

EU ENERGY SECURITY IN THE CONTEXT OF COMPETITION WITH RUSSIA IN THE EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN*

Doğu Akdeniz'de Rusya ile Rekabet Bağlamında AB Enerji Güvenliği

Gamze ARMİŞEN**

Nuri Gökhan TOPRAK***

Öz

Bu çalışmada Rusya ile Avrupa Birliği arasında Doğu Akdeniz'de yaşanan rekabetin başlıca nedenleri ile enerji kaynağı ülkelerin enerji kavramını bağımlı ülkelere karşı nasıl bir siyasi yaptırım aracı olarak kullandıkları ve bu bağlamda aktörler arası ilişkilerin nasıl şekillendiği ele alınmaktadır. Temel iddia, Rusya'nın Doğu Akdeniz'de siyasi güç olarak enerji faktörünü AB'ye karşı kullanmasına rağmen, AB'nin bölgeye yönelik politikalarını sürdüreceği ve enerji güvenliğinin sadece AB'nin değil Rusya'nın enerji güvenliğini de olumsuz etkileyeceğidir. Çalışma, realist teori kapsamında Doğu Akdeniz rekabet bağımsız değişkeni ile AB enerji güvenliği bağımlı değişkeni arasındaki nedenselliği anlamaya çalışmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: AB, Doğu Akdeniz, Enerji Güvenliği, Enerji Politikaları, Rusya.

Abstract

This study discusses the reasons for the competition between Russia and the EU in the Eastern Mediterranean, and in this context, how energy-rich countries employ energy as a political tool against dependent countries and how the relations between these actors can be shaped. The main claim posits that although Russia wields energy as a political tool in the region, the EU will continue its policies, adversely affecting both its own and Russia's energy security. The study tries to understand the causality between the Eastern Mediterranean competition (independent variable) and EU energy security (dependent variable) within the scope of realist theory.

Keywords: EU, Eastern Mediterranean, Energy Security, Energy Policies, Russia.

* **Received on:** 18.10.2023

Accepted on: 21.11.2023

** Doktorant, İstanbul Aydın Üniversitesi Lisansüstü Eğitim Enstitüsü Siyaset Bilimi ve Uluslararası İlişkiler Bölümü, e-posta: garmisen@stu.aydin.edu.tr, ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6133-9161>

*** Doç. Dr., Kırklareli Üniversitesi İktisadi ve İdari Bilimler Fakültesi Uluslararası İlişkiler Bölümü, e-posta: nuri.toprak@klu.edu.tr, ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9792-7448>

INTRODUCTION

This study examines the interplay between energy security and geopolitical dynamics in Russia and the EU in the context of the Eastern Mediterranean region. The EU's dependence on Russia for energy supply, coupled with the emerging competition in the Eastern Mediterranean, poses a significant threat to the EU's energy security. According to 2021 data, 72% of the energy mix is dependent on fossil fuels, as the EU accounts for 12% of global energy consumption (Yaşot, 2022: 1). When we examine 2021 data, limited domestic production of 4.1 % in world energy production has made the EU heavily dependent on external suppliers (Çıtak, 2023: 85).

Therefore, one of the EU's primary policy priorities is to maintain energy security, primarily by balancing its relations with energy suppliers, notably Russia. Failure to do so could have adverse effects on the EU's energy security (Güven, 2023: 225). In this regard, the intensification of competition between Russia and the EU in the Eastern Mediterranean region highlights the crucial role of the energy security concept in influencing international politics.

The study aims to contribute to the understanding of how energy is utilized as both an economic and political weapon, shedding light on the complexities of energy security in international relations. As a result, we will learn how competition in the Eastern Mediterranean region affects the EU's energy security and why the EU focuses on the region.

The "Eastern Mediterranean" Region is considered an important transit point that opens the Middle East, which contains approximately 43-47% of the hydrocarbon reserves detected in the world, and the Caspian Basin, which is also rich in these energy resources, to world markets (Özekin, 2020: 7). Its strategic location and ownership of energy transit routes have attracted the attention of both the EU and Russia (Kedikli & Çağalan, 2017: 122). Russia has been focusing on the Eastern Mediterranean to increase its energy reserves, bolster its economic income, and enhance its global political position. The country has also utilized energy exports as a political tool, using them to garner support or exert pressure for its political objectives. This has created a competitive

EU ENERGY SECURITY IN THE CONTEXT OF COMPETITION WITH RUSSIA IN THE EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN

environment among various powers vying for access to the region's resources. For the EU, ensuring energy security and reducing dependence on Russia have been priorities. The EU has pursued active policies to diversify its energy sources and transit routes. However, Russia has sought to impede the EU's involvement in the region by employing energy as a means of imposing sanctions or exerting pressure (Abbas, 2023: 583).

The intense competition between the EU and Russia in the Eastern Mediterranean can potentially lead to erroneous actions and a potential energy supply security gap. This situation may limit the EU's maneuverability in foreign policy, particularly when dealing with the region, due to the complexities and challenges posed by the competition for energy resources. It is significant to note that this provided passage reflects a particular perspective on the dynamics of the Eastern Mediterranean region and the competition between the EU and Russia. The situation may evolve, and additional factors and perspectives could contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of the complex dynamics at play in the region.

Realist theory provides a framework for comprehending how nations prioritize energy security as a crucial part of their national security and foreign policy, driven by their pursuit of power and self-interest. It contributes to understanding the strategic calculations and actions that nations take to secure a stable and reliable energy supply, frequently in a competitive and sometimes conflict-prone international environment where energy resources are significant drivers of state power and influence (Duman, 2021: 12).

A state's ability to develop economically, uphold national security, and affect international affairs depends on its access to energy. As a result, states develop a range of strategies to ensure energy security. However, they occasionally do not think twice about using violence when they are striving for power or to advance their own national interests (Gürbulak, 2023: 30).

The efforts made by states to guarantee access to and control over energy resources, given their strategic importance, fall under the heading

of energy security. States that control supply chains or have access to essential energy resources will take advantage of the situation, change the energy flow, and create ties of financial and political reliance. Such a process may lead to conflict, and states may take an adverse stance on reconciliation. The realist viewpoint argues that in some situations, governments can protect their interests through agreements. The goal of this cooperation is to protect state interests and maintain the balance of power.

All things considered, the Russia-EU competition in the Eastern Mediterranean is important in the context of EU energy security and foreign policy because it directly influences the EU's ability to diversify its energy sources, ensure a stable energy supply, and maintain its autonomy in foreign policy decision-making. The outcome of this competition will shape the energy landscape and geopolitical dynamics in the region, with lasting implications for both the EU and Russia. The essential argument of the study is that in the EU-Russia competition in the Eastern Mediterranean, although the EU produced policies to reduce its energy dependence on Russia, it was not enough, and energy security was endangered as a result of competition.

The significance of this study contributes to the literature by explaining the EU and Russia's energy policies, the energy element in bilateral relations, and Russia's goals against the EU in the Eastern Mediterranean competition, explaining in which direction the EU's possible energy security will progress.

The results of the study can shed light on policymakers' concerns about the outputs of competition for both Russia and the EU and in which direction changes are needed to reveal the EU's energy security situation. This section explains or highlights the main research question as follows: What represent the mechanisms through which the Russia-EU energy competition in the Eastern Mediterranean jeopardizes EU energy security?

Additionally, it is crucial to consider minor details of our primary question in various contexts under the following subheadings: What are the factors that direct the interests of Russia and the EU in the Eastern

EU ENERGY SECURITY IN THE CONTEXT OF COMPETITION WITH RUSSIA IN THE EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN

Mediterranean region? How have Russia's strategies changed in the Eastern Mediterranean before and after the Putin era? Is it in line with the EU's strategy for energy security and its conduct in the Eastern Mediterranean?

LITERATURE REVIEW

One of the reasons for choosing EU-Russia energy relations and energy security as the subject of study is that it is an ongoing issue. Furthermore, doing a synthesis study on the Eastern Mediterranean's growing popularity among national players, as well as its growing political and economic relevance, will provide a new viewpoint to the literature.

The master's thesis titled "Energy Dynamics of Energy Security in the Eastern Mediterranean," written by Nazlı Yoldaş, has inspired academic studies to be carried out in the field of energy security, specifically the Eastern Mediterranean. Within the scope of the study, the realist theory, the importance of the Eastern Mediterranean, the dynamics in energy policies, and the approach of international actors to the region have been supportive of this study.

"The Importance of the Eastern Mediterranean as a Competitive Field in the Field of Energy," written by Umut Kedikli and Ömer Çağalan (2017), argues the importance of the Eastern Mediterranean to analyze the energy policies of the actors. Metecan Yaşot (2022) published a master thesis titled "Conflict Areas Affecting the Energy Security of the European Union: Ukraine-Russia, Iran, and the Eastern Mediterranean," which explains the EU's relationship with the country or region in crisis and the EU's energy security are mentioned. This study examines the EU from the perspective of the Eastern Mediterranean and expresses its reflection on energy security. In order to understand the purpose of Russia, one of the active actors in the region as well as the EU, in the Eastern Mediterranean and to shed light on the energy relations between the EU and Russia, it will benefit from the analysis called Russia's Eastern Mediterranean Policy, written by Çağatay Özdemir (2018).

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK: ENERGY SECURITY

The idea of energy security can be addressed in a variety of ways. Broadly speaking, these fall into three different groups. First, "accessing convenient and accessible energy resources at low cost" is the definition of "energy security," and the second category is assessed in light of "global warming, chemical contamination of water, and nuclear proliferation." The third category is defined in the context of international politics as the economic mobility brought about by local and global energy markets, the assurance of countries' access to the energy resources required for the maintenance of their power, and the responses of countries in terms of their foreign policies (Toprak, 2019: 662).

Energy security is the supply and diversification of energy from a physically reliable, uninterrupted source at an affordable price, along with the oil crises of the 1970s and 1980s (Kocatepe, 2019: 59). Otherwise, internal and global issues could jeopardize national economic and diplomatic stability while also driving up prices and posing a threat to energy security. In summary, it is critical to balance rivals by advancing shared interests. Increasing energy variety remains a crucial component of energy market security. This condition prevents the energy demand from being met by a sole actor or a small group of actors because it becomes necessary to consistently employ the same energy sources as supply diversification declines.

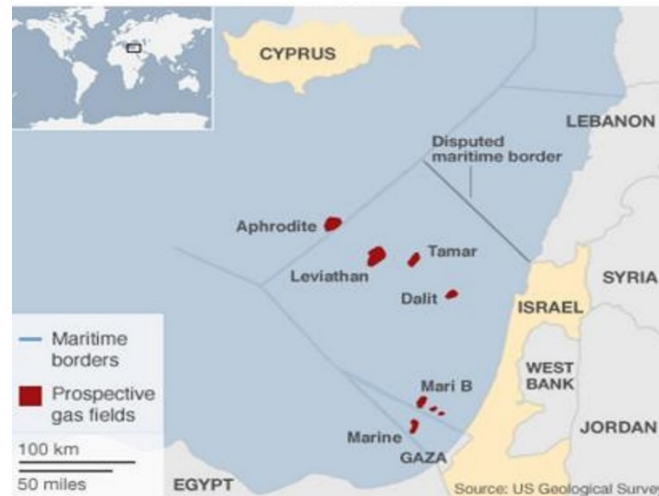
Given the strategic significance of energy resources, states' efforts to ensure access to and control over those resources fall under the category of energy security because states that dominate supply chains or possess key energy resources will exploit this situation, alter the energy flow, and establish relationships of economic and political dependence. Conflict may arise during such a process, and states may adopt a position that is hostile to reconciliation. The realist perspective, however, contends that in some circumstances, governments can safeguard their interests through agreements. However, this collaboration takes place with the intention of safeguarding state interests and upholding the balance of power.

EU ENERGY SECURITY IN THE CONTEXT OF COMPETITION WITH RUSSIA IN THE EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN

EASTERN MEDITERRANEA GEOPOLITICS AND ECONOMICS

The Eastern Mediterranean basin, where the most significant energy discoveries of recent years have been made, is part of the energy corridor connecting the Middle East with abundant energy resources to Europe with scarce resources. Geographically, the Eastern Mediterranean is where Europe, Asia, and the Middle East converge. The position of the area on major commerce routes and its abundant energy resources account for its strategic significance (Tuğ, 2019: 80). It is assumed that this region, where natural gas reserves have just been identified and are still anticipated to be produced, possesses the potential to yield benefits to both reserve countries and energy-demanding countries (Karagöl & Özdemir, 2017: 55). This situation provided a competitive environment for accessing energy resources and allowed political crises to occur among the actors due to the ambiguity of energy security.

Picture 1: Gas in the Eastern Mediterranean



Source: Varghese, 2020.

In order to quickly supply to the demand markets with the use of existing pipelines and lines that are planned to be built by sea, it is equally crucial to transit the subsurface resources of the Middle East and the Caspian Region from the Eastern Mediterranean to the demand locations (Denizli, 2022: 45). Geopolitical tensions are raised by disputes over Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZ) that affect resource allocation, maritime

borders, and access to resources in the area (Türkeş, 2021: 92).

Geoeconomically, the Eastern Mediterranean is a promising zone for economic growth since it contains significant energy resources that influence the energy policies of the countries in the area. The opportunity to increase their political and economic power as well as their income from energy exports is presented by this circumstance for both the regional nations and the great powers.

Along with energy resources, maritime trade is another element that significantly affects the geo-economics dynamics of the area (Üren, 2021: 856). The Eastern Mediterranean region, which is rich in ports, shipping lanes, and marine trade networks, is dynamic and places economic concerns first. Additionally, within this scope, it is necessary to assess elements like regional cooperation potential, energy infrastructure, investments, trade, and collaborative projects. It is possible that the aforementioned economic factors are not based on a struggle for dominance between the parties as a component of foreign policy, but rather that cooperation aimed at addressing shared interests will boost the economic interests of the states in the region and promote energy security.

ANALYSIS OF THE HISTORICAL BACKGROUND: ENERGY POLICIES OF RUSSIA BEFORE 2000

Russia participates enthusiastically in energy diplomacy as a result of the abundance of its energy resources and its export capacity. As a result, access to and policies on energy carry out a significant role in determining Russia's foreign policy. Explaining many elements that contributed to the change in Russia's energy policy and security stance before and after 2000 is vital to comprehend the existence of competition in the context of the study's importance to the Eastern Mediterranean.

When we go back to the period before the 2000s, the void left by the collapse of the Soviet Union in Eurasia led to instability in Russia, which resulted in status loss and border shrinking. It was necessary to innovate in foreign policy strategies in order to avert this situation. As a result, Russia's energy policies, which form its foundation, must change because

EU ENERGY SECURITY IN THE CONTEXT OF COMPETITION WITH RUSSIA IN THE EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN

in order to eradicate its economic and political turmoil in the 1990s, Russia needed access to new revenue streams.

In the 1990s, Russia focused primarily on oil and gas exploration and production in the Eastern Mediterranean. However, due to the country's lack of a significant presence in the natural gas market, not much investment has been made in infrastructure in the region. Alternatively, it has focused on increasing production by securing new oil and gas fields in high-demand European and Asian regions.

DURING THE PUTIN ERA

With Vladimir Putin coming to power in 2002, there have been significant changes in the energy sector. Russia has followed a policy that expands its energy field and gives importance to transmission line diversity within the scope of infrastructure work (Özdemir, 2022: 91). With the integration of national security plans and energy programs, it has also entered a phase in which energy resources are exploited as a deterrent force. Within the context of the instances below, let us investigate how Russia has used the energy sector as a diplomatic tool in the political and military processes.

The 2008 gas crisis between Russia and Ukraine put both nations' energy security in jeopardy because Ukraine serves as the conduit for natural gas flowing to the EU (Erkal, 2018: 73). Following the crisis, Russia sought to lessen its susceptibility to the consequences of interdependence by diversifying its energy supply and entering new markets.

Following the procedure, Russia began construction on the Nord Stream Natural Gas Pipeline Project in 2011, which will deliver natural gas to the EU market without the need for a transit nation. The goal of the Nord Stream 2 project was to make it easier for Russian natural gas to reach European markets. Relations with Ukraine changed as a result of Russia's annexation of the Crimean Peninsula in 2014 (Arslan, 2017: 38). However, Russia has put into place the South Stream Natural Gas Pipeline Project to circumvent Ukraine in the distribution of natural gas to Europe. Within the framework of the project, Russia sought to penalize Ukraine

and defend its market share in the EU (BBC, 2012). The idea was, however, abandoned afterward. Political and economic factors also played a role in Russia's decision. It would not be prudent to turn to the South Stream project because it will negatively affect Russia's economy due to changes in oil prices and EU sanctions.

The project should be replaced with Blue Stream 2, which will increase Russia's influence in the Eastern Mediterranean. The project will support Türkiye's access to energy resources in the Eastern Mediterranean and boost its geopolitical influence in the area while also trying to provide energy security by delivering Russian natural gas to Europe via Türkiye. (Hamzaoğlu, 2022: 272). Additionally, to avoid suffering too much loss in the EU market, the Power of Siberia Natural Gas Pipeline construction project was launched in 2014, and natural gas flow to China was made available in 2019. This was done in order to diversify the market and avoid suffering too much loss in the EU market (BBC, 2019).

By implementing the Turkish Current Project in 2020, Russia hoped to lessen Ukraine's contribution to the flow of natural gas to Europe. However, as a result of Ukraine's Western orientation and convergence with NATO, military drills began on the Ukraine-Russia border in 2020 and continued through 2021. In response to this situation, Russia invaded Ukraine in 2022 and imposed economic sanctions.

The Russian currency has increased once more as a result of Russia, the decree mandating Paying in Rubles in Energy Trade with Unfriendly Countries, the rise in oil and natural gas prices, and the decree (Cebotari, 2022: 1007).

As can be understood, the Western and EU countries could not agree under a single roof on the restrictions on Russian energy. After the occupation of Ukraine, Russia developed cooperation with China in energy and economic fields. It increased its energy trade by signing natural gas and oil agreements. In fact, with the completion of the Power of Siberia-2 Natural Gas Pipeline, relations have developed more.

Regarding Russia's energy policy for the future, it has adopted a methodology that reflects its strategic objectives and national interests in

EU ENERGY SECURITY IN THE CONTEXT OF COMPETITION WITH RUSSIA IN THE EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN

the energy sector in 2030. Russia intends to transport natural gas via several routes without using a transit nation. Another crucial issue is that in order to maintain economic growth based on energy, cooperation will be sought, particularly with the Asia-Pacific region (Varol Sevim, 2014: 93). In a nutshell, Russia is built on the goals of diversification, collaboration, and securing a dominant position.

POLICY FRAMEWORK: RUSSIA'S EAST MEDITERRANEAN TARGET AND ENERGY POLICIES

Russia aimed to improve its energy policy and broaden its influence by making it easier to acquire energy resources in the Eastern Mediterranean region. In order to participate in energy exploration and production activities more effectively on the reserves, Russia has mobilized Russian energy enterprises in the region and formed several partnerships. In addition to cooperating, it also aimed to increase the amount of energy it exported through projects like erecting transmission lines and storage facilities, which would facilitate access to markets in the Eastern Mediterranean. Beyond raising production and capacity, ensuring energy security in the region is crucial. By expanding its military presence and creating important locations in the area, it also attempted to sway regional politics (Yoldaş, 2020: 70).

Its plans to share the region's energy resources and export its energy reserves to the global market are also important. The pro-US stance of the states in the area compelled Russia to initiate diplomatic relations. For instance, Russia was able to improve its standing in the region by supporting Assad during the Arab Spring. Considering its military base in the city of Tartus on the Mediterranean coast of Syria, it can be claimed that Russia is trying to take an active part in the competition in the Eastern Mediterranean (Kazancıoğlu, 2022: 40).

In order to retain its military presence in the area and forge connections with other gas projects, it actually conducted some military drills in the Eastern Mediterranean. In addition to Syria, Russia has developed ties with the Greek Cypriot Administration of Southern Cyprus

(GCASC), which faces economic challenges from its neighbors. Due to the growing demand for energy in the Eastern Mediterranean, it grants entities like the USA, France, Germany, and Russia the freedom to look for resources in the area, which forms the basis of its relations with the GCASC. Russia was able to maneuver throughout the Eastern Mediterranean more readily thanks to this circumstance.

Additionally, it sought to maintain the European countries' reliance on him for energy, from which it obtained the vast bulk of its economic wealth. As will be discussed in the study, it has prioritized both reducing dependence and preserving energy security by giving resource diversification by looking to the Eastern Mediterranean. At the same time, Türkiye is a member of the area. In order to dominate the Eastern Mediterranean, Türkiye did not hold back from forming partnerships with other players, providing Europe with a foothold that gas could provide without interruption. The possibility that gas from the Eastern Mediterranean could now be transported to Europe via Türkiye could have a big impact on Russia.

We will discuss Russia's relations with Syria, which are crucial at this time, while also discussing its objectives in the Eastern Mediterranean. Syria is the location where Russia's Middle East and Eastern Mediterranean policies converge. The success it has in Syria will be crucial to achieving the objectives of both strategies.

Syria's strategic location at the intersection of crucial areas like Eurasia, the Middle East, and the Eastern Mediterranean makes it possible for Russia to conduct an effective Middle Eastern and Eastern Mediterranean policy. Because of its military presence in Syria, Russia has the chance and advantage of controlling the Suez Canal, the Gulf of Iskenderun, and the Persian Gulf. More importantly, Syria allows it to avoid encirclement, move into a besieging country posture, and finally have the possibility to accept, at least to some extent, the Turkish Straits' handicap, which limits it to its geographic location. S-300 and S-400 air defense systems, technical teams of special forces, and navy components are all part of the naval base built in Tartus (Aras & İşyar, 2023: 522).

Due to these benefits, Russia does not want to leave Syria and is

EU ENERGY SECURITY IN THE CONTEXT OF COMPETITION WITH RUSSIA IN THE EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN

continuing its military assistance that it began at the Assad regime's invitation in September 2015. With the "Hmeymim Air Base" it obtained in Latakia, its political and military position in the Middle East and Eastern Mediterranean was further bolstered as it began to give the Assad regime military support (Killioğlu, 2021: 17). With the most advanced warplanes, the S-300 and S-400 air defense missiles have created a multi-layered air defense system termed A2/AD (Anti Access/Area Denial) that covers the Eastern Mediterranean. As part of the "Astana Process," which was launched with meetings in Moscow at the beginning of 2017, Russia, which has ensured the survival of the Syrian regime by its military backing, collaborates with Türkiye and Iran on actions pertaining to Syria's future (Üren, 2021: 864). Its actions in the Middle East and Eastern Mediterranean have started to rise as a result of the military bases' expansion in Syria.

In summary, Russia has taken a proactive stance in the area. In addition to its connections with Syria, it has worked to assure the potential for energy, economic, and political cooperation with Egypt and Lebanon, two nations with which the EU has established strong communication.

Cooperation with Egypt, particularly in the energy sector, has been apparent. Russian energy firms have contributed to Egypt's energy infrastructure and invested in the country's natural gas reserves.

EU'S EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN TARGET AND ENERGY POLICIES

For the EU, which relies on imports to meet its energy demands, ensuring energy security is crucial. In order to improve the internal market, it has altered its approach to energy security by diversifying its resource base, locating new resources, and enacting legislation that ensures the free flow of energy (Meral, 2016: 51). However, among its top policies are cooperation with energy suppliers for energy security and diplomatic access to energy resources.

To touch on the main lines of the EU's energy policy, it is basically shaped at the national level in order to protect and manage the energy

resources of the member states. In the 1950s and 1970s, the EU played a limited role in the energy field and in coordinating energy policies. After the 1973 and 1979 oil crises, efforts were directed towards enhancing energy security. Policies were created to encourage the use of renewable energy sources, promote energy efficiency, and diversify the energy supply (Yılmaz & Kalkan, 2017: 186). By the 1990s, the development of a single internal market had strengthened EU energy policies. Additionally, there was an aim to liberalize markets, integrate energy infrastructures, and promote competition in the energy industry.

Over the following decade, the EU made significant moves to integrate its energy policies with measures to mitigate climate change. The transition to an energy system based on renewable energy sources has been supported by policies like the 2030 Climate and Energy Framework and the 2020 Energy and Climate Package. By 2050, the EU wants to become carbon neutral (Avrupa Birliği Başkanlığı, 2023). It also encouraged cooperation with the EU Energy Union in areas such as diversifying energy supply, integration of the energy market, and strengthening energy diplomacy in order to strengthen energy policies.

In keeping with its commitment to energy security, the EU is believed to be interested in the Eastern Mediterranean natural gas market. The EU has integrated additional sources, including Azerbaijani and Turkmen gas, through the Southern Gas Corridor in the Caspian Sea and the Fifth Corridor in the Eastern Mediterranean due to the rise in demand as the domestic gas production of the EU declines. Between 2019 and 2020, it is also intended to import 10 billion cubic meters of natural gas annually and boost energy security by lowering the cost of LNG (Kalafat, 2023: 35). LNG will increase competitiveness and flexibility while lowering the security risk to a minimum. The EU will also work diligently to address issues related to energy security, member-state unity, and regional stability.

While reducing concerns, bilateral cooperation will also become a vital partner by promoting the expansion of the economies of the two countries. The discussions it has had with superpowers like the USA as well as the countries in the region are very important. At the EU-US Energy Council, the availability of resources in the Eastern Mediterranean was

EU ENERGY SECURITY IN THE CONTEXT OF COMPETITION WITH RUSSIA IN THE EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN

emphasized. The EU tried to ensure energy security in Russia after the energy crisis and to sever the faulty interdependent link because over 42% of the EU's imports come from Russia (Kalafat, 2023: 32).

The EU and Türkiye now work more closely together in terms of their range of energy resources because the TANAP and TAP projects, which have developed Azerbaijani natural gas, are meant to assure the security of the energy supply (Kavaz, 2020: 9). The other alternative is the Turkish Stream Project between Russia and Türkiye. With this program, the EU will increase the number of transit countries. Additionally, it will ensure energy security by transporting energy reserves from the Eastern Mediterranean to the EU via Türkiye (Gurbanov, 2016: 78-79).

In matters like Russia's energy market share, pricing competition, and political interactions, the rivalry for energy resources in the Eastern Mediterranean looks to be a factor in the energy security strategy.

The EU's Eastern Mediterranean strategy, however, is shaped by entities in the region with competing interests, such as Türkiye, Greece, and the GCASC. The Eastern Mediterranean became the EU's natural borders when the GCASC, the island's sovereign representative, joined the EU in 2004 while the Cyprus issue was still unresolved and prohibited from being so. Because Greece is a member nation and Türkiye is a candidate nation, the EU is directly involved in contentious problems in the Eastern Mediterranean in the current Türkiye-Greece ties, where tensions are growing. The basis of the sharing competition in the Eastern Mediterranean is the right to have rights in existing and potential energy resources, and the basis of the problems for Türkiye lies in the attempts of Greece and the GCASC to establish dominance in the seas by ignoring the rights and interests of Türkiye and other coastal states.

The GCASC, which has unilaterally continued its energy activities in the Eastern Mediterranean since the EEZ (Economic Exclusive Zone) agreement signed with Egypt in 2003, disregards the rights of the Turkish community, which is the island's founding element, and seeks to advance regional and global agendas through energy resources. It appears that the GCASC, which has gained a sizable advantage as a result of being admitted as a member of the European Union (EU), intends to use the

financial gain it will receive from selling its energy reserves to the international market as a trump card against the TRNC during negotiations. The GCASC will also entice foreign businesses to the Eastern Mediterranean and address the energy problem on a regional and global scale. They seek to pressurize Türkiye and elevate the situation to a global level.

The activities started by the US Noble Energy in 2011 were carried out on various parcels by large companies like the French Total and the Italian Eni. This was in contrast to the GCASC, which divided the area designated as its own EEZ into 13 parcels in 2007 and permitted international companies to conduct energy exploration activities on behalf of the Republic of Cyprus (Yaycı, 2011: 33). The GCASC has increased its energy cooperation, particularly with Israel and Egypt, and expanded it to military fields, depending on the geopolitical developments in the area, after being successful in luring foreign businesses to exploration activities.

After the failed Cyprus negotiations in Crans Montana, the GCASC continued its initiatives in its countries, believing that Türkiye could profit from the issues it was having with the neighboring nations. President of the GCASC Nikos Anastasiadis declared during a visit to France in November 2017 that French Total and Italian Eni businesses would begin drilling operations in the sixth parcel in an effort to capitalize on the recent tensions between Türkiye and the EU. An additional significant action taken by Anastasiadis during this visit was his offer to provide the French access to the naval base at Mari (Tatlısu) and the air base in Paphos Andreas Papandreou (Yılmaz, 2018: 3)

In addition, the GCASC is attempting to use EU funding to build the Eastern Mediterranean Pipeline Project, which will transfer natural gas deposits from Cyprus to Greece, Italy, and Israel.

The pipeline will be constructed around 3 kilometers below the surface of the ocean, first traveling to Greece and, subsequently, Italy. The project, which is estimated to be 1,900 kilometers long and cost up to 17 billion dollars, is the longest and potentially most expensive natural gas pipeline in the World (Yılmaz, 2018: 3). Bypassing Türkiye in this way will allow the GCASC to transport its natural gas reserves to Europe. Due to

EU ENERGY SECURITY IN THE CONTEXT OF COMPETITION WITH RUSSIA IN THE EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN

its exorbitant cost and the fact that it will travel through Türkiye's Exclusive Economic Zone, this natural gas pipeline does not appear to be practicable.

On the other hand, the EU also maintained friendly relations in the Eastern Mediterranean with Egypt, Lebanon, and Greece. The reasons for Greece's policies and decisions in the Eastern Mediterranean are complex and based on a number of elements, to begin with when we discuss their connections with Greece. Since 1981, Greece has been a part of the EU. Greece and the EU are strategic allies. Greece's ambition to maintain its EU membership and continue to be an active member within the EU is reflected in its cooperation with the EU on events in the Eastern Mediterranean. In the Eastern Mediterranean, Greece defends its rights to its continental shelf and maritime jurisdictions. Regarding determining maritime jurisdiction regions in the Aegean Sea and the Eastern Mediterranean, as well as the extraction of energy resources, Greece employs a strategy based on international law. Greece and Türkiye have long-standing disagreements about matters including marine jurisdictions, sovereign rights, and military tensions. One of the things that encourages Greece to support the EU is these disputes.

Greece requests the EU's assistance and collaboration in resolving these concerns. Furthermore, Greece places a high value on the discovery and utilization of energy resources in the Eastern Mediterranean. Greece might benefit from economic growth and energy security from the extraction of these resources. Greece, therefore, sets the objective of collaborating with the EU and its regional allies on energy initiatives in the Eastern Mediterranean.

Energy, stability and security, economic development, and regional collaboration are just a few of the new fields it has developed. As we consider energy cooperation, it is important to note that the EU places a high strategic value on the discovery and exploitation of energy resources in the Eastern Mediterranean. The EU hopes to strengthen energy supply security, diversify energy sources, and meet carbon reduction goals by working with Lebanon and Egypt on energy resources. It creates cooperative ventures in this environment about things like the extraction, transportation, and sale of natural gas. In order to enhance stability and

security in extraction, transportation, and marketing, they have also formed a number of collaborations. This framework also includes establishing maritime borders and looking for solutions for energy projects that are compliant with international law. There is a lot at stake here for the EU, Lebanon, and Egypt as well. By working together with the EU, Lebanon and Egypt hope to boost their economies in the areas of sustainable growth and economic development.

RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN TÜRKİYE AND ITS EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN NEIGHBORS

The relationship between Türkiye and the various players in the Eastern Mediterranean is highly complicated. First, when we look at Türkiye's relations with Greece, we see that there is tension between the two nations because of their divergent views on who should determine maritime borders and who should have sovereign authority in the Eastern Mediterranean. The establishment of maritime borders, the distribution of energy resources, and the rights of islands to their continental shelf are among the topics that have caused conflict between these two nations. Cyprus is another participant. Türkiye and the GCASC have had a long-running dispute over the island of Cyprus.

While the majority of the international community only recognizes the GCASC, Türkiye recognizes the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus. This conflict has become more challenging as a result of the discovery of energy resources in the Eastern Mediterranean.

When we look at Egypt, a country that cooperates with both the EU and Russia in the region, we see that, while diplomatic ties had been broken for a while, they were eventually reestablished in 2021. The dynamics of relations between these nations are significantly influenced by the availability of energy resources in the Eastern Mediterranean.

The understanding between the parties, their diplomatic links, and global dynamics will determine the outcomes and direction of the discussion in the Eastern Mediterranean. Geopolitical balances in the area may be impacted, and relations with other foreign actors may also change as a result.

EU ENERGY SECURITY IN THE CONTEXT OF COMPETITION WITH RUSSIA IN THE EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN

With the outbreak of the Syrian civil war, Syria's weapon in the area, relations with Türkiye have drastically deteriorated. Türkiye sponsored Syrian opposition factions while attempting to maintain authority in northern Syria. Another argument over the division of maritime boundaries and energy resources in the Eastern Mediterranean resulted from this.

Another significant player influencing the balance in the Eastern Mediterranean is Russia. The dynamics in the region may be impacted by Russia's involvement and energy initiatives in Syria.

Finally, the Eastern Mediterranean's energy security is greatly impacted by Libya, particularly its undersea natural gas reserves. In order to work together on the extraction, transportation, and trading of energy resources, Türkiye and Libya have signed cooperation agreements in this area. The construction of pipelines to carry natural gas from Libya has the support of Türkiye. These initiatives endeavor to contribute to the diversity of energy sources and boost energy security. Power dynamics at the regional and global levels have an impact on Libya. Türkiye and many nations, including Greece and Egypt, have differing views on maritime boundaries and the distribution of energy resources, particularly in the Eastern Mediterranean. This is one of the elements influencing Libya's security of supply and access to energy sources. From a military standpoint, Türkiye has supported the Libyan Government of National Accord (GNA) politically and militarily. This assistance was given to acknowledge the GNA as the legitimate government and to maintain the nation's stability. Türkiye has a stake in ensuring the security of the energy supply, and a stable Libya can make it easier to harvest and transport energy resources safely. Briefly put, Türkiye wants to keep working closely with Libya to exploit energy resources and maintain security.

CONCLUSION

Russia will not cease showing the idea of energy as a power factor in response to the EU's liberalization efforts in the competition in the Eastern Mediterranean and its attempts to solve the concerns of dependency on a small number of suppliers in energy imports. However,

it should not be forgotten that putting pragmatic measures into place would jeopardize Russia's pricing stability, long-term economic expansion, and energy demand security. That is because it will open the door wide to embargoes enforced by dependent countries or other superpowers.

When we consider the worst-case scenarios, we see that the disruption of energy resources, supply issues, and political disputes will result in a loss of confidence between the parties, which will have a significant impact on the energy market and trigger a period of tension in bilateral relations. Even though it is implausible, this regression, which takes into account not just the relationships between the two countries but also the affiliations of the parties, might lead to a worldwide energy catastrophe. The EU's reliance on Russia for energy may grow as a result of energy competition. As a result, the Union's energy security may be in jeopardy, endangering the member states' industrial endeavors, residential energy use, and day-to-day activities.

On the other hand, interruptions in energy supply can slow down economic growth by reducing production. In the context of Eastern Mediterranean competition, increases in energy costs may cause price fluctuations. Thus, the overdependence of energy resources on a single supplier may continue, causing member states to encounter uncertain situations in energy supply. Additionally, the EU, which has a market in Russia, has established itself as a significant player in the energy industry by forging close ties with advanced economies like China, India, Pakistan, and, to a lesser extent, the United States. Russia has the benefit of leveraging the energy resources of Central Asian and Caucasian nations to its advantage in supplying energy to the European Union. Russia also controls the energy resources of these nations. As a result, it had more influence and market power over energy reliance.

By offering financial assistance to the economically underdeveloped riparian nations in the Eastern Mediterranean and avoiding transit routes, Russia can make another move that serves its own interests. Political and energy supply security issues could arise as a result of the rivalry in the Eastern Mediterranean, which could result in a stalemate in relations.

EU ENERGY SECURITY IN THE CONTEXT OF COMPETITION WITH RUSSIA IN THE EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN

Nevertheless, despite the entire process, the EU's proactive policies with the Eastern Mediterranean riparian nations continued to foster relationships with alternative energy providers. For instance, the EU has established ties with the GCASC and even unilaterally admitted it as a member of the Union. Türkiye is an important component of the EU's energy security because it serves as a bridge between places that depend on energy imports, like Russia, and regions that do not, like the EU, and because it is located at the intersection of two continents.

The EU gains ground, and the Eastern Mediterranean region sees a diversity of cooperation as a result of Türkiye's ambition to join. Türkiye is anticipated to maintain its strategic importance within its zone of influence. The EU needs energy resources from the Eastern Mediterranean to reduce its reliance on Russia, and because of its geographic location and project costs, it is thought that this is the best technique to be achieved via pipelines over Türkiye. This might have significant implications for Türkiye, including increasing energy cooperation with the EU, reducing natural gas purchase costs, and controlling the distribution of energy in the region.

A broader assessment would be that exporting countries like Russia have the potential to impede the measures taken to mitigate the negative consequences of the EU's energy policies in the Eastern Mediterranean. The analysis predicted that the EU's dependency on Russian energy resources would increase at least until 2030. Nevertheless, wars in the Eastern Mediterranean region and energy exploration and extraction activities will make it difficult for the EU to sustain resource diversity. Thus, reliance on Russia will continue.

REFERENCES

- ABBAS, E. K. (2023). The Russian Strategic Vision in the Eastern Mediterranean Region. *Russian Law Journal*, 11(9), 580-586.
- ARAS, H., & İŞYAR, Ö. G. (2023). Rusya'nın Suriye Krizine Müdahalesinin Neorealizm Çerçevesinde Analizi. *TESAM Akademi Dergisi*, 10(2), 513-529.
- ARSLAN, T. (2017). Avrupa Birliği'nin Enerjide Rusya'ya Bağımlılığı Sorunsalında; Türkiye ve Doğu Akdeniz. (Unpublished Master's Thesis), Ankara: *Ufuk Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü*.
- Avrupa Birliği Başkanlığı (2023). Fasil 27: Avrupa Birliği'nin Çevre ve İklim Değişikliği Politikası, https://www.ab.gov.tr/fasil-27-cevre_92.html.
- CEBOTARI, L. (2022). EU-Russia Energy Relations: Problems and Perspectives. *Sciendo*, 16(1), 1001-1014.
- ÇITAK, D. (2023). 2000'li Yıllarda Enerji Politikaları Çerçevesinde Avrupa Birliği – Rusya İlişkileri. (Unpublished Doctoral Thesis), Edirne: *Trakya Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü*.
- DENİZLİ, C. (2022). Doğu Akdeniz Hidrokarbon Kaynakları Üzerine Jeopolitik Bir Değerlendirme. (Unpublished Master's Thesis), İstanbul: *Marmara Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü*.
- DUMAN, S. (2021). İdealizm ve Realizm Tartışması. (Unpublished Graduation Project). Konya: *Selçuk Üniversitesi İktisadi ve İdari Bilimler Fakültesi*.
- ERKAL, H. Y. (2018). Enerji Güvenliğine Yönelik Tehditler ve Enerji Güvenliği Politikalarındaki Değişim. *Ahi Evran Üniversitesi İktisadi ve İdari Bilimler Fakültesi Dergisi*, 2(2), 63-78.
- GURBANOV, I. (2016). Perspective for Turkish Stream Project: Possible Scenarios and Challenges. *Caucasus International Journal*, 6(2), 75-96.
- GÜRBULAK, K. (2023). Doğu Akdeniz'de Enerji Güvenliğinin Uluslararası Politik Ekonomisi. (Unpublished Master's Thesis), Bilecik: *Şeyh Edebali Üniversitesi Lisansüstü Eğitim Enstitüsü*.

EU ENERGY SECURITY IN THE CONTEXT OF COMPETITION WITH RUSSIA IN THE EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN

GÜVEN, H. N. (2023). Bölgesel ve Küresel Bir Güç Mücadele Alanı Olarak Doğu Akdeniz. (Unpublished Master's Thesis), Karabük: Karabük Üniversitesi Lisansüstü Eğitim Enstitüsü.

HAMZAOĞLU, H. (2022). Rusya-Avrupa Birliği İlişkilerinde Enerji Etkeni ve Kuzey Akımı- 2 Boru Hattı Projesinin Jeopolitik İçeriği. Alanya Academic Review Journal, 5(1), 265-286.

KALAFAT, K. (2023). Alternatives for the European Union's Natural Gas Dependency on Russia. (Unpublished Master's Thesis), Orta Doğu Teknik Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü.

KARAGÖL, E. T., & ÖZDEMİR, B. Z. (2017). Türkiye'nin Enerji Ticaret, Merkezi Olmasında Doğu Akdeniz'in Rolü, İstanbul: SETA.

KAVAZ, İ. (2020). Enerji Kaynakları ve Transfer Rotaları Bağlamında Doğu Akdeniz. Anadolu Stratejisi Dergisi, 2(2), 1-14.

KAZANCIOĞLU, M. (2022). Rusya'nın Güvenlik Algısı ve Suriye Krizi Sonrası Doğu Akdeniz Stratejileri. (Unpublished Master's Thesis), Tekirdağ: Namık Kemal Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü.

KEDİKLİ, U., & ÇALAĞAN, Ö. (2017). Enerji Alanında Bir Rekabet Sahası Olarak Doğu Akdeniz'in Önemi. Tekirdağ Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Metinleri, 1, 120-138.

KILLIOĞLU, M. E. (2021). Rusya'nın Suriye ve Doğu Akdeniz'deki Mevcudiyeti. H. Ö. Sarıdoğan and F. Çelebi, (ed.), İktisadi ve İdari Bilimlerden Seçkin Araştırmalar, (pp. 7-21), İzmir: Duvar Yayınları.

KOCATEPE, N. (2019). Enerji Güvenliğinde Türkiye'nin Rolü. Akademik Bakış Dergisi, 71, 57-67.

MARA, D., NATE, S., STAVYTSKY A., & KHARLAMOVA, G. (2022). The Place of Energy Security in the National Security Framework: An Assessment Approach. Energies, 15(2), 658.

MERAL, Ç. A. (2016). The Energy Relations between the European Union and Russia. (Unpublished Master's Thesis), İstanbul: Bilgi Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü.

- ÖZDEMİR, Ç. (2018). Rusya'nın Doğu Akdeniz Stratejisi, İstanbul: SETAV.
- ÖZDEMİR, G. (2022) Enerji Güvenliği Bağlamında Rusya'nın Hazar Enerji Politikası. *The Journal of Diplomatic Research*, 4(2), 85-99.
- ÖZEKİN, M. K. (2020). Doğu Akdeniz'de Değişen Enerji Jeopolitiği ve Türkiye. *Güvenlik Stratejileri*, 16(33), 1-51.
- Rusya Çin Doğalgaz Boru Hattı Açıldı, Sibiry'a'nın Gücü Yılda 38 Milyar Metreküp Gaz Taşıyacak (2019) BBC. <https://www.bbc.com/turkce/haberler-dunya-50629873>
- South Stream Gas Pipeline Construction to Start (2012) BBC. <https://www.bbc.com/news/av/business-20639545>
- STERGIOU, A. (2017). Russia's Energy and Defense Strategy in the Eastern Mediterranean. *Economics World*, 5(2), 101-119.
- TOPRAK, N. G. (2019), Sıcak Denizde Soğuk Savaş: Türkiye'nin Enerji Güvenliği Bağlamında Doğu Akdeniz. H. Çomak and B. Şakir Şeker, (ed.), *Akdeniz Jeopolitiği I*, (pp. 660-674), Ankara: Nobel Yayınları.
- TUĞ, Z. (2019). Doğu Akdeniz'de Deniz Yetki Alanları Uyuşmazlığı Sorunu. (Unpublished Master's Thesis), Karabük: Karabük Üniversitesi Lisansüstü Eğitim Enstitüsü.
- TÜRKEŞ, İ. (2021). Doğu Akdeniz'de Uyuşmazlık Teşkil Eden Deniz Alanlarında Gerçekleştirilen Hidrokarbon ve Doğalgaz Çalışmalarının Kıbrıs Sorununa Yansıması ile Soruna Getirdiği Yeni Dinamikler. *Euro Politika*, 11, 86-107.
- ÜREN, M. (2021). Küresel Güç Olma Hedefi Bağlamında Rusya'nın Doğu Akdeniz Politikası. *Fırat Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi*, 31(2), 851-874.
- VARGHESE, K. S. (2020). Energy Geopolitics in the Eastern Mediterranean Region. *Defence Research and Studies*, <https://dras.in/energy-geopolitics-in-the-eastern-mediterranean-region/>
- VAROL SEVİM, T. (2014). Rus Dış Enerji Politikası ve Yeni Hedef Kuzey Doğu Asya. *Uluslararası İlişkiler Dergisi*, 11(41), 87-108.

EU ENERGY SECURITY IN THE CONTEXT OF COMPETITION WITH RUSSIA IN THE EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN

YAŞOT, M. (2022). Avrupa Birliği'nin Enerji Güvenliğini Etkileyen Çatışma Alanları: Ukrayna-Rusya, İran ve Doğu Akdeniz. (Unpublished Master's Thesis), Aydın: Adnan Menderes Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü.

YAYCI, C. (2018). Doğu Akdeniz'de Deniz Yetki Alanlarının Paylaşılması Sorunu ve Türkiye. Bilge Stratejisi, 4 (6), 1-70.

YILMAZ, E. (2018). Doğu Akdeniz'de Enerji Çıkmazı, İstanbul: SETAV.

YILMAZ, S., & KALKAN D. (2017). Enerji Güvenliği Kavramı: 1973 Petrol Krizi Işığında Bir Tartışma. Uluslararası Krizi ve Siyaset Araştırmaları, 1(3), 169-199.

YOLDAŞ, N. (2020). Doğu Akdeniz'de Enerji Güvenliğinin Güncel Dinamikleri. (Unpublished Master's Thesis), İstanbul: Gelişim Üniversitesi Lisansüstü Eğitim Enstitüsü.