

## GEOPOLITICS OF MEDITERRANEAN REGION

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### **Abstrak**

*Tulisan ini akan membahas tatanan geopolitik kontemporer kawasan Mediterania. Makalah ini akan meneliti bagaimana berbagai kekuatan, termasuk Eropa dan Asia, berjuang untuk memengaruhi ruang strategis Mediterania. Makalah ini juga akan membahas bagaimana kawasan ini muncul sebagai alternatif energi Rusia bagi Eropa. Turki merupakan pemangku kepentingan dan pemain penting di kawasan Mediterania. Turki memiliki berbagai kepentingan, termasuk budaya, ekonomi, dan strategis; oleh karena itu, negara ini serius dengan keterlibatannya di kawasan tersebut. Makalah ini juga berfokus pada bagaimana Turki mengelola kepentingannya di kawasan tersebut. Makalah ini didasarkan pada metode penelitian deskriptif dan analitis. Secara historis, kawasan Mediterania selalu memainkan peran penting dalam geopolitik global. Kawasan ini penting bagi NATO. Di era pasca-Perang Dingin, koalisi baru dibuat di kawasan tersebut. Perang Ukraina membuat kawasan tersebut lebih penting. Turki sedang merestrukturisasi strateginya di kawasan tersebut.*

### **Abstract**

The present paper will discuss the contemporary geopolitical setting of the Mediterranean region. This paper will examine how different powers, including Europe and Asia, are struggling to influence the Mediterranean strategic space. The paper will also discuss how the region is emerging as an alternative to Russian energy for Europe. Turkey is an important stakeholder and player in the Mediterranean region. Turkey has multiple interests, including cultural, economic, and strategic; therefore, the country is serious about its engagements in the region. The paper also focusses on how Turkey has been managing its interests in the region. The paper is based on descriptive and analytical research methods. The historically Mediterranean region always plays an important role in global geopolitics. The region is important for NATO. In the post-Cold War era, new coalitions were made in the region. Ukraine's war makes the region more important. Turkey is restructuring its strategy in the region.



## INTRODUCTION

For centuries, the struggle to control strategically significant geographical regions with international implications has been a driving force in global politics. The field of geopolitics, which took shape in the 19th and 20th centuries, remains not only relevant today but increasingly vital in shaping the geographical contours of world affairs. In the post-Cold War era, many experts assert that the world is now experiencing a Cold War 2.0 characterised by different methods and tactics, as evidenced by Russia's invasion of Ukraine and China's threats to invade Taiwan.

This surge in instability and conflict reflects the profound shifts occurring in the global order. While the United States continues to be the dominant military power, political, economic, and technological influence is gradually shifting eastward to nations like China and India. Experts have issued stark warnings that we are transitioning from a “post-war” to a “pre-war” world, a sentiment echoed by Poland’s newly elected Prime Minister, who suggested that Europe has already entered a “pre-war era.” Some analysts even speculate that a Third World War may already be underway,

with overlapping conflicts in Europe, the Middle East, and potentially East Asia.

This instability is a symptom of the global order's wrenching transition. The world is moving from a unipolar system dominated by the United States to a multipolar one, where power is more widely distributed among states, corporations, and non-state actors. At the same time, global institutions, norms, and rules established in the mid-20th century to prevent military escalation and promote economic cooperation are under increasing strain.

Last year, global defence spending surged by over 9 percent, reaching a record \$2.2 trillion, as warfare increasingly extends into economic and technological domains. The West has ramped up its use of economic and technological sanctions against adversaries, though the outcomes have been mixed. Meanwhile, surveys from over 150 countries indicate that global dissatisfaction with democracy has reached its highest levels since the mid-1990s.

As global geopolitical competition expands and the West struggles to maintain its dominance, different regions, including the Mediterranean, are being reshaped in this new geopolitical landscape.

Over the past two decades, the global landscape has transformed into a dynamic contest between multiple power poles. The United States and its Western allies, represented by organizations like NATO and the G7, strive to maintain their preeminence worldwide (Patrick, 2022). While the US continues to dominate the Caribbean, China's rise in the Pacific challenges this supremacy.

In the Atlantic, Brazil and South Africa may not match the US and NATO's military strength, but the BRICS alliance could shift the power balance if their cooperation deepens, particularly in security (Duggan *et al.*, 2022). Argentina's recent BRICS application hints at further expansion, potentially enhancing BRICS' influence in the South Atlantic and challenging US hegemony.

The Ukraine war marked a significant geopolitical shift, illustrating the practical emergence of a multipolar world. Russia's invasion altered global security dynamics, with implications extending beyond Eurasia. The conflict's outcome will significantly impact Eurasian security and global power structures. Russia's historical ties with North African Mediterranean countries further bolster its influence.

In the Middle East, Russia's involvement, particularly in Syria, poses a

challenge to Western dominance. Russian private military companies and alliances with countries like Iran underscore its strategic maneuvers in the region. Additionally, China's Belt and Road Initiative deepens its engagement in the Mediterranean, complicating the geopolitical landscape for NATO and Western powers.

The Mediterranean's security dynamics are crucial for NATO and Russia, with both viewing the region as vital to their strategic interests. Russia's military presence in the Mediterranean challenges NATO's security and stability. Diplomatic efforts and cooperation are essential to mitigate tensions and promote regional stability.

In North Africa, political transitions and historical legacies shape the region's dynamics. NATO's strategic interests often lead to support for certain regimes while opposing others, reflecting broader geopolitical goals. The Mediterranean remains a focal point where global powers navigate complex security and political challenges to safeguard their interests.

The geopolitical landscape of the Eastern Mediterranean has undergone significant shifts, as explored in various scholarly works that examine the region's evolving dynamics. In *The Eastern Mediterranean in Transition: Multipolarity,*

*Politics and Power* (2015), edited by Spyridon N. Litsas and Aristotle Tziampiris, the contributors analyze the changing geopolitical environment, emphasizing the interaction between regional powers, energy politics, and external actors such as the European Union, the United States, and Russia. The book particularly highlights how the discovery of natural gas reserves and an increasingly complex security environment have reshaped political interactions in the region.

Building on this foundation, *The New Geopolitics of the Eastern Mediterranean: Trilateral Partnerships and Regional Security* (2019), edited by Zenonas Tziarras, delves into the emerging trilateral alliances among Greece, Cyprus, and Israel. The contributors examine how these partnerships are altering regional security dynamics, contributing to a new balance of power in the Eastern Mediterranean. This volume provides critical insights into how regional actors are responding to external pressures and the shifting geopolitical landscape.

Zenonas Tziarras' *Turkish Foreign Policy: The Lausanne Syndrome in the Eastern Mediterranean and Middle East* (2022) offers a focused examination of Turkey's foreign policy, particularly through

the lens of the Treaty of Lausanne. Bülent Gökay presents a nuanced analysis of how historical grievances continue to influence contemporary Turkish geopolitical strategies, arguing for the enduring impact of these historical factors on Turkey's regional ambitions and interactions.

Michael McKinney's *Geopolitics of the Arab Spring: The Changes in EU External Relations with Egypt* (2021) explores how the political upheavals of the Arab Spring, particularly in Egypt, have affected the European Union's external relations with the country. McKinney's analysis centers on the intersection of geopolitics and diplomacy, providing valuable insights into how the EU has recalibrated its policies in response to the rapidly changing political landscape in North Africa and the Middle East.

In *Energy and Geopolitics in the Eastern Mediterranean* (2022), Charles Ellinas discusses the transformative impact of recent natural gas discoveries on the region. He explains how these energy resources have turned the Eastern Mediterranean into a focal point of geopolitical competition, drawing in global powers and heightening tensions among neighboring states.

While these studies provide a comprehensive overview of the geopolitical dynamics in the Eastern Mediterranean, they notably lack a detailed analysis of the post-Ukraine war scenario and its implications for the region. Furthermore, they offer limited coverage of Turkey's evolving Mediterranean policy in the context of these new global tensions. The proposed study aims to fill these gaps by focusing on the contemporary geopolitics of the Mediterranean, especially in the wake of the Ukraine war and the rising tensions in the Pacific region due to China's assertiveness. It will also explore the emergence of anti-Western coalitions in the region, offering a fresh perspective on the shifting alliances and power structures that are reshaping the Mediterranean geopolitical landscape today.

## ANALYSIS FRAMEWORK

### Idea of Geopolitics and Mediterranean Region

Geopolitics is a complex and evolving concept that examines the interplay between geographical factors and their profound influence on international politics, power dynamics, and strategic decision-making. Over time, the term has been shaped by diverse theoretical perspectives and historical

contexts, making it a vital framework for understanding global affairs.

The foundations of geopolitical thought were laid in the late 19th and early 20th centuries by scholars such as Friedrich Ratzel and Halford Mackinder. Ratzel's concept of *Lebensraum* (living space) posited that states must expand territorially to ensure survival, underscoring the critical role of geography in the quest for power. Mackinder, in his seminal "Heartland Theory," argued that control over the central landmass of Eurasia—the "Heartland"—was essential for achieving global dominance. These classical theories highlighted the strategic importance of geographical location, physical terrain, and natural resources in shaping a nation's foreign policy and military strategies.

As globalization accelerated in the late 20th and early 21st centuries, the concept of geopolitics expanded beyond its traditional focus on territorial control. It began to incorporate the influence of economic, technological, and cultural factors on global power relations. Scholars like Zbigniew Brzezinski, in *The Grand Chessboard* (1997), emphasized the strategic importance of managing key regions in an increasingly interconnected world. This broader understanding of geopolitics reflects the complexities of modern international

relations, where power is often exercised through economic leverage, technological dominance, and cultural influence, in addition to military might.

One of the critical dimensions of modern geopolitics is the geopolitics of energy. Authors like Daniel Yergin, in *The Prize* (1991), have demonstrated how control over energy resources, particularly oil and natural gas, has profoundly shaped global politics and conflicts. The competition for these vital resources continues to be a driving force behind many international disputes and alliances, making energy a central concern in geopolitical analysis.

The Mediterranean region, with its strategic location at the crossroads of Europe, Asia, and Africa, has long been a focal point of geopolitical interest. Its significance stems from its role as a hub of civilizations, cultures, and economic activity, as well as its control over crucial maritime routes. The Mediterranean has historically been a theater of intense geopolitical competition among both regional and global powers. In the contemporary era, countries like Turkey, Greece, Egypt, and Israel, along with external powers such as the United States, Russia, and the European Union, continue to vie for influence in this pivotal region.

In the 21st century, Mediterranean geopolitics is increasingly shaped by emerging challenges such as migration, climate change, and regional instability. The Arab Spring, for instance, triggered significant political upheaval across North Africa and the Middle East, dramatically altering the geopolitical landscape and affecting the European Union's relations with its southern neighbors. These developments have underscored the need for a nuanced understanding of the region's geopolitical dynamics.

Various geopolitical theories have been applied to analyze the Mediterranean's strategic importance. Classical theories like Mackinder's "Heartland Theory" and Alfred Thayer Mahan's "Sea Power Theory" continue to provide valuable insights. In the Mediterranean context, these theories emphasize the critical importance of naval power and the control of key maritime chokepoints such as the Suez Canal and the Strait of Gibraltar. These strategic locations have historically been, and continue to be, vital for the projection of power and the control of global trade routes.

The conceptual framework explores the ongoing struggle and competition across various global regions, focusing on how

different powers, including Turkey, navigate their affairs. The global landscape has shifted from a unipolar world dominated by the United States and its Western allies to a more multipolar setting, characterized by the emergence of new power centers such as China, Russia, and the BRICS nations (Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa). While the U.S. remains a dominant force, the BRICS alliance could potentially challenge this dominance if their cooperation intensifies.

China's rise poses a significant challenge to U.S. influence in the Pacific, while Russia's historical and strategic connections, alongside China's Belt and Road Initiative, complicate the dynamics in Eurasia, challenging Western influence. The invasion of Ukraine by Russia represents a major geopolitical shift, underscoring the practical emergence of a multipolar world and altering global security dynamics, especially in Eurasia. The conflict in Ukraine and the subsequent sanctions on Russia have underscored Europe's dependency on Russian oil and gas, highlighting the urgent need for energy diversification. As a result, Europe is increasingly looking towards the Middle East, North Africa, and other regions for alternative energy sources.

The Mediterranean region is strategically crucial for both NATO and Russia. NATO seeks to maintain stability and protect the interests of its member states, while Russia's military presence in the area poses a strategic challenge. Political changes and instability in North Africa have implications for regional security and Western interests, with NATO and Western countries often supporting certain regimes to maintain influence and stability. Meanwhile, Turkey is focused on securing its interests in the Mediterranean, balancing its role as a NATO member with an independent foreign policy approach.

## RESEARCH METHOD

The research method for the text "Contemporary Geopolitical Setting" is grounded in a thorough literature review, supported by qualitative data analysis, synthesis of findings, and rigorous validation processes. This approach provides a comprehensive and nuanced understanding of the current geopolitical landscape and its implications for global power structures.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

### Contemporary Geopolitical Setting

After two decades of the post-Cold War era, the global landscape has evolved into a



wide and openly contested struggle between different poles of power. The United States and Western powers, represented by organizations like NATO and the G7, are fiercely defending their status as the sole superpower across various regions of the world (Patrick, 2022). While the US maintains dominance in the Caribbean region, China's ascendancy in the Pacific poses a significant challenge to American supremacy (Mearsheimer, 2010).

In the Atlantic theater, Brazil and South Africa may not individually match the military might of the US and NATO. However, the potential expansion and deepening cooperation within the BRICS partnership could substantially alter the balance of power (Duggan, *et al.* 2022). If BRICS countries enhance their military collaboration, particularly in the security domain, they could pose a formidable challenge to US dominance not only in the Caribbean but throughout the entire Atlantic region and possibly glob (Shidore, 2023).

Argentina's recent application for BRICS membership underscores the potential for further expansion of the alliance. If Argentina were to be granted membership, BRICS would significantly bolster its influence in the South Atlantic, posing a

comprehensive challenge to NATO and US hegemony in the region. This expansion of BRICS influence could reshape geopolitical dynamics and alter the power balance in the Atlantic, leading to intensified competition and strategic recalibration among global powers (Shidore, 2023).

The post-Ukraine war era has marked a significant shift in the global geopolitical landscape (Vlados & Chatzinikolaou, 2024). For years, there has been speculation about the emergence of a multipolar world order, with Russia positioned as one of the key poles. However, prior to the Ukraine conflict, these discussions remained largely theoretical. The invasion of Ukraine by Russia marked the first practical manifestation of these geopolitical tensions, fundamentally altering global security dynamics, particularly in Eurasia.

The repercussions of this invasion extend beyond regional boundaries, impacting global security in profound ways. The outcome of the conflict will play a pivotal role in shaping the future trajectory of Eurasian security and beyond. Should Russia emerge victorious or successfully navigate a prolonged conflict akin to the Korean War stalemate (Kluth, 2023), it would consolidate its dominant position in European security



affairs and shape regional security interests accordingly.

Russia's historical ties with North African Mediterranean countries further underscore its potential influence in shaping broader security dynamics. These historical connections provide Russia with additional avenues to exert influence and potentially expand its sphere of influence beyond its immediate borders (Rumer, 2019).

As the conflict in Ukraine unfolds, the international community closely monitors developments, recognizing the far-reaching implications for global security and the evolving geopolitical landscape. The outcome of this conflict will undoubtedly have profound and lasting consequences, reshaping the balance of power and influencing the strategic calculus of nations worldwide (Polyakova, *et al.* 2024).

During the Soviet era, countries like Albania, Algeria, Egypt, Libya, and Syria were often considered as Soviet client states, reflecting the extent of Soviet influence in various regions. Even today, Russia maintains deep involvement in the Middle East, particularly in countries like Syria. This ongoing proximity between Russia and Middle Eastern nations poses a challenge to traditional Western dominance, particularly

in the Gulf and the broader Middle East (Smagin, 2023).

Russia's sustained engagement in Syria and its active involvement in North African countries solidify its position as a significant stakeholder in the Mediterranean region. Recent military coups in some North African nations are believed to have been influenced and managed by Russia, further highlighting its strategic interests in the region (Ferragamo, 2023). The presence of Russian private military company PMC Wagner reinforces Moscow's efforts to counter perceived Western influence in Africa (Rampe, 2023).

Russia's historical ties and strategic interests in the Mediterranean region have been bolstered in the post-Cold War era, with the Syrian crisis providing a golden opportunity for Russia to assert its presence and prevent NATO dominance in the area (Borshchevskaya, 2022). For Western countries and Turkey, the East Mediterranean region holds considerable importance for various reasons. These include ensuring Israel's security, tapping into new oil and gas reserves in the region, and safeguarding the navigation of the Suez Canal—a vital artery for global trade. The complex interplay of geopolitical interests and strategic imperatives underscores the significance of

the Mediterranean region as a focal point for major global powers.

The security dynamics of the Mediterranean region hold immense significance for both NATO and Russia, as it serves as a pivotal theater in their respective geostrategic calculations. From Russia's perspective, the Mediterranean is viewed as a crucial component of its strategic defense perimeter, providing strategic depth and influencing its broader defense posture (Rumer & Sokolsky, 2021). Similarly, the Mediterranean region can be considered the southern flank of NATO (David, 2024), given the presence of key NATO members such as Greece, Slovenia, and Italy, all of which are Mediterranean countries. Moreover, the security interests of other major NATO members like Turkey, Spain, and France are intrinsically tied to the stability and security of the Mediterranean region.

The presence of Russian military forces in the Mediterranean poses a direct threat to NATO's collective security interests (NATO, 2023), as well as to individual member states. This military presence not only challenges NATO's strategic positioning in the region but also introduces a source of potential instability and conflict. The Mediterranean

serves as a critical nexus where the interests of NATO and Russia intersect, shaping the broader security landscape of the region and beyond.

As such, efforts to mitigate tensions and enhance cooperation in the Mediterranean are paramount for both NATO and Russia. Addressing security challenges in the region requires a multifaceted approach, encompassing diplomatic engagement, confidence-building measures, and collaborative security initiatives. By fostering dialogue and cooperation, NATO and Russia can work towards promoting stability and security in the Mediterranean, thereby reducing the risk of conflict and advancing mutual interests in the region.

Some countries in the region, notably Turkey, face unique vulnerabilities due to their geographical positioning. Unlike maritime powers such as China and Japan, Turkey is situated between two inland seas, the Black Sea and the Mediterranean. If Russia were to solidify its dominance in Ukraine and bolster its presence in the Mediterranean, it would pose a significant challenge to Turkish security. Such a scenario would not only increase Turkey's dependence on NATO but also weaken its bargaining position vis-à-vis Russia.

Prior to the Ukraine war, Russia's presence in the Mediterranean was largely symbolic, aimed at projecting itself as a global power. However, in the aftermath of the conflict, Russia's military presence in the region has transformed into a tangible threat to NATO. By establishing a foothold in the Mediterranean, Russia also extends its reach into Africa, further complicating the security dynamics of the region. Moreover, Russia's collaboration with Iran in Syria underscores its strategic maneuvering in the Mediterranean (Grajewski, 2022).

China's expanding engagement in the Middle East and Africa through initiatives like the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) adds another layer of complexity to the Mediterranean region's geopolitical landscape. Egypt and Algeria emerge as significant partners for China under BRI projects, amplifying Beijing's influence in the region. The collaboration between China and Russia, both in the Pacific and Europe, is likely to intensify in the Mediterranean, given their shared strategic interests (Sidlo, 2020).

Overall, the convergence of Russian assertiveness, Chinese engagement, and regional dynamics in the Mediterranean poses profound challenges for countries like Turkey and underscores the need for proactive diplomacy and strategic

maneuvering to safeguard their security interests in the face of evolving geopolitical pressures.

### **Political Shifting in North Africa and Euro Mediterranean Security Idea**

The concept of security, whether at the national or international level, is inherently multi-dimensional and multi-vector. Events occurring in one country or region can have significant repercussions on the national security of others, often influenced by the dynamics of competition and perceptions of adversaries. Throughout history, the regions of North Africa and Southern Europe, encompassing the Euro-Mediterranean and Afro-Mediterranean zones, have been embroiled in power struggles and have frequently engaged in invasions and conflicts (Allosso, 2021).

In contemporary times, although North African nations have attained sovereignty and independence, they are undergoing significant political transitions shaped by their historical legacies. Egypt, despite being ruled by a military regime, is experiencing strong political movements within the country. Libya is mired in a devastating civil war, Tunisia is grappling with political instability, and while Algeria and Morocco enjoy relative political stability, there exists a

palpable aspiration for political change within their societies. Syria is already embroiled in a protracted civil war, and Lebanon is facing severe economic and political challenges. Among the non-European Mediterranean countries, Turkey stands out as relatively stable (Aliyu *et al.* 2023).

NATO and European Mediterranean countries view recent political changes in the region with apprehension. Many of these changes are driven by Islamic political ideologies and parties (Bakir, 2021). European nations are concerned that if these political shifts were to stabilize, a new political reality might emerge that could potentially challenge Western interests and dominance in the Mediterranean region. Should North African countries pursue ambitious defense, foreign, and economic policies, they could pose a direct threat to Western dominance across various dimensions, including the deployment of long-range weapons.

In light of these considerations, NATO is unlikely to support any political changes in the Afro-Mediterranean region that could challenge Western military supremacy or lead to independent decision-making that could disrupt the status quo in managing the

region. The preservation of Western interests and security remains paramount in shaping the approach towards political developments in the Mediterranean.

Western countries adopt a nuanced approach in their geopolitical strategies, often supporting certain regimes while opposing others based on various factors such as perceived national interests, regional stability, and geopolitical considerations. For instance, while Western nations vehemently oppose the Assad regime in Syria, they lend support to President Sisi's administration in Egypt (Maher, 2018). Similarly, several other regimes in Africa, though unpopular domestically, receive backing from NATO and European countries, as evidenced by recent examples in Niger and Gabon (Villalón, 2023). The political developments in sub-Saharan Africa have a direct impact on the security situation in the Mediterranean region. The escalation of violence in the Sahel region, for instance, directly affects Afro-Mediterranean countries, particularly Algeria and Morocco (Middle East Monitor, 2023).

Despite the unpopularity of many regimes, a continuation of instability often aligns with the interests of NATO. Consequently, Western powers tend to

support either pro-Western dictatorships or corrupt democratic governments, as this serves their broader strategic goals (Von & Wahman, 2021). Furthermore, NATO's strategic maneuvering extends beyond supporting established regimes; it also involves backing militant and terrorist groups to achieve geopolitical objectives. This includes support for terrorist organizations like the PKK, which align with Western interests in specific contexts (Musa, & Karacaoglu 2024). In the realm of international relations and security, moral considerations often take a back seat to strategic imperatives.

Any fundamental shift in policy would necessitate a corresponding change in ideological frameworks and the conceptualization of state operations. Despite the proactive engagement of Russia, China, and Iran challenging Western dominance, Western powers persist in pursuing their objectives. This entails efforts to demilitarize at the military level and de-Islamize at the political level, reflecting a strategic commitment to maintaining influence and stability in the Mediterranean region.

Turkey, recognizing the strategic significance of the Mediterranean, prioritizes its engagement in the region (Örmeci, 2021). Additionally, preventing African

immigration into Europe remains a crucial policy objective within the broader European strategy for the Mediterranean, reflecting the complexities and interconnectedness of security dynamics in the region

### **Ukraine War and Energy Geopolitical Setting**

From an energy perspective, the world can be broadly categorized into two distinct groups: oil and gas producers on one side and consumers on the other. Interestingly, the majority of energy-producing nations are relatively small, economically weak, and financially disadvantaged, while the major consumers are comprised of robust economies with significant military prowess. Europe, collectively representing one of the largest economies globally, finds itself heavily reliant on imported oil and gas.

Prior to the Ukraine conflict, the European Union (EU) relied significantly on energy imports from Russia. According to data from 2020, the EU imported nearly 60 percent of its total energy requirements, with Russia accounting for 24 percent of the EU's energy supply. This dependency was particularly pronounced in natural gas, with Russia supplying 41 percent of the EU's total imported gas. Furthermore, Russia held a dominant position in the hard coal market,

serving as the largest supplier with 45.65 percent of the EU's total coal imports (European Parliamentary Research Service, 2022).

This heavy reliance on Russian energy resources underscored Europe's vulnerability to external geopolitical tensions and highlighted the imperative for diversification and energy security measures. The Ukraine conflict has catalyzed a renewed focus on reducing dependency on Russian energy supplies and exploring alternative sources to safeguard Europe's energy interests and ensure stability in the region.

During the Covid-19 era, major economic activities ground to a halt, leading to a significant decrease in energy consumption. However, as economies began to rebound in the post-Covid-19 era, Russia's invasion of Ukraine on February 24, 2022, threw a wrench into the recovery process. Western nations, led by the United States, vehemently opposed the invasion and responded with some of the most stringent economic sanctions ever imposed on Russia. In a principled stand, European countries ceased all energy imports from Russia (BBC, 2023).

Despite these sanctions and the suspension of energy supplies from Russia,

European countries continue to import Russian energy through various channels. Surprisingly, other major consumers such as India and China have increased their imports of Russian energy compared to previous periods (The Hindu, 2023). European nations have long accused Russia of weaponizing its energy exports to advance political objectives (Finley & Mikulska 2023). In the aftermath of the Ukraine invasion, Europe is intensifying efforts to diversify its energy sources away from Russian dependency.

To establish long-term alternatives, European countries are exploring three primary options: increasing energy supplies from the Middle East, engaging in new partnerships in North Africa, and developing ties in the Caucasus and Central Asia (CCA). However, due to Russia's monopoly over the Central Asian pipeline network and the security risks associated with potential military conflicts, European enthusiasm for the CCA region is somewhat tempered. Consequently, Europe is prioritizing its focus on the Middle East and the African Mediterranean region as it seeks to reduce its reliance on Russian energy supplies (Berriault, 2023).

## Europe Energy Security in Post Ukraine War

The policy of imposing sanctions created an energy emergency in the world because these sanctions were not only prohibiting their companies but pressurizing other developing or developing countries not to buy cheap Russian energy. It created upheaval in Europe because many European countries, including France and Germany, heavily depended on Russian energy. A total of 27 percent to 34 percent of European oil was supplied by Russia (Zalan, 2022). Many European and non-European countries were importing nearly 70 percent to 100 percent of their oil demand. Germany, the largest economy, was importing nearly 40 percent in January and February 2022, an all-time high in the recent past. Regularly Germany imports nearly 30 percent of its total oil demand. Poland imported nearly 60 percent while Finland imported between 80 to 90 percent oil of its total demand (Aljazeera, 2022).

In major, 60 percent of Russian total oil production goes to OECD countries, and 20 percent goes to China (IEA, 2022). The remaining share of European oil comes from different countries. According to 2020 data, 29 percent of total oil was supplied by Russia while the US share was 9 percent, Norway 8

percent Saudi Arabia and the United Kingdom's share was 7 percent each, and Kazakhstan and Nigeria contributed 6 percent each (Eurostat, 2020).

In the Gas arena, it was more challenging to reduce Russian Gas because nearly 40 percent of total European gas came from Russia (IEA, 2022), and like oil, some small countries were nearly 100 percent dependent on it (Buchholz, 2022).

Like oil, the European largest economy Germany, in gas also heavily depends on Russia with nearly 50 percent of its total demand. At the same time, other leading economies like Italy are also dependent with 46 percent, while France is relatively less with 24 percent of total demand fulfilled from Russian gas. Except for Russia, Norway's share is the largest in European supply with 21 percent, while Algeria contributes 8 percent and Qatar gives 5 percent in total gas supply. Russia supplies 72 percent of its total gas production to European OECD countries, including Turkey. At the same time, non-OECD Europe and Eurasian countries, including Kazakhstan and Belorussia, received 17 percent of total Russian gas production. China and Japan individually received 5 percent and 4 percent of Russian gas production (Orr, 2022).



Russia also dominates in coal supply to Europe with 57 percent of the total coal supply which is 26.3 percent of the Russia's total coal exports. In term of dependency stands it is 70 percent in terms of thermal coal imports used in electricity generation (Kaya, 2022) while U.S and Australia contribute 16 percent and 14 percent, respectively (Eurostat, 2020). The United Kingdom, one of the largest economies, imports 27 percent of its coal from Russia (Bolton, 2023).

### Alternatives

Mediterranean region not only provide a viable energy alternative to Europe but it has always important part in western security under NATO. All states of Mediterranean Europe are NATO members while on other side Russian and Iranian presence in Syria create a security challenge for NATO. To convince African leadership, western leadership rush to MENA to secure extra supply before the winter. Usually, a not popular destination of powerful European countries, Algeria became the popular destination of many European leaders. Algiers provided the European Union with only 11 percent of its gas in comparison of Russian 47 percent. Algeria export already 83 percent of its gas to Europe (Fasanotti, 2022).

European Council President Charles Michel visited Algeria and urged it to extend energy cooperation during the crisis. He commented very racially and with the colonial mindset and stated, "reliable, loyal and committed partner in the field of energy cooperation.". In July 2022, Italy's prime minister Mario Draghi toured Algeria to extend energy ties (Al Jazeera, 2022); after Russia, Algeria is one of the foremost gas suppliers to Italy (Africa News, 2022). France and Algeria's relations are still not in perfect shape. In October 2021, Algeria withdrew its ambassador to Paris and banned its airspace for France (Aljazeera, 2021). But the French president visited Algeria with the main agenda of energy. Again in October 2022 French prime minister and 16 ministers visited Algeria for more economic cooperation (Bobin, 2022). To increase production Algeria signed a four billion U.S. dollars Production Share Agreement (PSA) with French Total, Italian Oil Company Eni, and American Occidental (France 24, 2022). Despite all North African efforts, it could not fulfill the gap of Russian gas because African countries were already supplying their gas to Europe. European countries are also focusing on other African countries, including Mali, Mozambique, Nigeria, Egypt, Senegal, and

Mauritania. However, it will take time to fulfill the gap in Russian gas because it needs some new pipelines, infrastructure, security guarantees, and investment.

### **Turkish Strategy for Mediterranean**

The Mediterranean holds paramount importance for Turkish security, with a secure and Turkish-dominated or neutral Mediterranean standing as a top priority in Turkish foreign and security policy. Turkey's ties with African Mediterranean countries are deeply rooted in historical, cultural, and civilizational connections.

While Turkey has been a longstanding member of the NATO military alliance, its independent foreign policy under President Erdoğan has often led to differing approaches from many Western countries and the US. Turkey's interests in the Mediterranean region are multifaceted, revolving around four fundamental objectives:

1. Ensuring free and unhindered navigation in the Mediterranean Sea, vital for Turkey's economic and strategic interests (Turkey Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2023).
2. Safeguarding the Aegean status quo as established by the 1923 Lausanne Peace Treaty and countering any aggressive moves by Greece that

threaten Turkish sovereignty and security (Turkey Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2023).

3. Protecting the civilizational space of the African Mediterranean, reflecting Turkey's commitment to fostering cultural ties and promoting stability and development in the region (Anadolu Agency, 2019).
4. Securing a fair share in the natural resources, including oil and gas reserves, of the Mediterranean, which are crucial for Turkey's energy security and economic development (Altunışık & Martin, 2023).

Given these strategic imperatives, Turkey remains actively engaged in diplomatic efforts and regional partnerships to uphold its interests in the Mediterranean and ensure its security and prosperity in the face of evolving geopolitical challenges

### **CONCLUSION**

Since ancient times, the Mediterranean region has played a pivotal role in global politics. In modern times, its significance persists, particularly in the emergence of European powers onto the world stage. Throughout the Cold War, Western powers held sway over this strategic area. However, in the post-Cold War era and the advent of a

multipolar world, the dynamics have shifted dramatically. Powers such as China, Russia, and Iran are now challenging Western hegemony.

Russia and Iran have formed a coalition to counter Western dominance, with China aligning itself with them. Given its crucial importance for Turkey's security, the region prompts Turkey to reassess its security options. In the aftermath of the Ukraine conflict, the Mediterranean region is emerging as a viable alternative energy source for Europe, reducing dependence on Russian energy. Additionally, Western powers, including NATO, are not only securing their own flanks but also providing security guarantees to Israel.

European nations are directing significant attention to the Mediterranean region for various reasons, including energy concerns and the need to counter the influence of Russia and Iran. Currently, the Mediterranean region has transformed into a multi-vector, multi-dimensional arena, shaping global competition for the foreseeable future.

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