



Eastern Mediterranean Region and Decentralization of International Order

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Abstract

Conflicts are going all around the world. Different region has different issues and various players involved. But one region which has constantly been significant in present geopolitical context is “Eastern Mediterranean”. Maintaining its legacy of 60s and 70s the region has still burning and sitting on a volcano. It has seen a different variety of conflicts, religious, ethnic, racial, territorial etc. And there is big fist fight going on over resources. Turkey, Israel, Cyprus, Libya, Lebanon, Egypt, Syria and many more foreign players are strategizing their plans to get hold on these unexplored resources. The huge pile of gas reserve has potential to fulfil demands of clean energy and make these small states rich as never before.

This ongoing tussle can be theorized with the decentralization of International Order as the players involved are strong and weak with this region. They are no longer subordinate to any “poles”. This has been seen when Armenia and Azerbaijan locked their horn recently over areas of Nagorno-Karabakh. Two forces working simultaneously are decentralisation and regionalisation. The idea has grown stronger in present time. Whether it’s a matter of security, economy, migration, or now a day’s pandemic. Regions tend to work cohesively among their member nations.

A lot is happening in Mediterranean Sea. Through these lenses this paper will try to explore the potential energy reserves in Eastern Mediterranean and their significance in changing geopolitics of the region. And how regional and international states are formulating their policies.

Keywords: *Abuse of authority, Corruption, Law, Government Administration, Resource based conflict, Eastern Mediterranean*

1.0 Introduction

The 21st century has witnessed fast changes in geopolitical dimensions. It has challenged US hegemony over the world. Reshuffling of global order post-cold war is regressive and has challenged the primacy of the US since the beginning of the 20th century. Each continent and region have more than one powerful state - be it India and China in Asia, Japan and Australia in Pacific, Iran and Saudi Arabia in the Middle-east. Imitating their superiors, middle and small states are bargaining deals and growing to get hold on vantage points. The power vacuums mostly created out of conflicts in various regions around the world are used by these states to exploit the region and push their own agendas independently. International order has been going through two processes which are interconnected:

- Decentralization of international order
- Regionalisation

According to Joseph Nye, an international region is made of “a limited number of states linked by geography and by degree of mutual interdependence”. Aristotle Tziampiris further describes major factors affecting nature of the region, as:

- Degree of cohesion
- Internal and external recognition
- Common historical background
- Possible economic interdependence

These factors are to judge a region to be “strong or weak” and analyse the character of the state. For any regional organization to be successful, there are certain criteria to fulfil, firstly, it must ensure benefits for all the regional groups. Secondly, there should be a leader among them that could serve as a focal point. And thirdly, there is a need for an external power to guide them. Any regional organization needs to fulfil at least two criteria, for instance in the case of the EU, Germany serves as the Focal point. The North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) flourished under the aegis of the USA; but as soon as USA pulled itself out of treaty NAFTA fell. The Latin American Free Trade Agreement (LATFA) failed for the same reason.

In the case of the Mediterranean region, it has always been strategically important in stabilising and destabilizing international order. Since the time of the crusades, the lust of the Levant drove crusaders into the coastal and mainland of west Asia. As per scholars, the Crusades itself was an economic and territorial siege. Countries in the Eastern Mediterranean region are Cyprus, Greece, Turkey, Albania, Syria, Lebanon, Israel, Palestine, Jordan and Egypt. There are a number of factors that are going to be decisive in the power struggle in, or regionalisation of, Eastern Mediterranean.

1. Gas exploration and transmission.
2. Power struggle in the region.
3. Civil unrest in neighbouring states (Libya and Syria)
4. External power influence in the region.
5. Private Players.



Courtesy: Google Images

Recently there has been a huge how the discovery of hydrocarbons in the Mediterranean Sea. This has created a great rift in regional politics and geopolitics as a whole. The discovery of gas in the eastern Mediterranean is not only about energy security and profitability, it has divided the whole region into two lobby. The Turkey group and Israel group. These two groups information are arranging and rearranging themselves at a different level from exploration up to transmission. The geological survey has found that the Levant basin has a potential 3.5 tcm of gas and the Nile basin contains 6 tcm of gas. Such a huge pile has the potential of meeting the demands of regional states and of the prospect market for almost half a century. An estimated gas reserve in the Levant region is shown in the table.

Country	Estimated Gas Resources	Add. Potential
Israel	1000 bcm	400 bcm
Lebanon	750 bcm	
Syria	230 bcm	170 bcm
Cyprus	120 bcm	

These discoveries have led to the state-wise surveys in the field, which consequently has led to conflict over the field area and right over these basins. Among all Cyprus-Turkey conflict is a deterministic factor. Cyprus is a small country with a population of almost 12 lakhs. The annual energy consumption of Cyprus per capita is 3662 kWh. Around 90% of energy from Aphrodite fields is surplus that can be exported to the world market at a huge profit. That means she could produce, consume and profitably export the energy on its own. This could rocket the economy with almost \$2 billion. Cyprus has welcomed the exploration process in 2011 and authorised several blocks to companies including Eni, Total, KOGAS etc.

Now, Turkey has the issue with all this going around without being consulted. Turkey has recently sent its drilling ships to the Cypriot basin. A few of the concerns of Turkey includes:

Water boundary sharing with Cyprus is controversial.

Since the discovery, Turkey has started its own exploration with drilling and seismic ships sailing around Turkish Cypriot. Cyprus on the other hand blames Turkey for entering in her offshores. But Turkey is headstrong in its mission. This offensive voyage is somehow connected to the exclusion of Turkey from major deals of the Mediterranean. Turkey's Mediterranean shore also known as the "Turquoise Coast" is nearly 1600 km and is the longest in the region. Besides, Turkey is the largest state in the Eastern Mediterranean in area, economy, population and in almost all the aspects. Turkey claims that its natural right of Turkey to be included in major deals and coalition. Moreover, Turkey wants the right on offshore as it believes that it belongs to the people of the whole island precisely Cypriot.

Looking for the balance of power Turkey is shuffling the geopolitics of the region. The Libyan civil unrest post Arab spring is much to do now. The UN-backed government GNP is fighting with warlord Haftar and its militias. Turkey has entered the war in Libya backing Tripoli-based GNP, it can be seen as a tryst for a new lobby and excess offshore for future exploration.

Libya is the richest country in Africa.

The power vacuum post-Gaddafi has created a rumble within. With all the efforts from the UN and International society, the Government of National Accord (GNA) was formed in 2016 in Tripoli under the leadership of Fayez Al Sarraj. But Libyan National Army (LNA), was formed by the authorization of The House of Representatives in Tobruk has waged war against GNA. Its commander then Field Marshal and now a warlord Khalifa Haftar has unified and mobilised the whole military under him. They are targeting and bombing Tripoli frequently, disabled the economy and have destroyed the lives of civilians. This has created a chain of crisis. Civilians are losing life and property and are forced for migration. According to Mustafa Sanaullah, chairman of National oil Corporation Libya has lost \$126 billion in these six years.

Along with Turkey, there are other interested parties in this lobbying process. Italy sees this as an opportunity for its oil companies (like Eni) to gain access in Libya. While Turkey gaining drilling rights. Meanwhile, the LNA has been supported by UAE, France, KSA etc. UAE is providing military support to Haftar fighters with air support and vehicles. In August 2014, Emirates fighter planes carried out airstrikes in south-west zones, under "Operation Dignity".

Europe is the largest and most feasible market for hydrocarbons. The world is now moving to clean energy furl. And this reserve is the answer to all the climate agreements. Europe is the targeted market for the Mediterranean gas reserve. But the big question is about infrastructure. Currently for such kind of gas export.



Image: DW

Russia and the US have their own strategy and sides in this regionalisation. US and France have already requested to join the EastMed Gas Forum. Whereas Russia campaigning in Syria and back door support to Haftar's LNA has not cleared Kremlin's strategy till now. But Moscow is surely not happy with American Vessels patrolling in the Mediterranean.

Way Forward

The process of regionalization in the eastern Mediterranean is missing some of the basic principles of regionalism. There is no leader emerging out of the region which could make all the neighbours sit together and plan the process. There are blocks getting formed up. In January, 2019 the EastMed Gas Forum deal has been signed by seven countries: Egypt, Israel, Greece and Cyprus, along with Jordan and Palestine as observer states. But the very obvious missing is Turkey. Any forum or block in the region cannot practically succeed without taking Turkey in confidence. Turkey on the other hand signed a military and maritime deal with Libya's GNA. Energy production and exportation is at the core of this regional alignment. For most of the nations in the region, this is the chance to magnify their internal and external policies. For instance, Cyprus sees this as a chance to balance out Turkey. However, for any regional cooperation, there must be a common good, such process can only gain momentum if there is a leader. In this case, we have Israel and Turkey. On that above ground, Turkey should have been included in the forum. And furthermore, it already has the laid infrastructure to export gas to Europe. The stability in the region is the need of the hour as it could solve a number of crisis, humanitarian, security, migration, environmental, border disputes etc. There is a race in East Med that is shuffling in nature and a meta state of coming order. And in this process of regionalisation "natural gas" is a crucial determinant.

Europe is the largest and most feasible market for hydrocarbons. The world is now moving to clean energy furl. And this reserve is the answer to the all the climate agreements. Europe is targeted market for the Mediterranean gas reserve. But the big question is about infrastructure. Currently for such kind of gas export EastMed Pipeline that has been proposed has estimated costing of \$6 Billion. Of which \$4 million has already

been put to study feasibility. Signed pipeline will cross Leviathan to Cyprus and then to Greece mainland. For Cyprus this deal is of worth \$9.5 billion which means \$11000 per citizen. And main lands this deal is hot talk in social and political narratives. While turkey is feeling excluded and demeaned. Turkey's entry into Syria conflict can also be seen from this Mediterranean point of view. Erdogan has been trying to balance the power and creating a bargaining chip. Where Turkey's state policy is been irking for all the East Mediterranean countries.

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