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## Geopolitics of Mediterranean energy

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### Abstract

The Mediterranean Sea has a very important geopolitical position, which has made it enjoy a special place in the structure of the international system. The Mediterranean Sea is called the Mediterranean because it is located between Europe, Africa and Asia and has a very special and unique position. The Mediterranean is connected to the Atlantic Ocean from the west through Gibraltar, between two European and African countries, Spain and Morocco. On the northeast side, it is connected to Marmara and the Black Sea through Turkey and the Dardanelles, and at the bottom, that is, in the southeast, it passes through Egypt and connects to the Red Sea with the 192-kilometer Suez Canal, which is an important part of Egypt's foreign exchange income. Be related to the Mediterranean.

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Overall, the Mediterranean Sea is a densely populated region with a complex political history that includes many different ethnic groups. This has led to the creation of a complex and fragmented political map. Today, 21 countries with an area of 2 to 2.4 million square kilometers have coastlines in the Mediterranean Sea, including Albania, Algeria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Cyprus, Egypt, France, Greece, Israel, Italy, Lebanon, Libya, Malta, Monaco, Montenegro, Morocco, Slovenia, Spain, Syria, Tunisia and Turkey. This sea has large energy reserves, which has caused regional and extra-regional powers to seek to increase their sphere of influence in the Mediterranean (El Rhazi, et.al, 2020: 1). This importance has doubled in the last few years.

Since the early 2000s, a new big game has been formed among regional and extra-regional actors over access to fossil energy fields in the Mediterranean. Along with this capacity, discussions about exploration, production processes and resource transfer options have continued. Although the current situation in the region started 20 years ago, the historical process of offshore drilling in the Eastern Mediterranean dates back to the 1960s. During this time, Egypt and Israel have carried out various drilling operations. Also, each of the Mediterranean coastal governments have declared an exclusive and economic zone, 200 miles long, for the exploitation of energy resources in the seabed. Israel, Egypt, South Cyprus, Lebanon, Syria and Palestine are countries that have potential energy resources and natural gas discoveries are being made in the eastern Mediterranean. The most well-known discoveries in the eastern Mediterranean are the Tamar and Leviathan regions, which were discovered in 2009 and 2010; In total, there are 900 billion cubic meters of gas in these two regions. It is worth noting that 35 trillion cubic meters of natural gas have been discovered in the waters of Israel and Cyprus, and there is a possibility of finding another 85 trillion cubic meters of natural gas reservoirs on the coasts of Syria, Lebanon and Palestine (Demir, Tekir, 2017: 4). These two fields were the biggest deep gas discoveries in the world at that time. Later, the discovery of the Aphrodite field in 2011 and the Zohr gas field in 2015 changed the position of the Mediterranean Sea from regional to global.

The proven reserves of hydrocarbons and new discoveries in the Eastern Mediterranean may not be comparable to the reserves of Saudi Arabia, Iran, Qa-

tar, Russia and the UAE, which will turn the entire region or any of the countries that own it into a global energy player, but it can play an important role in the global market. especially in Europe; It can also be an important energy transfer pathway. According to the latest estimates, the oil and gas capacity of the Mediterranean region is approximately 5 billion barrels and more than 13.5 trillion cubic meters, respectively (Kavaz, 2021: 4). The discovery of a significant amount of extensive energy resources in the Eastern Mediterranean has turned this region into a multidimensional competitive environment. Europe plans to turn the Mediterranean into one of its main energy supply points, and so far it has taken great steps in this direction.

In this research, considering the vastness of the Mediterranean Sea and the variety of commercial activities in it, we want to study the importance of the Mediterranean Sea for regional and extra-regional powers by emphasizing the energy field, and we are looking for an answer to the question that the importance of the Mediterranean Sea for regional powers and What is a metaregion from the perspective of energy? And what is the importance of the Mediterranean Sea in the evolution of the world energy market? And what role does the Mediterranean Sea play in transferring energy to other parts of the world? In this article, we are looking for answers to these questions by using documentary sources and analytical descriptive method. This research is important from the point of view that solving many current disputes or reaching future agreements in the Mediterranean is possible by understanding the importance of energy in the region, and it is possible to draw various regional models in this field, which can ultimately lead to regional cooperation and increasing peace and lead to stability. The necessity of the present research is that almost among scientific researches, the gap of comprehensive study of this issue is felt, which has caused many developments in the Mediterranean to remain unknown to the audience.

The Mediterranean is always very important as a strategic area for regional countries and great powers. The Mediterranean is one of the main energy supply areas of Europe, which can reduce Europe's dependence on Russian gas. As a result, both Mediterranean basin countries are looking for European markets and West Asian countries are looking to transfer their gas to Europe through

the Mediterranean. According to what has been said, in the past few years, the Mediterranean has become more important and many regional and extra-regional powers are seeking to increase their presence and influence in this area. Reducing dependence on Russian energy, guaranteeing investment contracts for American oil companies and ensuring European energy security are among the most important reasons for the importance of the Mediterranean Sea for extra-regional powers in the energy debate.

Also, for regional powers, becoming an energy hub, participating in energy corridors, concluding multilateral contracts in the field of energy and transferring liquefied natural gas are among the most important reasons for the importance of energy discoveries in the Mediterranean for the countries of the region. With the calming of the internal conditions and the establishment of political stability in Syria and Lebanon, these two countries can also play the role of transit and bring oil and gas from the Middle East to Europe. In the meantime, the Islamic Republic of Iran can play a prominent role in supplying energy to Europe, especially in the current war between Russia and Ukraine.

**Key words:** Geopolitics, Energy, Mediterranean Sea, Copenhagen School