet</i> : Is the 2019 maritime deal between Turkey and the Government of National Accord of Libya an international agreement?, <i>Ioannis Stribis</i>	149
Eastern Mediterranean Sea Maritime Spatial Planning and Transboundary Cooperation, <i>Juan L. Suárez-de Vivero</i>	175
Legal Regulation of Offshore Energy Activities in the East Mediterranean Sea, <i>Nathalie Ros</i>	189
EU and US Energy and Security Policies toward the Eastern Mediterranean, <i>Michael Rubin</i>	203
Concluding Remarks.....	209

Acronyms and abbreviations

AKP	<i>Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi</i> - Justice and Development Party
BRICS	Brazil Russia India China South Africa
CDU	Christian Democratic Union
CESM	Center of Strategic Studies of the French Navy
CFSP	Common Foreign and Security Policy
CoP	Conference of the Parties
CSDP	Common Security and Defence Policy
DOALOS	Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea
EC	European Community
EEAS	European External Action Service
EEZ	Exclusive Economic Zone
EMGF	East Mediterranean Gas Forum
EMSA	European Maritime Safety Agency
ENP	European Neighbourhood Policy
ESS	European Security Strategy
EU	European Union
EUGS	European Union Global Strategy
EUOAG	European Union Offshore Oil and Gas Authorities Group
FDI	Foreign Direct Investment
FIR	Flight Information Region
FRUS	Foreign Relations of the United States
GNA	Government of National Accord (Libya)
GNU	Government of National Unity (Libya)
HoR	House of Representatives (Libya)
HTS	<i>Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham</i>
IMO	International Maritime Organization
IS	Islamic State
KU	Koç University
KUDENFOR	Koç University Maritime Research Forum
LAAF	Libyan Arab Armed Forces
LNA	Libyan National Army
LNG	Liquefied Natural Gas
MAP/BARCON	Barcelona Convention for Protection of the Mediterranean Sea against Pollution – Mediterranean Action Plan

MENA	Middle East and North Africa
MFA	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
MSP	Maritime Spatial Planning
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NAVTEX	Navigational Telex
NOTAM	Notice to Airmen
OPEC	Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries
OPRC	International Convention on Oil Pollution Preparedness, Response and Co-operation
PYD/PKK	Kurdistan Workers' Party
REACH	Registration, Evaluation, Authorisation and Restriction of Chemicals
REMPEC	Regional Marine Pollution Emergency Response Centre for the Mediterranean Sea
ROC	Russian Orthodox Church
ROMPE	Regional Organization for the Protection of Marine Environment
SAR	Search and Rescue
sq.km.	Square kilometer
TAF	Turkish Armed Forces
TANAP	Trans-Anatolian gas Pipeline
TcF	Trillion Cubic Feet
TPAO	Anonymous Turkish Petroleum Corporation
“TRNC”	“Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus” (self-proclaimed)
UAE	United Arab Emirates
UCAVs	Unmanned Combat Aerial Vehicles
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
UNCLOS	United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
UNSC	United Nations Security Council
UNSMIL	United Nations Support Mission in Libya
UOC	Ukrainian Orthodox Church
US	United States
USD	United States Dollar

About the Jean Monnet European Centre of Excellence of the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens

The Jean Monnet European Centre of Excellence of the National & Kapodistrian University of Athens (NKUA) was founded in 2000, by formal agreement between the NKUA and the European Commission and since then it has been operating without interruption.

The research and educational activities of the Centre contribute to the international promotion and increased standing of the University of Athens and play a significant role in the improvement of the position of the NKUA in international evaluations (given the importance given to the Centres of Excellence in such procedures).

In the last five years, five research and education project proposals have been selected for co-financing by the EU Education and Culture Executive Agency (EECEA) under the Erasmus+ Jean Monnet Projects. Five of them have been successfully completed ('Promoting European Values and Citizenship in Multicultural Classrooms', 2016-2018 – 'European Governance in Key Sectors for Greece's Recovery: Agriculture, Tourism and Maritime Policies', 2014-2017 – 'Learning EU at Schools', 2014-2016 – 'European Governance of Migration: The External Dimensions', 2017-2020 - 'EU Policies towards its East Mediterranean Maritime Space: Energy and Security', 2019-2022). The Centre is currently implementing the project 'Specialization of Strategic Tourism Plan Actions & Strategic Study of Human Resources Development in the Tourism Sector', funded by a private company (from 2015 onwards).

In 2022 the Centre launched the -approved by the EECEA- Jean Monnet project 'Migration Challenges from Eastern and Central Mediterranean: EU Policies & New Responses' (2022-2025). The Centre also carries out two training programmes of the NKUA Centre for Lifelong Learning, in the fields of immigration and of foreign policy and security, respectively. In the past five years, the Center has offered another 12

educational programmes in addition to those co-funded by EU funds, (<https://jmce.gr/portal/courses/>)

During the more-than-twenty-year operation of the Center, 3,360 students of all levels, university graduates and researchers attended our educational programs and the 30 conferences, seminars, workshops, lectures and public debates. The Centre's scientific network includes 197 academics and other specialists who contribute to the implementation of the Centre's educational programmes and research activities.

The publications of the Centre include 5 books (in collaboration with Athens publishers), 12 papers in the series 'The Athens Jean Monnet Papers' and 4 in the series 'National Strategy Papers'. For the above series, there is a peer review committee at the Center, with internal and external (non-NKUA) judges. Furthermore, the Centre publishes in a special section of its website, the 'Researchers' Tribune', research papers by postgraduate students, doctoral candidates and young scientists, prepared in the framework of the Center's research programmes. The papers published in the 'Researchers' Tribune' are currently more than 90.

The Centre cooperates on a permanent basis with the Hellenic University Association for European Studies, the European Public Law Organization (EPLO), the Jean Monnet Chairs in Greek Universities, the W. Martens Center for European Studies in Brussels, the Zurich Elite Business School (ZEBS), the Anna Lindh Foundation, the Kalliopi Koufa Foundation for the Promotion of International and Human Rights Law, as well as with other Universities, think tanks and public entities in Greece and abroad, but also with international and local businesses (Google, PriceWaterhouseCoopers Business Solutions, *etc.*).

Introduction

In the framework of its European Governance Programme, the Jean Monnet European Centre of Excellence (Centre) of the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens (NKUA) expands its activities on the study of European Union's (EU) policies towards its Eastern Mediterranean maritime space, as part of the external aspects of the EU's energy and security policies, two fields identified to be particularly underrepresented at present in the academic community in Greece.

In this connection, the Centre submitted a project proposal titled 'EU Policies Towards its East Med Maritime Space: Energy & Security' (Erasmus+ Jean Monnet Activities 2019 Call for proposals), which was selected by the Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency of the European Commission (EU-EMES project, reference number 611501-EPP-1-2019-1-ELEPPJMO-PROJECT), and the respective grant agreement was signed in October 2019.

The overall aim of EU-EMES is to promote reflection and enhance knowledge on the subject matter of the project, by forming and supporting a scientific team, comprised of excellent academics, researchers from the NKUA and other universities and research institutes in Greece and abroad, as well as persons with professional expertise and interest (*e.g.*, policy makers, business and civil society representatives) in the study fields of the project.

In this respect, the Centre has built the key staff of the project by mobilising its own resources (academic staff and researchers) and involving academics and researchers from other departments of the NKUA, other Greek universities, universities in Egypt, France and Turkey, as well as the Geneva Centre for Security Studies (Athens Hub). Key staff members have been selected based on their academic and research excellence in the fields of study relevant to the EU-EMES topics of interest, and also based on their record in promoting European ideas and values in their respective countries.

Furthermore, in order to expand the team of experts involved in the implementation of the project, the Centre reached out to additional universities, institutes and think tanks in Greece and abroad. From these contacts, the Centre secured the participation from academics of higher education institutions and think tanks from

the Republic of Cyprus, Egypt, France, Greece, Germany, Israel, Libya, Spain, Turkey, the UAE and the US. The academics, as well as other researchers who joined the project team at the stage of its implementation, draw their expertise from various disciplines, such as international relations, political science, European studies / Europeanisation, law, environmental studies, political economy, security studies, energy, energy security and business, regional studies *etc.*

Moreover, throughout the implementation of the project, the Centre held consultations with policy makers and prominent journalists in Greece, other EU Member States and the USA to collect their views on the issues with interest for the project and take them into account in the organisation of the two project events. For the same purpose, project key staff members consulted with incumbent and former officials of EU Institutions, EU Member States and non-EU countries of the East Mediterranean region. The input of the policy makers and the analytical community has been extremely valuable, in particular, for the preparation of the ‘Policy Conference on Energy and Security in the East Med Maritime Space: The role of the EU’; an important number of persons belonging to the above groups accepted the invitation to participate as speakers, moderators and discussants in the Conference.

Thus, for the meaningful preparation of the events envisaged in the project and its other outputs, the Centre organized in January and February 2020, in Athens, two brainstorming sessions, one on the energy and security policies of the EU with focus on the East Mediterranean region and the other on law and policy on maritime issues in this sea basin, in particular maritime delimitation issues, offshore activities (exploration, drilling, exploitation, pipelines) and regulation under international and EU law. In these brainstorming sessions, closed to the public, participated, along key staff members, selected policy makers, analysts and business representatives. During these brainstorming meetings, the participants identified the major issues and challenges for the EU and its Member States in the Eastern Mediterranean space as well as the implications and impact of the EU on the developments in this space through its various policies, in particular in the fields of energy and security. A second objective of these sessions was to help the Centre organise the two events of the project, as the detailed topics, draft programme, potential speakers and participants in the conference and the cross-fertilization workshop were agreed upon at the brainstorming sessions. Furthermore, the outcomes of the brainstorming provided valuable food-for-thought for

further elaboration for the policy conference and the present electronic book on EU's Eastern Mediterranean Maritime Space - Energy & Security Policies and the Policy Report on Perspectives for Academic Cooperation in the Eastern Mediterranean Maritime Space.

The two events of the project were the Cross-fertilisation workshop on EU Policies on Energy and Security in the East Med for young researchers, and the Policy Conference on Energy and Security in the East Med Maritime Space.

Ahead of these events (and of the brainstorming sessions) the Centre prepared and disseminated in November 2019 a concept paper entitled 'An Outline for the preparation of the Events to be organised for the Implementation of the EU-EMES project' (uploaded to the project webpage on the Centre website).

The Cross-fertilisation workshop took place virtually (between 15/11 and 6/12/2021) and was addressed to young researchers and doctoral students from universities in Greece and abroad. The workshop provided a selection of lectures by the key staff and invited experts on EU Governance & Integration, EU Foreign Policy and CSDP, European Neighbourhood Policy, EU policies addressing Maritime Security and Hyber/Cyber Threats and EU Energy and Environmental policies.

The Policy Conference was a two-day policy-oriented conference which took place in Athens (3-4/11/2022) in a hybrid form. It brought together key staff and other members of the scientific team of the project along with policy makers from Europe, US and other East-Med countries, who discussed energy security, hard and soft security issues affecting EU and its Member States, and the role of East Mediterranean countries in this context, including maritime delimitations as well as the options for EU and the other actors in the Eastern Mediterranean space, and the policy tools for the successful implementation of EU policies in the region.

This cross-fertilisation project aimed at boosting existing knowledge on the subject, and at analysing recent geopolitical developments in the Eastern Mediterranean. In this context, the implementation activities were focused on EU's actorness in the region (EU as a force of stability), implementing multi-disciplinary approaches in relation to political, economic, security, migration and institutional cooperation aspects in the Eastern Mediterranean. In this way, the project activities

contributed to enhancing EU orientation of the teaching and research activities of the academic and research institutions involved in the project implementation.

In addition to the academics and other experts, the project has attracted over one hundred young researchers from EU Member States and countries of the East Mediterranean region, thus reinforcing the European dimension in their research. It has also increased interest in understanding the functioning of the European Union. In parallel, it has significantly promoted Greek researchers' understanding and knowledge and increased their interest in EU policies with relevance to/impact on the Eastern Mediterranean region and countries. Moreover, it has supported involved staff, professors, researchers and PhD students in their research and teaching of the subject, increasing opportunities for academic staff in terms of professional and career development. Furthermore, the project, by providing an EU micro-institutional environment, significantly contributed to the (EU) socialization of East Mediterranean academics, researchers and experts, which resulted in a long-lasting Europeanisation impact.

The project activities addressed Europeanisation mechanisms, in terms of (a) establishing a common terminology/ontology amongst participants, (b) role-setting (common) comprehension amongst participants, (c) developing of EU institutional skill set and understanding to (d) create fertile ground for EU governance policies to be materialized.

In these aspects, the project promoted active European citizenship and dealt with the role of the EU in its Eastern Mediterranean neighbourhood and the challenges ahead, enhancing awareness of the Union and facilitating future engagement and people-to-people dialogue across European regions.

To recap, as a cross-fertilization project, the EU-EMES:

- Contributed to the understanding, advanced existing knowledge and enhanced the dynamic of a multi-disciplinary and international scientific team at the Jean Monnet European Centre of Excellence of the NKUA, following a specific need to improve Greece's research in the subject (EU Policies towards its Eastern Mediterranean Maritime Space in Energy and Security).

- Facilitated participating institutions in examining the issue of the organization of further common academic activities and the preparation of relevant supporting tools (including through Erasmus Mundus Joint PhD Degrees, and/or joint consortia for other schemes of European funding).

- Promoted synergies in the Eastern Mediterranean region, by removing artificial and conceptual boundaries through better understanding of existing and new aspects of the Eastern Mediterranean dynamics in terms of energy security and EU Energy Strategy.

- Aimed at jointly-developed content and co-teaching for selected doctoral students and researchers from the involved universities, in subjects related to several aspects of EU Governance, including political, economic, social, business, environmental, maritime and energy security.

The ideas, conclusions and recommendations presented below are the output of the cross-fertilization Workshop (seven online sessions held from 15 November to 6 December 2021) and the policy-oriented International Hybrid Conference, held in Athens on 3 and 4 November 2022. Both activities were organized and animated by the Centre in the framework of the EU-EMES project. Centered around the general theme of EU Policies towards East Mediterranean: Energy and Security, the Workshop and the Conference brought together dozens of academics, top experts, researchers, policymakers, students and civil society from Cyprus, Egypt, France, Germany, Greece, Israel, Libya, Spain, Turkey, the UAE, and the US, and engaged them in constructive dialogue and exchange of views.

More particularly, on the first day of the Conference two study groups, comprising academics and top experts (with no audience participation), delved into the issues of Energy and Security in the East Mediterranean Sea. On the second day, the broad audience participation (both in-person and virtual) made evident the relevance of the issues discussed. The topics were first presented by the speakers, and then thoroughly examined in context from various perspectives. After expressing their own views and opinions, the speakers concretized them by making specific recommendations and policy proposals, suggesting indicated course of action in order for their ideas to materialize in tangible solutions. What is more, after discussing and

debating on certain controversial issues, they converged on some of them, while questions from the audience enabled productive interaction and nuanced approaches.

The following presentation of conclusions and recommendations originate from (and encapsulate) the presentations and debates during the above two formal events and preparatory meetings. They cannot be assigned in their totality to one or more of the participating academics and researchers, nor to the Jean Monnet European Centre of Excellence of the NKUA.

The present electronic publication contains specific papers on concrete issues affecting EU policies and action towards the East Mediterranean region. These papers were elaborated in the framework of the research activities of the EU-EMES project and were orally presented and discussed in the events organized by the European Centre of Excellence of the NKUA for the implementation of the project (cross-fertilization workshop, policy conference and in the meetings held for the preparation of the Workshop and Conference). These papers focus on particular issues and shed light on challenges EU Institutions and Member States are faced with in the crucial neighbouring space of the East Mediterranean Sea.

Challenges of the World Ocean in a Changing Strategic and Energy Security Context: The Case of the Eastern Mediterranean

*Aris Marghelis**

In a period of world-scale restructuration of strategic relations and reorganization of energy routes, the long-standing importance of the maritime space gains new momentum. In this context, the Eastern Mediterranean holds a particular position.

It is an area of rivalry but also of cooperation between its coastal States, and a key region located on a key maritime route. Therefore, it also involves the strong interests of extra-regional powers. In particular, it is a region that is pivotal for Europe's security. This is especially the case with regard to energy security, that has been propelled to the top of the European agenda following Russia's war on Ukraine. Accordingly, the security architecture that will prevail in the Eastern Mediterranean is of decisive importance.

Given these elements, this region offers an excellent case-study of the dynamics and challenges - both traditional and new - that apply to the maritime area, while highlighting the need of an integrated European strategy towards it.

I. The strategic importance of the maritime space in power politics: a timeless beauty

A. Between permanence and change

Starting with a truism is rather inevitable when it comes to the strategic importance of the seas with regard to power politics. History teaches that who aims to evolve into a regional or world power needs to develop competitive naval capabilities. That was the case of Great Britain in the 18th century, of the United States (U.S.) after 1945, of the Soviet Union in the 1960s, of China since the 2000s. Today, countries like India and Turkey are striving to secure a place on the world naval map so as to confirm their eruption on the international arena. This historical phenomenon is consubstantial with

*Dr Aris Marghelis is Associate Researcher at the Maritime and Ocean Law Center, University of Nantes.

the importance of the seas in world trade: it is generally acknowledged that the latter is seaborne up to 90%, although this statistic depends on the method of calculation (weight, value, volume)¹.

However, another dimension has been emerging in this traditional equation, since the high seas – understood as the maritime area located beyond national sovereignty – have specific characteristics that vest them with a particular role in a context of global-scale balance of power shift.

The World Ocean is one of the humanity's three common areas, along with the outer space and the cyberspace. In this area, the notions of sovereignty, of borders, and of legality are not as rigid and clear as onshore; this means that military and technological superiority will provide to its holder a prominent positioning in the process of shaping any future rules. In strategic terms, this renders the oceans a privileged area to exert competition, to contest rules and/or establish new ones, including through hybrid means and low-intensity coercion. This allows upsetting balances without resorting to open conflict or to actions that would uncontestedly justify an immediate and direct military response on the behalf of the challenged actor(s). In other words, the sea offers the ability to display intentions, to contest a certain order, to express claims, and to gradually impose new realities at a relatively low cost, by crossing *orange*, rather than red lines. This may prove to be a very tricky strategy, as it could trigger an overreaction on the behalf of the challenged actor(s), ending thus in burdening the latter with the responsibility of the escalation.

Besides, and due to the fact that the freedom of navigation applies to it, the World Ocean also offers greater *anonymity*. As a result, illegal actions perpetrated on the high seas cannot be easily tracked and, subsequently, cannot be indisputably attributed to a state actor so as to engage its responsibility. This makes the oceans even more conducive to indirect strategic contestation. The destruction of the gas pipeline Nord Stream 2 is an edifying example of this phenomenon: it is difficult to prove that this act of sabotage has been perpetrated by one State or another, while, when the scenario was evoked that it might have been committed by a 'pro-Ukrainian group'²,

¹ For recent statistics and the importance of seaborne trade in a nutshell, see: UNCTAD Handbook of Statistics 2022 - Maritime transport. [Online]. Available at: https://unctad.org/system/files/official-document/tdstat47_FS13_en.pdf (Accessed: 30 April 2023).

² Sabbagh, D., Oltermann, P. and Tondo, L. (2023). 'Officials believe pro-Ukraine group may have sabotaged Nord Stream – reports', The Guardian, 8 March. [Online]. Available at:

Ukraine (as a State) immediately denied any involvement³. The multiplication of attacks on oil tankers with drones (which, as a weapon, allows a high degree of anonymity as well) is also a manifestation of this trend.

Undoubtedly, as long as we remain in a dynamic of developing rivalry between great powers (or aspiring great powers), the World Ocean will steadily continue to evolve into an area of contestation, of competition and of potential confrontation. This increases the strategic pressure exerted on the seas and explains the massive development of the naval capabilities of the state actors resorting to such strategies, and of those willing to counter them. To give only an example, between 2013 and 2017, China added to its naval power the equivalent of the whole French Navy in number of ships and submarines⁴. The French Navy, on its side, has recently operated a fundamental doctrinal shift. It is, henceforth, getting prepared for a high intensity engagement on the oceans⁵, a scenario that was virtually not taken into consideration anymore after the end of the Cold War.

B. Using the maritime space as a ground for contestation and subversion: the example of the 2020 Turkish ‘Grand Strategy’ in the Eastern Mediterranean

Turkey’s 2020 Eastern Mediterranean ‘Grand Strategy’ is a striking case study of the strategy consisting in using the sea to contest existing rules and establish new realities by using hybrid means. Indeed, Turkey attempted to take over the strategic control of the Eastern Mediterranean by performing a resolute hybrid strike that led to a crisis between Greece and Turkey, but also between France and Turkey.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2023/mar/07/officials-believe-pro-ukraine-group-sabotage-nord-stream-pipelines> (Accessed: 30 April 2023).

³ Cursino, M. and McGarvey, E. (2023). ‘Ukraine denies involvement in Nord Stream pipeline blasts’, BBC, 8 March. [Online]. Available at: <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-64877979> (Accessed: 30 April 2023).

⁴ According to the former French Navy Chief of Staff, during his audition before the Commission of National Defense and Armed Forces of the French National Assembly, 26 July 2017. [Online]. Available at: https://www.assemblee-nationale.fr/dyn/15/comptes-rendus/cion_def/115cion_def1617009_compte-rendu (Accessed: 30 April 2023).

⁵ See, for instance: Admiral Vandier, P. (2022). ‘The hypothesis of naval combat is thus back on the agenda and the French Navy is getting ready to face it.’, *Marine & Oceans*, 15 June. [Online]. Available at: <https://marine-oceans.com/en/interview-with-admiral-pierre-vandier-chief-of-staff-of-the-french-navy-2/> (Accessed: April 30, 2023).

The objectives and means of the 2020 Turkish ‘Grand Strategy’

The main objective of the 2020 Turkish ‘Grand Strategy’ being to acquire the strategic control of the Eastern Mediterranean, this required to break the two main obstacles to its designs: international law and rival naval power.

In July 2020, following the legally and politically controversial Turkish-Libyan maritime delimitation agreement of November 2019, Turkey launched a campaign of ‘exploration activities’ on the continental shelf on which Greece claims exclusive rights. The seismic survey ship *Oruc Reis*, that conducted until late November 2020 this ‘exploration’, was escorted by warships. This left few doubts as to Turkey’s real intentions and to the fact that exploration and drilling activities served primarily an expansionist agenda in the Eastern Mediterranean. By simultaneously exerting military pressure on Greece and creating *faits accomplis* in what concerns exclusive rights of exploration, Turkey hoped to force its neighbour to negotiate the issue of maritime delimitation in the framework of the balance of power (which Ankara considers as being in its favour), rather than in the framework of international law. And it is a fact that international law of the sea does not provide the necessary legitimacy to Turkey’s maritime designs as reflected in its maritime geopolitical doctrine. This is precisely the reason why Turkey has not adhered to the Law of the Sea Convention and has opted for the militarisation of its regional strategy and foreign policy, especially towards Greece and Cyprus. In short, in 2020, the objective was to proceed to a unilateral and *de facto* appropriation of the sea by using a hybrid strategy mixing military and non-military power. Besides, should Greece had obtempered, such a situation would have ended in creating a new reality that would have been extremely difficult to reverse. This has been a long-term Turkish strategy, but it reached a peak in 2020 because Greece was starting to recover from its 10-years financial crisis. Turkey apparently assumed that this crisis had seriously impaired the operational capabilities of the Hellenic Navy, as virtually no investments had been made for a decade. Accordingly, it was considered as the right moment to strike, before the Greek military’s recovery started. Nonetheless, the decades-long Greek-Turkish strategic rivalry and the constraints caused by the financial crisis contributed, slowly and rather discreetly, to the development of a certain resilience of the Greek armed forces and of their ability to absorb – with the available means – the constant Turkish strategic and operational pressure, without giving up sovereign rights though. This element was manifestly underestimated by Turkey in

2020, while this Turkish strategy finally resulted in pushing Greece to engage in a quick and massive modernization of its military capabilities.

In parallel with the attempt to break Greece's military and legal 'maritime backbone', Turkey also tried to override the last significant obstacle to its strategic designs in the Eastern Mediterranean: France. Indeed, along with its survey activities in Greek-claimed maritime zones, Turkey was conducting a weapon-smuggling operation in Libya so as to consolidate its position there and create viable conditions for the strategic control of the Eastern Mediterranean. In other words, the seismic survey activities in the Greek-claimed maritime zones and the weapon-smuggling activities in Libya were the two sides of the same coin. This weapon-smuggling activity took place in gross violation of the United Nations Security Council resolution 2292 (2016), prompting the control of suspect cargo ships in the framework of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) operation *Sea Guardian*. It is in this context, that a Turkish frigate escorting such a cargo aggressed a French frigate (*Courbet*) while the latter was about to perform her control tasks.

The Turkish tactics and state of mind

In this context, two incidents are characteristic of the state of mind that prevailed in the Turkish Navy and of how, from an operational point of view, Turkey tried to reach its objectives.

The first is the above-mentioned incident between the French frigate *Courbet* and a Turkish frigate off Libya in June 2020, when the latter performed what is called a 'target illumination', which is an *objectively* hostile action, as it is the last stage before firing a missile. More than to produce an immediate operational result – which made little sense when one looks at how the warships were positioned at the very moment of the incident⁶ – the objective was to demonstrate determination and to threaten the French Navy, which is the only navy (besides the Hellenic Navy) capable and *willing* to shadow the Turkish naval power in the region. In fact, defeating mentally a navy through intimidation equates almost to a military victory at sea. In such a scenario, Turkey would have practically remained the only sizable naval power in the Eastern

⁶ Marghelis, A. (2021). 'The French Military's Perception of the Turkish Military and Turkey's Expansion in the Eastern Mediterranean', *Études de l'Ifri*, Ifri, November, p. 21. [Online]. Available at: https://www.ifri.org/sites/default/files/atoms/files/marghelis_france_turkey_eastern_mediterranean_2021_.pdf (Accessed: 30 April 2023).

Mediterranean, paving thus the way for imposing *de facto* its framework and rules. To take the words of a high-ranking French military source who was referring to the Eastern Mediterranean, ‘*If we disappear from the area for 2-3 years, we will not enjoy the same rights and these rights will be very difficult to recover when we go back. The rules will have changed de facto. At sea, nothing is guaranteed like onshore. You have to be present in order to defend your lawful interests and international rules*’⁷. Put another way, should France had shown hesitance and left Turkey succeed in its designs, any navy (beyond the U.S. Navy) aiming to sail and operate in the region would have quickly ended up in doing so in Ankara’s shadow. Consequently, the balance of power in this critical region would have been durably upset at the expense of Greece, France and, in the end, Europe.

The second incident was the collision between a Greek and a Turkish warship in August 2020 in the area south of the small Greek archipelago of Kastellorizo, located off the southern shores of Turkey. According to a high-ranking Greek military source who was closely involved in the management of the 2020 Greek-Turkish crisis⁸, the order was given to the Greek frigate *Limnos* to move closer to the Turkish seismic survey ship in order to better monitor the latter’s activity. The Turkish frigate *Kemal Reis*, that belonged to the *Oruc Reis*’ escort flotilla, apparently misunderstood the move, presuming that the *Limnos*’ objective was to harass the survey ship. As a result, the *Kemal Reis*, in an unprofessional move, suddenly deviated from her route in the direction of the *Limnos*, which was located on her right. According to the regulations for preventing the collisions at sea, the *Limnos* had the priority. Hence, the *Limnos* continued her route and, as a result, both ships collided, with the much younger and modern Turkish vessel suffering important damage from the collision she caused.

Obviously, the objective was to force the Greek vessel to stop and/or change her course, that is to say, to *retreat* before the Turkish commander’s will. In the same way as the incident involving the French frigate off Libya, it should not be exclusively understood in its immediate and local context. It is also to be apprehended through the prism of the short-tempered state of mind prevailing in Ankara (and, respectively, in the Turkish Navy) at the very moment, that was stemming from a mix of ‘strategic overheating’, of overconfidence, and of deep conviction that the country was

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 26.

⁸ Exchange took place in April 2023.

performing a strategic breakthrough of historical importance for its greatness. And, assuredly, should Turkey had succeeded in its objective to take over the strategic control of the Eastern Mediterranean within a few weeks, this would have been a milestone with regard to the region's future, and beyond. However, like the *Courbet*, the *Limnos* did not get intimidated and she behaved according to the rules and not according to the Turkish commander's will.

Precisely because at sea, where everything is more volatile than onshore, showing consistency and determination is of crucial importance for the establishment of a *de facto* order. Concretely, had the *Limnos* shown hesitation, or opted for 'security' in order to avoid escalation, this would have happened at the price of humiliation, while it would have sent a very wrong message to allies and potential allies with respect to Greece's determination and aptitude to defend its rights, as well as to its reliability as a partner. Accordingly, this could have contributed to impair its ability to conclude strategic and defence cooperation agreements, a policy that has evolved into a major pillar of its regional strategy right after the 2020 Greek-Turkish crisis. And a milestone of this policy is the Greek-French strategic cooperation and mutual defence agreement of September 2021.

At the crossroad of diplomacy, power and the rule of law: how Greece and France forestalled the 2020 Turkish 'Grand Strategy'

First, Greece, by shadowing the Turkish activities with its navy, made clear that it would not silently acquiesce in any *fait accompli*. Should Greece had remained passive by fear of escalation - and given the mindset prevailing in Ankara at the very moment - this would have been understood by Turkey as a green light to proceed to the next step: drilling. Drilling is a stage above exploration without physical contact (such as the one performed by the *Oruc Reis*, that used cables and did not touch the seabed), and a stage under exploitation. It justifies, on the behalf of the challenged actor, a harsher response than in the case of exploration activities performed without physical contact. This is due to the potential damage that physical contact may cause to the resources on which the challenged State claims *exclusivity*. Thus, it was crucial to obstruct the Turkish strategy at the stage of exploration conducted without physical contact. Otherwise, in case of drilling, the escalation would have eventually gone out of control, as core interests would have been at stake.

Second, the French operational and military synergy with Greece⁹ – along with clear messages from Egypt, the United Arab Emirates¹⁰ and later Saudi Arabia¹¹ – had a dissuasive effect on Turkey. France and Greece’s objective was to send an unambiguous signal that intimidation and *faits accomplis* would not work and that they are not the appropriate way to solve any dispute in the region. The opposite would have opened Pandora’s Box with regard to the region’s stability, as it would equate to the *de facto* consecration of the use of military power as an efficient and acceptable tool to impose a certain order in a part of Europe.

Third, the Greek-French diplomatic coordination finally drew the necessary attention on the behalf of European Union (EU)¹² and NATO¹³ partners regarding the Turkish behaviour. This put into question what Ankara long considered as an

⁹ See, for instance: Deutsche Welle (2020). ‘France to increase Mediterranean presence amid Turkey row’, 13 August. [Online]. Available at: <https://www.dw.com/en/france-turkey-military-gas/a-54544925> (Accessed: 30 April 2023).

¹⁰ See, for instance: Mathews, S.(2020). ‘UAE joins Greek, Egyptian naval exercise in Eastern Mediterranean’, Al-Monitor, 1 December. [Online]. Available at: <https://www.al-monitor.com/originals/2020/12/uae-greece-defense-agreement-turkey-eastern-mediterranean.html> (Accessed: 30 April 2023); Egypt Today (2020). ‘Egypt conducts joint military exercises with France in the Mediterranean’, 15 July. [Online]. Available at: <https://www.egypttoday.com/Article/1/90083/Egypt-conducts-joint-military-exercises-with-France-in-the-Mediterranean> (Accessed: 30 April 2023); Iddon, P. (2020). ‘UAE Dispatches Fighter Jets To Support Its Allies Against Turkey’, Forbes, 26 August. [Online]. Available at: <https://www.forbes.com/sites/pauliddon/2020/08/26/uae-sends-fighter-jets-to-support-allies-against-turkey/> (Accessed: 30 April 2023).

¹¹ Panoutsopoulou, M. (2021). ‘Saudi Air Force jets arrive in Greece for joint drill’, Anadolu Agency, 15 March. [Online]. Available at: <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/europe/saudi-air-force-jets-arrive-in-greece-for-joint-drill/2175860> (Accessed: 30 April 2023).

¹² See, for instance: European Commission (2020). Key Findings of the 2020 Report on Turkey, 6 October. [Online]. Available at: https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/country_20_1791 (Accessed: 30 April 2023); European Parliament (2020). European Parliament resolution of September 17 2020 on the preparation of the special European Council summit focusing on the dangerous escalation and the role of Turkey in the Eastern Mediterranean. [Online]. Available at: https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-9-2020-0230_EN.html (Accessed: 30 April 2023); European Council (2020). Special meeting of the European Council (1 and 2 October 2020) – Conclusions. [Online]. Available at: <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/45910/021020-euco-final-conclusions.pdf> (Accessed: 30 April 2023); European Council (2020). European Council meeting (10 nd 11 December 2020) – Conclusions. [Online]. Available at: <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/47296/1011-12-20-euco-conclusions-en.pdf> (Accessed: 30 April 2023); Statement of the Members of the European Council, 25 March 2021. [Online]. Available at: <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/48976/250321-vtc-euco-statement-en.pdf> (Accessed: 30 April 2023); Ajaccio declaration after the 7th Summit of the Southern EU countries (MED7) (10 Sept. 2020). [Online]. Available at: <https://www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/en/french-foreign-policy/europe/news/article/ajaccio-declaration-after-the-7th-summit-of-the-southern-eu-countries-med7-10> (Accessed: 30 April 2023); Declaration of the 8th summit of the Southern European countries, Athens, 17.9.2021. [Online]. Available at: https://www.pio.gov.cy/assets/pdf/newsroom/2021/09/17092021_EUMED%20Joint%20Declaration.pdf (Accessed: 30 April 2023).

¹³ Emmott, R., Irish, J. and Gumrukcu, T. (2020). ‘In parting shot, Pompeo rebukes Turkey at NATO meeting’, Reuters, 3 December. [Online]. Available at: <https://www.reuters.com/article/turkey-usa-nato-int-idUSKBN28D1YJ> (Accessed: 30 April 2023).

indisputable *acquis*: the fact that, because of its particular weight as an economic and strategic partner, it will always be more costly for the EU and NATO members to rebuke Turkey in case of improper behaviour, than to close their eyes.

In other words, as a result of a well-tuned multiscale strategy involving diplomacy, balanced military projection and operational synergies, Greece and France succeeded in their main objective: to jam the Turkish strategy and to raise for Turkey the cost of its actions.

Lessons for Europe from the 2020 Eastern Mediterranean crisis

The first conclusion that can be drawn is that this crisis is a *textbook case* of the use by a state actor (in this case, Turkey) of the maritime space to upset balances and impose new realities and rules without resorting to *open* conflict or to actions that would *lawfully* trigger an immediate and full-scale military response on the behalf of the challenged actor (in this case, Greece). It is a typical case of crossing an *orange* (although deep orange), rather than a red line.

The second conclusion is that, following Greece's and France's well-calibrated answer and coordination, Turkey's strategic hyper-engagement ultimately failed in attaining its very objective. Both countries' efficiency resulted from their clear understanding of Turkey's objectives, strategy and state of mind. Indeed, as maritime nations, Greece and France have a well-rooted maritime culture and tradition that irrigate their civil and military decision-making structures, and guide their behaviour at sea. As a result, not only Turkey made no concrete gains, but it paid a certain diplomatic cost in its relations with the EU, NATO and other regional and extra-regional state actors. Accordingly, Turkey did not revert to its behaviour¹⁴, despite declarations in 2021 on its intention to do so¹⁵ and an unprecedentedly aggressive rhetoric in 2022¹⁶. To the contrary, it engaged in survey and drilling activities only in *uncontested* waters, off

¹⁴ As of mid-2023.

¹⁵ Reuters (2021). 'Turkey could expand drilling in eastern Mediterranean amid territorial dispute', 24 May. [Online]. Available at: <https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/turkey-could-expand-drilling-eastern-mediterranean-amid-territorial-dispute-2021-05-24/> (Accessed: 30 April 2023).

¹⁶ See, for instance: Fiedler, T. (2022). 'Erdoğan repeats threat against Greece during G20', Politico, 16 November. [Online]. Available at: <https://www.politico.eu/article/recep-erdogan-turkey-threat-against-greece-g20/> (Accessed: 30 April 2023); Stamouli, N. (2022). 'Erdoğan warns Greece that Turkish missiles can reach Athens', Politico, 11 December. [Online]. Available at: <https://www.politico.eu/article/erdogan-warns-greece-that-turkish-missiles-can-reach-athens/> (Accessed: 30 April 2023).

the city of Alaneia¹⁷ while, following the disastrous earthquakes of February 2023 (and as of mid-2023), it has refrained from displaying an aggressive posture in the Aegean and the Eastern Mediterranean at all levels.

The third conclusion is related to the EU and NATO. As the sea continues to gain importance in the world's strategic equation, a sound understanding of the maritime domain's strategic particularities and the way it is integrated into global power politics is essential. This is especially the case for the EU, if it really wishes to become a credible geopolitical player on a more and more competitive international scene on which law is increasingly shadowed by power. In this respect, the EU and NATO – including Turkey – may also start to see the potential extension of the Greek and Turkish territorial waters up to the legal distance of 12 nm in the Aegean Sea as a strategic asset, rather than as a headache. And there are some reasons for that, as the strategic context in which both organizations are called to operate is quickly evolving. In a situation of unrelenting rivalry with Russia, such an extension of territorial waters would reinforce Europe and NATO's strategic posture in the Eastern Mediterranean – where the Russian navy is active – in many ways:

It could help better monitor Russia's maritime flows, as any ship coming from – or going to – the Black Sea would necessarily cross Greek and/or Turkish territorial waters. Additionally, by decreasing the Aegean high seas, there will be less space left for the Russian shadow fleet (see II. A.) to operate, and this reduces the security – and even doctrinal – issues associated with potential operation on the high seas designed to counter this new phenomenon.

It would contribute to weaken the hybrid and quite efficient maritime-continental ring, patiently built by Russia. This ring starts from the Sea of Azov and goes through the Black and the Aegean Seas, the Eastern Mediterranean, the 'Russia-compatible' countries of Syria, Iraq and Iran, the Caspian Sea, and back to the Azov and the Black Seas through the Russian river system (the Volga-Don canal). This ring is designed to provide Russia with some of the maritime geostrategic depth it lacks, and this also explains the importance given by Russia to the transformation of the Sea of

¹⁷ Agenzia Nova (2022). 'Turkey: the most advanced drilling vessel starts gas exploration activity in the eastern Mediterranean', 9 August. [Online]. Available at: <https://www.agenzianova.com/en/news/turchia-la-piu-avanzata-nave-da-perforazione-avvia-lattivita-di-ricerca-del-gas-nel-mediterraneo-orientale/> (Accessed: 30 April 2023).

Azov into a Russian lake and, accordingly, the violence of the battle for Mariupol in spring 2022.

By shrinking the area of high seas in the Aegean, there will also be less available space for strategic adversaries to operate sabotage. This is particularly relevant in a context of growing vulnerability of energy infrastructure in the high seas, and of increasing importance of the Eastern Mediterranean for Europe's energy security (see II).

In sum, we are in a context in which the security integration *inside* the Western strategic community is getting deeper and the *external* limits of each geopolitical aggregate (including the Western) become bolder. Therefore, the extension of the maritime area under the *sovereignty* of a member of that community – especially when located in such a critical area where Western interests come across increasingly antagonistic dynamics – should be seen as meeting the collective interest. As such, not only should it be endorsed by the community, but requested by it. In what concerns the Turkish objections that the legitimate extension of the Greek territorial waters would impair the freedom of navigation in the Aegean, everyday practice demonstrates that they are groundless. These objections are rather designed to make Turkey's stance more audible to Western partners (especially the U.S.), who are very sensitive to anything related to the freedom of navigation. In fact, a simple look at the two main maritime routes connecting the Black Sea to the Western and Eastern Mediterranean is enough to observe that, in some areas, these routes pass through the current 6-miles Greek territorial waters without any obstruction. In any case, the freedom of navigation issues have been legally settled long ago with the right of innocent and of transit passage. Greece, as an EU and NATO member, and as a maritime nation, has neither the will nor the diplomatic and political capability to impair this freedom in the Aegean Sea or anywhere else. This would be particularly unwelcomed by both allies and rivals, while it wouldn't serve Greece's interests. In reality, the Turkish objections proceed from the fact that such an extension would significantly decrease the portion of high seas in the Aegean and, consequently, the maritime area available for performing contestation strategies towards Greece. In other words, Turkey would lose strategic leverage against Greece. But this remains relevant only to the extent Turkey persists in seeing its most stable and predictable neighbour, Greece, as a potential strategic satellite and perseveres in its ambivalence towards NATO. Put it differently, if Turkey leaves its strategic

ambiguity and begins to project itself as a regular NATO member – and, therefore, to see Greece as an ally –, it will also start to contemplate the extension of the Greek and of its own territorial waters in the Aegean as a win-win situation.

In this respect, a last conclusion can be drawn in relation to the Ukrainian conflict. It is only following Russian actions in Ukraine that the EU members finally understood that it is the *lack* of determination and of military power that brings instability and conflict, and not the opposite. If Turkey ‘took its chance’ in 2020 in the Eastern Mediterranean (and in other areas such as Libya, the Caucasus and Syria), it is because it assumed that it was surrounded by a ‘military desert’ in which nobody could really match its military power and counter its determination. Accordingly, if it finally failed in its designs, it is exactly because it got from Greece, France and other regional and extra-regional actors – but not from many important EU members – the unequivocal message that this was not the case. It is precisely the moment after which actions started to be replaced by rhetoric. Admittedly very aggressive and unacceptable rhetoric, but still rhetoric. This is also corroborated by the fact that Turkey does in the Cypriot maritime zones what it can’t do in the Greek maritime zones, that is to say *drilling*. And this is because Cyprus is militarily weak and is not a NATO member. This means that escalation in Cyprus is less costly for Turkey, while it is more difficult for Greece to deploy there the same strategy it deployed in 2020 in its own maritime zones, although its rearmament program suggests that it intends to acquire the military means to project power in a much larger area than the Aegean, *i.e.* in the area extending from southwest Crete to Cyprus. It is probably not coincidental that the first of the three frigates that Greece ordered from the French Naval Group will be named after Kímon, the 5th century BC Athenian admiral who faced the Persians in Cyprus and restored the strategic bond between the island and mainland Greece.

Put another way, as long as Turkey perseveres in considering military power as a regular foreign policy tool, opposing convincing military power is the only guarantee of stability. Even more, jamming Turkey’s ability to use its military machine to impose in the Eastern Mediterranean realities that are incompatible with fundamental principles of international and maritime delimitation law is, actually, the only way to bring Turkey to consider seriously the legal and pacific means to resolve issues. As long as Ankara’s calculus remains that ignoring international law and militarizing regional relations is more beneficial than the respect of international law and pacific approaches to regional

issues, a solution is not likely. For that reason, it is crucial that disrespect of international law is costly enough and its respect attractive. Only a pacific and legal way to resolve issues and build the Eastern Mediterranean security architecture can make this architecture efficient and sustainable in the long run. A regional order built on *faits accomplis* sustained by the threat of use of force will only create resentment and acrimony that will, sooner or later, undermine this regional order. Turkey's statements following the 2023 Vilnius NATO summit seem to go in this direction, although it remains to be seen if this is a real change of mindset with regard to the Eastern Mediterranean, or a tactical retreat due to a temporary inability to persevere in its previous strategy.

II. The issue of energy security: where are we heading to?

A. Changing patterns in the world energy flows: manifestations and challenges

Following Russia's war on Ukraine, we have entered a phase in which Western countries have opted to inject more flexibility in the global energy transportation network. This takes place by using liquefied natural gas (LNG), ships and geographically disseminated reception, stockage and re-gasification units (that might be also floating and, therefore, mobile). This is even true for Russia, which seems to have accepted the LNG challenge¹⁸ (although it is not an easy task)¹⁹, despite the fact that the reorganization of European energy flows targets precisely the dependance on Russian gas. Indeed, the conflict in Ukraine has promptly reshuffled world energy routes, leading to a process of 'de-continentalization'²⁰ and, accordingly, of 're-maritimization' of Europe's energy flows. According to the Center of Strategic Studies of the French Navy (CESM), from July 2021 to July 2022, Russian gas and oil exports

¹⁸ For instance, according to the Russian economic newspaper Kommersant, in 2022, the LNG exports of the Russian company Novatek to Europe by ship increased by 13.4%, the exports of Gazprom through pipelines shrunk by 46%, while the portion of LNG in Russian gas exports – that has long been insignificant - reached 25%. See: Kommersant (2023). 'Russian LNG settles in Europe', 16 January. [Online]. Available (in Russian) at: <https://www.kommersant.ru/doc/5772310> (Accessed: 30 April 2023). See also: Staalesen, A. (2023). 'Chinese investors could finance Murmansk LNG', The Barents Observer, 7 June. [Online]. Available at: <https://thebarentsobserver.com/en/arctic-lng/2023/06/chinese-investors-could-finance-murmansk-lng> (Accessed: 8 June 2023).

¹⁹ Palti-Guzman, L. and Eyl-Mazzega, M.-A. (2023). 'The Strategic Repositioning of LNG: Implications for Key Trade Routes and Choke Points', *Études de l'Ifri*, Ifri, April 2023, p. 21-23. [Online]. Available at: https://www.ifri.org/sites/default/files/atoms/files/palti-guzman_eyl-mazzega_lng-traderoutes_2023.pdf (Accessed: 30 April 2023).

²⁰ On this, see, for instance: *Ibid.* See also: Mazzucchi, N. (2022). 'La France et l'Europe face à la décontinentalisation des flux énergétiques', *Revue de Défense Nationale*, No 853, Octobre 2022, pp. 19-24.

to the EU *via* land-based pipelines decreased by 70% and 20.3% respectively, while LNG exports increased by 142.5%²¹. At the same time, EU's LNG imports from the U.S. increased by 197.8%, from Algeria by 41.8%, from Norway by 48.5% and from the Gulf States by 185.3%²².

Injecting flexibility in the energy transportation network provides greater ability to reorganize this network quickly, avoiding thus an excessive reliance on a single actor that may turn into a rival in such an instable geopolitical, security and economic landscape. As long as Europe depends mainly on pipelines that do not enable rapidly switching from an energy provider to another, it remains impossible to reach the degree of resilience and swift decision-making required in an increasingly challenging international environment²³.

Additionally, by operating a transition from a 'vertical system' based on pipelines to a 'network system' based on shipping and on a net of LNG reception, stockage and re-gasification units disseminated along its coasts and connected to its hinterland, Europe enhances the security of its energy *infrastructure*. Undoubtedly, it is more difficult to inflict a *critical* blow to an extensive, dispersed and mobile network, than to a static pipeline. This is particularly relevant in a context of increasing rivalry and insecurity on the high seas, as any static infrastructure located beyond territorial waters becomes a potential target and is, thus, vulnerable. The sabotage of the Nord Stream 2 undersea pipeline in September 2022 is probably the most revealing example of this challenge. The destruction of a single part of this pipeline was enough to render highly improbable any hypothetical resume of Russian gas deliveries to Germany through this vector. This growing uncertainty regarding the security of fixed energy infrastructure located in the common area that is the World Ocean - in which the freedom of navigation and operation entails the risk of facilitating potentially unclaimed

²¹ Brèves Marines CESM (2023). 'La décontinentalisation des flux énergétiques en Europe', No 274, April 25. [Online]. Available at: https://www.defense.gouv.fr/sites/default/files/cesm/BM_274_Décontinentalisation.pdf (Accessed: 30 April 2023).

²² *Ibid.*

²³ According to the IMF, in 2020, 42% of the gas imported in the EU was coming from Russian pipelines, 30% from non-Russian pipelines and 28% was LNG. See: Di Bella, G., Flanagan, M., Foda, K., Maslova, S., Pienkowski, A., Stuermer, M. and Toscani, F. (2022). Natural Gas in Europe. The Potential Impact of Disruptions to Supply, Working Paper No 2022/145, 19 July, IMF Working Papers. [Online]. Available at: <https://www.imf.org/en/Publications/WP/Issues/2022/07/18/Natural-Gas-in-Europe-The-Potential-Impact-of-Disruptions-to-Supply-520934> (Accessed: 30 April 2023).

and/or unattributable acts of sabotage - has already been identified as a new challenge for Western societies²⁴.

Interestingly enough, while Europe and China face a similar need - that of diversifying both energy providers *and* routes - they seem to adopt opposite strategies. Like Europe, China depends at a high degree on its energy imports, especially in order to feed its industrial activity, and these imports arrive mainly by sea. Hence, in parallel with its maritime strategy that aims to temper the - still - uncontested Western strategic primacy in the oceans, China seeks also to temper its heavy dependence on maritime energy flows by developing its land-based energy supply routes. After the Power of Siberia land pipeline that began delivering Russian gas in late 2019, the plan for a second gas pipeline reaching China through Mongolia (Power of Siberia 2) seems to gain a new momentum following the Chinese leader's visit to Moscow in March 2023²⁵. Should it be realized, this would be a significant milestone in the world's energy routes reorganization process. It will considerably reinforce the direct connection between one of the world's biggest energy producers and one of the world's biggest industrial powers and energy consumers, in a scheme that is isolated from any possibility of Western interference.

Therefore, while Europe proceeds to a 'de-continentalization' and a 'maritimization' of its energy flows, China resorts to a partial 'de-maritimization' and 'continentalization' of its own energy flows. In both cases, it is the vivid illustration of the opposite trends in the evolution of their relations with Russia. In this respect, China's growing synergy with Russia is crucial and seems, henceforth, to fit the interests of both powers. Although, for a long time, Russia was cautious about feeding with energy the gigantic Chinese industry by fear of being overwhelmed by its imposing neighbor, souring relations with what Moscow calls the 'Collective West' seem to have

²⁴ See, for instance: Defense News (2023). 'Europeans wade into fighting seabed threats with drones and sensors', 9 January. [Online]. Available at: <https://www.defensenews.com/global/europe/2023/01/09/europeans-wade-into-fighting-seabed-threats-with-drones-and-sensors/> (Accessed: 30 April 2023); Chuter, A. (2023). 'British naval forces get specialized vessel for seabed operations', Defense News, 20 January. [Online]. Available at: https://www.defensenews.com/global/europe/2023/01/20/british-naval-forces-get-specialized-vessel-for-seabed-operations/?utm_source=sailthru&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=dfn-dnr (Accessed: 30 April 2023); The Maritime Executive (2023). 'NATO Confirms Risk of Russian Attack on Subsea Infrastructure', 4 May. [Online]. Available at: <https://www.maritime-executive.com/article/nato-confirms-risk-of-russian-attack-on-subsea-infrastructure> (Accessed: 5 May 2023).

²⁵ Russian Presidency (2023). 'Press statements by President of Russia and President of China', 21 March. [Online]. Available at: <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/70750> (Accessed: 30 April 2023).

lifted the remaining skepticism. Yet, energy deliveries from the sea will remain critical for China, especially given that most of its biggest cities are ports and that most of the world's largest ports are Chinese²⁶.

In other words, the importance of the sea in the global – and particularly the European – energy security is expected to increase, and so are likely to increase the economic, geopolitical and military challenges associated to this new reality. It cannot be excluded that this situation leads to the progressive establishment of rival frameworks in the common area that is the World Ocean, in which most of the basic rules were consensual until now. Russia and Iran appear to be at the heart of this new development. We may mention (non-exhaustively) early but increasingly frequent signs of such a trend:

- The multiplication of attacks on - and seizure of - oil tankers²⁷.
- The decision of Panama to withdraw from its vessel registry 136 Iran-linked ships²⁸.
- The creation of a Russian 'shadow fleet' to bypass Western economic measures²⁹. The activities of this shadow fleet already trigger the reaction of several coastal States³⁰, with some of them deciding to expand their legislation in waters located beyond their sovereignty³¹. At the same time, calls to oppose what is becoming a new maritime reality in the high seas are already being made in the West³².

²⁶ Among the ten biggest ports of the world, seven (Hongkong included) are Chinese.

²⁷ To take the latest example: The Maritime Executive (2023). 'Report: Iran Seized Tanker in Retaliation for US Oil Seizures', 28 April. [Online]. Available at: <https://maritime-executive.com/article/report-iran-seized-tanker-in-retaliation-for-us-oil-seizures> (Accessed: 30 April 2023).

²⁸ See, for instance: Moreno, E. (2023). 'Panama has canceled registry to 136 Iran-linked vessels', Reuters, 18 January. [Online]. Available at: <https://www.reuters.com/business/energy/panama-has-canceled-registry-136-iran-linked-vessels-2023-01-18/> (Accessed: 30 April 2023).

²⁹ See, for instance: Sheppard, D., Cook, C. and Ivanova, P. (2022). 'Russia assembles "shadow fleet" of tankers to help blunt oil sanctions', Financial Times, 2 December. [Online]. Available at: <https://www.ft.com/content/cdef936b-852e-43d8-ae55-33bcbbb82eb6> (Accessed: 30 April 2023).

³⁰ See, for instance: The Maritime Executive (2023). 'Report: Singapore Sees Dramatic Jump in Detentions Due to Shadow Fleet', 1 June. [Online]. Available at: <https://www.maritime-executive.com/article/report-singapore-sees-dramatic-jump-in-detentions-due-to-shadow-fleet> (Accessed: 2 June 2023).

³¹ See, for instance: The Maritime Executive (2023). 'Spain Tries to Regulate Ship-to-Ship Tanker Transfers in Int'l Waters', 28 March. [Online]. Available at: <https://www.maritime-executive.com/article/spain-tries-to-regulate-ship-to-ship-tanker-transfers-in-int-l-waters> (Accessed: 30 April 2023).

³² See, for instance: Stavridis, J. (2023). 'Russia's Ghost Fleet of Oil Tankers Is a Floating Time Bomb', Bloomberg, 30 March. [Online]. Available at: <https://www.bloomberg.com/opinion/articles/2023-03-30/russia-s-ghost-fleet-of-oil-tankers-is-a-floating-time-bomb?accessToken=eyJhbGciOiJIUzI1NiIsInR5cCI6IkpXVCJ9.eyJzb3VyY2UiOiJITdWJzY3JpYmV5R2lmdGVkQXJ0aWNsZSI6ImIhdCI6MTY4MDE3NTc3NiwiZXhwIjoxNjgwNzgwNTc2LCJhcnRpY>

- The Russian-Iranian project aiming at creating an alternative trade route from Russia to India through the Caspian Sea, Iran and the Arabian Sea. Its objective is to bypass all the straits along the maritime routes connecting the Baltic and Black Seas to the World Ocean, in a context of Western economic measures on both Moscow and Tehran that are expected to last³³. In general, both States intent to substantially expand their maritime cooperation³⁴ so as to decrease what they perceive as the ability of the West to interfere – at least indirectly – in their activities.

This is suggestive of a fear that, in the long run, vehemence and harsh rivalry between great powers and their respective network of friendly countries may lead some parts of the World Ocean to be *de facto* inhospitable for one or the other, contrarily to what prevails today.

B. The Eastern Mediterranean and Europe's energy security

Why the Eastern Mediterranean is crucial to Europe's energy security?

Since it is connecting Asia and the Middle East / Northern Africa (MENA) region to Europe, the Eastern Mediterranean could not remain unaffected by the changing dynamics related to the role of the maritime space in the energy security. Unmistakably, it steadily evolves into a pivotal region for Europe's energy security, for three main reasons.

First, the Eastern Mediterranean is an *energy transit* area. Following the conflict in Ukraine, Europe's free access to the Eastern Mediterranean, the Gulf and the Indo-Pacific has become critical for its energy security. In this respect, the harmful strategic consequences for Europe of Russia's war on Ukraine should not be miscalculated. Even at a high price, Russia seems to succeed in one of its core objectives: to stimulate a world-scale reshuffle of influence to the detriment of the West. This is clearly visible in the Gulf, where Russia confirms its influence, China erupts as an honest regional broker in the long-standing Iranian-Saudi row, Syria rapidly restores ties with its Arab fellows, while Western influence undergoes a rebalancing process with uncertain

2xlSWQOiOJSU0JGNTBUMFGQjQwMSIsImJjb25uZWN0SWQOiOixODJBRTAzNUY2NDc0ODk
wODhEM0VCRUVGRUUzQkJFMiJ9.TlStt_V55hUkexR6gSo76WepyEzLf28G4h3Bz9r_2y8&utm_
campaign=dfn-ebb&utm_medium=email&utm_source=sailthru&SToverlay=2002c2d9-c344-4bbb-
8610-e5794efcfa7d (Accessed: 30 April 2023).

³³ See, for instance: Tirone, J. and Motevalli, G. (2022). 'Russia and Iran Are Building a Trade Route That Defies Sanctions', Bloomberg, 21 December. [Online]. Available at: <https://www.bloomberg.com/graphics/2022-russia-iran-trade-corridor/> (Accessed: 30 April 2023).

³⁴ See, for instance: TASS (2023). 'Moscow, Tehran mulling joint shipping company — Ambassador to Russia', 14 July. [Online]. Available at: <https://tass.com/economy/1647073> (Accessed: 15 July 2023).

outcomes³⁵. The potential long-term consequences of this tendency should not be underestimated, since the Gulf is a region of high importance for Europe's energy security. On the one hand, it contributes to the diversification of energy suppliers: in 2022, Saudi Arabia and Iraq exported respectively 52.21% and 15.8% more oil to Europe compared to 2021; the United Arab Emirates exported some 53,000 barrels of crude oil (compared to zero in 2021); Qatar increased its natural gas exports by 53.42%³⁶. On the other hand, the Gulf States are located on the route to the Indo-Pacific, which is also gaining in importance for Europe's energy security, especially considering India's upgraded role as an energy supplier, and despite accusations that New Delhi re-exports Russian oil³⁷.

In other words, energy flows from the Gulf and the Indo-Pacific are increasing in importance for Europe, and they transit mainly through the Eastern Mediterranean in order to connect to the European energy network. Such a connection point is the Greek port of Alexandroupolis, which is evolving into a significant energy knot for the Balkans and Eastern Europe. This new reality has upgraded Greece's role in Europe's energy security, an evolution that has not been welcomed by Turkey, which sees any regional energy development to which it is not directly associated as to be obstructed.

Second, the Eastern Mediterranean is important for Europe's energy security due to its *energy production* capacities. Since 1999, some 90 trillion cubic feet (Tcf) of gas have been discovered in the Eastern Mediterranean, and new discoveries are ongoing³⁸. As a comparison, in 2021, the EU consumption was around 15 Tcf. According to a report of the Centre on Global Energy Policy of the Columbia

³⁵ See, for instance: Szuba, J. (2023). 'US not notified yet of UAE's withdrawal from Gulf maritime coalition', Al-Monitor, 31 May. Available at: https://www.al-monitor.com/originals/2023/05/us-not-notified-yet-uaes-withdrawal-gulf-maritime-coalition?utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=daily%2053123%20May%2031%202023%2024&utm_content=daily%2053123%20May%2031%202023%2024+CID_676f1011c3fff739d3084747b88b6238&utm_source=campmgr&utm_term=US%20not%20notified%20yet%20of%20UAES%20withdrawal%20from%20Gulf%20maritime%20coalition (Accessed: 1 June 2023).

³⁶ 'La décontinentalisation des flux énergétiques en Europe', *op. cit.*

³⁷ See, for instance: Narayan, M. and Verma, N. (2023). 'Fuels from Russian oil gets backdoor entry into Europe via India', Reuters, 6 April. [Online]. Available at: <https://www.reuters.com/business/energy/fuels-russian-oil-gets-backdoor-entry-into-europe-via-india-2023-04-05/> (Accessed: 30 April 2023).

³⁸ i24NEWS (2023). 'Israel discovers new "significant" gas field off its coast', 31 May. [Online]. Available at: <https://www.i24news.tv/en/news/israel/economy/1685546870-israel-discovers-new-significant-gas-field-off-its-coast> (Accessed: 1 June 2023).

University³⁹, if Eastern Mediterranean States – and particularly Egypt, Cyprus and Israel – conduct dynamic investment policies, the region could, by the early 2030s, offer to the international market some 50 Tcf. Nonetheless, it should not be taken for granted that these quantities, even if they prove to be realistic, will be available for the sole EU. Much will depend on the growth of Egypt’s domestic consumption⁴⁰ and on exports to other regions of the world, as there is no fundamental reason for Egypt and Israel to export their gas *exclusively* or even mainly to the EU. The Memorandum of Understanding signed between the EU, Egypt and Israel in June 2022 explicitly states that this energy cooperation is without prejudice to Egypt and Israel’s right to use their gas resources for domestic consumption and for exports to clients other than the EU⁴¹. Yet, it appears clearly that, based on today’s projections, the Eastern Mediterranean is undoubtedly a critical area for Europe’s energy security, especially given the high degree of dependence on Russian gas. It shall be recalled that in 2020, the EU imported 84% of its gas, with more than 40% of these imports coming from Russia⁴². From this point of view, it is in the strategic interest of the EU that Cyprus – whose domestic gas consumption is anecdotal compared to Turkey’s – retains control on any of its gas-rich maritime zones unlawfully coveted by Turkey, as this gas will be more easily and massively accessible for the EU. Moreover, exploration is still ongoing south of Crete. If sizable and exploitable reserves are discovered in zones under Greek jurisdiction, this will further increase the importance of the Eastern Mediterranean in Europe’s energy security.

Third, precisely because the Eastern Mediterranean connects Europe to the MENA region, and is important in terms of energy transit and energy production, it is also an area of critical *energy infrastructure*. The flagship regional energy project has

³⁹ Dr. Nie, S. and Mills, R. (2023). ‘Eastern Mediterranean Deepwater Gas to Europe: Not Too Little, But Perhaps Too Late’, Center on Global Energy Policy at Columbia SIPA, March 2023. [Online]. Available at: https://www.energypolicy.columbia.edu/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/East-Med-Gas-CGEP_Report_030923-2.pdf (Accessed: 30 April 2023).

⁴⁰ According to the U.S. Energy Information Administration, in 2021, Egypt consumed 87% of the gas it produced: U.S. Energy Information Administration (2022). ‘Natural gas production and consumption has increased in Egypt and Israel for 20 years’, 29 November. [Online]. <https://www.eia.gov/todayinenergy/detail.php?id=54799#> (Accessed: 30 April 2023).

⁴¹ ‘Memorandum of Understanding on cooperation related to trade, transport, and export of natural gas to the European Union between the European Union represented by the European Commission the Arab Republic of Egypt represented by the Ministry of petroleum and mineral resources the State of Israel represented by the Ministry of energy’, 15 June 2022. [Online]. Available at: https://energy.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2022-06/MoU%20EU%20Egypt%20Israel_0.pdf (Accessed: 30 April 2023).

⁴² Di Bella, G. *et. al.*, ‘Natural Gas in Europe. The Potential Impact of Disruptions to Supply’, *op. cit.*

long been the EastMed undersea gas pipeline connecting Israel to Cyprus, Greece and the rest of Europe. Nevertheless, serious concerns have been raised in terms of technical feasibility, economic viability and geopolitical acceptability, especially with regard to the part of the pipeline going from Cyprus to Greece. Turkey is its main opponent, while the U.S. withdrew its initial support to the project in early 2022. Although this project has not been officially abandoned and a future revival cannot be excluded, it seems that it is getting adapted to the new context and takes a hybrid form. Israel and Cyprus have now expressed their will to build a pipeline connecting both countries, and the gas arriving in Cyprus will be delivered to the market through LNG ships⁴³, following thus Europe's general trend. This is not necessarily a negative development for Greece – which, it shall be reminded, has strongly advocated the EastMed pipeline project along with Cyprus – as long as Greek-owned LNG carriers and Greek gas reception, stockage and re-gasification infrastructure are actively involved in this energy planification. Yet, the EastMed pipeline project has also been doubled by two undersea electric power cables projects: the EuroAsia interconnector⁴⁴ and the EuroAfrica interconnector⁴⁵, both supported by the U.S.⁴⁶ The EuroAsia interconnector aims to connect Israel's electric grid to Europe through Cyprus and Crete, and it benefits from a strong support from the EU as well⁴⁷. It will transfer electricity to and from Europe, increasing that way the energy security of all parties. It will also provide Europe with electricity produced in Israel and Cyprus using natural gas and renewable energy sources, contributing, that way, to Europe's energy transition and further disconnection from Russian supplies. The EuroAfrica interconnector will connect Cypriot and Greek power grids to Egypt for the same purposes.

⁴³ The Maritime Executive (2023). 'Israel and Cyprus Agree on Landmark LNG Gas Export Project', 15 May. [Online]. Available at: <https://www.maritime-executive.com/article/israel-and-cyprus-agree-on-landmark-lng-gas-export-project> (Accessed: 1 June 2023).

⁴⁴ <https://euroasia-interconnector.com/> (Accessed: 30 April 2023).

⁴⁵ <https://www.euroafrica-interconnector.com/at-glance/> (Accessed: 30 April 2023).

⁴⁶ U.S. Embassy Spokesperson (2022). 'Statement on East Med Energy Cooperation', U.S. Embassy and Consulate in Greece, 10 January. [Online]. Available at: <https://gr.usembassy.gov/statement-on-east-med-energy-cooperation/> (Accessed: 30 April 2023).

⁴⁷ European Commission Directorate-General for Energy (2022). 'Commission participates in launch of EuroAsia Electricity Interconnector', 14 October. [Online]. Available at: https://commission.europa.eu/news/commission-participates-launch-euroasia-electricity-interconnector-2022-10-14_en (Accessed: 30 April 2023).

In the light of the above, the key issue for Europe is how to integrate the Eastern Mediterranean into its energy security strategy in the long run, and here comes the issue of Turkey's regional posture.

Discussing the Turkish factor with regard to Europe's energy security

Although transactionalism has long been a distinctive feature of Turkey's foreign policy, under President Erdogan, it has evolved into the main rule, particularly towards Europe. Through this strategy, Turkey aims at extorting geopolitical gain in any occasion and, step by step, to build its regional hegemony and great power status that will come as a *fait accompli*. This method gained momentum in the period 2015-2020, due to a relative introversion of the West. The Brexit, the Greek financial crisis, the election of Donald Trump and subsequent concerns about NATO's future, as well as the reversal of the strategic landscape in Syria and Libya, gave the impression of a certain weakness. Consequently, this opened new spaces for the strategic expansion of rival powers. Turkey efficiently used this opportunity, while the failed coup attempt of 2016 provided the Turkish President with the necessary motive to toughen its stance towards Europe and the U.S.

Towards Europe and the West in general (beyond Greece and Cyprus as specific targets), this Turkish strategy has manifested itself directly *via* three main vectors: the migration issue⁴⁸; Ankara's relation with Russia – especially in the context of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict⁴⁹; the issue of Finland and Sweden's adhesion to NATO, on the occasion of which Turkey's transactionalism probably reached its apogee. Although such a posture could be objectively understandable on the behalf of a non-NATO State, it is certainly more problematic when it comes to a NATO member like Turkey. Yet, this is also the consequence of the West's implicit but *de facto* acceptance of the emergence and consolidation of a Turkish exceptionalism over the years. And this is not without repercussions on the issue of Europe's energy security, as the latter might well evolve into the fourth vector of Turkey's transactional strategy towards Europe.

⁴⁸ See, for instance: France 24 (2020). 'Erdogan warns Europe to expect "millions" of migrants after Turkey opens borders', 3 March. [Online]. Available at: <https://www.france24.com/en/20200303-erdogan-warns-europe-to-expect-millions-of-migrants-after-turkey-opens-borders> (Accessed: 30 April 2023).

⁴⁹ TASS (2023). 'Turkey won't take sides in armed conflicts, including in Ukraine — Erdogan', 23 March. [Online]. Available at: <https://tass.com/world/1593197> (Accessed: 30 April 2023).

Indeed, in the Eastern Mediterranean, Turkey's actions aim at creating a situation in which it would be *de facto* able to control the maritime routes and to veto any decision regarding the energy exploitation and cooperation in the region. These two elements are the essence of its geopolitical maritime doctrine, which –it shall not be forgotten – is *entirely* consensual among Turkey's elite and society. The situation that would arise from the implementation of Turkey's doctrine would not only be detrimental to Europe's interests, but to the interests of the other non-European coastal States of the Eastern Mediterranean as well. Since Turkey has neither the historical, cultural and ideological legitimacy, nor the political maturity to take over the *leadership* of the region, the only way to satisfy its quest of grandeur is to try to impose its *hegemony* in the region, including through the exhibition and/or use of force. However, this is a risky strategy for Turkey too, as, in case of failure, it may further erode its legitimacy to play a central role in the region's security architecture. It is not a coincidence that Turkey's actions led to the deterioration of its relations with most of the region's key States (beyond Greece and Cyprus), who seem to be well aware what a Turkish hegemony in the region would mean for them in the long run. A certain lull in the Eastern Mediterranean that followed the February 2023 earthquakes is also the result of Turkey's understanding that its strategy of tension has not been as efficient as expected.

In other words, if Turkey was to succeed in its design to acquire a *de facto* right of veto on the developments related to energy (transit, production, infrastructure) in the Eastern Mediterranean, this would give Ankara an unprecedented leverage on Europe's future. This scenario becomes even more realistic if we consider two more elements. First, Turkey's privileged relation with Russia, while the latter is the main challenge when it comes to Europe's energy security. Second, the fact that the TANAP and TurkStream pipelines already transit through Turkey and contribute to Europe's energy security. As a result, a success of Turkish designs in the Eastern Mediterranean would give Turkey the possibility to create a *de facto* and adjustable 'energy condominium' with Russia. And this is precisely Russia's objective, as Moscow knows very well that Turkey's transactionalism – which tends to acquire structural characteristics – provides plenty of opportunities to undermine the Western strategic posture. And this is the essence of President Putin's proposal to create, amid the war in Ukraine, a gas hub in

Turkey – an idea that, unsurprisingly, the Turkish president found attractive⁵⁰, as it increases its room for manoeuvre vis-à-vis Europe.

In light of the above, a scenario in which Turkey would retain control over any energy project in the Eastern Mediterranean cannot but happen at Europe's expense, as the EU would practically become a hostage obliged to 'buy' from Ankara energy security at a high political and geopolitical price. This would be extremely compromising for all the EU members, and particularly for Cyprus and Greece, who are EU's gate to the region. In such a situation, the latter would become a remote periphery – and, most likely, an expendable buffer zone – of a Europe increasingly introverted and concentrated on its Carolingian core. This explains Athens' objective – and subsequent diplomatic engagement – to transform Greece into the bridge between an extraverted and confident Europe on the one hand, and the MENA region and Asia on the other, giving thus the possibility to the EU to be directly involved in the security architecture of the Eastern Mediterranean. Actually, if the EU has its say in the region, it is by virtue of Greece and Cyprus' membership, complemented by the ability of the French navy and its local partners to sail and operate in the region.

Put it differently, like any maritime area that is crucial for all types of international flows (trade, energy, data)⁵¹, *the Eastern Mediterranean cannot be subject to any unilateral expansionist geopolitical project*. On the contrary, it requires a balanced and principled cooperation between multiple States sharing common interests, and apprehending international law as the framework of their relations, so as to maintain the region secure and inhospitable to unilateral agendas. This is crucial for Europe's energy security and relations with the MENA region. In this respect, the choices of key European States such as Germany and Italy (henceforth, one may also add Poland) are critical, as it remains unclear how they contemplate Europe's energy security and strategic future in the long run, in particular with regard to their relations with Turkey and to their vision of the Eastern Mediterranean. Although it may

⁵⁰ Ljunggren, D. (2022). 'Putin says Turkish gas hub can easily be set up, reveals pipeline damage details', Reuters, 31 October. [Online]. Available at: <https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/putin-says-gas-hub-can-be-set-up-turkey-quite-easily-2022-10-31/> (Accessed: 30 April 2023).

⁵¹ Suruga, T. (2023). 'Asia's internet cable projects delayed by South China Sea tensions', Nikkei Asia, 19 May. [Online]. Available at: https://asia.nikkei.com/Business/Business-Spotlight/Asia-s-internet-cable-projects-delayed-by-South-China-Sea-tensions?utm_campaign=IC_asia_daily_free&utm_medium=email&utm_source=NA_newsletter&utm_content=article_link&del_type=1&pub_date=20230519190000&seq_num=3&si=20104121 (Accessed: 20 May 2023).

legitimately be considered that the complexity of the regional equation – including due to Turkey’s NATO membership – requires a tactful handling, *consistency* cannot but be a key ingredient for a credible and well-grounded long-term EU policy and energy security strategy. Therefore, urging for the respect of *status quo* and international law in the South China Sea⁵² while, in comparable situations, not adopting the same stance in the Eastern Mediterranean – and even providing Ankara with the tools of ambitions similar in their essence to those of China⁵³ – may raise some questions as to the credibility of a common EU vision in terms of energy security in a crucial period.

In this very context, the potential transformation of Turkey into the main interface between Europe on the one hand, and Asia and the MENA region on the other, is a critical issue with regard to Europe’s future, as Turkey would gain substantial leverage in fixing the terms of Europe’s relations with these key regions. And the debate on the consequences of such a scenario has not been conducted thoroughly enough. In fact, it raises the fundamental question of whether energy security has really become a collective challenge for the EU, or of whether each State should continue to apprehend it primarily in a narrow national dimension.

Conclusion

In a world that requires to further enhance security integration among partners and allies, as well as to develop a long-term common vision and an ability to react quickly to an increasing number of outstanding challenges that determine the viability of this long-term vision, the Eastern Mediterranean appears to be a pivotal region for Europe’s future. It encompasses all the strategic and security challenges associated with the growing importance of the sea in power politics and energy security. Moreover, it is practically indissociable from the essence of what is at stake in Ukraine: the terms of Europe’s security architecture for the decades ahead.

In this context, a clear, robust and principled – not transactional – European strategy of inclusion of the Eastern Mediterranean in the EU’s energy security and

⁵² TASS (2023). ‘Germany’s top diplomat finds unilateral change to status quo in Taiwan Strait unacceptable’, 14 April. [Online]. Available at: <https://tass.com/defense/1604165> (Accessed: 30 April 2023). See also: The Maritime Executive (2023). ‘EU’s Foreign Policy Chief Calls for Naval Patrols in Taiwan Strait’, 23 April. [Online]. Available at: <https://www.maritime-executive.com/article/eu-s-foreign-policy-chief-calls-for-naval-patrols-in-taiwan-strait> (Accessed: 30 April 2023).

⁵³ See, for instance: The Economist (2021). ‘German submarines are giving Turkey an edge over Greece’, 3 July. Available at: <https://www.economist.com/europe/2021/07/03/german-submarines-are-giving-turkey-an-edge-over-greece> (Accessed: 30 April 2023).

strategic planification for the next decades is needed, in order for Europe to retain the critical ability to fix itself the terms of its relations with the MENA region, the Indo-Pacific and Asia. This is a *sine qua non* condition for its transformation into a ‘geopolitical’ and autonomous Europe.



JEAN MONNET EUROPEAN CENTRE OF EXCELLENCE
NATIONAL AND KAPODISTRIAN UNIVERSITY OF ATHENS

21-23 Marasli str., 106 76 Athens
Tel: +30 210 72 20 508 & 213 13 02 659
Email: jmcenter-athens@pspa.uoa.gr www.jmce.gr

ISBN 978-618-86114-1-2