



## **The trilateral partnership between Greece, Cyprus & Israel**

Background, recent developments and future considerations regarding  
the security environment in the Eastern Mediterranean



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## **Disclosure Statement**

The opinion expressed in this text represents the author's personal views and in no way reflects the official position of the Hellenic Institute for Strategic Studies (HEL.I.S.S.) or any other Institute or Organization he is affiliated with.

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## **Abstract**

The trilateral partnership between Greece, Cyprus and Israel began on August 8th, 2013 in Nicosia, with the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the Ministers of Energy of the three states. It is of strategic importance because it contributes to regional peace and stability, affecting not only the security environment in Eastern Mediterranean but also the economic development of its members and other major stakeholders. Although the trilateral partnership focuses mainly on the exploitation of the energy deposits discovered in the Levantine Basin, it is also encompassing several other sectors such as defence, economy, the environment, immigration and trade, which affects the balance of power at regional level.

Initially, we examine the dynamics that led to the approach between the three states, a factor that helps us understand the nature of this relationship. We also refer to some recent developments concerning the construction of the East Mediterranean (EastMed) pipeline, new hydrocarbon deposits discoveries, the influence of the United States and the normalization of the bilateral relations between Israel and Türkiye. Finally, we examine 4 future scenarios regarding the perspectives of this partnership depending on the attitude of major regional and international actors, to conclude by assessing the most possible one, given the existing conditions in the Eastern Mediterranean.

## Introduction

The trilateral partnership between Greece, Cyprus and Israel began on August 8<sup>th</sup>, 2013 in Nicosia (Cyprus), where the Ministers of Energy of the three countries met and signed a **Memorandum of Understanding (MoU)**<sup>1</sup> regarding energy issues. During the meeting, they confirmed the intention to create **EuroAsia Interconnector** (Appendix C) and **Eastern Mediterranean Pipeline** (Appendix A), also known as EastMed. Since then, the cooperation has been extended to other areas as well,<sup>2</sup> while the Heads of State of the three countries have taken part in seven Summits that took place on:

- ✓ January 28<sup>th</sup>, **2016** in **Nicosia** (Cyprus),
- ✓ December 8<sup>th</sup>, **2016** in **Jerusalem** (Israel),
- ✓ June 15<sup>th</sup>, **2017** in **Thessaloniki** (Greece),
- ✓ May 8<sup>th</sup>, **2018** in **Nicosia** (Cyprus),
- ✓ December 20<sup>th</sup>, **2018** in **Ber Seva** (Israel),
- ✓ March 20<sup>th</sup>, **2019** in **Jerusalem** (Israel), and
- ✓ December 7<sup>th</sup>, **2021** in **Jerusalem** (Israel).

## The reasons behind the Partnership

The main reason that led to the cooperation between the three states is the existence of natural gas deposits (Appendix B) in the Levantine basin.<sup>3</sup> The most important ones were "**Tamar**" and "**Leviathan**" discovered in the Exclusive Economic

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<sup>1</sup> Μνημόνιο Ελλάδας-Ισραήλ-Κύπρου: Φυσικό Αέριο και Ηλεκτρισμός στο Επίκεντρο των Επαφών, ENERGIA.gr, 8 Αυγούστου 2013, <https://www.energia.gr/article/72969/mnhmonio-elladasisrahlkyproy-fysiko-aerio-kai-hlektrismos-sto-epikentro-ton-epafon> (27/04/2022) and Greece, Cyprus and Israel sign energy, water memorandum, HELLENIC REPUBLIC, Greece in the UK, 09 August 2013, <https://www.mfa.gr/uk/en/the-embassy/news/greece-cyprus-and-israel-sign-energy-water-memorandum.html> (28/04/2022).

<sup>2</sup> Τζιάρρας Ζήνωνας, *Διεθνής Πολιτική στην Ανατολική Μεσόγειο: Τουρκία, Κύπρος και Δίκτυα Συνεργασίας σε μια «Νέα» Υπο-Περιφέρεια*, Παπαζήση, Αθήνα, 2020, pp. 251-253.

<sup>3</sup> Zemach Shaul, Israel's Exploitation of Hydrocarbons: Status quo or Quo vadis? στο Giannakopoulos Angelos (editor), *Energy Cooperation and Security in the Eastern Mediterranean: A Seismic Shift towards Peace or Conflict?* The S. Daniel Abraham Center for International and Regional Studies, Tel Aviv University, Tel Aviv, 2016, p. 65.

Zone (EEZ) of Israel in **2009** and **2010** respectively, as well as "**Aphrodite**" discovered in **2011** in the EEZ of the Republic of Cyprus.<sup>4</sup> Therefore, the trilateral partnership contributed to the reduction of extraction costs, providing the possibility of channeling hydrocarbons to the European market.

Another reason for rapprochement was **Türkiye's aggressive Foreign Policy** in the Eastern Mediterranean, especially after **2010**.<sup>5</sup> The ongoing **casus belli** towards Greece since 1995, the promotion of the Turkish revisionist doctrine of the **Blue Homeland**<sup>6</sup> (Appendix D) and the illegal **delimitation of its EEZ** with Libya<sup>7</sup> (Appendix E) are only a few examples of this policy, which ignores the rules of International Law.<sup>8</sup> Therefore, the trilateral partnership was also aiming at dealing with Turkish provocation.<sup>9</sup>

A third reason that acted as a catalyst for cooperation on the part of Israel was the fact that it is located in an area in which **conflicts and political instability** prevail, especially after **2011**.<sup>10</sup> Israel tried to cover this security deficit, through the development of interstate relations with neighboring countries that had a **stable**

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<sup>4</sup> Baconi Tareq, *A Flammable Peace: Why gas deals won't end conflict in the Middle East*, Policy Brief, European Council on Foreign Relations, December 2017, [https://ecfr.eu/wp-content/uploads/A\\_flammable\\_peace\\_2.pdf](https://ecfr.eu/wp-content/uploads/A_flammable_peace_2.pdf) (29/04/2022).

<sup>5</sup> Richert Jörn, Turkey's Energy Leadership Ambitions and Their Implications for Energy Governance in the Eastern Mediterranean, στο Giannakopoulos Angelos (editor), *Energy Cooperation and Security in the Eastern Mediterranean: A Seismic Shift towards Peace or Conflict?* The S. Daniel Abraham Center for International and Regional Studies, Tel Aviv University, Tel Aviv, 2016, pp. 61-63.

<sup>6</sup> Areteos Evangelos, *Mavi Vatan and Forward Defense: The Sinuous Journey of a Republican and Imperial Hybridization*, Turkish Desk of the Diplomatic Academy of University of Nicosia, 2020, <https://www.unic.ac.cy/da/wp-content/uploads/sites/11/2020/07/Mavi-Vatan-and-Forward-Defence-Evangelos-Areteos.pdf> (28/04/2022).

<sup>7</sup> Κουκάκης Γεώργιος, *Αποκλειστική Οικονομική Ζώνη (ΑΟΖ): Οι προσπάθειες οριοθέτησής της από τα κράτη της Ανατολικής Μεσογείου*, ΚΕΔΙΣΑ, 7 Φεβρουαρίου 2022, <https://kedisa.gr/apokleistiki-oikonomiki-zoni-aoz-oi-prospatheies-oriothetisis-tis-apo-ta-krati-tis-anatolikis-mesogeiou/> (28/04/2022).

<sup>8</sup> Μπαμπανάσης Στέργιος, Βασικές διαπιστώσεις και συμπεράσματα του Συνεδρίου, at Μπαμπανάσης Στέργιος & Πλατιάς Αθανάσιος & Σεϊμένης Ιωάννης (επιμέλεια) *Οι γεωστρατηγικές αλλαγές στη Μεσόγειο και οι επιπτώσεις τους*, Παπαζήση, Αθήνα, 2018, p. 25.

<sup>9</sup> Ατταλίδης Μιχάλης, Η Γεωπολιτική των Τριμερών Συνεργασιών, at Ντάλης Σωτήρης (επιμέλεια) *Mare Nostrum: Μετατοπίσεις ισχύος στον Γεωπολιτικό Χάρτη της Μεσογείου*. Γεωπολιτικές και Γεωοικονομικές προκλήσεις, Παπαζήση, Αθήνα, 2020, p. 218.

<sup>10</sup> Χειλά Ειρήνη, Ανατολική Μεσόγειος, Γεωπολιτικές Δυνάμεις και Ελλάδα, at Ντάλης Σωτήρης (επιμέλεια) *Mare Nostrum: Μετατοπίσεις ισχύος στον Γεωπολιτικό Χάρτη της Μεσογείου*. Γεωπολιτικές και Γεωοικονομικές προκλήσεις, Παπαζήση, Αθήνα, 2020, σσ. 299-311.

**political system**, such as Cyprus and Greece.<sup>11</sup> The fact that both countries were members of the **European Union** gave additional perspectives to their cooperation.<sup>12</sup>

## Recent Developments

On March 20<sup>th</sup>, 2019, during the 6<sup>th</sup> Trilateral Summit, the **United States** formally expressed their support to the trilateral partnership by participating in the joint statement published at the end of the Summit.<sup>13</sup> The importance of the US support was so great that after the 6<sup>th</sup> Summit the Trilateral Partnership was referred to by most analysts as the "**3+1**" **scheme**. Another positive development that took place on September 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2020 was the creation of the **East Mediterranean Gas Forum (EMGF)**,<sup>14</sup> an Organisation between Greece, Cyprus, Israel, Egypt, France, Italy, Jordan and Palestine based in Cairo, which aims to develop dialogue between gas producing, consuming and transit countries in order to develop a sustainable market in the Eastern Mediterranean.

On December 19<sup>th</sup>, 2021 Israel's Ambassador to Greece gave an interview, confirming Israel's intention to construct EastMed, with a possible **redirection of its course to Egypt** (Appendix F), a country that - as he pointed out - is an important energy partner for his country.<sup>15</sup> In early 2022, the future of the trilateral partnership

<sup>11</sup> Ezrahi Ariel, Cooperation Prospects and Conflict Potential around Hydrocarbons in the Middle East: Israel–Egypt–Palestinian Territories–Jordan στο Giannakopoulos Angelos (editor), *Energy Cooperation and Security in the Eastern Mediterranean: A Seismic Shift towards Peace or Conflict?* The S. Daniel Abraham Center for International and Regional Studies, Tel Aviv University, Tel Aviv, 2016, pp. 79-80.

<sup>12</sup> On 14 Οκτωβρίου 2013 the EU declared as PCI (Project of Common Interest) both EastMed (PCI 7.3.1) and EuroAsia Interconnector (PCI 3.10), funding a big part of the surveys. Official Journal of the European Union, L 349/30, 21.12.2013 <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32013R1391&from=EN> (27/04/2022) και *Eastern Mediterranean Pipeline Project*, NS ENERGY, <https://www.nsenegybusiness.com/projects/eastern-mediterranean-pipeline-project/> (27/04/2022).

<sup>13</sup> *Joint Declaration Between Cyprus, Greece, Israel, and the U.S. After the 6th Trilateral Summit*, U.S. Embassy in Athens, 21 March 2019, <https://gr.usembassy.gov/joint-declaration-between-cyprus-greece-israel-and-the-u-s-after-the-6th-trilateral-summit/> (27/04/2022).

<sup>14</sup> *EAST MEDITERRANEAN GAS FORUM*, <https://emgf.org/> (27/04/2022) and Φόρουμ Φυσικού Αερίου της ανατολικής Μεσογείου («East Mediterranean Gas Forum – EMGF»), Υπουργείο Περιβάλλοντος και Ενέργειας, <https://ypen.gov.gr/forum-fysikou-aeriu-tis-anatolikis-mesogeiou-east-mediterranean-gas-forum-emgf/> (27/04/2022).

<sup>15</sup> The majority of Israel's gas exports are channeled to Egypt. The two countries are connected by natural gas pipeline, while one more is under construction. Γ. Αμράνι στην «Κ»: Δεν επηρεάζει η Τουρκία τις σχέσεις Ελλάδας–Ισραήλ, Η ΚΑΘΗΜΕΡΙΝΗ, 19 Δεκεμβρίου 2021, στο

seemed doubtful,<sup>16</sup> as several reports indicated that the US no longer desired the construction of EastMed.<sup>17</sup> Despite the ongoing rumors, a representative of the US State Department, reaffirmed the American support, stating that the interest of the US had shifted to electricity and other **renewable energy sources**.<sup>18</sup>

On February 17<sup>th</sup>, 2022 the Israeli Ambassador to Greece in an another interview stated that the construction of a pipeline mainly **depends on the companies**, expressing his doubts about the viability of both EastMed and a possible pipeline to Türkiye, while pointing out that a more likely solution was the construction of a similar one to **Egypt**.<sup>19</sup> Russia's invasion of Ukraine a few days later led the European Union to seek new energy suppliers, such as **Egypt** and **Israel**,<sup>20</sup> highlighting the value of the EastMed pipeline.<sup>21</sup>

On March 9<sup>th</sup>, 2022 - after a long period of weak diplomatic relations - the President of **Israel** visited the President of the Republic of **Türkiye**,<sup>22</sup> an action that initiated several concerns<sup>23</sup> due to the latter's statements about cooperation between the

<https://www.kathimerini.gr/politics/561635200/g-amrani-stin-k-den-epireazei-i-toyrkia-tis-scheseis-elladas-israil/> (27/04/2022).

<sup>16</sup> Κουκάκης Γεώργιος, *East Med, Ενεργειακή Ασφάλεια και Εθνικά Συμφέροντα*, ΕΛΙΣΜΕ, 24 Ιανουαρίου 2022, <http://www.elisme.gr/images/pdf/files/EastMed-Analysis-Koukakis.pdf> (27/04/2022).

<sup>17</sup> It seems to have been a leak of a non-paper from the Department of State, characterizing EastMed's construction economically unviable and a source of tension in the Eastern Mediterranean region.

<sup>18</sup> Στέιτ Ντιπάρτμεντ για EastMed: Οι ΗΠΑ παραμένουν δεσμευμένες στο σχήμα 3+1, Η ΚΑΘΗΜΕΡΙΝΗ, 10 Ιανουαρίου 2022, <https://www.kathimerini.gr/politics/561661954/steit-ntipartment-gia-eastmed-oi-ipa-paramenoy-n-desmeymenes-sto-schima-3-1/> (27/04/2022).

<sup>19</sup> Γιώσι Αμράνι, Πρέσβης Ισραήλ Συνέντευξη στη Liberal, Πρεσβεία του Ισραήλ στην Ελλάδα, 17 Φεβρουαρίου 2022, [https://embassies.gov.il/athens/AboutIsrael/Science\\_Academia\\_scholarships/Pages/Ambassador-Amrani-interviewLiberal2022.aspx](https://embassies.gov.il/athens/AboutIsrael/Science_Academia_scholarships/Pages/Ambassador-Amrani-interviewLiberal2022.aspx) (27/04/2022).

<sup>20</sup> Άρθρο του Νίκου Τσάφου στην «Κ»: Νέα πνοή για το φυσικό αέριο στην Ανατολική Μεσόγειο; Η ΚΑΘΗΜΕΡΙΝΗ, 13 Μαρτίου 2022, <https://www.kathimerini.gr/politics/foreign-policy/561759079/nea-pnoi-gia-to-fysiko-aerio-stin-anatoliki-mesogeio/> (27/04/2022).

<sup>21</sup> Επανέρχονται στο προσκήνιο δύο ενεργειακά σχέδια, Η ΚΑΘΗΜΕΡΙΝΗ, 6 Απριλίου 2022, <https://www.kathimerini.gr/politics/561795643/epanerchontai-sto-proskinio-dyo-energeiaka-protzeft/> (27/04/2022).

<sup>22</sup> *President Herzog of Israel at the Presidential Complex*, Presidency of the Republic of Türkiye, 9 Μαρτίου 2022, <https://www.tccb.gov.tr/en/news/542/135917/president-herzog-of-israel-at-the-presidential-complex> (27/04/2022) και *Full text of President Isaac Herzog's statement at the Presidential Complex in Ankara*, President of the State of Israel, 9 Μαρτίου 2022, <https://www.gov.il/en/departments/news/press-0903222> (27/04/2022).

<sup>23</sup> Κουκάκης Γεώργιος, *Τουρκία και Ισραήλ: Μια ανησυχητική (επανα)προσέγγιση*, ΚΕΔΙΣΑ, 11 Μαρτίου 2022 <https://kedisa.gr/tourkia-kai-israil-mia-anisychitiki-epanaprosengisi/> (27/04/2022).



two states in the field of energy.<sup>24</sup> On March 28<sup>th</sup>, 2022, the **Greek** Minister of Foreign Affairs met his **Egyptian** counterpart in Cairo,<sup>25</sup> where they discussed several issues such as the possibility of **LNG** supplies and the construction of **EuroAfrica Interconnector**.<sup>26</sup>

On April 5<sup>th</sup>, 2022, the **US Deputy Secretary of State** met with the Greek Minister of Foreign Affairs to discuss - among other things - issues related to energy,<sup>27</sup> while two days later she stated that EastMed is too expensive and time-consuming.<sup>28</sup> In a subsequent statement, she emphasized the **US preference for LNG transport** through the cooperation of Greece, Cyprus, Israel, Egypt and Türkiye,<sup>29</sup> a scenario that was also promoted by the Turkish side.<sup>30</sup>

Another view, however, was given again by Israel's Ambassador to Greece. During his speech at the Delphi Economic Forum the Israeli Ambassador stated that the way the deposits are going to be exploited is going to be determined exclusively by the states involved, **characterizing Egypt as a "key country"** for the progress of the projects.<sup>31</sup> These statements were confirmed on April 11<sup>th</sup>, 2022 during the trilateral

<sup>24</sup> “It is in our hands to contribute to making peace, serenity and the culture of co-existence prevail once again in our region”, Presidency of the Republic of Türkiye, 9 Μαρτίου 2022, <https://www.tccb.gov.tr/en/news/542/135922/-it-is-in-our-hands-to-contribute-to-making-peace-serenity-and-the-culture-of-co-existence-prevail-once-again-in-our-region-> (27/04/2022).

<sup>25</sup> Συζητήσεις με Κάιρο για ενέργεια, Η ΚΑΘΗΜΕΡΙΝΗ, 29 Μαρτίου 2022, <https://www.kathimerini.gr/politics/561782557/syzytiseis-me-kairo-gia-energeia/> (27/04/2022).

<sup>26</sup> EuroAfrica at a glance, EuroAfrics Interconnector, <https://www.euroafrica-interconnector.com/at-glance/> (27/04/2022).

<sup>27</sup> Διπλωματική κινητικότητα: Στην Αθήνα κορυφαίοι αξιωματούχοι του Στέιτ Ντιπάρτμεντ για σειρά επαφών, Η ΚΑΘΗΜΕΡΙΝΗ, 5 Απριλίου 2022, <https://www.kathimerini.gr/politics/foreign-policy/561795265/diplomatiki-kinitikotita-stin-athina-koryfaioi-axiomatoychoi-toy-steit-ntipartment-gia-seira-epafon/> (27/04/2022).

<sup>28</sup> Βικτόρια Νούλαντ: Ασύμφορος και μη βιώσιμος ο EastMed, χρειάζονται άμεσες λύσεις, ΠΡΩΤΟ ΘΕΜΑ, 7 Απριλίου 2022, <https://www.protothema.gr/world/article/1230416/viktoria-noulad-asumforos-kai-mi-viosimos-o-eastmed-hreiazodai-ameses-luseis/> (27/04/2022).

<sup>29</sup> Βικτόρια Νούλαντ στην «Κ»: Ναι σε LNG, όχι σε αγωγούς στη Μεσόγειο, Η ΚΑΘΗΜΕΡΙΝΗ, 7 Απριλίου 2022, <https://www.kathimerini.gr/politics/561797341/synenteyxi-viktoria-noylant-stin-k-nai-se-lng-ochi-se-agogoys-sti-mesogeio/> (27/04/2022).

<sup>30</sup> Ο Σινάν Ουλγκέν στην «Κ»: Ο EastMed μπορεί να επανέλθει αν ενταχθεί στο σχέδιο και η Τουρκία, Η ΚΑΘΗΜΕΡΙΝΗ, 6 Απριλίου 2022, <https://www.kathimerini.gr/politics/561790435/o-sinan-oylgken-stin-k-o-eastmed-mporei-na-epanelthei-an-entachthei-sto-schedio-kai-i-toyrkia/> (27/04/2022).

<sup>31</sup> Με όλο το σεβασμό κ.Νούλαντ, αλλά οι χώρες της περιοχής θα αποφασίσουν για τον EastMed, λέει ο Πρέσβης του Ισραήλ, Hellas Journal, 8 Απριλίου 2022, <https://hellasjournal.com/2022/04/me-olo-to-sebasmo-k-noulant-alla-oi-xores-tis-periochis-tha-apofasissoun-gia-ton-eastmed-leei-o-presvhis-tou-Israhl/>

meeting of the Ministers of Energy in Jerusalem,<sup>32</sup> where the possibility of transporting natural gas through Türkiye was ruled out and the creation of an **LNG station in Cyprus** (Vasiliko) was discussed.<sup>33</sup>

Another recent development related to the trilateral partnership is the visit of the **Turkish Foreign Minister to Israel** on May 25<sup>th</sup>, 2022. During his visit, he met with his Israeli counterpart, who stated that Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu's visit marked the restart of the relations between the two states. He also announced the reconstitution of the **Joint Economic Commission** between Israel and Türkiye and the attempt to reach a new agreement in the field of **Civil Aviation**.<sup>34</sup>

The fact that **Yair Lapid** did not mention anything about the energy sector and that the Turkish Foreign Minister was not accompanied by the Minister of Energy - as reported by Turkish media<sup>35</sup> - suggested that Israel was not willing at the time to proceed to a large-scale cooperation with the Turkish side.<sup>36</sup> Moreover, on May 26<sup>th</sup>, 2022 some media reports indicated that the EU was considering the possibility of importing **Israeli natural gas** in the form of LNG through **Egyptian facilities**.<sup>37</sup>

In a bilateral level, the Greek **Deputy Foreign Ministry** in charge of economic diplomacy visited Israel between **8-9 June 2022**, where he met with the Israeli Deputy

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[sevasmo-k-noulant-alla-i-chores-tis-periochis-tha-apofasisoun-gia-ton-eastmed-lei-o-presvis-tou-israil/](#) (27/04/2022).

<sup>32</sup> Το σχέδιο Ισραήλ, Κύπρου και Ελλάδας για εξαγωγές LNG στην Ευρώπη, ΤΑ ΝΕΑ, 12 Απριλίου 2022, <https://www.tanea.gr/2022/04/12/economy/economy-greece/to-sxedio-israil-kyprou-kai-elladas-gia-eksagoges-lng-stin-eyropi/> (27/04/2022).

<sup>33</sup> Εναλλακτικές για τον EastMed στην τριμερή Ελλάδα-Κύπρου-Ισραήλ, Η ΚΑΘΗΜΕΡΙΝΗ, 12 Απριλίου 2022, <https://www.kathimerini.gr/economy/561806206/enallaktikes-gia-ton-eastmed-stin-trimeri-elladas-kyproy-israil/> (27/04/2022).

<sup>34</sup> FM Lapid meets with Turkish FM Çavuşoğlu in Jerusalem, Israel, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 25 May 2022, <https://www.gov.il/en/departments/news/fm-lapid-meets-with-turkish-fm-cavusoglu-25-may-2022> (27/05/2022).

<sup>35</sup> «Νέο κεφάλαιο» στις σχέσεις Τουρκίας - Ισραήλ μετά από 15 χρόνια;, ΗΜΕΡΗΣΙΑ, 26 Μαΐου 2022, <https://www.imerisia.gr/kosmos/43946-neo-kefalaio-stis-sheseis-toyrkias-israil-meta-apo-15-hronia> (27/05/2022).

<sup>36</sup> «Άνθρακας» για την Τουρκία το ισραηλινό αέριο, Η ΚΑΘΗΜΕΡΙΝΗ, 25 Μαΐου 2022, <https://www.kathimerini.gr/world/561876310/anthrakas-gia-tin-toyrkia-to-israilino-aerio/> (27/05/2022).

<sup>37</sup> Συμφωνία με Ισραήλ και Αίγυπτο για την προμήθεια φυσικού αερίου επεξεργάζεται η ΕΕ, Capital.gr, 26 Μαΐου 2022, <https://www.capital.gr/epikairota/3636718/sumfonia-me-israil-kai-aigupto-gia-tin-promitheia-fusikou-aeriou-epexergazetai-i-ee> (27/05/2022).

Foreign Minister for Economy and Industry and the Chairman of Israel's Innovation Authority.<sup>38</sup> Mr. Frangkogiannis signed 2 Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs) regarding the trade sector with Israel's **Export Institute** head and **Israel Foreign Trade Risks Insurance Corporation**, and discussed issues pertaining the enhancement of know-how exchange and the creation of joint research programs in the fields of **renewable energy** and **agro-tech**.

After a few days, between **12-13 June 2022**, the Greek **Climate Crisis and Civil Protection Minister** visited Israel, where he met with **Minister for Public Security** and **Minister for Environment Protection**. He also met with **Deputy Minister of Defense**, with whom he signed another Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the two countries on **Civil Protection** cooperation.<sup>39</sup>

As far as the Defence sector is concerned, the **Chief of Hellenic Navy General Staff** visited Israel between **18-20 July 2022** upon invitation of his Israeli counterpart, where they confirmed the two parties high-level of cooperation,<sup>40</sup> followed by a visit of the **Hellenic Army General Staff Chief** to the Israeli **Chief of Ground Forces** on **August 2-4, 2022**.<sup>41</sup> Finally, on **14-15 September 2022** the Chief of the **Hellenic National Defense Staff** visited Israel to participate in the 1<sup>st</sup> **International Military Innovation Conference** in Tel Aviv organized by the Israel Defence Forces. Among the 24 countries that took part in the conference was **Cyprus** and the **USA**.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Hellenic Republic, Greece in Israel, *Deputy Foreign Ministry in charge of economic diplomacy visits Israel*, 15 June 2022, <https://www.mfa.gr/missionsabroad/en/israel-en/news/deputy-foreign-ministry-in-charge-of-economic-diplomacy-visits-israel.html> (04/10/2022).

<sup>39</sup> Hellenic Republic, Greece in Israel, *Climate Crisis and Civil Protection Minister, Christos Stylianides, visits Israel*, 16 June 2022, <https://www.mfa.gr/missionsabroad/en/israel-en/news/climate-crisis-and-civil-protection-minister-christos-stylianides-visits-israel.html> (04/10/2022).

<sup>40</sup> Hellenic Republic, Greece in Israel, *Chief of Hellenic Navy General Staff VADM Petrakis visits Israel*, 29 July 2022, <https://www.mfa.gr/missionsabroad/en/israel-en/news/chief-of-hellenic-navy-general-staff-vadm-petrakis-visits-israel.html> (04/10/2022).

<sup>41</sup> Hellenic Republic, Greece in Israel, *Chief of Hellenic Army General Staff Lieutenant General C. Lalousis visits Israel*, 10 August 2022, <https://www.mfa.gr/missionsabroad/en/israel-en/news/chief-of-hellenic-army-general-staff-lieutenant-general-lalousis-visits-israel.html> (04/10/2022).

<sup>42</sup> Hellenic Republic, Greece in Israel, *The Chief of the Hellenic National Defense Staff, Gen. K. Floros visits Israel*, 23 September 2022, <https://www.mfa.gr/missionsabroad/en/israel-en/news/the-chief-of-the-hellenic-national-defense-staff-gen-floros-visits-israel.html> (04/10/2022).

As far as the hydrocarbon deposits are concerned, there has been major discoveries in the Cypriot as well as the Israeli EEZ. To be more specific, in **August 2022** ENI announced the findings of **2,5 tcf** of natural gas during its surveys conducted in **Block 6** of the **Cypriot EEZ**.<sup>43</sup> On October 2022, Energean announced another major hydrocarbon deposit of approximately **1,6 tcf** in **Block 31** of the **Israeli EEZ**, which can be exported either to Cyprus through the future LNG station in Vasiliko or to Egypt through the existing or future pipelines.<sup>44</sup>

As far as the EEZ disputes are concerned, Cyprus and Israel seem to be very close to reaching a deal regarding their dispute about the "**Aphrodite**" deposit found in the Cypriot EEZ and its neighboring Israeli "**Ishai**" deposit. The Ministers of Energy of the two countries met in Cyprus on **September 9<sup>th</sup>, 2022** where they held relevant discussions stating that the two sides have developed a roadmap in order to fully exploit the natural gas findings of their EEZ.<sup>45</sup> Another positive development that affects the exploitation of natural gas findings is the fact that on **October 11<sup>th</sup>, 2022** Israel and Lebanon reached an agreement regarding their **EEZ delimitation**.<sup>46</sup>

Finally, on **October 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2022** Türkiye signed a preliminary deal (as part of a new MoU) with Libya's Government of National Accord (GNA) on energy exploitation.

<sup>43</sup> Τομάρας Απόστολος, *Μεγάλο κοιτάσμα αερίου στην Κύπρο*, 23 August 2022, Η ΚΑΘΗΜΕΡΙΝΗ, <https://www.kathimerini.gr/politics/foreign-policy/562008703/megalo-koitasma-aerioy-stin-kypro/> (18/10/2022) και Κωστήδης Μανώλης, *Νέο κοιτάσμα στην Κύπρο: Αντίδραση από την Τουρκία*, 23 Αυγούστου 2022, Η ΚΑΘΗΜΕΡΙΝΗ, <https://www.kathimerini.gr/politics/foreign-policy/562008706/neo-koitasma-stin-kypro-antidrasi-apo-tin-toyrkia/> (18/10/2022).

<sup>44</sup> *Νέα ανακάλυψη κοιτάσματος φυσικού αερίου της Energean στο Ισραήλ*, ENERGYPOST.GR, 6 Οκτωβρίου 2022, <https://www.energypost.gr/18486/%ce%bd%ce%ad%ce%b1-%ce%b1%ce%bd%ce%b1%ce%ba%ce%ac%ce%bb%cf%85%cf%88%ce%b7-%ce%ba%ce%bf%ce%b9%cf%84%ce%ac%cf%83%ce%bc%ce%b1%cf%84%ce%bf%cf%82-%cf%86%cf%85%cf%83%ce%b9%ce%ba%ce%bf%cf%8d-%ce%b1%ce%b5/> (18/10/2022) and Surkes Sue, *Energean announces new Israel gas discovery, estimated at 7-15 billion cubic meters*, The Times of Israel, 6 October 2022, <https://www.timesofisrael.com/energean-announces-new-israel-gas-discovery-estimated-at-7-15-billion-cubic-meters/> (18/10/2022).

<sup>45</sup> Καράγιωργας Ιωάννης, *Συμφωνία Κύπρου-Ισραήλ για την επίλυση του ζητήματος με τα κοιτάσματα*, euronews, 19 Σεπτεμβρίου 2022, <https://gr.euronews.com/2022/09/19/simfonia-kiprou-israel-gia-ta-koitasmata-afroditi-kai-isai> (18/10/2022).

<sup>46</sup> *Israel and Lebanon reach historic agreement settling maritime dispute*, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Israel, 11 October 2022, <https://www.gov.il/en/departments/news/israel-and-lebanon-reach-historic-agreement-11-oct-2022#:~:text=Share%3A,principles%20laid%20out%20by%20Israel>. (18/10/2022).

Moreover, the Turkish Minister of Foreign Affairs stated that "*third countries do not have the right to interfere with the agreements signed by the two sovereign countries. It doesn't matter what they think*"<sup>47</sup> showing once more Türkiye's disrespect for International Law and aggressive Foreign Policy. This agreement though, was rejected by the Parliament of Libya, Greece and Egypt as it clearly defined UNCLOS.

## Future concerns

Bearing in mind the reasons that led to the rapprochement of the three states, we understand that the main concern regarding the future of the trilateral partnership is **energy security** of partner-states and the European Union member-states. The projects promoted through this partnership, namely EuroAsia Interconnector and Eastern Mediterranean Pipeline, contribute to the **diversification** of both energy sources and the corresponding hydrocarbon transport corridors (Appendix G).<sup>48</sup>

A second concern, closely related to the aforementioned, is the economic development of the three states, through the creation of a **stable natural gas market**.<sup>49</sup> The exploitation of the deposits found in Eastern Mediterranean - either by the form of natural gas or LNG - in addition to the inflow of foreign investment capital and the export profits (Appendix H), will create **new job opportunities**, that will have a positive impact to the reduction of unemployment.

Another concern is **regional stability and security**. Although indirectly, the trilateral cooperation significantly affects not only the relations between partner-states, but also the rest of the Eastern Mediterranean states, as it practically demonstrates the

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<sup>47</sup> Aydogan Merve & Barakat Mahmoud, *Türkiye, Libya sign agreements on hydrocarbon, gas*, AA, 03 October 2022, <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/middle-east/turkiye-libya-sign-agreements-on-hydrocarbon-gas/2701599#> and Turkey-Libya preliminary deal prompts Greece, Egypt to push back, REUTERS, 3 October 2022, <https://www.reuters.com/business/energy/turkey-libyan-government-agree-preliminary-maritime-energy-deal-2022-10-03/> (18/10/2022).

<sup>48</sup> Giannakopoulos Angelos, The Eastern Mediterranean in Light of Recent Energy Developments and Their Impact στο Giannakopoulos Angelos (editor), *Energy Cooperation and Security in the Eastern Mediterranean: A Seismic Shift towards Peace or Conflict?* The S. Daniel Abraham Center for International and Regional Studies, Tel Aviv University, Tel Aviv, 2016, p. 11.

<sup>49</sup> *Benefits of the EastMed Pipeline project*, Eastern Mediterranean Pipeline Project, NS ENERGY, <https://www.nsenergybusiness.com/projects/eastern-mediterranean-pipeline-project/> (27/04/2022).

**will for cooperation** in several levels. That, in addition to the support of major economic and military actors such as the United States and the European Union, also acts as a **barrier to the Turkish aggressive Foreign Policy**.<sup>50</sup>

Finally, one could claim that the development of the trilateral partnership, could facilitate the solution of the **Cyprus issue** (Appendix I), using the energy sector as a leverage of pressure and a powerful **negotiating tool** against Türkiye,<sup>51</sup> as Türkiye has shown major interest - even pursuing the creation of a pipeline that will pass through its territory – in that particular field. That said, we need to consider the perspectives that lie ahead regarding the future of the partnership between the three states.

## Perspectives

The trilateral partnership between Greece, Cyprus and Israel has a special dynamic which favors its expansion in many more areas,<sup>52</sup> a situation that led to its characterization as a **quasi-alliance**.<sup>53</sup> However, the extended construction timeline of EastMed<sup>54</sup> - which is expected to be operational around 2025 - combined with the US shift of preference to renewable energy sources and the normalization of Israel's relations with Türkiye, shook the foundations of the partnership.

A possible future scenario, taking into account the rapprochement between Türkiye and Israel, regarding partner-states relations is the **abandonment of the partnership** - on behalf of Israel - and the formation of a new one with Türkiye.

<sup>50</sup> Dokos Thanos, Energy Geopolitics in the Eastern Mediterranean: The Role of Greece στο Giannakopoulos Angelos (editor), *Energy Cooperation and Security in the Eastern Mediterranean: A Seismic Shift towards Peace or Conflict?* The S. Daniel Abraham Center for International and Regional Studies, Tel Aviv University, Tel Aviv, 2016, pp. 44-45.

<sup>51</sup> Tsakiris Theodoros, The Gifts of Aphrodite: The Need for Competitive Pragmatism in Cypriot Gas Strategy στο Giannakopoulos Angelos (editor), *Energy Cooperation and Security in the Eastern Mediterranean: A Seismic Shift towards Peace or Conflict?* The S. Daniel Abraham Center for International and Regional Studies, Tel Aviv University, Tel Aviv, 2016, p. 29.

<sup>52</sup> Teller Neville, *Greece, Cyprus and Israel: Champions Of The Eastern Mediterranean – OpEd*. Eurasia Review, 2017.

<sup>53</sup> Tziarras Zenonas, *Israel-Cyprus-Greece: a 'Comfortable' Quasi-Alliance*, Mediterranean Politics, 2016.

<sup>54</sup> *Eastern Mediterranean Pipeline Project*, NS ENERGY, <https://www.nsenergybusiness.com/projects/eastern-mediterranean-pipeline-project/> (27/04/2022)



However, the possibility of this case is considered **relatively low**, not only due to the statements of the Israeli side but also because of Israel's excellent economic cooperation with Greece, Cyprus, and Egypt.

A second scenario is that of the **enlargement of the partnership**. The majority of Eastern Mediterranean states have demonstrated a strong will for cooperation, especially in the field of economy and trade, such as the creation of the Natural Gas Forum and a number of trilateral partnerships that Greece and Cyprus have launched such as with Egypt,<sup>55</sup> Lebanon<sup>56</sup> and Palestine.<sup>57</sup> An enlargement can take place either by the "addition" of another Eastern Mediterranean state (**Scheme 4+1**), or through the official support of a "third party", such as Italy<sup>58</sup> or France<sup>59</sup> (**Scheme 3+2**).

## Conclusions

Concluding this presentation, we must point out that as long as the trilateral partnership between Greece, Cyprus and Israel is **supported by both the United States and the European Union** – no matter how long the construction timeframe of EastMed is going to be – the partnership should be considered solid, as the three states have shown that they can adapt to the demands of the energy market by developing LNG capabilities. Besides as far as green energy is concerned, we must not forget that one of

<sup>55</sup> The trilateral partnership was initiated in 2014. Ελληνική Δημοκρατία, Υπουργείο Εξωτερικών, Διμερείς Σχέσεις της Ελλάδος, *Αίγυπτος*, <https://www.mfa.gr/blog/dimereis-sheseis-tis-ellados/egypt/> (28/04/2022).

<sup>56</sup> Ελληνική Δημοκρατία, Υπουργείο Εξωτερικών, Διμερείς Σχέσεις της Ελλάδος, *Λίβανος*, <https://www.mfa.gr/blog/dimereis-sheseis-tis-ellados/lebanon/> (27/04/2022).

<sup>57</sup> Ελληνική Δημοκρατία, Υπουργείο Εξωτερικών, Διμερείς Σχέσεις της Ελλάδος, *Παλαιστίνη*, <https://www.mfa.gr/blog/dimereis-sheseis-tis-ellados/palaistine/> (27/04/2022).

<sup>58</sup> On April 2022 the Italian Parliament approved a decision according to which the Italian government will seek closer involvement in the trilateral cooperation between Greece, Cyprus and Israel. *EastMed Pipeline: Expectations for Draghi's signature*, Οικονομικός Ταχυδρόμος, 21 Απριλίου 2022, <https://www.ot.gr/2022/04/21/english-edition/eastmed-pipeline-expectations-for-draghis-signature/> (28/05/2022).

<sup>59</sup> France has already signed a Strategic Partnership Agreement with Greece regarding Defence and Security. ΦΕΚ 187Α, 08 Οκτωβρίου 2021 [http://www.et.gr/docs-nph/search/pdfViewerForm.html?args=5C7QrtC22wEzH9d6xfVpRXdtvSoClrL8HrWp6VkJYB5x5MXD0LzQTLWPU9yLzB8V68knBzLCmTXKaO6fpVZ6Lx3UnKl3nP8NxdnJ5r9cmWyJWelDvWS\\_18kAEhATUkJb0x1LIdQ163nV9K--td6SIuXc6PpU13EBtQE3b2C\\_s8eQcsYt5TXaXMxsqvtKnouh](http://www.et.gr/docs-nph/search/pdfViewerForm.html?args=5C7QrtC22wEzH9d6xfVpRXdtvSoClrL8HrWp6VkJYB5x5MXD0LzQTLWPU9yLzB8V68knBzLCmTXKaO6fpVZ6Lx3UnKl3nP8NxdnJ5r9cmWyJWelDvWS_18kAEhATUkJb0x1LIdQ163nV9K--td6SIuXc6PpU13EBtQE3b2C_s8eQcsYt5TXaXMxsqvtKnouh) (27/04/2022).

the major projects of the trilateral partnership is the construction of EuroAsia Interconnector, providing electricity to the European market.

The future of the trilateral cooperation will be greatly affected by the **Turkish Foreign Policy**, since Türkiye is trying to get involved in the exploitation process of East Mediterranean's hydrocarbon deposits. However, Türkiye's participation in the trilateral partnership seems to be unrealistic - as this would presuppose its compliance with International Law and the resignation from its illegal demands – actions that would have a negative political impact to the Turkish Government.

On the other hand, **a small trade agreement between the Türkiye and Israel** - as the first country has shown that it seeks to furtherer deepen its relations with the latter - could be the case, in order for Israel to moderate the Turkish aggression. Such a scenario though, will most probably not change the balance of power in the region. Türkiye has also been trying to restore its diplomatic relations with Egypt since May 2021, as the latter is a key country regarding the energy sector. However, this effort is not expected to affect Egypt's Foreign Policy, as long as Al-Sisi remains in power.

On the contrary, under the current circumstances, we conclude that **the most probable scenario is the one of the trilateral partnership's enlargement** to a "3+2" scheme with the support of **France** as Greece has already signed a Strategic Partnership Agreement with the latter or a "4+1" scheme with the accession of **Egypt** focusing on LNG and electric power, as Egypt has the needed LNG facilities and the EU has scheduled the construction of EuroAfrica Interconnector, having Egypt as its starting point.



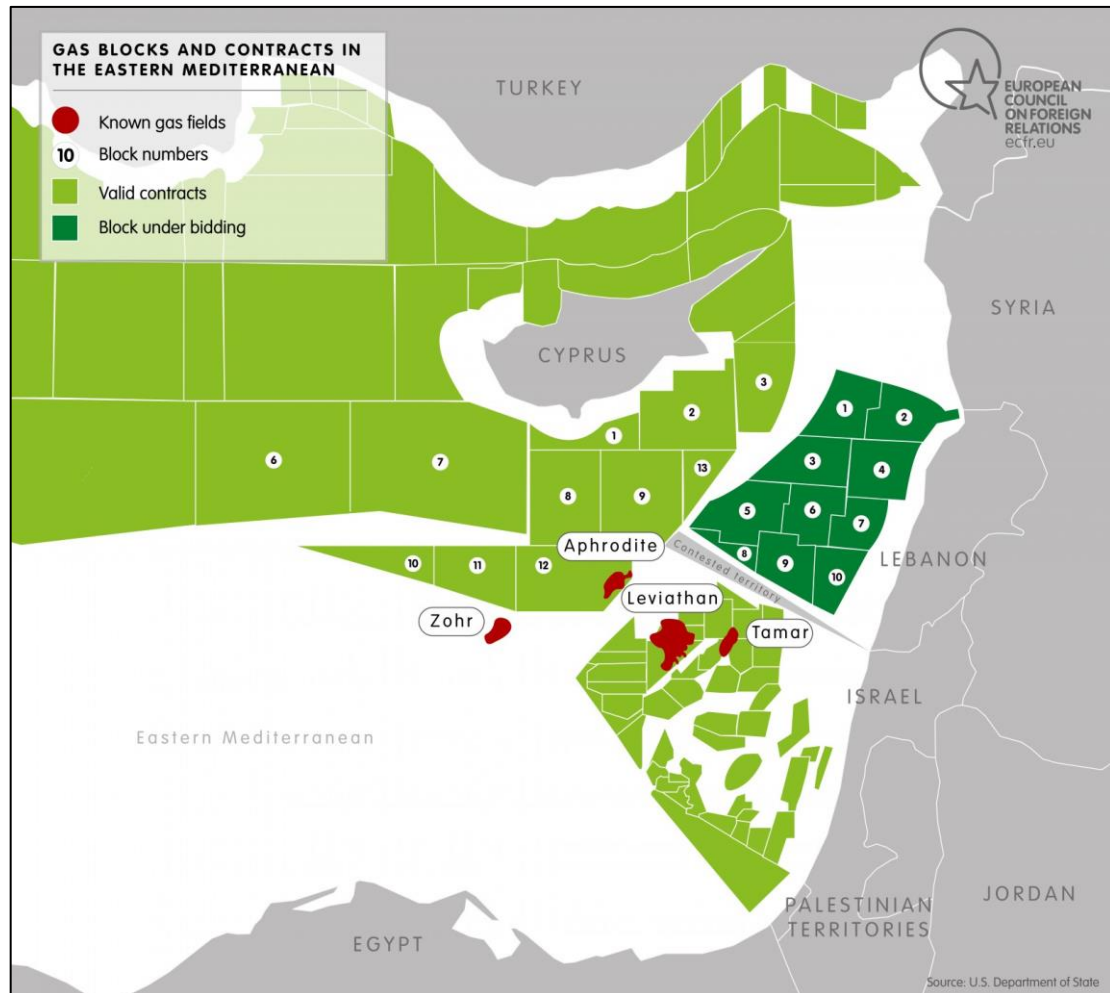
## **Appendices**

## A. The Eastern Mediterranean pipeline route



Source: [https://ecfr.eu/publication/pipelines\\_and\\_pipedreams\\_how\\_the\\_eu\\_can\\_support\\_a\\_regional\\_gas\\_hub\\_in\\_7276/](https://ecfr.eu/publication/pipelines_and_pipedreams_how_the_eu_can_support_a_regional_gas_hub_in_7276/)

## B. Natural gas deposits found in the Levantine basin



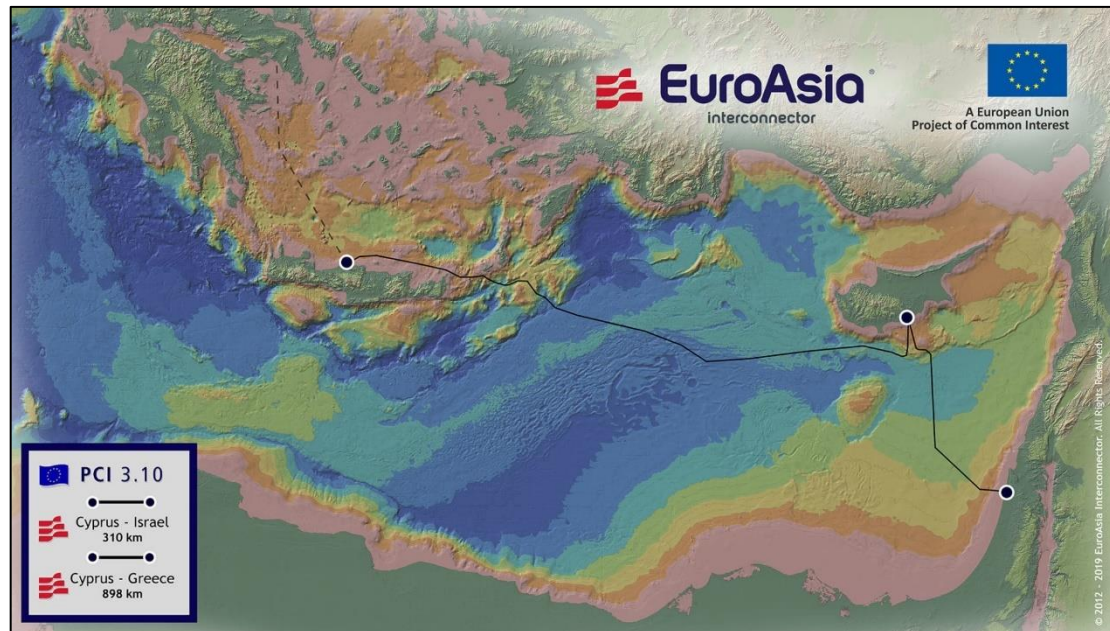
Source: [https://ecfr.eu/publication/pipelines\\_and\\_pipedreams\\_how\\_the\\_eu\\_can\\_support\\_a\\_regional\\_gas\\_hub\\_in\\_7276/](https://ecfr.eu/publication/pipelines_and_pipedreams_how_the_eu_can_support_a_regional_gas_hub_in_7276/)

Key recent gas discoveries in the Eastern Mediterranean			
Gas field	Country	Year of discovery	Resources
Tamar	Israel	2009	280 bcm (Gross mean resources)
Leviathan	Israel	2010	620 bcm (Gross mean resources)
Aphrodite	Cyprus	2011	140 bcm (Gross mean resources)
Zohr	Egypt	2015	850 bcm (Potential of lean gas in place)

Data sources: Noble Energy and Eni (2015) [bcm: billion cubic metres].

Source: [https://www.bruegel.org/sites/default/files/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/ST\\_GZ\\_30-11-15.jpg](https://www.bruegel.org/sites/default/files/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/ST_GZ_30-11-15.jpg)

## C. EuroAsia Interconnector and EuroAfrica Interconnector



Source: <https://euroasia-interconnector.com/at-glance/the-route/>



Source: <https://www.euroafrica-interconnector.com/at-glance/>



#### D. The revisionist Turkish "Blue Homeland" doctrine



Source: [https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/middle\\_east/turkey-greece-blue-homeland/2020/09/26/15cf7afe-fc3b-11ea-830c-a160b331ca62\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/middle_east/turkey-greece-blue-homeland/2020/09/26/15cf7afe-fc3b-11ea-830c-a160b331ca62_story.html)

## E. The EEZ delimitation agreement between Turkiye & Libya



## F. Potential export routes for Mediterranean natural gas



Source: <http://gca.satrapia.com/eastern-mediterranean-energy-geostrategy-on-proposed-gas-export-routes>

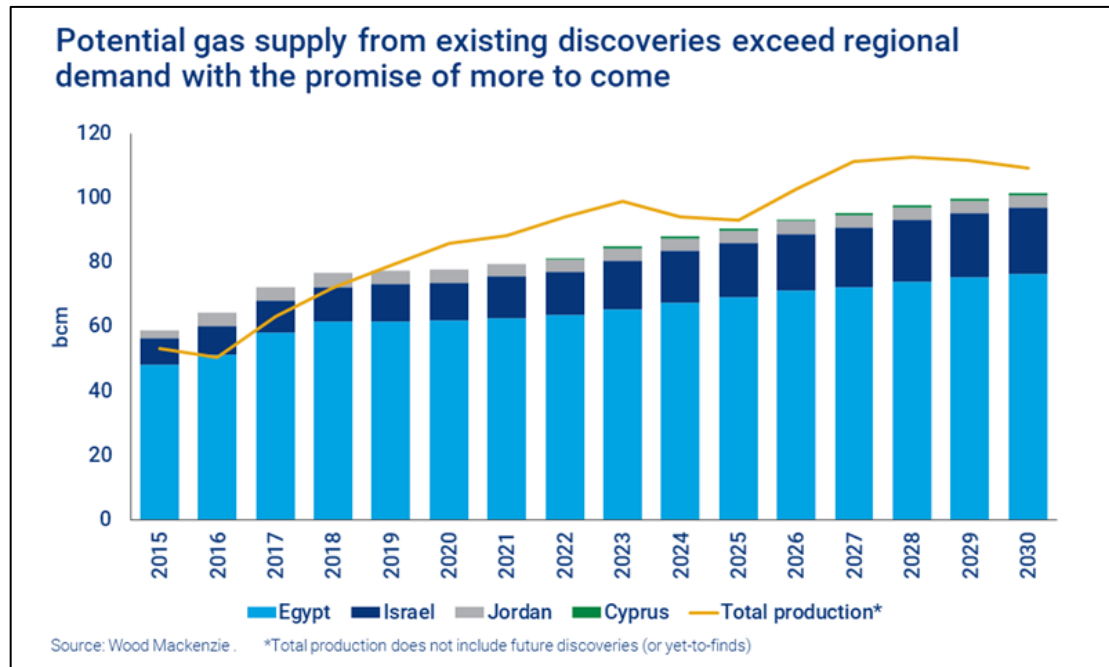
## G. Pipeline network in Europe & Türkiye



Source: [https://feuture.uni-koeln.de/sites/feuture/user\\_upload/Fig6\\_Energy\\_pipeline.png](https://feuture.uni-koeln.de/sites/feuture/user_upload/Fig6_Energy_pipeline.png)

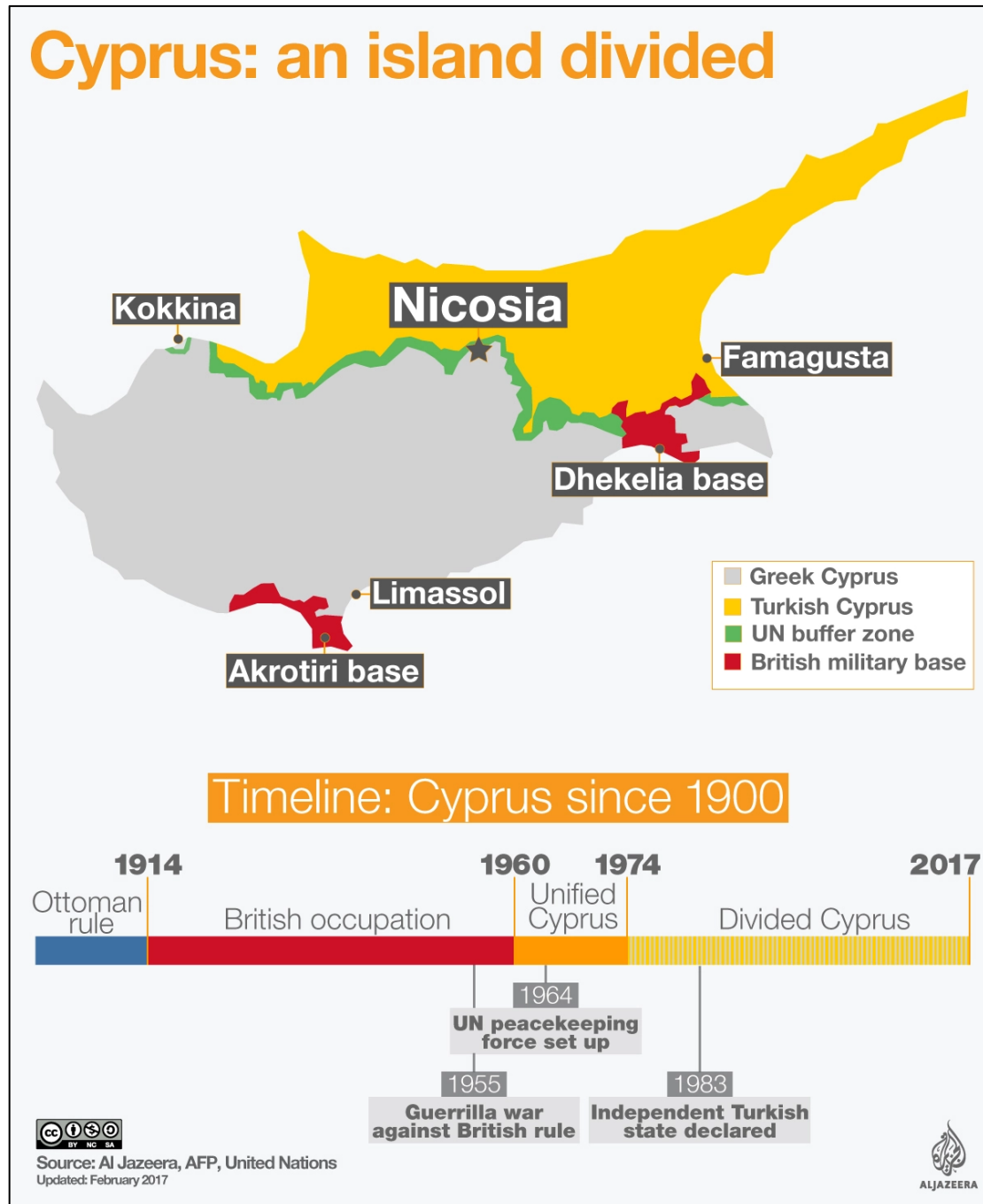


## H. The natural gas market potentials



**Source:** <https://www.woodmac.com/news/the-edge/monetising-the-east-meds-giant-gas-finds/>

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Source: <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2017/2/20/cyprus-an-island-divided>

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<https://www.washingtonpost.com/>

<https://www.woodmac.com/>

## Curriculum Vitae



Georgios Koukakis was born in Heraklion, Crete and holds a Master of Arts in "Governance, Development and Security in the Mediterranean" from the Department of Mediterranean Studies, University of the Aegean (Rhodes, Greece), while his master thesis focused on the Hellenic National Security Council. His research interests include National Security, Law of the Sea, International Organizations, Foreign Policy, Energy Security, Strategy, National Defence, Management and Leadership, Culture, Education and Lifelong Learning.

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