

Hydrocarbon Relations An Eastern-Mediterranean Case Study on Cypriot Fuel Discoveries

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The Republic of Cyprus (ROC) is 130 nautical miles from Israel, 187 nautical miles from Egypt, 50 nautical miles from Turkey, and 432 nautical miles from mainland Greece. As a result of the close proximity to these countries, the Republic of Cyprus plays a pivotal role in the region.

Historically, Greece and Cyprus share a common culture traceable to antiquity. Additionally, the Republic of Cyprus has maintained a strong link to Egypt which was one of the first countries in the region to recognize the ROC after it gained independence in 1960. The Israel-Cyprus relationship, however, is more complex; Cyprus has historically valued partnerships with its Arab neighbors, which has made it cautious in its dealings with Israel, but policy positions on both sides have changed in recent years with the two nations becoming close allies.

The most complex of all its historical relationships is with Turkey, which shares cultural links to Cyprus. Along with Greece and the UK, Turkey is a guarantor power granted under the Treaty of Guarantee which established the Republic of Cyprus. Turkey subsequently used this authority as a justification for its invasion of Cyprus in 1974 and continues to occupy roughly a third of the island. The effects of the illegal occupation and disrespect for international law by Turkey towards Cyprus have made it nearly impossible for the two sides to reconcile their differences.

Offshore hydrocarbon exploration has been a source of geopolitical tension for nearly two decades, but the issue escalated after September 2011 when the ROC began subsea drilling. Many Cypriot hydrocarbon sources remained undiscovered until then because of the island's unique and challenging topography: the resources are buried in the "ultra-deepwater" with depths exceeding 2 kilometers.²

Cypriot hydrocarbon exploration began in 2006 when the ROC initially began conducting research in its Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ). The country had previously

entered an EEZ delineation agreement with Egypt in 2003 and entered subsequent agreements with Lebanon in 2007 and Israel in 2011. During the republic's first round of exploration, only three energy companies bid for a license to explore. Noble Energy won the bidding and was given a license to explore part one of the sub-sections (or "blocks") of the EEZ. As such, Noble Energy signed a production-sharing agreement with ROC.³ After Noble discovered a significant source of hydrocarbons in the block, Cyprus' second round of exploration attracted 15 bidders. Two important conclusions emerged from these rounds of bidding: first, that five of the EEZ blocks partly fall under Turkey's territorial jurisdiction; and secondly, that the companies chosen were very large oil and gas companies from countries with significant military strength.

The number of hydrocarbons discovered in the Cypriot EEZ seem quite insignificant compared to countries such as Russia, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Iran, and the United States, all of which possess at least 38 times the number of hydrocarbons (in terms of cubic feet). However, considering that smaller countries in the Levantine region primarily depend on imported hydrocarbons for their energy production, these relatively small discoveries of hydrocarbons within their reach will have a great impact. According to Hayriye Özgür, unclear delineation borders, internal conflicts, unestablished international markets, Cyprus' geopolitical position, and a lack of data are currently preventing the successful extraction and use of these hydrocarbons.⁴ These issues also lead to cycles of negotiations that indiscriminately commence and terminate between regional countries and international circles. Discussions thus far have led to three proposed construction projects, new technological investment for transportation, and potential initiatives related to the international export of these hydrocarbons, all of which have hefty financial and political implications. Many analysts have emphasized the hydrocarbon-related energy disputes as a political tool, especially with regard to Cyprus' entry in the EU in 2004, the Annan Plan (2004), domestic economic issues, and the emerging roles of the UN and the United States.

Cypriot-Israeli relations have improved substantially over the past decade.⁵ Studies to date attribute multiple factors as playing a cultivating role in the relationship between these two countries, mainly based on historical, political, and economic events in the region.⁶

Current literature identifies the historical background for relations between the ROC and Israel. Many scholars have concluded that, in the past decade, increased relations and cooperation between the ROC and Israel are mainly the result of regional security and energy development concerns. Specifically, the deterioration in Israeli-Turkish relations subsequently led to increased defense cooperation between Israel and the ROC, due to joint agreement that Turkey actively threatens eastern Mediterranean stability. Additionally, the 2010 agreement between the ROC and Israel demarcating their respective EEZ's laid the framework between the two countries for cooperation on issues

relating to future energy development in the region.⁷ These two issues – defense and energy – are not mutually exclusive, but rather have a direct impact on one another. Some researchers, like Papaioakeim, conclude that the discovery of hydrocarbons led the ROC to create synergies with its neighbors, particularly Israel, to help secure the energy reserves against regional threats.

Although it is widely undisputed that the discovery of hydrocarbons has played a positive role in cultivating the Cypriot-Israeli relationship, most of the current research on the topic focuses on qualitative historical events rather than the direct effects on bilateral ties from the discovery of hydrocarbons in the area. Other than citing positive economic benefits of this discovery and its influence on defense cooperation, there is limited research on how hydrocarbons have contributed to increased and wider cooperation between the ROC and Israel.

Egypt is by far the largest producer of liquified natural gas (LNG) in the eastern Mediterranean. However, Egypt has been experiencing serious resource-related pressures as a result of misguided policies and increasing demand. Egypt is a critical player in exporting extracted hydrocarbons in the form of LNG. The importance of building upon the current discussions between Cyprus, Israel, and Egypt in order to devise a plan to build infrastructure for transportation, storage, and plants for LNG use has been emphasized by scholars such as Charles Ellinas. The largest part of the EEZ in play for negotiations between Cyprus and Egypt are in the Aphrodite field, which contains modest reserves. One of the biggest discoveries in the region is located in Egypt's Zohr field which was uncovered in 2015. Although the site is currently in development, it caused the ROC to reconsider the energy potential of the EEZ, leading to a third round of licensing.

Ellinas emphasizes both the importance and risk of Cyprus-Egyptian LNG production projects. The competitive market of LNGs, length of gas sale contracts, commercial stability dependent on gas prices, regulatory stability, and project costs all impose heavy challenges to an LNG project. Furthermore, Egypt has to face the immediate issue of paying debts owed to oil and gas companies, along with mitigating risks related to terrorist activity. The way this issue is handled will have a huge impact on Egypt's financial credibility, which could heavily impact Egypt's ability to raise money for any LNG project.

The ROC has had close ties with Greece for the past few decades. Greece has more control in the relationship, particularly regarding affairs with other countries due to its stature as a more influential regional power. This is mainly attributed to Greece's direct connection to continental Europe, as well as its greater monetary capital. The relationship spans across topics such as electrical energy and crisis management. Both Cyprus and Greece have several alliances with one another and other countries, such as Egypt and Israel, reflecting their close locational proximity. That being said, most of these alliances

pertain to the recent discovery of hydrocarbons in the region. One relationship that is particularly important is the ROC and Greece's working relationship with Russia, as both heavily rely upon Russia's natural gas. Curiously, the ROC and Greece have tentatively supported Russia's agenda regarding the EU, going as far as being labeled Russia's "Trojan Horses" inside the EU.⁸

Although the ROC and Greece have had their fair share of political disputes, the two states have combined forces in order to oppose their larger threat: Turkey. Greece is even considered Cyprus' "big brother" to defend the island against Turkey and their many demands, especially because Turkey does not recognize Cyprus as an independent state power.

In April of 2004, the ROC officially demarcated the boundaries of its EEZ to the international community, allowing the country to invite third party members to conduct research on the amount of hydrocarbons within the zone. Greece also declared their EEZ in 2004, further strengthening the relationship with Cyprus as they increased communication.

Cypriot-Turkish relations, on the other hand, are best defined by their hostility and competition, dating back to Turkey's hostile invasion of the island in 1974. According to Dr. Ioannis Mazis, Turkish studies specialist and professor of Economic Geography and Geopolitical Theory at the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens, Turkey perceives Cyprus' geostrategic location as quintessentially important to both regional and global power projection. Quoting the former Turkish Prime Minister, Mazis asserts that "A country that ignores Cyprus cannot be active in the world and peripheral politics... this small island occupies a position that (may) influence directly the strategic linkages between Asia and Africa, Europe and Africa, and Europe and Asia."⁹

Recent discoveries of hydrocarbon reserves have only amplified these sentiments; as Cyprus continues to explore and attempt to extract fuel resources in its EEZ, tensions with the globally unrecognized Turkish-backed Northern Cyprus have only risen. Northern Cypriots, as argued by Ayla Gürel and others, reject commercial expansions into the identified reserves and assert that the Republic of Cyprus (ROC) should wait for further international jurisprudence to adjudicate upon claims in the area as to whom the reserves belong to. However, the vast majority of the international community and European Union has sided with the Republic of Cyprus and allowed for continued drilling, escalating reactionary frustrations held by Northern Cyprus and Turkey.

These hydrocarbon-related disputes are far from a recent development: as early as 2002, the Turkish navy prevented Cypriot commissioned commercial vessels from searching for hydrocarbon reserves in the ROC's EEZ, which was swiftly met with Cypriot legal retaliation, specifically in the form of reasserted EEZ boundaries. Hostilities have become more material over time, but as Turkish political scientist Tolga Demiryol notes

that the 2018 Cyprus gas dispute nearly culminated in hot conflict as “tensions between Turkey and the ROC flared...due to drilling by the ROC in the disputed waters of [Cyprus].”¹⁰ Although American military support successfully deescalated the flashpoint, few signs indicate that international arbitration between the ROC and Turkey will be resolved anytime soon

As a final note, it is worth considering that the future of escalating tensions between Cyprus and Turkey regarding recent hydrocarbon discoveries are best understood through escalatory and cooperative schools of thought. Demiryol frames this dichotomy as a question of security dilemmas or economic interdependence respectively in relation to ongoing disputes as a predictive mechanism for future relations. Turkey straddles a precarious balance of resource regionalism and threat perception: although the intrinsic attributes of energy scarcity and reserves incentivize multinational infrastructure development and market expansion, the hydrocarbon issue pertains to challenges of Turkish sovereignty in relation to Northern Cyprus and an emerging de facto military-alliance between Cyprus, Greece, Israel, and Egypt leading to material shifts in military presence and thus regional balances of power.¹¹ Although these evolving power dynamics have undergirded Cypriot-Turkish relations for the past decade, the future of this regional relation, therefore, will be determined largely by competing considerations of Turkish officials.

Multilateral and Regional Relations

Not only have numerous bilateral partnerships emerged between the ROC and various countries around the region, but the ROC has also expanded these partnerships into multilateral initiatives. These partnerships usually include Greece and another country in the region. The two main trilateral agreements that have garnered attention are the partnerships including Greece-Cyprus-Israel and Greece-Cyprus-Egypt. As will be shown, there is an ample amount of research devoted to understanding the motivations of forming these synergies, and the effects of the hydrocarbon discoveries on them.

Current research detailing the trilateral relationship between Greece-Cyprus-Israel concludes that the partnership was formed along similar lines responsible for the bilateral ties between the countries. One of the primary motivations is defense against the shared security threat of the region, Turkey. Along with aligning together to create a more stable region, research has shown that there is a common interest in creating a shared South-East Energy Corridor in Europe culminating with the Eastern Mediterranean (EastMed) Pipeline Project. The EastMed Pipeline would connect the hydrocarbon discoveries of Cyprus and Israel to the European Union market via Greece and Italy.¹² As a result of energy and security, researchers such as Ioannis Mazis conclude that these factors may serve as catalysts for long-term political, economic, and military cooperation between the three countries.¹³

There are concerns about Cyprus-Greece-Turkey relationships due to Cyprus' and Greece's decision to delimit the Economic Exclusive Zones (EEZ) without Turkey's consideration. The ROC and Greece's actions may have also put Turkey's relationship with the EU even more on edge due to Turkey's refusal to recognize ROC as a state and to solve disagreements with Greece over the Aegean Sea. Greece and ROC have been known to join forces against Turkey, although they are still usually at a disadvantage--despite being members of the EU, which gives them more power in the relationship.

Results and Findings

In the past decade, the relationship between the ROC and Israel has dramatically increased across a variety of areas. The increased cooperation was not entirely predictable as the two countries did not always enjoy particularly warm relations. The ROC was historically cautious with Israel because of the ROC's partnerships with the Arab countries of the region and because of Israel's relationship with Turkey.¹⁴ However, in 2010, the two countries ushered in a new decade that would be characterized by their newfound partnership. Much of why the two countries are experiencing warmer relations can be attributed to the discovery of hydrocarbons in the region, among other factors. However, the impact of the hydrocarbon discovery on the increased cooperation cannot be isolated as the breakdown of Turkish-Israeli relations follows this same timeline.

In analyzing the timeline of hydrocarbon discovery in the Eastern Mediterranean region with that of developments in the Cyprus-Israel relationships, the link between the two becomes apparent. In 2010, "[t]he U.S. Geological Survey estimated a mean of 1.7 billion barrels of recoverable oil and a mean of 122 trillion cubic feet (tcf) of recoverable gas in the Levant Basin Province using a geology-based assessment methodology."¹⁵ (Schenk et. al. 2010). When isolating the estimates to only that in the EEZs of Israel and Cyprus, U.S.-based Noble Energy concluded that about 40 tcf lies within this area, with about 35 tcf in Israel's EEZ and 5 tcf in Cyprus' EEZ.¹⁶

Not long after these discoveries were made, the two countries entered into an agreement to delimit their respective EEZs in December of 2013. This laid the foundation of a partnership between the two countries that would span far beyond energy. Over the next few years, Cypriot-Israeli relations experienced a high level of growth: the two nations took part in many high-level visits, entered into multiple defense and security agreements, along with conducting joint military drills. These military agreements were the result of the hydrocarbon discoveries, and subsequent energy cooperation between Israel and the ROC with the primary goal being to protect the area in which the energy is located against any regional threat. As a result of these overlapping timelines, the impact of the Eastern Mediterranean hydrocarbon discoveries on the increased cooperation between the ROC and Israel is directly visible.

However, the increased relations between the ROC and Israel cannot be isolated to the discovery of hydrocarbons alone. At this same time, the relationship between Israel and Turkey rapidly deteriorated. Around the time of the hydrocarbon discoveries in 2010, the Mavi Marmara Incident caused Turkey to significantly downgrade its political relations with Israel. In addition, Turkey began to cultivate a relationship with Iran – arguably Israel's greatest perceived existential threat – placed sanctions on Israel and threatened military operations in the Eastern Mediterranean. Despite attempts to restore relations, the Turkish-Israeli relationship has not recovered over the past decade.¹⁷ As a result, Israel began to align itself with other countries around the Eastern Mediterranean region, mainly Cyprus. Due to these concurrent events, the discovery of hydrocarbons and the breakdown of Turkish-Israeli relations, it cannot be accurately determined to what extent energy discoveries affected the Cypriot-Israeli relationship.

Egyptian-Cyprus relations have dated back to years before the discovery of any hydrocarbons in the region. Both countries have supported each other's candidacy for various membership with United Nation committees. Frequent and friendly visits between the heads of both countries date back to the 1960s with Former Egyptian President Nasser and former Cypriot President Makarios III.¹⁸ Lastly, Egypt was also one of the first countries to recognize Cypriot independence.

Large pockets of gas in offshore Egypt were discovered in 2003 by Shell. This prompted Egypt to reach a delineation agreement to chart maritime borders with Cyprus, which allowed Egypt to protect its newly found pockets of gas. This 2003 delineation led to formation of the southern border of Cyprus' EEZ. At this time, Turkey believed this bilateral treaty between Egypt and Cyprus was void due to international law, stating that agreement infringed on Turkish continental shelf borders.¹⁹ Although some adjustments to the delineations have been made since, Turkish-Egypt relations have remained sour ever since. When this 2003 bilateral agreement was made, there was no major discovery of hydrocarbons within Cyprus' EEZ.

The economic relations between the two countries before 2011 show a large spike in Cyprus imports from Egypt 1995 to 1996 from \$18M to \$65M. Although the latter level of imports was not consistent in the following years, the \$65M level regained more longitudinal stability in 2006 for a couple of years before dropping to \$40M in 2012 and remaining around at that level since.²⁰ Furthermore, Egypt and Cyprus were not in each other's top five exporters or importers in terms of value of goods and services exchanged. This is likely an indicator of the relatively small population size and overall demand in both compared to most of their export and import destinations.

After the discovery of hydrocarbons in Cyprus' EEZ in 2011 by Noble Gas, especially in the Aphrodite gas field, the relationship between Cyprus and Egypt continued to remain strong. From an economic perspective, Egyptian exports to Cyprus increased 81.15%

between 2016 and 2017.²¹ Furthermore, since 2014, annual tripartite summits between Cypriot, Egyptian, and Greek governmental leaders have showcased a model of cooperation between the three countries.

While Egypt was previously known to have its own stable supply of natural gas, since 2012, its reserves have been running out, causing Egypt to cancel its natural gas export contract with Israel. However, in the following year, Egyptian military leader Al-Sisi implemented innovative energy sector reforms, spurring new interest in Egyptian energy reserves. Because Egypt no longer required imported energy, Cyprus, along with other countries such as Israel, were forced to reassess their energy economic strategy. Furthermore, the renewed interest for private companies in energy sources in the Eastern Mediterranean positively affected interests within Cyprus as well, spurring the start of a third and successful licensing round for exploration within their EEZ. This was especially meaningful for Cyprus, as its Aphrodite field discovery had been overshadowed by other recent site findings. The Republic of Turkey claims that Eni cannot drill at either of these sites, since it claims that they both are Turkey's continental shelf. Because of the strong sense of cooperation fostered between Cyprus and Egypt over the years, Egypt has publicly showed its support for Cyprus in regards to these disputes.²² Nonetheless, Turkey has continued to militarily harass Cyprus and has announced that they would extensively review holdings of any gas company that agrees to work with Cyprus for natural gas discovery and/or drilling efforts.

Looking back to the root of Israeli-Egyptian uncertainty, the 2012 agreement outlined that Egypt was to supply natural gas to Israel, but the nation was forced to back out because of Egypt's ineffective energy policies and depleting natural gas reserves. Egypt did not have a natural gas exportation contract with Cyprus because the ROC was self-sufficient at the time, thanks to discoveries within the island's EEZ, such as the Aphrodite field. As a result of these Cypriot EEZ discoveries, no Egyptian natural gas contract existed, allowing Egyptian-Cyprus mutual trust to remain intact, unlike the scenario seen with Egyptian-Israeli relations. This trust is what allowed the intergovernmental Egyptian-Cypriot LNG agreement to move forward.

Egypt and Cyprus have had their own particular negative interactions with Turkey, especially with regard to matters affecting the energy sector. Cyprus' troubles with Turkey directly stem from the discovery of hydrocarbons in their EEZ, which led both countries to form a stronger connection and show support for each other internationally against Turkey. Timing-wise, this is one of the biggest reasons that prompted the recurring tripartite annual summits, a deliberate and public display of international connectedness. This mutual dislike for Turkey partially rooted from Cyprus hydrocarbon discovery, coupled with the timing of the Cypriot hydrocarbon discovery led to the almost immediate Cypriot-Egyptian LNG deal mentioned earlier, and are a testament to the especially strong political and economic relationship between the two countries.

Hydrocarbon findings in the Mediterranean Sea have only strengthened the relationship between Greece and Cyprus. Greece was one of the countries that was part of the treaties supporting the ROC once it received its independence from the United Kingdom in 1960. This was displayed when Turkey challenged Cyprus' EEZ once it had been established with eight other nations: Greece, along with other states, offered their assistance in opposition to Turkey's threats.

Particularly with issues between the ROC, Greece, and Turkey, the former two nations jointly dispute many of Turkey's jurisdictional claims and demands, making it more difficult for it to claim access to the hydrocarbons in the region. Cyprus and Greece have rejected Turkey's claims to the United Nations and have designed the idea of the Israel-Cyprus-Greece pipeline in order to limit interactions with Turkey regarding the energy sources in the Eastern Mediterranean Sea. The ROC and Greece's actions to discredit Turkey have further strained the relationship between the European Union and Turkey. In 2006 the EU froze all membership talks with Turkey due to their previous treatment of the ROC. Another requirement for Turkey to join the European Union was to resolve their other conflicts with Greece over the Aegean Sea.

Greece itself is also increasing its importance in the European Union as it will be the connector of any possible energy pipelines from Israel and ROC. However, this increase in power is not at all comparable to the ROC's. Before the discovery of the gas in the region, Cyprus mainly relied upon a handful of countries to support it. Now the state has a voice in the European Union, as it contains one of the largest energy hydrocarbon reservoirs of the region. Both the ROC and Greece will be decreasing their dependence on other countries for energy sources, encouraging their growth as viable economic allies.

The trajectory of Cypriot-Turkish tensions is controlled by Turkish fearmongering and hydrocarbon securitization. Fatih Donmez, Energy Minister of Turkey, has framed the issue as a question of Turkish national sovereignty, declaring that the "rights" of Turkish Cypriots must not be ignored in the process.²³ Additional Turkish ministers assert that these disputes of sovereignty extend "beyond energy" suggesting the concerns have wider implications than previously considered. The fuel resources themselves provide two additional strategic incentives for Turkish control. They reduce Turkey's dependence on foreign fuel sources allowing it to operate more independently in the liberal world order, and they allow Turkey to utilize fuel as a strategic stepping stone to garner global relevance and become a power player in Eurasia. The nation, often referred to as a hub, transit, or corridor for global energy flows has been recognized by several authorities in the European Union – namely the EU European Commission – as the gateway to regional energy markets for the continent as a whole.²⁴ Former Turkish President Abdullah Gul has countered Cyprus's potential to be a "hydrocarbon hegemon" by declaring it to be "half a country."²⁵

All of these motivations have disincentivized any form of Turkish cooperation, culminating in illegal Turkish drilling in October 2019 despite wide rebukes from Cyprus and international institutions. Although ministers have made vague reference to potentially cooperative initiatives, these deals have been overwhelmingly unsuccessful and function more as vain attempts to bolster comment on this point, noting that "what is missing is the political will to walk the extra mile...a step that is intrinsic to the peace process."²⁶

Likewise, Cypriot officials have signaled that hydrocarbon-related conflicts are of grave concern for the nation. Drawing upon similar themes of sovereignty, the nation accused Turkey of "severe escalation" of the crisis in the wake of recent drilling initiatives, and further as a violation of sovereign rights.²⁷ These concerns have been met with material threats although ultimately not resulting in serious conflict, Turkish warships guarded its hydrocarbon exploration vessels in Cyprus' EEZ and surrounded the island, the most significant step in military escalation since the discoveries of these fuel reserves over a decade ago. These threats were also present throughout 2017 and 2018, resulting in at least two other direct confrontations between Turkish military vessels attempting coercive gunboat diplomacy.

With these considerations in mind, three primary conclusions can be drawn regarding the future development of Turkish-Cypriot relations surrounding the ongoing hydrocarbon dispute. First, the conflict has significantly worsened tensions between the two states, leading to threat escalation and coercive actions by the Turkish government. Second, new trends in the status quo project intensified hostilities rather than cooperation, devolving from rhetoric into material military maneuvers and deployments. This suggests that neither Turkey nor Cyprus have operated in mutually beneficial frameworks. Lastly, these tensions are unlikely to turn into conflict in coming years. As Kontos remarks, while Turkish actions fit well within a combative paradigm of international relations, there "are no strong indications that military escalation is among Turkey's options" considering only that "selective mobilization of limited naval forces" has occurred rather than full-blown deployments."²⁸

Russia has been a prominent supplier of energy to the European Union, giving it a direct incentive to involve itself in these matters. As a result, one of the main reasons why Russia is intervening in the Eastern Mediterranean region is to ensure that Turkey's aspirations to become a new energy hub does not succeed. On the other hand, Russia has supported the ROC's right to explore and exploit offshore gas reserves located in its EEZ. Russia has even offered its cooperation to assist the ROC in developing gas fields, and also to protect them from possible threats, like Turkey.²⁹ This is due to the fact that Russia sees Turkey as a competitor, and the ROC as an ally.

Some of the biggest players in the oil industry have greatly involved themselves in the site discovery and drilling in the Eastern Mediterranean. These include BP, Shell, and Total. A large problem these oil giants are facing is the increased costs of hydrocarbon extraction, partly due to the decline in the discovery of new hydrocarbon sites. The prospects of hydrocarbon sites in the Eastern Mediterranean have much more value in the eyes of such oil companies. This is evidenced by their swift decisions to enter bidding contracts for commercial access to Cyprus' EEZ to the extent where many claim the bidding levels have exceeded sustainable levels. Likewise, even with the slight indication of energy reforms by Al-Sisi as seen in Egypt, many companies were quick to bid in and bolster discovery of hydrocarbon sites.³⁰

The discovery of hydrocarbons has strengthened Cyprus' relationships with Greece, Israel, and Egypt, while those with Turkey have continued to devolve. However, these relationships hardly existed in isolation. In many instances, the effects on one bilateral relationship interfered with that of other multilateral or bilateral connections, especially in relation to Turkey.

Research suggests certain factors related to hydrocarbon discoveries are more dominant in certain relationships than in others. Cypriot-Turkish tensions, for example, focus heavily on political questions of sovereignty and jurisdictional challenges over specific claims to offshore drilling locations. These concerns have also allowed the political implications of hydrocarbon drilling to predominate Cyprus-Greece and Cyprus-Egypt alliances, as these have evolved into regional partnerships to check the perceived threat of an aggressive Turkey. On the other hand, the Cyprus-Egypt relation has been most affected by the potential for economic opportunities, such as expanded pipeline access and renewed bilateral agreements.

Moreover, Russia and various oil conglomerates, not only have an interest in the hydrocarbon reserves in the eastern Mediterranean, but view the location as a pathway to expanding their regional influence. In many respects, these interests align with those of Greece, Egypt, Israel, and Cyprus, both in reducing Turkish influence in the area but also utilizing the fuel for economic gain. In the future, these actors are likely to continue cooperating and balance against Turkey, which is considered a potential threat to the region's stability.

A limitation to coping with these issues is the biases of various sources. Many are interest-specific sources with private or country-specific agendas influencing their respective accounts or explanations. The same potential for bias is found across news articles and sources.

Conclusion

The Republic of Cyprus has historically had limited relationships among other countries due to its relatively isolated geographic placement in the Eastern Mediterranean Sea and frequent dependence on other countries. The discovery of natural gas surrounding Cyprus has reconstructed all of their political relationships. Cyprus' relationships have strengthened with their geographically proximate allies, including Egypt, Greece, and Israel. Simultaneously Cyprus' recent surge of world power has further increased tensions between Turkey, who craves power over the hydrocarbons in the region. Although, Turkey remains an outlier refusing to accept the increasing influence of Cyprus in the region, international power balancing is widely predicted in an attempt to mitigate this perceived threat to the region's security.

¹ "Hydrocarbon Relations: An Eastern-Mediterranean Case Study on Cypriot Fuel" is a foreign policy research paper written by Vasili Ioannidis, Harshita Jalluri, Kenneth Larson, and Gabriella Valderrama. During the team's tenure in the Fall 2019 semester in the Michigan Foreign Policy Council at the University of Michigan, the group was assigned the task to develop a research project on a topic within the broader category of "Climate and Energy." In collaboration with mentors from the Brookings Institution, the research group developed a case study relating to the Eastern Mediterranean hydrocarbon discoveries and how they have impacted regional relationships, with a particular focus on the Republic of Cyprus. Upon completion and review, the paper was published in Volume 4, Issue 1 of the Michigan Foreign Policy Council's own foreign policy journal, the *Michigan Foreign Policy Review*. Additionally, at the end of the Fall 2019 semester, the research group had the opportunity to present its findings at the Michigan Foreign Policy Conference hosted by the Michigan Foreign Policy Council. The University of Michigan has granted us reprint rights and the authors have significantly revised and updated their research for presentation in this journal.

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Further Reading

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