



East Mediterranean Gas Discoveries and their Strategic Impacts

Ehud Eiran

Maritime Strategies in the Middle East

Challenges & Opportunities

The Middle East is a major area of maritime trade, given the vast oil supplies in the Persian Gulf region and several gas exploitation and exploration projects in the Mediterranean region. The development of these prospects and maritime trade, however, are threatened by acts of piracy and terrorist attacks in the waters between the Suez Canal and the Strait of Hormuz. Such threats have frequently prompted insurance companies to raise their premiums for merchant ships that navigate these waters. In addition, the Middle East has been the arena of fierce competition not only among the external actors who have economic and strategic interests in the region but also among local powers aiming to position themselves as the uncontested hub for maritime freight. The papers in this series of *Insights* explore how the countries of the Middle East and key external actors envision their maritime strategies for the region.

Cover photo: The platform of the Leviathan natural gas field in the Mediterranean Sea, viewed from Caesarea in northern Israel, 19 December 2019. Jack Guez/AFP.

East Mediterranean Gas Discoveries and their Strategic Impacts

Ehud Eiran*

While recent natural gas discoveries and developments in the eastern Mediterranean have ushered in a modest degree of economic cooperation among the littoral countries, they have also exacerbated the existing tensions between some of these players. The growing importance of these offshore gas fields has given added reason to a number of key regional actors to develop more elaborate maritime strategies to protect both their economic and security interests.

The discovery and development of natural gas fields in the eastern Mediterranean over the past two decades has fostered a modest degree of economic cooperation and interdependence among some of the littoral countries while also drawing greater international economic engagement in the region. By increasing Israel's energy independence, these discoveries and cooperative arrangements have

enhanced the country's position in the region. At the same time, the gas discoveries have created new sources of conflict, namely, between Israel and Lebanon and between Turkey and the Republic of Cyprus. These developments have encouraged some of the key regional actors to turn their attention to the sea and develop more elaborate maritime strategies.

Gas Discoveries

Beginning in the late 1990s, Israel, Egypt, Cyprus, and the Palestinian Authority discovered significant offshore gas deposits in two regional geological formations — the Nile Basin and the Levant Basin — located in waters off their shores in the eastern Mediterranean (see map). Egypt had already discovered an offshore natural gas field in the late 1960s and has been operating it since 1970.¹ However, the recent discoveries were far more significant by virtue of their sizes and the fact that some of them straddled the exclusive economic zones (EEZs) claimed by various states. They also created an incentive for other countries in the region to issue tenders for exploration and for international energy companies to bid for them.

The two most significant discoveries in the region were the Egyptian Zohr field, discovered in 2015 and believed to contain 30 trillion cubic feet (TCF) of recoverable gas,² and the Israeli Leviathan field, discovered in 2009 and believed to hold some 22 TCF

¹ Arab Republic of Egypt, Ministry of Petroleum and Mineral Resources, “Natural Gas”, n.d., <https://www.petroleum.gov.eg/en/gas-and-petrol/discovery-search-production/Pages/gas.aspx>

² Wood Mackenzie, “Asset Report: Zohr”, October 2021, <https://www.woodmac.com/reports/upstream-oil-and-gas-zohr-32315360>

(recoverable).³ In 2011, Cyprus discovered the Aphrodite gas field. This has a small extension that goes into Israeli waters (Yishai reservoir) and holds an estimated 10 per cent of the gas deposits. The field is still undeveloped. Gas also was discovered in 1999 in the sea near the Gaza Strip (Gaza Marin) but has not been developed to date.

The Israeli and Egyptian discoveries were brought online in the following years. Production from the Egyptian Zohr field began in 2017, only two years after its discovery.⁴ Israeli's Leviathan gas field, which was discovered in 2009, came online in late 2019. Israel's Tamar field, northeast of the Leviathan gas field, came online in 2013, four years after it was discovered. By 2020, natural gas from the Tamar and Leviathan fields accounted for 70 per cent of Israel's electricity production.⁵ The expected addition of gas from a third field, Karish-Tanin, in mid-2022⁶ will further increase Israel's reliance on natural gas.

The two geological formations, the Nile Basin and the Levant Basin, where the discoveries were made, are believed to hold yet more gas. As a result, Egypt, Cyprus, and Israel continue to issue tenders for exploration, and they have been joined by Lebanon and Syria.⁷

³ Leviathan, "The National Project", <https://leviathanproject.co.il/>

⁴ Offshore Energy Today, "Update: Zohr gas production to reach 3.2 bcfed target by 2019 end", 21 August 2019, <https://www.offshore-energy.biz/report-zohr-gas-production-to-reach-3-bcfed-target-by-2019-end/>

⁵ Israeli Ministry of Energy, "A Report on the Structure of the Energy Market in Israel", March 2021, https://www.gov.il/BlobFolder/reports/israel_energy_sector/he/israel_energy_sector.pdf

⁶ Energean, "Karish", 18 March 2022, <https://www.energean.com/operations/israel/karish/>

⁷ C. J. Schenk, M. A. Kirschbaum, R. R. Charpentier, T.R. Klett, M. E. Brownfield, J. K. Pitman, T. A. Cook, and M. E. Tennyson, M.E., 2010, "Assessment of Undiscovered Oil

Foreign Interest in Energy Projects

Energy prospects in the Eastern Mediterranean have also created an opening for both international and regional investors. Most notably, the Greek-British energy company Energean owns the Israeli Karish-Tanin gas field, as well as 80 per cent of the licences in four other blocks in Israel's EEZ. Energean also owns 100 per cent of the oldest offshore gas field in the region, Egypt's Abu Qir, as well as other Egyptian fields, namely, North El Amriya, North Idku, and North EastHap'y. The Israeli gas field Leviathan was almost 40 per cent owned by US-based Noble Energy, which was later acquired by Chevron in 2020.

Within the region, an Israeli company, Delek Drilling, owns 30 per cent of the Cypriot field Aphrodite. Mubadala, Abu Dhabi's sovereign wealth fund, owns gas fields in Israel and Egypt.

Growing Energy Interdependence

Historically, the Middle East has been known as an area with low levels of intra-regional trade and economic interdependence. However, the gas discoveries have changed this state of affairs to some degree. Much of this nascent regional energy interdependence involves offshore fields. At its heart is the Arab Gas Pipeline (AGP) project, the 1,200 km long pipeline that runs from Egypt, through Jordan to Lebanon, Syria, and Turkey. There are also pipes running from Egypt and Jordan to Israel, but, owing to political constraints, they are not formally considered to be part of the AGP. Portions of the pipeline were used over the years to deliver Egyptian gas to Israel and Jordan. As Egypt's energy demands

grew, the pipeline was used in the reverse, with gas flowing from Jordan⁸ and Israel to Egypt. Israel also exports gas to Jordan through a shorter pipeline that serves industrial potash activity in the Jordanian Dead Sea. (Israeli companies signed several preliminary agreements over the years to export gas to power stations both in the West Bank and Gaza, although none of them has materialised to date.⁹) This regional energy connectivity and burgeoning interdependence is expected to grow further, with the possibility of connecting the pipeline to Iraq.¹⁰

“At the heart of the nascent regional energy interdependence is the 1,200 km-long Arab Gas Pipeline project.”

In a separate development, Egypt signed an agreement to import gas from Israel, then process it into liquefied natural gas (LNG) at its facilities in Idku and Damietta and re-export it to markets in Asia and Europe. Media reports suggest that Egypt signed a similar agreement with Cyprus, although for now Nicosia still does not produce its own natural gas. The ongoing war in Ukraine may provide an incentive for deeper cooperation between Egypt and Europe in this regard. Indeed,

⁸ This was gas that Jordan imported from international markets in the form of LNG and re-exported to Egypt.

⁹ Times of Israel, “Qatar, PA advance deal to supply Gaza power plant with Israeli natural gas”, 27 December 2021, *Times of Israel*, <https://www.timesofisrael.com/qatar-pa-advance-deal-to-supply-gaza-power-plant-with-israeli-natural-gas/>

¹⁰ Adal Mirza, “Iraq eyes Syria transit route for Egyptian gas imports”, Argus Media, 19 April 2021, <https://www.argusmedia.com/en/news/2210305-iraq-eyes-syria-transit-route-for-egyptian-gas-imports>

Egyptian energy analyst Ahmed Kandil wrote in early March 2022 that “the Ukraine crisis might offer Egypt an opportunity to achieve its strategic aim of becoming a regional hub for the production, trade, and shipment of natural gas.”¹¹

All these interdependencies hold the promise for greater stability, both at the state level and the regional level. For example, with the energy crisis wreaking havoc on Lebanon’s internal stability, Egypt agreed to supply gas to Lebanon via Jordan. Reports suggest that the gas will be supplied to Egypt by Israel. If these are accurate, the Egyptian pass-through would provide the political cover for the government in Beirut against allegations that it receives gas from Israel.¹² Likewise, in February 2021, Qatar pledged US\$60 million to develop the infrastructure that would enable Gaza to receive gas from Israel.¹³ At the regional level, the Israeli-Egyptian and Israeli-Jordanian gas deals provide an economic layer to the peace treaties between Israel and the two Arab nations.

An Israeli-Greek-Cypriot Quasi-Alliance?

Another regional effect of the gas discoveries is their contribution to the evolution of an Israeli-Greek-Cypriot quasi-alliance starting in the first

¹¹ Ahmed Kandil, “Can Egypt become a gas supplier to Europe?” *Abram Online*, 8 March 2022, <https://english.abram.org.eg/NewsContent/50/1201/462514/AlAbram-Weekly/Egypt/Ukraine-LNG-wars.aspx>

¹² Sara Seif Eddin, “Why gas earmarked for Lebanon is not Egyptian”, *Mada Masr*, 22 February 2022, <https://www.madamasr.com/en/2022/02/23/feature/politics/why-gas-earmarked-for-lebanon-is-not-egyptian/>

¹³ Associated Press, “Qatar to pour \$60 million into new Israel-Gaza gas pipeline”, AP News, 21 February 2021, <https://apnews.com/article/israel-united-arab-emirates-middle-east-qatar-dubai-34dc00216a5e7587e57bddf0dc8f049>

decade of the century.¹⁴ It was common concerns about Turkey that brought the three nations closer, and potential cooperation relating to gas provided a comfortable point of focus for their cooperation.

“Common concerns about Turkey brought Israel, Greece and Cyprus closer.”

Leaders of the three nations, as well as their senior officials, meet on a regular basis and support each other diplomatically. For example, Israel backed the Cypriot position regarding the Turkish incursion into the demilitarised zone on the island of Cyprus, near the city of Verosha, in the summer of 2021.¹⁵ The three nations also cooperate militarily. Israel sells arms to both Hellenic nations, and all three of them periodically engage in joint military exercises. In early 2018, Cyprus took delivery of an Israeli-made offshore patrol vessel and made clear that it was intended for protecting the island’s EEZ.¹⁶ In January 2021 it was revealed that Greece had signed a 20-year contract with Israeli defence manufacturer Elbit Systems to upgrade the training capacity of its air force. Beyond the security dimension, the three

¹⁴ Zenonas Tziarras, “Israel-Cyprus-Greece: A ‘Comfortable’ Quasi-Alliance”, *Mediterranean Politics* 21, no. 3 (2016), pp. 407–427

¹⁵ Barak Ravid, “Scoop: After Erdoğan call, Israel reassures Greece”, *Axios*, 21 July 2021, <https://www.axios.com/erdogan-call-israel-greece-turkey-relations-17d4be64-5501-40d3-a739-79986f64fcf5.html>

¹⁶ Naval Today, “Cyprus Navy commissions its first ever offshore patrol vessel”, *Naval-today.com*, 15 January 2018, <https://www.navaltoday.com/2018/01/15/cyprus-navy-commissions-its-first-ever-offshore-patrol-vessel/>

countries have signed a large number of cooperation agreements on matters such as tourism, education, and innovation.

As noted earlier, energy companies from Israel have invested in energy assets in Cyprus while those from Greece have invested in energy assets in Israel. The most significant joint project that the three countries have been discussing is the EastMed pipeline. This is meant to connect the Israeli and Cypriot gas fields via a 1,900 km long undersea pipeline to Greece and from there to Italy and the rest of Europe. However, it is unclear whether the project will move ahead, in part because the United States has withdrawn its support for it.

“The East Mediterranean Gas Forum offers Israel a place within a regional construct that accepts it.”

The offshore energy agenda of this quasi-alliance was further advanced as it stood at the heart of the creation of a new regional institution, the East Mediterranean Gas Forum, formed by the three nations along with Egypt, Jordan, the Palestinian Authority and Italy. Born out of an Egyptian initiative, the forum was formally launched in 2021, although it had been in existence since 2019. France joined the forum after it was created, while the European Union, United States and the World Bank are observers. The vision of the forum is to create a “platform for structured policy dialogue on natural gas, leading to the development of a sustainable regional gas market that could unlock the full gas potential in the East Mediterranean region.”¹⁷ The forum holds the promise of optimising policies regarding gas, and, beyond that, serves

¹⁷ East Mediterranean Gas Forum, <https://emgf.org>

as an economic foundation for greater regional coordination. At a deeper level, the forum holds two identity-based promises. First, it offers Israel a place within a regional construct — a Mediterranean one — that accepts it. This against a background in which the state of Israel is not fully recognised by most of the Middle Eastern countries. Second, the forum puts paid to the notion that the Israeli-Hellenic quasi-alliance is a Judeo-Christian entity operating in opposition to the Muslim world, especially Turkey.^{18 19}

“The East Mediterranean Gas Forum puts paid to the notion that the Israeli-Hellenic quasi-alliance is a Judeo-Christian entity operating in opposition to the Muslim world, especially Turkey.”

However, the quasi-alliance is facing at least two challenges. One of these revolves around the uncertainty regarding the EastMed pipeline project, which was the primary large-scale joint project that the three

¹⁸ For Israeli concerns that the quasi alliance would be seen through this lens, see Orna Mizrahi, “Israel’s Policy in its Triangular Relations with Greece and Cyprus”, Policy Analysis 23, no. 3 (July 2020), Institute for National Security Studies (INSS), Tel Aviv University, <https://strategicassessment.inss.org.il/en/articles/israels-policy-in-its-triangular-relations-with-greece-and-cyprus/>; For a Turkish perspective on the religious undertones of the issue, see Joshua Krasna, “Israel-Greece-Cyprus take on Turkey in the Mediterranean”, *Al-Monitor*, 22 January 2020, <https://www.al-monitor.com/originals/2020/01/israel-turkey-greece-cyprus-benjamin-netanyahu-natural-gas.html>

¹⁹ A closer look would reveal that this presumed dichotomy between an Israeli-Hellenic quasi alliance and the Muslim world has its limitations. For example, Cyprus and Greece have had excellent relations with the Arab world throughout the Cold War.

nations were advancing. The project initially received US support as Washington, especially during the Trump presidency, saw the pipeline as a possible vehicle to decrease European reliance on Russian gas. Although the European Union funded a preliminary study on the pipeline, most experts warned that the project would face numerous technical, political, economic, and environmental challenges. Indeed, in January 2022, the United States withdrew its support from the project. But energy cooperation between Israel, Cyprus and Greece may still go ahead even if the East Med gas pipeline is not developed: in January 2022, the European Union granted €567 million for the development of the EuroAsia Interconnector, an electric subsea cable that will connect the national grids of Israel, Cyprus and Greece.²⁰

“A significant challenge to the quasi-alliance arises from Turkey’s efforts to improve relations with Israel and possibly create a wedge between the two Hellenic states and Israel.”

A more significant challenge to the quasi-alliance arises from Turkey’s efforts to improve relations with Israel and possibly create a wedge between the two Hellenic states and Israel. Turkey and Israel had a close informal alliance in the 1990s that included foreign and security coordination, especially vis-à-vis their joint neighbour, Syria. That informal alliance included significant arms deals, trade, and tourism.

²⁰ AFP, “Cyprus, Greece, Israel electricity link gets EU Funding”, *Barron’s*, 27 January 2022, <https://www.barrons.com/news/cyprus-greece-israel-electricity-link-gets-eu-funding-01643294108?tesla=y>

However, with the rise to power of Recep Tayyip Erdogan in Turkey, relations chilled. After 2004, Erdogan, then still prime minister, began to attack Israel. He called it a terrorist state, condemned it for its 2008 conflict with the Hamas movement in Gaza, and in 2009 stormed out of a public event with Israel's then president, Shimon Peres, during the World Economic Forum in Davos.

A major crisis occurred in May 2010, when Israeli forces killed 10 Turkish activists on board the Mavi Marmara, a ship that had tried to break Israel's maritime blockade of Gaza. The Turkish state prosecution subsequently indicted 10 senior Israeli officers, including the chief of staff, the director of military intelligence and the commander of the navy, over the incident.²¹ The issue was resolved in 2016 through US mediation, following which Israel paid compensation to the Turks and Turkey dropped the charges against the Israeli officers. Nevertheless, the relationship remained cold for a few years, not least because Turkey has been assisting Hamas by allowing it to operate within Turkish territory, awarding citizenship to senior Hamas operatives,²² funnelling funds to the organisation,²³ overlooking offensive Hamas cyber operations

²¹ Herb Keinon, "Turkish court to indict Ashkenazi over 'Marmara'", *Jerusalem Post*, 29 May 2012,

<https://www.ipost.com/international/turkish-court-to-indict-ashkenazi-over-marmara>

²² James Rothwell, "Turkey grants citizenship to Hamas operatives plotting terror attacks", *Telegraph*, 13 August 2020,

<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2020/08/13/turkey-grants-citizenship-hamas-operatives-plotting-terror-attacks/>

²³ Ami Rojkes Dombe, "Turkish government agency providing funds to Hamas", *Israel Defense*, February 2021, <https://www.israeldefense.co.il/en/node/48273>

launched from its territory²⁴ and funding Palestinian projects in Israeli-controlled East Jerusalem.²⁵

Since early 2021, however, Turkey has signalled interest in better relations with Israel, including through public gestures towards Israel's president²⁶ and foreign minister.²⁷ These efforts led to high-level communications between the leaderships of the two countries: President Erdogan and Israeli Prime Minister Naftali Bennett spoke in November 2021. These efforts culminated in the March 2022 visit of Israel's president to Turkey, during which he and Erdogan committed themselves to advancing the bilateral relationship. Amid the thaw in the relationship with Turkey, Israel took steps to reassure Cyprus and Greece that its commitment to the quasi-alliance was unchanged.

Regional Effects: Conflicts

Alongside the aforesaid stabilising aspect, the evolution of regional gas production has also created arenas for confrontation within existing rivalries, most notably, between Israel and Lebanon, and between Cyprus and Turkey. Lebanon rejected the maritime boundary that Israel declared and is claiming a few hundred square kilometres of Israel's EEZ. Both

²⁴ Anshel Pfeffer, " Hamas uses secret cyberwar base in Turkey to target enemies", *The Times*, 22 October 2020, <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/hamas-running-secret-cyberwar-hq-in-turkey-29mz50sxs>

²⁵ Ahmad Melhem, "Israel goes after Turkish projects in Jerusalem", *Al Monitor*, 30 June 2020, <https://www.al-monitor.com/originals/2020/06/israel-destroys-turkey-plaque-jerusalem-activities-relations.html>

²⁶ The Israeli president is the head of the state, but the position is largely a ceremonial one.

²⁷ Lahav Harkov, "Israeli, Turkish foreign ministers talk for first time in 13 years", *Jerusalem Post*, 22 January 2022, <https://www.jpost.com/international/article-694148>

parties have been holding talks through US mediation since at least 2011, but no agreement has been reached up to now. Indeed, during the negotiations, Lebanon expanded its claim to include portions of the Israeli Karish-Tanin gas field. The conflict serves the interests of Hizballah, the armed organisation that has dominated Lebanese politics. Part of the organisation's identity and sources of legitimacy lies in its opposition to Israel that was solidified during Israel's occupation of the southern part of Lebanon between the years 1985-2000. However, once Israel withdrew from Lebanon in 2000, Hizballah has had to identify new sources for claims against Israel.²⁸ The maritime claims have created a new point of contention. For example, in October 2021, Hizballah's secretary general, Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah, warned Israel that if it moved ahead with exploration in the contested areas his organisation "will act".²⁹

A second conflict that has intensified around the gas discoveries is between Turkey and the Republic of Cyprus. In a number of instances Turkish naval vessels removed exploration ships that were opening in Cypriot waters.³⁰ Ankara is concerned that a successful development of

²⁸ Ehud Eiran, "Between Land and Sea: Spaces and Conflict Intensity", *Territory, Politics, Governance* 5, no. 2, 2017: 190–206.

²⁹ Times of Israel, "Nasrallah warns Israel against searching for gas in disputed maritime region", *Times of Israel*, 23 October 2021, <https://www.timesofisrael.com/nasrallah-warns-israel-against-searching-for-gas-in-disputed-maritime-region/>

³⁰ Michele Kambas, "Standoff in high seas as Cyprus says Turkey blocks gas drill ship", Reuters, 11 February 2018, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-cyprus-natgas-turkey-ship-idUSKBN1FV0X5>; Al Jazeera, "Turkish navy orders Israeli ship out of Cyprus's waters", *Al Jazeera*, 19 December 2019, <https://www.aljazeera.com/economy/2019/12/15/turkish-navy-orders-israeli-ship-out-of-cypruss-waters>

Cypriot gas fields will isolate the Turkish-controlled part of the island of Cyprus.

A Regional Turn to the Sea: Navies, Maritime Visions and the Blue Economy

The recent offshore gas discoveries in the east Mediterranean have prompted countries in the region to pay greater attention to the maritime domain, mostly in terms of security and economics. For example, Israel has been described as experiencing a “turn to the sea” in the last two decades.³¹ Added to the country’s dependence on its seaborne energy resources is its dependence on desalinated water from the Mediterranean Sea. Between 2005 and 2015 Israel constructed five desalination facilities on the shores of the Mediterranean. These account for some 80 per cent of drinking water supplies in Israel. The turn to the sea has manifested itself, among other things, in the expansion of the Israeli navy to defend the country’s new offshore gas assets. Naval expansion is also intended to develop a submarine-based second-strike nuclear capability against a future nuclear Iran although Israel has never publicly stated so. Apart from the security component, the new turn to the sea involves two national maritime-related economic development plans, one initiated by Technion, a leading local university, and the other by the government’s planning directorate. Separately, in 2017 an Israeli-Chinese fund focused on the “blue economy” raised US\$150 million, promising to invest it in Israeli technology companies that work on “wind, wave, and solar energy; marine food, green and blue algae-based materials; drugs and cosmetics; artificial islands; sewage management; water purification and

³¹ Yael Teff-Seker, Ehud Eiran, and Aviad Rubin, “Israel turns to the sea”, *Middle East Journal* 72, no. 4 (2018): 610–630

desalination”.³² More recently, in early 2022, the city of Haifa created a national centre for innovation and a blue economy.³³

The second regional actor that has given new attention to the sea is Turkey. Ankara is advancing the concept of the “Blue Homeland” (Mavi Vatan). The idea was developed by Admiral Cem Gurdeniz, a leading figure in the Turkish navy, and has been adopted by President Erdogan. At the heart of the concept is the significance of the maritime domain in Turkey’s strategic outlook. Perhaps the most notable manifestation of this significance was the 2019 agreement between Turkey and the Libyan Government of National Accord, which created a maritime boundary between the two nations in disregard of any Greek claims in the region. Ankara is also engaged in a significant expansion of its navy, which includes the acquisition of a light aircraft carrier that is to be commissioned in 2022.

Conclusion

The significant gas discoveries in the eastern Mediterranean starting early this century have had major economic, political, and security effects in the region. Indeed, much of the policy and scholarly literature that points to the area as a distinct sub-region was written following these discoveries.³⁴ The discoveries and explorations have led to a modest

³² Tali Tsipon, “Israel-China Blueconomy fund raises \$150m”, *Globes*, 30 January 2017, <https://en.globes.co.il/en/article-blueconomy-investment-fund-raises-150m-1001174367>

³³ CTECH, “National Center for Innovation and Blue Economy to be established in Haifa”, *CTECH Calcalist*, 20 January 2022, <https://www.calcalistech.com/ctech/articles/0,7340,L-3927590,00.html>

³⁴ Efraim Inbar, “The New Strategic Equation in the Eastern Mediterranean”, Begin-Sadat Center for Strategic Studies, 2014; Spyridon n. Litsas and Aristotle Tziampiris (Eds.), *The Eastern Mediterranean in Transition: Multipolarity, Politics and Power* (Ashgate,

degree of energy interdependence, including the creation of a new regional organisation, the East Mediterranean Gas Forum. It has strengthened Israel strategically as it has become energy independent.

“Indeed, much of the policy and scholarly literature that points to the area as a distinct sub-region was written following these [gas] discoveries.”

The gas discoveries have facilitated the development of an Israeli-Greek-Cypriot quasi-alliance, which is, in effect, intended also to contain Turkey. Ankara, for its part, has been devising its own Mediterranean strategy, which focuses on territorial claims in the sea. The discoveries have drawn both extraregional state and private sector interests into the region.

The discoveries, in sum, have brought about greater economic cooperation and interdependence but also the intensification of some existing regional tensions, including that between a more assertive Turkey and some of the other regional players and a new maritime conflict between Israel and Lebanon. Either way, the new discoveries, as well as the new conflicts and tensions, have encouraged some of the key

2015); Eran Lerman, “Israel’s Emerging Relations in the Eastern Mediterranean” *Begin Sadat Center Perspectives* 321, 2015; Thanos Dokos (Ed.), “The Eastern Mediterranean in 2020: Possible Scenarios and Policy Recommendations”, ELLAMEP–Konrad Adenauer Stiftung Policy Paper, April 2016; Aviad Rubin and Ehud Eiran, “Regional Maritime Security in the Eastern Mediterranean: Expectations and Reality”, *International Affairs* 95, no. 5 (2019): pp. 979–997; Zenonas Tziarras (ed.), “The New Geopolitics of the Eastern Mediterranean: Trilateral Partnerships and Regional Security”, *Re-imagining the Eastern Mediterranean Series: PCC Report* 3, PRIO Cyprus Centre, Nicosia, 2019.

regional actors to turn their attention to the sea and led them to develop more elaborate maritime strategies, mostly in the security and economic fields.

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