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**LXIII. The role of energy as a geopolitical factor for the  
consolidation of Greek-Israeli relations**

**[& I.P. Sotiropoulos]**

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***Abstract***

During the current historical coincidence, the geostrategic conjunction of Greece-Cyprus- Israel is a reality, in order for the three states to cope in the best possible manner with the contemporary and future challenges in the arena of international and regional relations. Having a common strategic perception of the geopolitical sub-system of the south-eastern Mediterranean, Athens, Nicosia and Jerusalem strengthen day by day their political, diplomatic, economic and military relations, aiming at the preservation of stability in the area, against any revisionist factor. For the aforementioned strategic alliance, the discovery, extraction and exploitation of the hydrocarbon neo-reserves within the Greek, Cypriot and Israeli consecutive Exclusive Economic Zones, (EEZs), is the dynamic catalyst that reinforces even further the allied cooperation and effectiveness. Amidst the geopolitical transformation of the wider region of North Africa, Middle and Near East, the construction of the East Mediterranean Pipeline, (East-Med), is a common pursuit of the utmost significance, for the strategic alliance. Indeed, if the East-Med

is realized, it will be able to transfer, in the first phase, the Israeli and Cypriot hydrocarbons from the off-shore neo-reserves via Greek sovereign territory and EEZ to Italy and central Europe, signaling EU's gradual disengagement from the dependence on the Russian natural gas, allowing the EU to make its first steps of energy emancipation. Despite Ankara's attempt for rapprochement with Jerusalem, the official Israeli position heavily leans towards an Israel-Greek-Cypriot strategic alignment, as Israel's national security constitute the ultimate long-term priority for Jerusalem. Above all, such a development will upgrade the geopolitical status of all the three states of the strategic alliance in the regional geopolitical as well as the supra-geopolitical system.

**Keywords:** East Mediterranean energy neo-reserves, Levantine Basin, natural gas-field Zohr, East Mediterranean pipeline-(East-Med), south-east Mediterranean geopolitical subsystem, Israel, Cyprus, Greece.

**JEL classification:** Greece, Cyprus and Israel. However, the geopolitical factor of energy is the one that guarantees the seamless collaborative and allied dynamic of the three states in the long term basis. The recently discovered energy reserves in the adjacent EEZs of the three states, and notably the proposal of the East-Mediterranean pipeline, promise the turnaround of the area to a global energy strategic interest spot.

## ***1. Introduction***

It is a fact that in late-2000s, Athens and Jerusalem have come closer on the diplomatic, political, military and economic fields. The pursuit, in one hand of the valuable strategic depth towards the Mediterranean Sea by Israel and on the other the achievement of successful deterrent regional mechanism against Ankara, primarily resulting in the adequate protection of Nicosia's legitimate rights in extracting energy mixture from its Exclusive Economic Zone, (EEZ), have automatically promoted the convergence of the aforementioned states' national interests, of the geopolitical sub-system of the South-Eastern Mediterranean. In the same, their cultural heritage has set the foundations of the western

cultural model, while the current political developments, with the widespread unrest in the geopolitical sub-systems of North Africa and the Middle East contribute further to the strengthening of the relations of Greece, Cyprus and Israel. However, the geopolitical factor of energy is the one that guarantees the seamless collaborative and allied dynamic of the three states in the long term basis. The recently discovered energy reserves in the adjacent EEZs of the three states, and notably the proposal of the East-Mediterranean pipeline, promise the turnaround of the area to a global energy strategic interest spot.

## ***2. The strategic alignment of Greece-Cyprus-Israel***

The recent conclusion of a strategic alliance between Greece, Cyprus and Israel is an indubitable fact. In general terms, this is realized in all areas of activity of a sovereign state, with basic springboard the political, diplomatic and military alignment of the three states. A main motive behind the approachment of Athens and Nicosia by Jerusalem has been the gradual alienation of Turkey from Israel, resulting in the ultimate rupture in their relations, in late 2000s. Indeed, the strategic alliance between Turkey and Israel, which lasted just over ten, (10), consecutive years and provided Jerusalem with the necessary strategic-operational depth, began to tremble once Ankara attempted to implement its neo-Ottoman doctrine<sup>1</sup>, which has in store the dominant role in the wider region for Turkey, starting from the classic Middle East. Successive incidents, as the episode of the on the air disagreement between the Israeli President Mr. Shimon Peres and the, at that time, Turkish Prime Minister, Mr. Recep Tayyip Erdogan in the

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1. For the neo-Ottoman doctrine and its critics, Davutoglu, Ahmet, *Stratejik Derinlik: Türkiye'nin Uluslararası Konumu*, KüreYayinlari, Istanbul Küre, 2005, also, Davutoglu, Ahmet, "The Clash of Interests: An Explanation of the World (Dis) Order", *Perceptions: Journal of International Affairs*, Vol. 2, no. 4, Dec 1997-Feb 1998, Mazis, Ioannis Th., *Davutoglu and Geopolitics*, Herodotus, Athens, 2012, and Mazis, Ioannis Th., "Theoretical Perception of Geopolitics in Davutoglu's Work: A critical Presentation", *Civitas Gentium*, 3:1 (2013), Section A, pp.9-50, accordingly.

World Economic Forum in Davos, in January 2009, which resulted in the latter's final departure,<sup>2</sup> and the Mavi-Marmaracase,<sup>3</sup> marked the time of the definitive cessation of close political, diplomatic and military relations of Ankara and Jerusalem.

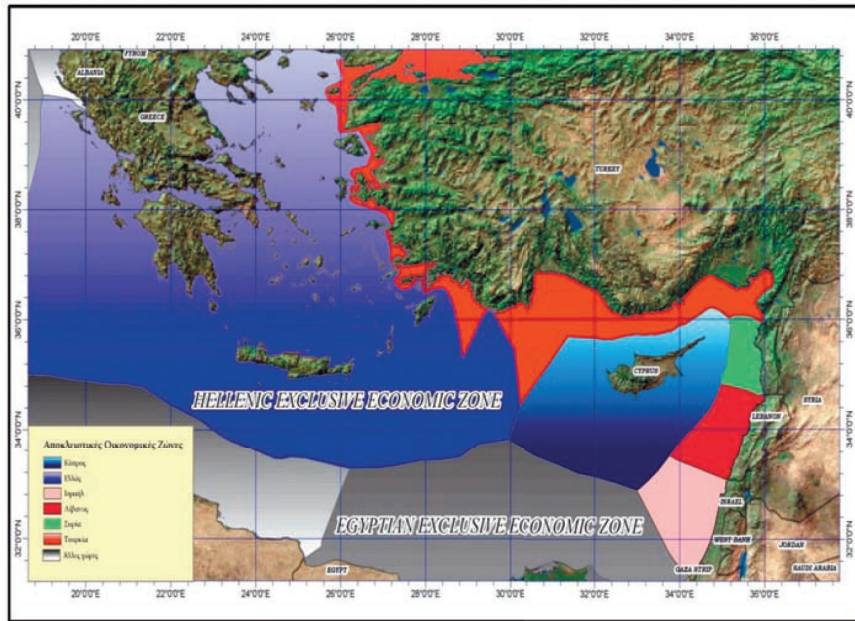
At the same time, Greece and Cyprus were facing the challenge of a revisionist Turkish policy<sup>4</sup> throughout the geographic arc from western Thrace and the northern Aegean down to the south east Mediterranean, in the Cypriot EEZ. As it was anticipated, with the objective convergence of the national interests of the three countries, Athens and Nicosia decided to proceed to the build-up of a trilateral/tripartite strategic alliance with Jerusalem, securing in this manner the full support and cooperation of the operationally powerful actor in the southeastern Mediterranean region, Israel. As a result, the historic conjuncture has been exploited to a significant extent, so that the three states can benefit to the maximum from this strategic alliance, creating a grid of multipliable power deterministically leading to geo-strategic balance and political stability in the wider region. A region with inherent instability in its peripheral geopolitical sub-systems, (North Africa, Middle East, Near East), where re-structuring has begun to materialize.

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2. *Time Magazine*, 30, January, 2009.

3. The Mavi Marmara incident in May 2010, in which nine Turkish activists while attempting to break the Israeli naval blockade of Gaza, with the blessings of Turkish Prime Minister, Mr. Tajip Erdogan.

4. For an analysis of the Turkish revisionary politics in South-East Mediterranean, refer to: Sotiropoulos, Ioannis, P., "The Geopolitics of Energy in the South-East Mediterranean. Greece, European Energy Security and the Eastern Mediterranean Pipeline.", *Contribution in the Roundtable of the International Scientific Workshop, 'Repositioning Greece in a Globalizing World*, Collective, Joint Partnership Project, Global and European Studies Institute, (GESI), University of Leipzig and the Faculty of Turkish Studies and Modern Asian Studies, School of Economics and Political Sciences, National and Kapodistrian University of Athens, 8-11 June, 2015, University of Leipzig, 2016, *forthcoming*, (11.000).



Map no 1: The EEZs of the south-eastern Mediterranean states according to the International Law, United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, (UNCLOS III), Montego Bay, Jamaica, 10th December 1982. (Source: Ioannis Th. Mazis and Georgios Sgouros, *Regional Science Inquiry Journal*, Vol. II (2), 2010, pp. 133-150).

The initiation of the political efforts of Athens and Jerusalem to build a strategic alliance, took place on 8 August of 2013, in Nicosia, where a Trilateral Memorandum of Understanding was signed between the Ministers of Energy of Greece, Cyprus and Israel, which confirms “...their volition for the promotion of their in-between economic relations and the reinforcement of the collaboration in the area of energy.” A clause about cooperation in order to protect key infrastructures, in the hot spots of the gas-fields in the south east Mediterranean, is also included in the Memorandum.<sup>5</sup>In the same

5. Memorandum of Understanding on cooperation in the fields of energy and water between the Ministry of Energy, Commerce, Industry and Tourism of the Republic of Cyprus, the Ministry of Environment, Energy and Climate Change of the Hellenic Republic and the Ministry of Energy and Water Resources of the State

vain, on October 2013, during the proceedings of the Supreme Council of Ministers for Cooperation between the Governments of Greece and Israel,<sup>6</sup> several legal agreements between the two countries for cooperation in various sectors, were signed.<sup>7</sup> In addition, following a meeting of the three foreign Ministers, a joint communiqué was issued by the three parties, on 12 November 2014, in Athens, expressing their “...*volition for the promotion of their in-between economic relations and the reinforcement of the collaboration in the area of energy...*”, once again.<sup>8</sup> Moreover, in the military-defence sector, Brigadier Giora Eiland,<sup>9</sup> stated on 30 November, 2014: “*We decided to have military attaché in Athens, something that only happens in 15 cities worldwide. This shows the depth of cooperation that exists now. We conduct common aviation and naval exercises in Greece, the Israeli defense industry supplies the Greek armed forces, the cooperation in the field of security and exchange of information is deepening, for the common fight against terrorism. Relationships that based on mutual economic benefits, as well as energy, have their own dynamics. Of course, if the Turkish- Israeli relations continue to deteriorate, there is another reason for closer cooperation between Greece and Israel.*”.<sup>10</sup> Indeed, in the military-operational field, dozens of common aeronautical and military manoeuvres have taken place in the Aegean Sea, the island of Crete (and within its EEZ limits), Cyprus, (and within its EEZ limits), in mainland Greece and the coast and deserts of Israel, something that further consolidates the strategic alliance of the three.<sup>11</sup>

Nonetheless, the energy geopolitical factor is the qualitative dy-

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of Israel. 08 August, 2013.

6. [http://www.mfa.gr/index2.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=1620&Itemid=318](http://www.mfa.gr/index2.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=1620&Itemid=318). The Hellenic Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

7. For an analysis of the Greek-Israeli policy of rapprochement, refer to Sotiropoulos, Ioannis, P., op. cit.

8. Joint Communiqué of the Ministries of Energy of Greece, Cyprus and Israel, 12 November, 2014, Athens.

9. Former head of the National Security Council of Israel.

10. *Kathimerini*, 30 November 2014.

11. For an analysis of the Greek-Israeli common military manoeuvres in South-East Mediterranean, refer to Sotiropoulos, Ioannis, P., op. cit.

namic catalyst in this tripartite allied relationship. Undeniably, the relations of the three countries have been profoundly impacted by geography, since they have contiguous EEZs, in which large volumes of energy mixture, (Israel, Cyprus) have been, or expected to be, (Greece), discovered, as well as by the potential construction of the East Mediterranean pipeline, a project of mutual strategic benefit.

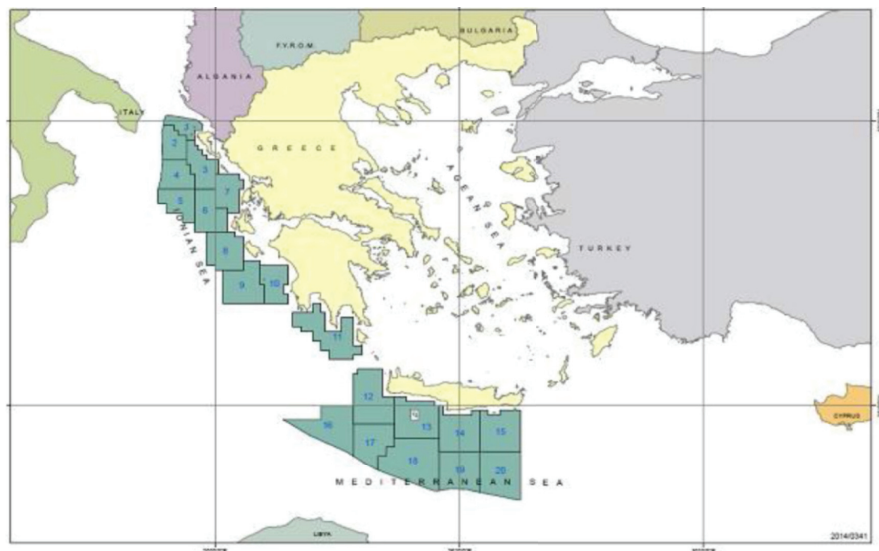
***3. The geopolitical factor of energy as the qualitative catalyst for a closer strategic alliance between Greece-Cyprus-Israel. The hydrocarbon neo-reserves and the Eastern Mediterranean Pipeline, (East-Med)***

The coincidence of discovery, extraction and exploitation of Israeli hydrocarbon neo-reserves with those of Cyprus, along with the Greek effort to scientifically measure its own, brings closer, by default, the interests and perceptions of Athens, Nicosia and Jerusalem for regional stability and development. Especially, as noted above, the lack of a stable regional ally for Israel, and the substantial disbursement of resources required from Greece and Cyprus in order to ensure their national sovereignty in a wider area, give the said convergence, elements of Grand National Strategy.

***3.1. The Greek neo-reserves***

Mainly three areas are the ones which are of energy interest, which objectively and without a doubt possess large volumes of hydrocarbons, natural gas and/or oil. These are the wider off-shore areas south of the island of Crete, the Ionian and the Herodotus Basin. As it frequently happens in such cases, the scientific studies do not agree as to the volume size, however in this case, they all agree on the existence of extensive neo-reserves of natural gas south of Crete and the Herodotus Basin as well as of oil reserves along the Ionian.





Map no 2: The Greek 'blocks', as appear in the second licensing round for hydrocarbon exploration, in 2014. (Source: Greek Ministry of Environment, Energy and Climate Change).

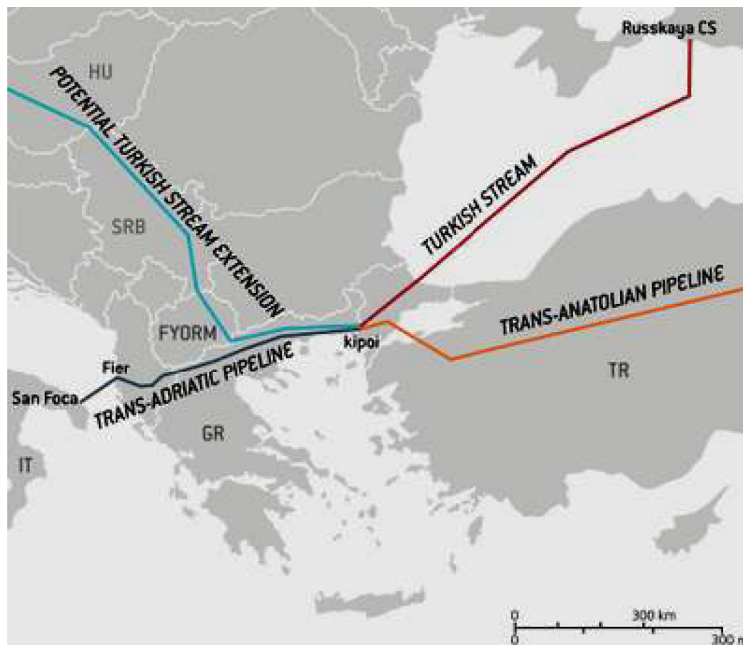
Thus, according to the US Geopolitical Survey, it is estimated that there are substantial volumes of natural gas 70km south of the Mesara Bay in Crete, which it is claimed that Greek block no 14 between the areas of Plakias and Frangokastello has 1,5 trillion m<sup>3</sup> of natural gas.<sup>12</sup> Similarly, a Greek study estimates the total volume of natural gas in the same area to approximately 3,5 trillion m<sup>3</sup>, identifying it with the Mexico Bay, the Persian Gulf and the Caspian Sea.<sup>13</sup> In relation to the financial value of the off-shore hydrocarbon neo-reserves and the net profits of Greece from the specific area alone, Deutsche Bank has estimated it to approximately €427 bn, while the Greek Public profit is estimated to €214 bn.<sup>14</sup> A similar economic study raises the Greek Public

12. Iosiphides, Iosif, *Energy Planning 2011-2030 and Geopolitics. RES, Natural Gas. 27+12 states together ... and 1 state against*, Parga, Athens, 2011.

13. Konophagos, Foskolos, et al, "The steps for attracting investments and the generation, as soon as possible, of mineral wealth. The delimitation of [Greek] EEZ", Secret Report to the Greek Prime Minister, July 2012, *Reuters*, 03 October 2012.

14. Iosiphides, Iosif, *op. cit.*

profit to €599 bn, over a period of 25 years, from the commencement of the exploitation.<sup>15</sup> Regarding the marine area of the Greek part of the Herodotus Basin, according to the French Beicip-Franlab, it is estimated that it might come to 2.5 trillion cubic meters of natural gas,<sup>16</sup> while, the American Geological Review gives a 50% probability there are 3 trillion cubic meters in excess of the 2.5 trillion m<sup>3</sup>, (i.e. a total of 5,5 tr. m<sup>3</sup>). In relation to the Greek oil energy neo-reserves, the responsible ministry assesses that the area of the Ionian Sea, along with that south of the island of Crete can produce 20-25 mil b/y over a period of 25-30 years from the commencement of exploitation.<sup>17</sup>



Map no 3: TAP, Turkish-Stream, and the potential extension of the later, upgrade Greece's traditional geopolitical value.  
(Source: Institute of Energy for South-East Europe).

15. Konophagos, op. cit.

16. This conclusion was reached by Beicip-Franlab by simulating the Greek part of the Herodotus Basin with that of the Israeli part of the Levantine Basin. Mazis, Ioannis Th., "The secrets of the Israel- Cyprus-Greece axis. The European energy reality. The emergence of US and Russia. The Turkish plans for Kastelorizo", *Foreign Affairs*, Hellenic Edition, March 2012, pp. 9-10.

17. Greek consumption of oil comes to 120 million bbl./y.

Finally, as a transfer network host country, it must be noted that Greece has a strong geographical advantage, being a core transit country for the regional energy-planned network of pipelines. Greece is part of TAP, Turk-Stream (the former South-Stream), as well as the, extremely interesting, Vertical Corridor, which vertically connects the Balkan and Eastern European States, from the Aegean to the Baltic, by-passing Ukraine. Finally, Greece has signed a Memorandum of Understanding with Russia, Serbia, Hungary and FYROM for the expansion of Turk-Stream towards Austria.



Map no 4: The Vertical Corridor connects vertically the Balkan and Eastern Europe states, from Aegean towards Baltic, can by-pass Ukraine. (Source: Institute of Energy for South-East Europe).

### 3.2. The Cypriot neo-reserves

Recent studies have shown that the marine area of the Levantine Basin up to the area adjacent to the Herodotus Basin contain natural gas neo-reserves. According to the most moderate estimates, the Beicip-Franlab and the Institut Français du Pétrole, estimate the total volume of neo-reserves of the off-shore area within the Cypriot EEZ to 3 trillion m<sup>3</sup>.

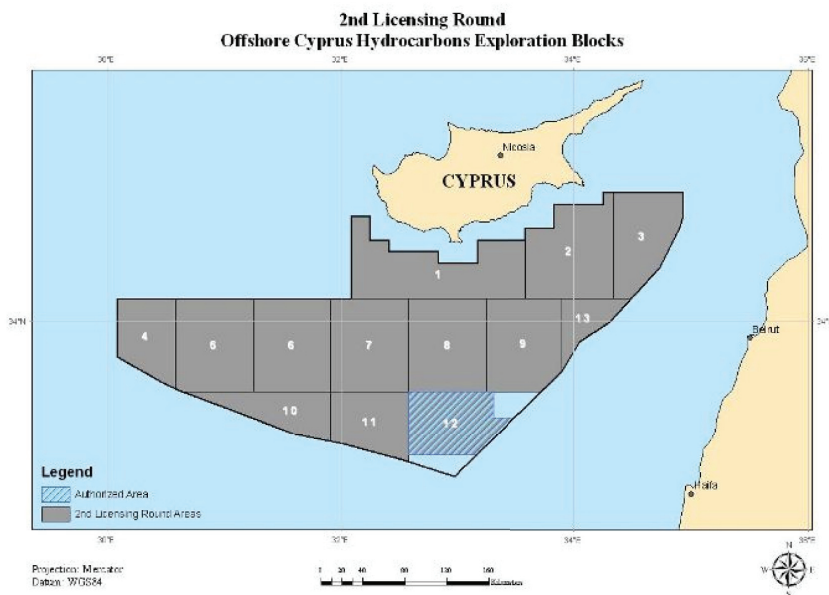
of natural gas. The Cyprus EEZ has been divided in 13 so-called “blocks”. Possible areas of neo-reserves within the EEZ are blocks 12 and 9 which are the first ones explored and have been conceded to international consortia for operation. Noble Energy and Delek are the operators of Block 12 and the Aphrodite natural gas field that is located within it, 34km west of the Israeli “Leviathan” gas field, which is also operated by the same consortium. Block 9 and the underlying gas fields “Onasagoras” and “Amathus” is operated by the Italo-Korean Consortium Eni-Kogas. With their recent announcements on 19 November 2014, the Israeli companies Delek and Avner, claim in the brief to their shareholders in the Israeli stock exchange that the natural gas quantities in ‘Aphrodite’ gas field exceed 4.5 trillion m<sup>3</sup>, 12% more than the estimates so far.<sup>18</sup> Furthermore, especially the Aphrodite natural gas field alone, in block no 12, according to the former Director of the Energy Service of the Cypriot Ministry of Commerce, Solon Casinis, contains approximately 8-12 trillion m<sup>3</sup> of natural gas, the value of which is estimated to €350 billion, and the net profit for the Cypriot state to €86 billion.<sup>19</sup> So far it is claimed by Noble Energy and Delek, which operate the said reserve-gas field, that it can yield a production of approximately 10 b/m<sup>3</sup>/y for the next 2-3 decades. In this view, Delek company, demonstrating its interest in the Aphrodite gas field, has entered into negotiations to buy share from Noble Energy, with its CEO Yossi Abu stating after a meeting with the Cypriot President, Nikos Anastasiades on 4 September: “*We are fully committed to developing the Aphrodite gas field, in line with its strategy of supplying the Cypriot and Egyptian markets with natural gas fast and efficiently. We already started the process of marketing the gas into those markets and we have long discussions with potential buyers for this gas*”.<sup>20</sup> It should be noted that given that the Cypriot economy is exclusively dependent on oil in order to cover its domestic needs, the vast majority, 80-85%, of the total production of natural gas, i.e. 2,4 to 2,5 trillion m<sup>3</sup>, will be exported. Indeed, since 2014, advanced talks have taken place for the export of the total natural gas production from the Aphrodite gas field to Egypt. In joint statement, on 25 November 2014, made by the Egyptian Minister

18. Mazis, Ioannis Th., op. cit., pp. 9-10.

19. Interview of Solon Casinis to [www.Euro2day.gr](http://www.Euro2day.gr), 15 April 2014.

20. *Naftemporiki*, 04 September, 2015.

of Oil and Mineral Resources, Ismail Sherif and the Cypriot Minister of Energy George Lakkotrypīs, the former stated that: “*Egypt can receive as much gas quantities as Cyprus can export*”.<sup>21</sup> His Cypriot counterpart also, stated that: “*It appears that the best option for export at present appears to be via a pipeline between Cyprus and Egypt and the talks focus on the existing infrastructure of Egypt’s liquefaction terminal, i.e. in Idku and Damietta*”<sup>22</sup>.



Map no 5: The neo-reserves in the EEZ of Cyprus are divided in 13 so-called “blocks”. The energy companies, Noble Energy and Delek are the operators of Block 12 and its Aphrodite natural gas field. (Source: Ministry of Energy, Commerce, Industry and Tourism of the Republic of Cyprus).

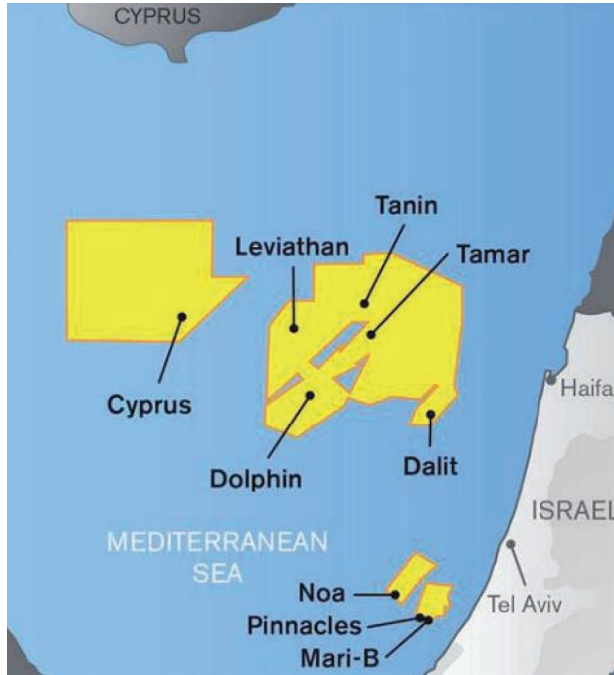
### 3.3. The Israeli neo-reserves

Until the recent discovery of the Leviathan, Tamar and Dalit neo-reserves, the Israeli deposits came to a maximum of 1, 7 trillion m<sup>3</sup>, from the traditional off-shore natural gas fields of Mari and Noa. Accord-

21. *Cyprus News Agency*, 25 November, 2014.

22. *Ibid.*

ing to the most moderate estimates, the BEICIP-FRANLAB and the Institut Franais du Petrole, the neo-reserves of natural gas in the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) of Israel amount up to 800billionm<sup>3</sup>. More specifically: 1.Tamar: 90kmfromHaifaand indepth of 1.680m. Estimated reserves 142 bn/m<sup>3</sup>,2.Dalit: 13km east of Tamar: Estimated reserves: 14 bn/m<sup>3</sup>, 3.Leviathan: 130km west of Haifa and in depth of 635m. Estimated Reserves: 535 bn/m<sup>3</sup>. In 2009, Israel began the extraction from the gas field Tamar, while the even larger field Leviathan is expected to yield production within 2016.Finally, it is estimated that the aforementioned volumes of natural gas can cover Israel's energy needs for the next 2 to 3 decades, while large quantities are to be exported.



Map no 6: Israel and Cyprus off-shore natural-gas fields

#### *3.4. The Egyptian neo-reserve natural gas-field Zohr*

A recent development comes to re-structure the plans for the exports of Cypriot and Israeli natural gas, as well as expedite the promotion of East-Med.

According to the Italian ENI<sup>23</sup>, an ‘ultra-gigantic’ neo-reserve of Egyptian natural gas in Zohr gas field, in block 9, also known as “*Shorouk*” which covers an area of 100 km<sup>2</sup>, at a depth of 1.450 km, 109 km of Port Side, was discovered on 30 August 2015.<sup>24</sup> Also, “*It’s the largest gas discovery ever made in Egypt and in the Mediterranean Sea and could become one of the world’s largest natural-gas finds*”,<sup>25</sup> the company said. Indeed, this reserve is the largest discovery of natural gas ever taking place in the Mediterranean, while according to ENI, its full utilization will be in a position to cover Egypt’s demand in natural gas for decades. More specifically, Zohr gas field is estimated to cover an area of 100 km<sup>2</sup> and can yield approximately 850 billion m<sup>3</sup> of natural gas.<sup>26</sup> An extremely important statement is that of Hamdy Abdel Aziz, Director of Communication of the Egyptian Oil Ministry, to Bloomberg Agency: “... *the entire production will be used for domestic consumption*.”<sup>27</sup>, while the quantities in Zohr gasfield, in Shorouk block, are estimated to adequately cover Egypt’s need for more than 10 years.

Also of extreme importance is the fact that Zohr gas field adjoins block 11 of the Cypriot EEZ, only 6 km away. It is worth noting that according to the Cypriot News Agency, the former Director of the Energy Service of the Ministry of Energy, Commerce, Industry and Tourism, Solon Kassinis supported that: “*Large quantities of gas will be discovered in the surrounding area and I am certain that our EEZ contains even larger quantities*.”<sup>28</sup> Consequently, what needs to be done is for the French company Total, holder of exploitation rights for the Cypriot block 11, to research whether this gigantic neo-reserve extends to the Cypriot EEZ.<sup>29</sup>

23. The research for oil and gas reserves was signed in 2014, between the Italian ENI and the Egyptian Ministry of oil, following a call for tenders.

24. ENI’s official public announcement, 30 August, 2015.

25. Ibid.

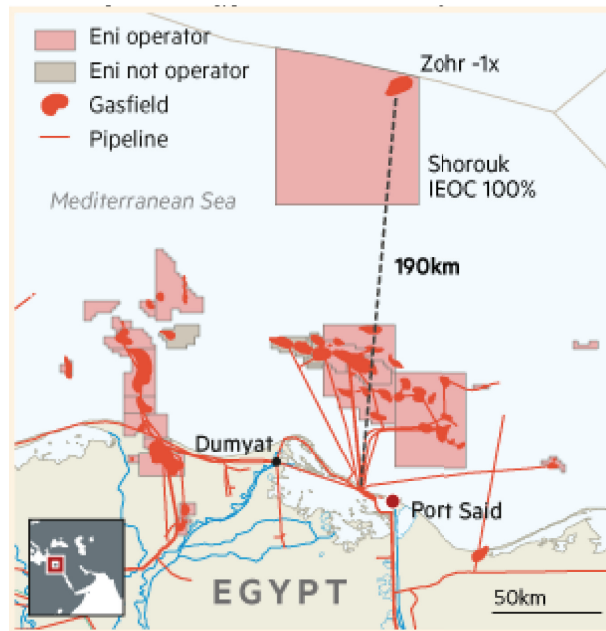
26. The role of Egypt as an energy key player in the region will be significantly upgraded following the discovery of Zohr gas field. The discovery increases Egypt’s total reserves of natural gas from 65,2 trillion m<sup>3</sup> to 100 trillion m<sup>3</sup>, significantly enhancing its geopolitical position.

27. *Bloomberg Agency*, 02 September, 2015

28. *Cyprus News Agency*, 02 September, 2015.

29. The new research results for block 11 will be delivered by the French Company to the Minister of Energy Commerce, Industry and Tourism in October.

It becomes clear that once the Egyptian government directs the entire quantity of natural gas from the aforementioned neo-reserve for domestic consumption, export options towards nearby markets, such as Egypt, are dramatically decreased for Jerusalem and Nicosia. On the other hand 2,5trillion m<sup>3</sup> of Cypriot natural gas, as well as a large part of the Israeli one, approximately 600-800 billion m<sup>3</sup>, ‘await’ their distribution in international markets. As a result, turning towards further, geographically, markets is unavoidable, a fact that is favourable for East-Med’s prospects.



Map no 7: The Egyptian neo-reserve natural gas-field Zohr

In conclusion, it appears that the “alea jacta est” for the development of a wider, deeper and substantial energy cooperation between Israel, Cyprus and Greece, within the framework of the existing geostrategic alliance of the three states. Athens expedites the international licensing round for hydrocarbon exploration, Nicosia consolidates the sector of production of natural gas and Israel is expected to commence the extraction from the Leviathan neo-reserve gas field in 2016, the third largest in the world, since the newly discovered Egyptian Zohr.



### 3.5 *The Eastern Mediterranean Pipeline, (East-Med)*<sup>30</sup>

All of these can only have the expected added value for the allied states, with the construction of the East Mediterranean Pipeline, which will form the backbone of the long term alliance between Israel, Greece and Cyprus.<sup>31</sup> Indeed, this pipeline is of the outmost strategic importance, since it will transport the Israeli, Cypriot and Greek natural gas reserves. The Greek Public Natural Gas Company, (DEPA) was the first to propose the option of East- Med, in 2012. The pipeline, as an option, having a length of 1.530 km<sup>32</sup> and a capacity of 8 to billion m<sup>3</sup>, without the Greek neo-deposits contribution, satisfies European Union's goal of multiple suppliers in order to achieve the higher degree of energy security.<sup>33</sup> Passing entirely through European ground and sovereign space, links Israel, Cyprus, Greece, and finally is connected with the Greek-Italian interconnector, (IGI), pipeline, which crosses the Adriatic Sea.<sup>34</sup> Following the construction of the off-shore pipeline, a terminal station is planned to be constructed in Cyprus, which will be used for the liquefaction of natural gas prior to its transfer to the European markets. Besides, Brigadier Giora Eiland's statement, highlights Israel's intention: "... the use of existing LNG facilities in Egypt is examined. The other option, the construction of the pipeline to Greece, is the preferred political and the safest way to interconnect with Europe."<sup>35</sup> It is of extreme importance that during a meeting in Rome, 18-19 November

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30. For an analysis of the Eastern Mediterranean Pipeline, (East-Med), and how it can increase the European Energy Security refer to: Sotiropoulos, Ioannis, P., op. cit.

31. Ibid.

32. More specifically, the off-shore distances of the East-Med from on-shore to on-shore landmark are the following: 150 km=Levantine Basin-Cyprus, 650 km=Cyprus-Crete, 400 km=Crete- Peloponnesus, 500 (on-shore) km=Peloponnesus-Thesprotia and connection with IGI.

33. For an analysis of the Eastern Mediterranean Pipeline, (East-Med), and how it can increase the European Energy Security refer to: Sotiropoulos, Ioannis, P., op. cit.

34. Ibid.

35. *Kathimerini*, 30 November, 2014.

2014, the Israeli Minister of Energy, Shirvan Shalom, proposed the solution of the East-Med to his counterparts of the European Mediterranean countries, labeling it a monumental technical construction of immense political significance.<sup>36</sup> Indeed, with the appropriate management in the energy sector, Greece-Cyprus-Israel will be in a position to forge a long-term alliance, which, having energy extroversion as a spearhead, could substitute in time the majority of EU's, practically monopolistic, suppliers of energy mixture. For eachally individually, this has also particular political importance. Jerusalem will probably attempt to immediately capitalize on the power stemming from exporting energy mixture to the E.U., *inter alia*, in the re-orientation of certain European institutions and powers, in favour of Israeli positions, in respect to the Arab-Israeli conflict. Greece and Cyprus will agonizingly attempt to exploit the benefits of their energy sector in order to exit faster and easier from the economic depression they are experiencing. Finally, there is no doubt, that the systemic geopolitical result of the tripartite alliance, which is geometrically accentuated by the energy geopolitical factor, is the rapid upgrading of the geopolitical status of the three allies on a peripheral level, in the geopolitical system of the southeast Mediterranean, and not only, with the warm blessings of the EU.

The East-Med proposal is also officially presented to the Vice-President of the European Commission and European Commissioner for Energy Union, Maros Sefcovic by the Greek and Cypriot Ministers of Energy on 9 December 2014, accompanied with the relevant economic violability studies and research results so far.<sup>37</sup> The pipeline has been included in the Project of Common Interest, (PCI) of the European Commission for 2015, while the responsible sub-committee of the European Union will finance its furtherfeasibility study, initially with the symbolic amount of two million euros, demonstrating its genuine interest for the construction of the East-Med. The said pipe-

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36. "Building a euro-Mediterranean energy bridge. The strategic value of the euro-Mediterranean natural gas and electricity networks in the context of energy security. 'International Euro- Mediterranean High Level Conference', 18-19 November, Rome Italy.

37. Sotiropoulos, Ioannis, P., *op. cit.*

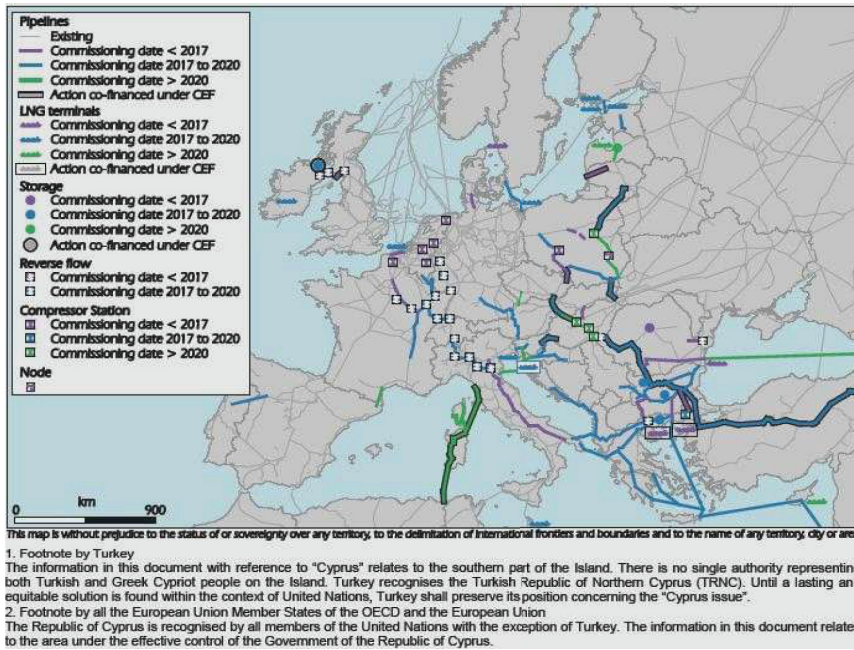
line will increase EU's energy security,<sup>38</sup> as it is estimated that the Eastern Mediterranean Basins contains more than 3,5 trillion m<sup>3</sup> of natural gas, and 1,7 billion barrels of oil.<sup>39</sup> Consequently, a strategic Mediterranean carousel has begun, originating from the south-east Mediterranean neo-reserves of Israel and Cyprus, with the involvement of certain key-stateguarantors and hosts of East-Med pipeline infrastructure, such as Greece, Cyprus and Israel, and potentially new energy suppliers such as Greece and Egypt, once the former starts the exploitation of its reserves and the sociopolitical situation in the latter is stabilized.<sup>40</sup>

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38. Ibid.

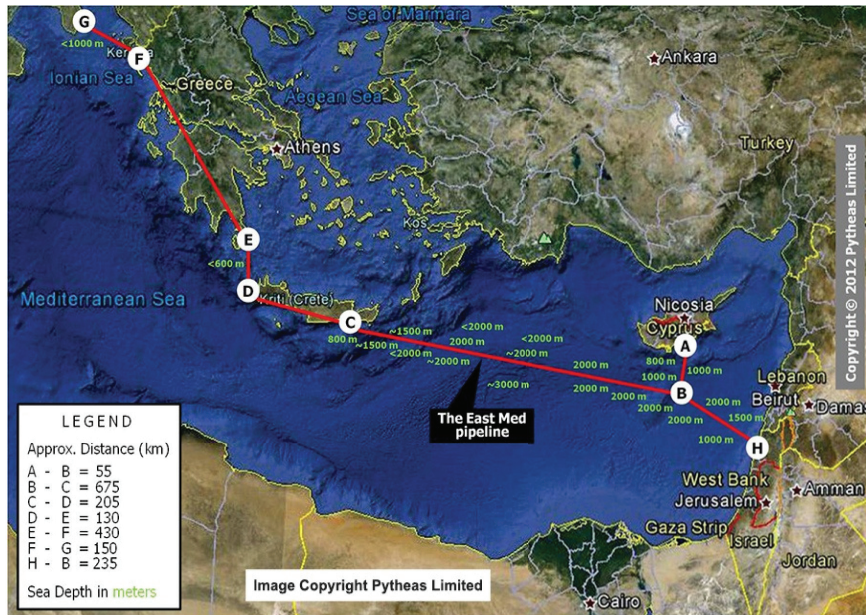
39. 'Overview of oil and natural gas in the Eastern Mediterranean region', *Energy International Association*, August 2013.

40. "Cairo has achieved variety in its energy mixture intended for consumption, while exports of oil and oil derivatives in Europe and the US, hold a significant share, at least until recently, of its total exports, although a downturn occurred since mid-2012 due of the political crisis experienced by the country.". According to CIA World fact-book, "The Egyptian production of natural gas, which is not sufficient to cover domestic needs, amounts to approximately 2,056 billion m<sup>3</sup>/y, while oil production varies from 720.000 for 2012, to 691,000 for 2013, bbl/d, i.e. 32,936 million tonnes/y, depending on the year and the source.". According to the Statistical report of the International Energy Agency, "Egypt's proven reserves in natural gas and oil amount to 2,186 trillion m<sup>3</sup> and 4,400 billion bbl., respectively. Both oil and gas are mined in the western regions of the country, the Nile Delta and the Gulf of Suez. Finally, Egypt uses, mainly for export purposes, two large seaside terminal stations of liquefied gas, (Liquid Natural Gas-LNG) in Idko and Damietta, which remain inactive since the 2010 revolution, when Cairo decided to cease gas exports and to exclusively use it for domestic consumption and mainly the productive industry. Egypt holds the largest oil refinery capacity in Africa with 726,000 bbl/d.". Ibid.



Map no 8: The Projects of Common Interest, (PCIs) in Europe Athens, Nicosia and Jerusalem consists an interalia geostrategic counterweight for the Turkish revisionism in the wider area.

It becomes clear that East-Med in one hand constitutes the qualitative catalyst in the strengthening and deepening of the allied relationship between Greece-Cyprus-Israel in the long-term and on the other will pay a very important role in the transport of energy mixture and the increase of EU energy security, while the development of the alliance between Athens, Nicosia and Jerusalem consists an interalia geostrategic counterweight for the Turkish revisionism in the wider area.



Map no 9: The Eastern Mediterranean Pipeline, (East-Med).(Source: Ioannis Th. Mazis and Georgios Sgouros, *Regional Science Inquiry Journal*, Vol. II (2), 2010, pp. 133-150).

#### 4. The Turkish efforts for rapprochement with Israel

Since the shooting down of the Russian SU-24 fighter by Turkish F-16 fighters and the subsequent development, the Russian-Turkish diplomatic relations are at their nadir. On the energy field, where Turkey is vulnerable, Moscow called off the construction of the Turkish Stream, which would transfer Russian natural gas to Europe through Turkey, while Ankara has become Kremlin's energy hostage, since it imports 50% of the natural gas, it consumes from Russia.

Under these circumstances, Ankara attempts to normalise the Israeli-Turkish relationships, with the mutual energy benefits as the core argument. More specifically, the Turkish President, Tajip Erdogan, stated on 2 January 2016: *"Israel is in need of a country like Turkey in the region, ...And we too must accept that we need Israel. This is a reality*

*in the region... If mutual steps are implemented based on sincerity, then normalization will follow*".<sup>41</sup>

One could argue that there are reasons of mutual benefits for an Israeli-Turkish rapprochement. The future prospect of co-exploitation of the natural gas reserves in the east Mediterranean is the primary reason, since Israel wishes to export natural gas from the 'Leviathan' gas field to Europe via all possible routes. On the other hand, Turkey would secure a substantial amount of natural gas for domestic consumption and would enter the Eastern Mediterranean natural gas transport map towards Europe. Netanyahu's government is already trying to enter into agreements with the governments of Nicosia and Athens for the export of Israeli natural gas, while some argue that an additional route, that of Turkey would increase his negotiating power and would speed up the export of Israeli natural gas. Finally, Turkey and Israel have traditionally been the USA's strategic partners. Following a long and serious Turkish deviation from this traditional policy, which raised a number of questions by NATO's partners as to Ankara's true political stance, a rapprochement and cooperation<sup>42</sup> between Ankara and Jerusalem, is going to be extremely satisfying to Washington, a powerful international pole of power of the acting geopolitical supra-system.

All these take place amidst the non-resolution of the Cyprus problem, the continuing blockade of the Gaza Strip by Israel and the strategic cooperation between Jerusalem-Nicosia-Athens with political, military and energy synergies. Moreover, it is extremely doubtful if whichever Turkish-Israeli rapprochement proposal from Ankara, does not disturb Israeli's relations with other regional forces.

In fact, it appears that there are business groups within Israel who find the Israeli-Turkish rapprochement beneficial to their own micro-economic interests and who actively promote it via energy based rela-

41. *Kayhan International*, Kayhan Group of Newspapers, 2 January, 2016.

42. Reuters suggested on December 17<sup>th</sup>, (from an anonymous Israeli source) that Mossad's incoming Director, Yossi Cohen, the Israeli envoy, Joseph Ciechanover, and the Turkish foreign ministry undersecretary, Feridun Sinirlioglu, have reached a preliminary agreement during negotiations in Switzerland. Ankara denied that such a meeting has taken place.

tions and official energy agreements.<sup>43</sup> Nevertheless, as Israel's national security is the ultimate priority for Jerusalem, the official Israeli position heavily leans towards an Israel-Greek strategic alignment. Brigadier Giora Eiland's statement though is indicative of the intentions of the Israeli state on the issue: "... *the use of existing LNG facilities in Egypt is examined. The other option, the construction of the pipeline to Greece, is the preferred political and the safest way to interconnect with Europe.*".<sup>44</sup> Furthermore, the Israeli Minister of Energy, Shirvan Shalom, proposed the solution of the East-Med to the ministers of the European Mediterranean countries during the meeting in Rome between 18 and 19 November, as a monumental technical construction of immense political significance.<sup>45</sup> Finally he pointed out that the project requires investment from Europe, of tens of billions of euros.<sup>46</sup> Considering that Israel's national security and interests are at stake, it is clear that business interests will not prevail. Moreover, given that this is also the international political trend, Israel would never jeopardize its national security in such a crucial sector such a synergy. As mentioned by Raphaël Metais: "*Since the 1960s when the private oil companies 'the Seven Sisters'*<sup>47</sup> *controlled more than 85% of international oil reserves,*

43. Sotiropoulos, Ioannis, P., "The Geopolitics of Energy in the South-East Mediterranean. Greece, European Energy Security and the Eastern Mediterranean Pipeline.", *Contribution in the Roundtable of the International Scientific Workshop, 'Repositioning Greece in a Globalizing World'*, Collective, Joint Partnership Project, Global and European Studies Institute, (GESI), University of Leipzig and the Faculty of Turkish Studies and Modern Asian Studies, School of Economics and Political Sciences, National and Kapodistrian University of Athens, 8-11 June 2015, Leipzig, University of Leipzig Publications, Leipzig, 2016, *forthcoming*.

44. Kathimerini, 30 November, 2014.

45. "Building a euro-Mediterranean energy bridge. The strategic value of the euro-Mediterranean natural gas and electricity networks in the context of energy security. 'International Euro- Mediterranean High Level Conference', 18-19 November, Rome Italy.

46. [www.timesofisrael.com](http://www.timesofisrael.com)

47. There are: Exxon-Mobil, Chevron, BP, Royal Dutch Shell, ConocoPhillips and Total (6 have left after mergers and acquisitions.), (in Mazis, Ioannis Th. and Balafouta, Virginia G., *Geopolitical Reality in the Dipole Greece-Cyprus, Solutions and Alibis*, Scientific series: Geo-cultures-Politics and Culture, Pappazisis, 2014, p. 35.).

*the trends reversed and today the “new Seven Sisters”<sup>48</sup>, the primary oil companies are of national character and possess the majority of the reserves”.*<sup>49</sup> Thus, Metais explains, *“the continuously growing number of similar national companies, controlled by the governments of their states, tend to surpass the logic of the markets for the benefit of wider political and ideological aspirations.”*<sup>50</sup> In addition, *the reluctance of certain governments of oil producing states to accept direct foreign investments renders the goal of energy security of energy importing countries, slightly more complicated.*<sup>51</sup> The geopolitical framework based on the above information with respect to energy security may be properly analyzed by the model “Empire and regions” as developed by Aad Correljé and Coby van der Linde.<sup>52</sup> This model foresees the future of energy security issues through *“the division of the world between countries and regions, based on ideologies, religions and political arguments”.*<sup>53</sup> The main props of this view is the absence of effective international markets combined with energy companies of a high degree of integration operating on a national basis. *“The observed dimension of the UN Security Council on the issue of the war in Iraq is an eloquent example of different states or groups of states with diverse interests on a conflict where energy considerations were not absent.”*<sup>54</sup> It is also remarkably instructive the case study, which justifies these approaches, of the Russian President’s behaviour since he was elected at the highest Russian office in 2000. President Putin has demonstrated an *“increasing by the day ability and volition to use energy as a political tool for the achieve-*

48. Aramco (Saudi Arabia), Gazprom (Russia), CNPC (China), NIOC (Iran), PDVSA (Venezuela), Petrobras (Brazil), and Petronas (Malaysia), (in *ibid.*, p. 35.).

49. Frank Umbach, “Global Energy Security and the Implications for the EU”, *Energy Policy*, no. 38, 2010, p. 1232, (in *ibid.*, pp. 35-6).

50. Umbach, *op.cit.*, p. 1232, (in *ibid.*, pp. 35-6.).

51. Umbach, *op.cit.*, p. 1232, (in *ibid.*, pp. 35-6.).

52. Aad Correljé and Coby van der Linde, “Energy supply security and geopolitics: A European Perspective”, *Energy Policy*, vol. 34, no. 5, 2006, p. 535.

53. *op.cit.*, p. 536, (in Mazis, *Geopolitical Reality in...*, p. 36.).

54. Metais, Raphaël, “Ensuring Energy Security in Europe: The EU between a Market-based and a Geopolitical Approach”, *EU Diplomacy Paper03*, College de l’Europe, Department of EU International Relations and Diplomacy Studies, p. 11.



*ment of political and geopolitical goals [...and] the reinforcement of his international position.”<sup>55</sup> “This fact appeared to be part of broader trends towards re-nationalisation and politicization of matters of energy matters.”<sup>56</sup>*

### ***Conclusions***

From a geopolitical perspective, the area of the south-east Mediterranean, since the discovery of the energy neo-reserves has come to face a new geopolitical reality. It is a fact that the hydrocarbon neo-reserves of Greece, Cyprus and Israel exceed their domestic needs by large. As a result, a significant bulk will be exported in order to cover the needs of European, mainly industrial intensive, states. The transport of the energy mixture from Greece's, Cypriot and Israel's EEZs, via the planned East-Mediterranean pipeline, will give the EU the opportunity to expand its energy supplier portfolio, increasing its energy security, significantly.

The majority Greece's neo-reserves area concentrated east of the island of Crete. They are estimated at 6 trillion m<sup>3</sup> of natural gas and 1,7 billion barrels of oil. The sustainability of the natural gas reserves is estimated at 100 years, a fact that underlines the importance of their proper management by the Greek government or the legal beneficiaries in future. The Ionian and Aegean Seas and the East Mediterranean have reserves of energy resources that can cover further needs as an exportable product. Moreover, the geographical route of the Turk-Stream, if implemented, is suitable to directly receive the energy production of these deposits via Greek territory, while an important role will be played by the Vertical Corridor which can connect, from an energy perspective, vertically the Balkan and Eastern Europe states, starting from the Aegean, with a direction from south to north, by-passing Ukraine and without involving any of Moscow's infrastructure. Israel's energy

55. Jakub M. Godzimirski, “Energy Security and the Politics of Identity”, in Fer-  
mann (ed.), *Political Economy of Energy in Europe*, Berliner Wissenschafts-  
Verlag, Berlin, 2009, p. 181.

56. Metais, Raphaël, “Ensuring Energy Security...”. *ibid.*, p. 10.

reserves are estimated to approximately 2,5 trillion/m<sup>3</sup> and it is estimated that they are can adequately cover its domestic energy needs for the next 3 decades, along with a certain volume of exports. In addition, Nicosia's domestic needs rely on oil, which means that the biggest bulk of its 3 trillion natural gas neo-reserves, approximately 2,5 trillion, can be exported; another fact that advocates in favour of the immediate construction of the East-Med. Finally, the discovery of the Zohr gas field does not downgrade the significance of the existing neo-reserves of the area. On the contrary, adjoining the Cypriot EEZ and block 11, this discovery increases the possibility for a similar one by Cyprus. In addition, the current planning for the export of Israeli and Cypriot natural gas to Egypt can be easily revised, inevitably channeling the lion's share towards the EU through the East-Med. Moreover, an increasing accumulation of energy mixture available for export by Israel and Cyprus is achieved, reinforcing the financial viability of East-Med, as well as its geopolitical value, exhorting Jerusalem and Nicosia towards its speedier construction, bringing Athens, Nicosia and Jerusalem even closer. Despite Ankara's attempt for rapprochement with Jerusalem, the official Israeli position heavily leans towards an Israeli-Greek-Cypriot strategic alignment, as Israel's national security constitute the ultimate long-term priority for Jerusalem.

Considering that the developments in the energy sector, and particularly the planning and the construction of pipelines, are closely related to the wider geostrategic interests and national policies, Greece, Cyprus and Israel are countries of unique energy, inter alia, geopolitical location. Being members of the EU, (Greece and Cyprus) and NATO, (Greece), either undeviatingly oriented towards the Western Community (Israel), they abut on the energy producers of the Middle East, North Africa and the energy channels of the Black Sea and Caspian natural gas. Particularly, the European strategy of diversifying the procurement of energy mixture is currently a favourable factor for the implementation of East-Med, the pipeline of Israel-Cyprus and Greece, which will transport natural gas from the neo-reserves of the Levantine Basin in the Mediterranean towards Europe. In this sense, Greece, Israel and Cyprus, which are extremely endowed due to their geopolitical position, including their cultural dimension, both historically as well as

in the contemporary world, come even closer together, covering gaps of geopolitical nature, operational character and political-economic flitters, deterministically heading towards a closer, deeper and long-term cooperative alliance, with the geopolitical factor of energy as a functional scheme.

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