

**IBN HALDUN UNIVERSITY  
SCHOOL OF GRADUATE STUDIES  
DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE AND  
INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS**

**MASTER THESIS**

**THE CONFLICT BETWEEN TURKEY AND GREECE  
IN THE EAST MEDITERRANEAN**

**HASENE ER**

**THESIS SUPERVISOR  
ASSIST. PROF. ALİ ASLAN**

**ISTANBUL, 2021**

**IBN HALDUN UNIVERSITY  
SCHOOL OF GRADUATE STUDIES  
DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE AND  
INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS**

**MASTER THESIS**

**THE CONFLICT BETWEEN TURKEY AND GREECE  
IN THE EAST MEDITERRANEAN**

**by  
HASENE ER**

**A thesis submitted to the School of Graduate Studies in partial  
fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in  
Political Science and International Relations**

**THESIS SUPERVISOR  
ASSIST. PROF. ALİ ASLAN**

**ISTANBUL, 2021**

## APPROVAL PAGE

This is to certify that we have read this thesis and that in our opinion it is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a thesis for the degree of Master of Arts Political Science and International Relations.

### Thesis Jury Members

Title - Name Surname	Opinion	Signature
Asst. Prof. Ali ASLAN		
Prof. Erik Ivar RINGMAR		
Assoc. Prof. Dr. Veysel KURT		

This is to confirm that this thesis complies with all the standards set by the School of Graduate Studies of Ibn Haldun University.

Date of Submission

Seal/Signature

## ACADEMIC HONESTY ATTESTATION

I hereby declare that all information in this document has been obtained and presented in accordance with academic rules and ethical conduct. I also declare that, as required by these rules and conduct, I have fully cited and referenced all material and results that are not original to this work.

Name Surname: Hasene Er  
Signature:

## ÖZ

### DOĞU AKDENİZ'DE TÜRKİYE YUNANİSTAN ÇATIŞMASI

Er, Hasene

Siyaset Bilimi ve Uluslararası İlişkiler Yüksek Lisans Programı

Öğrenci Numarası: 194022004

Open Researcher and Contributor ID (ORC-ID): 0000-0003-2551-7025

Ulusal Tez Merkezi Referans Numarası: 10407360

Tez Danışmanı: Dr. Öğr. Üyesi Ali Aslan

Eylül 2021, 72 sayfa

Bu tez, Türkiye ile Yunanistan arasında son yıllarda Doğu Akdeniz'de yükselen tansiyonun nedenini açıklamayı amaçlamaktadır. Bu doğrultuda öncelikle literatürdeki boşluk ortaya konulmuş ve bu boşluğu doldurmak için güç boşluğu tezi öne sürülmüştür. Ardından uluslararası sistemde mevcut değişim saldırgan realist perspektiften açıklanmıştır. Son olarak, Doğu Akdeniz'de Türkiye ile Yunanistan arasındaki tarihsel çatışma, uluslararası sistemdeki güç boşluğu bağlamında analiz edilmiştir. Tarih boyunca stratejik ve jeopolitik olarak büyük öneme sahip olan Doğu Akdeniz, Arap Baharı, Suriye iç savaşı gibi sorunlarla ve yeni enerji kaynaklarının keşfiyle yeni bir dönüşüm sürecine girmiştir. Enerji, ekonomi, ideoloji ve güvenlik gibi birçok alanı kapsayan bu dönüşüm, bölgesel güçler arasındaki ilişkilerde de sorunlara neden olmaktadır. Bunun en önemli örneklerinden biri, Türkiye ile Yunanistan arasında deniz yetki alanlarına ilişkin egemenlik sorunlarından kaynaklanan çatışmadır. Ayrıca, son dönemde uluslararası sistemde Rusya ve Çin'in ABD'ye karşı yükselişinin neden olduğu güç kayması etkisin Doğu Akdeniz'de de göstermiş ve ABD bölgede 1980'lerden itibaren sahip olduğu hegemon konumunu kaybetmiştir. Bu çalışmanın temel argümanı, uluslararası sistemdeki istikrarsızlığın Doğu Akdeniz'de bir güç boşluğuna yol açtığı, güç boşluğunun ise bölgedeki istikrarsızlığı artırarak Türkiye ile Yunanistan arasındaki çatışma ortamını tetiklediğidir.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Dođu Akdeniz, G Bořluđu, Saldırgan Realizm, Trkiye, Uluslararası Sistem, Yunanistan



## ABSTRACT

### THE CONFLICT BETWEEN TURKEY AND GREECE IN THE EAST MEDITERRANEAN

Er, Hasene

MA in Political Science and International Relations

Student ID: 194022004

Open Researcher and Contributor ID (ORCID): 0000-0003-2551-7025

National Thesis Center Reference Number: 10407360

Thesis Supervisor: Assist. Prof. Ali Aslan

September 2021, 72 Pages

The thesis aims to explain the reason for the rising tension between Turkey and Greece in the East Mediterranean in recent years. In this direction, firstly, the gap in the literature was revealed and the power vacuum thesis was put forward in order to fill this gap. Then, the current change in the international system is explained from the offensive realist perspective. Finally, the historical conflict between Turkey and Greece in the East Mediterranean is analyzed in the context of the power vacuum in the international system. The East Mediterranean, which has a great strategic and geopolitical importance throughout history has entered into a new transformation process with problems such as the Arab Spring, the Syrian civil war and the discovery of new energy sources. This transformation, which covers many areas such as energy, economy, ideology and security, also causes problems in the relations between regional powers. One of the most important examples of this is the high tension between Turkey and Greece arising from the sovereignty issues regarding the maritime jurisdiction areas. In addition, the power shift caused by the rise of Russia and China against the US in the international system also showed its effect in the Eastern Mediterranean, and the US lost its hegemon position in the region since the 1980s. The main argument of this study is that the instability in the international system leads to a power vacuum in the East Mediterranean, while the power vacuum increases the instability in the region and triggers the conflict environment between Turkey and Greece.

**Keywords:** East Mediterranean, Greece, International System, Power Vacuum, Turkey



## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>ÖZ</b> .....	<b>iv</b>
<b>ABSTRACT</b> .....	<b>vi</b>
<b>TABLE OF CONTENTS</b> .....	<b>viii</b>
<b>LIST OF SYMBOLS AND ABBREVIATIONS</b> .....	<b>ix</b>
<b>CHATER I INTRODUCTION</b> .....	<b>1</b>
<b>CHAPTER II LITERATURE REVIEW</b> .....	<b>6</b>
2.1. Introduction .....	6
2.2. Research Question .....	7
2.3. Methodology and Data Collecting .....	8
2.4. Literature Review .....	9
<b>CHAPTER III CHANGE AND STABILITY IN THE INTERNATIONAL SYSTEM</b> .....	<b>26</b>
3.1. Intoduction.....	26
3.2. Classical Realism .....	27
3.3. Defensive Realism.....	29
3.4. Offensive Realism .....	32
3.5. Conclusion.....	38
<b>CHAPTER IV EAST MEDITERRANEAN CONFLICT BETWEEN TURKEY AND GREECE AND INTERNATIONAL SYSTEM</b> .....	<b>40</b>
4.1. Intoduction.....	40
4.2. The Power Shift in the International System.....	42
4.3. The Historical Evaluation of Turkey and Greece Conflict in East Mediterranean in the Framework of the Power Vacuum Thesis .....	46
<b>CHAPTER V CONCLUSION</b> .....	<b>63</b>
<b>REFERERENCES</b> .....	<b>68</b>
<b>CIRRICULUM VITAE</b> .....	<b>72</b>

## LIST OF SYMBOLS AND ABBREVIATIONS

EASTMED	East Mediterranean Pipeline Project
EEZ	Exclusive Economic Zone
Eu	European Union
GSAC	Greek Cypriot Administration of Southern Cyprus
MENA	Middle East and North Africa
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
THE US	The United States
TR	Turkish Republic
TRNC	Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus
UN	United Nations

# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

The East Mediterranean is the coastal region where Turkey, Israel, Lebanon, Egypt, Palestine, Syria, the Greek Cypriot Administration, and the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus share common sea areas. The East Mediterranean is located in an important geopolitical and geo-strategic position where power rivalries between Eastern and Western civilizations have been experienced for centuries. The Mediterranean, which has hosted many civilizations for centuries, is on the route of the world's most valuable trade routes. The region has become an inter-sea connection point in large geography with the Strait of Gibraltar in the west, the Suez Canal in the south, and the straits in the north. Passing the Silk and Spice Roads, known as traditional trade routes, through the Eastern Mediterranean route has made this region a place where different cultures interact and contributed to the central position of world trade for many years. Also, the region is located in the region called the "fertile crescent" which includes Anatolia, Mesopotamia, and Egypt, which is known as the most fertile land in the world. (Yaycı, 2012:2).

Cyprus, the most important geopolitical and geo-strategic island of the Eastern Mediterranean, has special importance due to the role it plays in the control of the Middle East and the Eastern Mediterranean basin. Since Cyprus located in the middle of the continents of Asia, Europe, and Africa, known as the old world, land masses, and serves as an important port for sea and air transportation between these continents. The strategic value of this island increases particularly as it is located on maritime trade, transportation lines, and one of the main airlines, and it is the scene of conflicts of interest between groups/blocks. (Yaycı, 2012:3).

The main aim of all great civilizations throughout history was to dominate the eastern Mediterranean because they believed that this was the way to control both land and sea trade. In other words, the East Mediterranean, whose importance has

increased in direct proportion to the development of humanity, has raised the hopes of civilizations to dominate the world throughout history.

With the First World War, the importance of the East Mediterranean increased not only because it had the most important trade routes in the world, but also became the focus of the competition for the increasing energy source in the world. During the Cold War period, which emerged after the two world wars, the region witnessed the struggle for dominance of the Soviet Union and the United States, as in the international system. After the Soviet Union first lost its power and then collapsed, the US became the sole ruler in the region as in the world. Although it showed a relatively stable outlook in this process, global-scale struggles gained momentum again with the increase in power centers in the region.

Although it has maintained its importance throughout history, the East Mediterranean was not seen as a geopolitical region on its own for a long time and was considered as a part of the Middle East and North Africa region. The region has become an analysis unit in itself with the great transformation it has experienced in recent years. The instability in the Eastern Mediterranean in recent years has resulted from the internal problems of the small and underdeveloped states in the region, the conflicts between these states, and the controversial interventions of the US in the Middle East, especially after the September 11 attacks. The region has hosted many problems such as the Gulf Wars, the Arab-Israel Wars, and the Palestine and Cyprus issues. The anti-regime protests, which started in Arab countries after 2010 and are known as the Arab Spring, further increased the confusion in the region. (Ozan, 2020:165).

The crisis that started in Syria in 2011, on the other hand, reached a completely different dimension than in other countries, first affecting other countries in the region and then global powers. The conflict in the country was not limited to the Assad regime and the opposition forces, but also an authority gap opened to abuse by terrorist organizations arose. The increasingly chronic nature of the conflict has forced global actors and regional powers to take action to protect their interests or to gain benefits. Thus, Syria has become one of the focal points of both the regional

competition in the East Mediterranean and the competition between the great powers in the international arena.

In addition to these developments, another important factor that increases the importance of the East Mediterranean is the hydrocarbon resources discovered off Cyprus since the 2000s. The unique structure of the East Mediterranean does not allow the determination of maritime jurisdiction areas and exclusive economic zones in a way that all riparian states can accept. As a matter of fact, there is not a common international maritime convention ratified by all riparian states. The rules laid down by international law cannot impose any restrictions for some countries in the past and today. Particularly, Greece and Southern Cyprus' Exclusive Economic Zone Agreements with Egypt, Lebanon, and Israel, by ignoring the TRNC and Turkey, has prompted Turkey (Yılmaz, 2020:6).

The conflict between Turkey and Greece draws the most attention to the regional rivalry in the East Mediterranean. There has been disagreement between Turkey and Greece over the Cyprus issue in the East Mediterranean throughout history, and the tension has risen from time to time because of this. However, the problem of determining the maritime jurisdiction areas that emerged after the newly discovered energy resources in the region carried the confrontations in the region to another dimension between the two countries. However, the problem of determining the maritime jurisdiction areas that emerged after the newly discovered energy resources in the region carried the problems in the region to another dimension between Turkey and Greece. The conflict process between the countries, which started with the Maritime Boundary Delimitation Agreement signed by Turkey and Libya on November 27, 2019, has affected not only the region but also the international system.

This study focuses on the cause of this conflict between Turkey and Greece. In previous studies on the subject, various explanations have been made regarding the conflict between the two countries. While some studies argue that the reason for this conflict is Turkey's reaction to its exclusion from the region by Greece, some claim that ideologies such as nationalism or neo-Ottomanism increase the tension between

the parties, while others evaluate the current conflict only on the axis of energy resources.

Explanations on this subject are insufficient to explain the issue at the system level. After the Cold War, there was only one pole in the world, and the US became the only dominant power in the world with the collapse of the Soviet Union. However, the hegemony of the US, which has been going on for more than two decades, has weakened in recent years with the strengthening of Russia and China in the international system. The power shift in the international system has caused a power vacuum in some regions where the US is hegemon. The Eastern Mediterranean is one of them. The main idea of the research that the existence or absence of a hegemon power in the international system is a factor that affects the state behaviors in foreign policy at the regional level. The main argument of the research is that there is an inverse proportion between the existence of superpower and conflict by using offensive realism as a theoretical framework. The theoretical test with the argument for this study is made over the conflict between Turkey and Greece in the Eastern Mediterranean Sea. The case is studied with the process-tracing method that is a part of the qualitative research method. The process-tracing method that has an assumption with cause-effect relationship is chosen for the research because of the explanatory characteristic of the research question.

In the first part of the study, various explanations related to the conflict between Turkey and Greece were focused on and it was emphasized that the explanations were insufficient to explain the conflict in the international system dimension. In the next section, the theoretical framework of the subject is presented. In this section, change and stability in the international system are explained from defensive and offensive realist perspectives, and it is concluded that the change in the system can be explained with offensive realism, which claims that the change in the system is due to the rise of revisionist powers. In the last part of the study, the power shift in the international system is explained first. Then, the history of the Turkey-Greece conflict in the East Mediterranean was evaluated based on the international system. The historical examination is limited to the period between post-World War II and the present. As a result, it was concluded that the periods when the tension between

the two countries increased coincided with the periods when there was a power vacuum in the region



## CHAPTER II

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### 2.1. Introduction

The Mediterranean takes the attraction of both Turkey and Greece and other states because of having Cyprus that is located on maritime commercial ways. The region has one of the major airlines, Sicily, Maltese Islands, the Suez Canal that conjoin the East Mediterranean Sea and the Indian Ocean. Also, it controls the Middle East and its neighbors that have more than half of the world petroleum. The East Mediterranean is on the trade ways that integrate the east and west of the world in consideration of geographical location. Because the East Mediterranean reaches to Mesopotamia and the Near East through Turkey and Syria, the Arabian Peninsula, and the Persian Gulf through the Suez Canal. (Yaycı, 2012: 4-5).

The East Mediterranean as a critical area from past to today, have become disputed once again after new energy resources were discovered and led to the emergence of conflicted exclusive zones. Even the states that do not have a coast to the sea have started to follow the developments and play an active role in the politics of the region. However, geographically, they do not belong to the region; England, the US, Russia, France, and Italy are engaged in the region with international energy companies. The existence of naval ships of many states in the East Mediterranean produces security risks for states in the region. Also, all the related riparian states claim to have exclusive economic zones. Because of the specific geographic character of the region, it is not easy to delimitate the maritime zones. Now, there is not an inclusive agreement that all claimant states utilize.

Besides new resources, the rapidly increasing uncertainty and instability have turned the East Mediterranean into a geopolitical area with a set of idiosyncratic dynamics. The existence of weak and nondemocratic states in the region, such as crisis ridden Lebanon, Libya, Syria, Cyprus, and Palestine, might be shown as the reason for

turbulence in the region. The struggle for influence is one of the most important dimensions of uncertainty in the East Mediterranean.

The tension between Turkey and Greece, which are important regional powers, has escalated in recent years because they share maritime zones in the East Mediterranean. The first step was signing of international agreements by Greek Cypriot Administration of Southern Cyprus, the only representative that administers the natural resources surrounding the island. Turkey that does not recognize the Greek Cypriot as the only representative of the island argues that the Greek Cypriot Side and Greece aim to isolate Turkey from the Mediterranean Sea by restraining it, to the north of the region. In response, Turkey signed a Maritime Boundary Delimitation Agreement with Libya on 27 November 2019 to protect its rights derived from international law. This agreement as another factor that has escalated the tension between Turkey and Greece. Not only Greece but also all other riparian states have reacted against the agreement because the Government of National Accord in Libya does not have the legitimacy to sign an international agreement on behalf of the country and the agreement is contradictory to international law. Despite the reactions, the agreement was approved by the UN. (Acer, 2020: 2-3). Upon that, Greece signed an Exclusive Zone Agreement with Egypt on 6 August 2020 to remove the consequences of the agreement between Turkey and Libya. The agreement that was signed between Greece and Egypt to create an exclusive economic zone have caused new legal and political disputes. The agreement has prompted Turkey's objections. Turkey has considered the agreement invalid according to international law. The agreement has led to serious consequences which could trigger new conflicts in the region. While the Delimitation Agreement between Turkey and Libya has increased the tension, it seems that Greece has made some concessions by recognizing the limited influence of some Greek islands in delimitations of continental shelves (Acer, 2020:25-26).

## **2.2. Research Question**

Beside the legal aspect, it is very important to take the conflict between Turkey and Greece as a political problem. In this light the research question that this study seeks

to grapple with is why the tension between Turkey and Greece has increased in the East Mediterranean.

At this stage, Turkey and Greece seem to initiate a negotiation process. Making sense of the reasons why Turkey and Greece clash is important to develop future projections about the region. Understanding the roots of the problem might help to improve our predictions regarding which direction the current disputes will evolve. Now the East Mediterranean is in a very critical juncture as to the rising security dilemma of the states in the region. More particularly, Turkey's interests in the East Mediterranean play a critical role in the security of the homeland. Also, as mentioned before, the East Mediterranean dispute is not only a regional but also a global issue. Hence, the topic will continue to occupy the headlines even after the problem of sharing of energy resources is resolved. More, the conflict in the East Mediterranean is crucial due to continuing dispute over Cyprus, which is geopolitically and geo-strategically the most significant island as to the weight it carries in controlling the East Mediterranean and the Middle East. (Yaycı, 2012:5).

Another important factor that one should bear in mind that the international system currently evolves into a multipolarity. The US, which has held to hegemonic position in the system for a long time, seems to be balanced by provisional alliances by powerful actors such as Russia, China, and some regional actors. The topic carries importance in terms of examining the repercussions of power shift in the international system over the region.

### **2.3. Methodology and Data Collecting**

The research started with a literature review. In the first part of the literature review, the existing explanations regarding the current conflict between Turkey and Greece in the East Mediterranean were discussed and the gap in the literature was revealed. In the second part of the literature review, the theoretical framework of the study was formed, the views of various realists on the change in the international system were examined, and the current change in the system was discussed.

In the next part of the study, the case study will be made with a process tracing method, which is qualitative research method that examines one case or a few cases and examines casual mechanisms. The process tracing method is preferred because it approaches the cases in the context of cause-effect relationship. While looking for evidence in terms of cause, and effect relationship to the cases, the method of dealing with the events on a chronological basis was applied. In this light, the conflicts between Turkey and Greece in the East Mediterranean will be discussed together with the structure of the international system and the historical process and causes of the events will be examined.

The process tracing method has some disadvantages. One of the most important of these shortcomings is that large-scale generalizations carry risks. Since it is a case-based methodology, it is not suitable for larger generalizations. The argument presented in this study is valid for the conflict between Turkey and Greece in East Mediterranean and cannot be generalized to the conflicts of the parties in other issues and regions.

#### **2.4. Literature Review**

In the last decade, with the discovery of energy resources in the region, the East Mediterranean has turned into a region where states have had to reshape and rebuild their energy policies and strategies. The region has become one of the focal points of regional and global power struggles. With these developments, the number of studies over the East Mediterranean policies of the countries has expanded. Though it is a new subject, there has emerged competing accounts on why tension in the East Mediterranean between Turkey and Greece has increased in recent years.

Among those, these are the most important: the nationalist-historical approach, the economy-energy approach, the ideological change (or neo-Ottomanism) approach, the role of the leader (populism) approach, the defensive revisionism approach, and the structural change or the power vacuum approach.

Let's get started with the historical-nationalist approach. Heinz-Jurgen Axt argues that energy resources are in great demand in the East Mediterranean. In relation to this, and Turkey has had problems with Greece for over 60 years and with Cyprus for around a decade. Not only these three countries but also other actors of the region such as Libya, Israel, and Egypt are party to this conflict in the region. The situation became critical after the memorandum between Turkey and Libya for delimitation in maritime zones. These conflicts with the boundary claims of Greece and Cyprus. The memorandum has mobilized the Greek navy. This is evaluated as "casus belli" by Turkish Vice President Fuat Oktay., The Greek Foreign Minister Nikos Dendias, on the other hand, criticized Turkey for pursuing neo-Ottomanist foreign policy (Axt, 2021:133-134).

Nevertheless, all the actors in the conflict show willingness to initiate a process of dialogue. To Axt, the question is what the ways of a permanent and peaceful resolution of the conflict are? To answer this question, one has to take the historical background of the conflict into consideration and to dig for and entrenched negative perceptions of stakeholders (Axt, 2021:134).

Thus, Axt points out that Turkey is isolated and a latecomer in the East Mediterranean. This has become obvious after the East Med Gas Forum, which was established on 16 January 2020 by Greece, Cyprus, Israel, Egypt, Jordan, and Palestine with its headquarters in Cairo. France, too, has demanded to join the Forum while the US announced its desire to be considered as the permanent observer. In January 2020, Greece, Cyprus, and Israel signed an agreement to construct a pipeline to pump gas to Europe via the East Mediterranean. Although to what extent the project could be realizable is open to dispute, the matter is the exclusion of Turkey from the cooperation in the region. (Axt, 2021:135-136).

The exclusion does not prevent Turkey from developing a geopolitical agenda to ameliorate its negative effects. Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan explained, in front of a map, its country's political objectives on 2 September 2019, which marks the date when Turkey gained a victory against occupying Greek forces in Anatolia in 1922. The map shows that almost half of the Aegean Sea and until the region the east of the Crete belongs to Turkey according to the so-called Blue

Homeland Doctrine, which was designed by admiral Ramazan Cem Gürdeniz in 2006. To Axt, this doctrine posits an expansionist and nationalist vision the in Turkish foreign policy. (Axt, 2021:136).

President Erdoğan also criticized the Lausanne Treaty, which ended Turkey's Independence War and was signed in 1924, in his speech in September 2016. He contended that contrary to popular belief the treaty could not be considered a success. The treaty, which shaped the national borders between Turkey and Greece, was rather a defeat for Turkey. This is because Turkey left the Dodecanese islands to Greece and today it still suffers the unfortunate consequences of the treaty. President Erdoğan's statement was applauded and welcomed by the nationalists, particularly its present coalition partner, the Nationalist Action Party (Axt, 2021: 137).

Axt suggests that President Erdoğan's statements should be interpreted from the perspective of mutual enemy stereotypes in Greece and Turkey. The Greek collective memory is determined by its nationalist struggle against the Ottoman Empire. The Ottoman Turks are seen as invaders of Greek territories. The struggle for national independence and sovereignty amounts to ending of four- century old Ottoman bondage. What is seen as independence for Greece is seen a defeat for Turkey. (Axt, 2021: 137-138).

Modern Greek national identity, which is primarily. Constructed on Hellenic and Byzantine past in Asia Minor, puts Greece at odds with Turkey. This is because Greece, at least the Greek nationalists, has the "Great Idea" (Megali Idea), which envisions territorial expansion to revive the Byzantine Empire. This enforces Greece to exploit the resources up to the median line between the Eastern Greek islands and the Turkish coast. (Axt, 2021:138).

To sum up, the mutual negative images, which are produced and circulated by curriculums at school and media representations, are rooted in two countries' collective memories. Thus, to explain the current tension between Turkey and Greece in the East Mediterranean needs to take into account the disruptive role that the enemy stereotypes play.

This assumption is not new in the literature. It has been deployed to explain the Aegean conflict between Turkey and Greece. For instance, according to Şen, the “other” perception of the nationalism of two countries prevents to resolve the disputes in the region. As nationalism provides social integration inside, it contains a confrontational aspect outside. The “us” is constructed against an enemy or “other” outside. The Turkish and Greek nationalisms in the Aegean Sea conflict is a sharp example of this situation. While Greece perceives Turkey as a threat to the Dodecanese islands because of their historical ties to the Ottomans, Turkey is concerned with Greece’s Hellenist approach and the Megali Idea (Şen, 2015:179, 221).

The enemy perceptions of Greece and Turkey about each other can be seen as an important factor breeding tensions between the two countries. The antagonism between “us” and “other” is attractive and dominant in the context of nationalist ideology. However, it loses its meaning as one approaches to the issue with methodological sensitivity. The assumption suffers to explain the conflict, first of all, because it ignores the influence of other actors in the region. Indeed, there are rooted historical problems between Greece and Turkey, yet this does not explain the alliances in the region. Alliances are rather determined by non-ideological, material interests. For instance, Libya, one of the important allies of Turkey, does not share Turkey’s enemy perception of Greece. However, its relations with Turkey have grown significantly and these two countries formed an alliance at the expense of Greece.

Also, Turkey and Greece had good relations during the 1999 earthquake in Turkey. If nationalism always determines the nature of bilateral relations between the two countries, the question arises why these countries were reconciled at that time. The nationalism thesis cannot explain periodical changes in the bilateral relations between the two countries. Hence, it could aptly be claimed that the primary factor should be other rather than nationalism in explaining the conflict between these two countries.

There are studies that attempt to explain the conflict between Turkey and Greece in the East Mediterranean with the energy-economy thesis. Betül Algür, for instance,

argues that Turkey's interest to the region could be explained in the context of near-term Cyprus issue Turkey, the East Mediterranean is perceived as a national case because of the Cyprus issue. She associates the Cyprus issue with the hydrocarbon problem that has emerged in the East Mediterranean in recent years. Only Turkey recognizes the existence of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus as a sovereign state in the international arena. The Greek Cypriot Administration of Southern Cyprus assumes all the authority on behalf of the whole Cyprus. Despite the objection of Turkey, regional countries, and international actors such as the US and the EU support the and Greek thesis. (Algür, 2020, 56).

According to the author, the most important problem is the recognition of TRNC. Despite embargo and diplomatic loneliness, it maintains its existence as an independent and sovereign state. The recognition of this existence by the international community juridically would provide an insight into the delimitation problem of maritime jurisdiction in the East Mediterranean. (Algür, 2020:66).

Besides some factors that the geography brings Turkey, the hegemony struggle gathers speed with the effect of natural resources which was discovered in East Mediterranean. While until last 10 years, Turkey had a dispute with only Greece and GSAC in Cyprus where it has important interests in strategic, economic, and national aspects, today it had a face with many states because of the new energy resources. (Algür, 2020:66).

Unlawful Exclusive Economic Zone Agreements that were signed by many states in East Mediterranean, energy transmission lines, continental shelf issues became critical for Turkey. Energy Resources of the East Mediterranean carry Cyprus issue to a dynamic and competitive level by taking from the context of static historical problems. In the geography, a supremacy that will be provided by excluding Turkey, constitutes a big threat for Turkey, while supremacy that could be provided by Turkey will serve as a shield. The East Mediterranean policy of Turkey aims to save the rights of Turkish Cypriots and provide a fair share of energy to provide for its national security. (Algür, 2020:66-67).

Murat Ercan and Mehmet Can Kılınç have the similar energy economy approach that explains the East Mediterranean conflict with exploration of new energy resources and associate it with the Cyprus issue between Greece and Greek Cyprus. (Ercan &, Kılınç, 2020: 15). Mustafa Erçakıca 2021 argues that Turkey determines the sovereignty rights in the Black Sea by making a deal with the regional actors. But it has problems in the Aegean with Greece and in the East Mediterranean with Greek Cyprus and Greece. The resource of the problems in East Mediterranean is the nonrecognition of the rights of Turkey and TRNC. The East Mediterranean policy of Turkey is shaped for reaching a solution that protect the interests of Turkish Cypriots. (Erçakıca, 2021:330).

The energy economy approach considers that Turkey's East Mediterranean energy policy has developed based on security concerns in conjunction with the Cyprus problem. Turkey evaluates the Exclusive Economic Zone delimitation agreements, hydrocarbon tenders, and production and marketing projects in which Turkish Cypriots and itself are excluded, as violation of their rights, rising from international law. In this context, it pursues the power maximization against the alliances against itself and Turkish Cypriots that Turkey is guarantor of. Thus, the energy resources cannot only be associated with economy but also it is related with security problem and the primary reason of the alliances against Turkey is the power vacuum in the system while, the hydrocarbon resources are an important factor that increase the tension in the region.

Third one is the neo-Ottomanism approach. According to this explanation the conflict between Turkey and Greece in the East Mediterranean is related to ideology change in Turkish foreign policy. Merz Fabien is one of the authors who explains in 2020, escalation between Turkey and Greece/ Cyprus in the East Mediterranean explains with the neo-Ottoman foreign policy of Turkey He argues that in order to understand today's East Mediterranean, it is needed to look at the past decade of Turkish foreign policy. "Zero problems with neighbors" policy that shaped Turkish Foreign Policy during the first decade of AK Party government left by Turkey in the second decade. (Febien, 2020:2).

Febien claims that there are several, related and debated reasons for the departure of Turkey from that policy. The main reason is observed as Turkey's moving away from the European Union and West because of its willingness to revive the past glory of the Ottoman Empire. This new brand of Turkish foreign policy is coined as "neo-ottoman" beside the observers that define it as nationalistic. Neo- Ottomanism is an ideology that supports that Turkey should embrace the political, regional, and cultural heritage of the Ottoman Empire by expanding its influence in wider regions where the Ottoman Empire had penetrated. (Febien, 2020:3).

While new foreign policy estranged Turkey from NATO and the EU members, on the other hand, it ruptured its relations which were already problematical and complicated with Egypt and Israel that are two major actors of the East Mediterranean. In Egypt, Turkey strongly supported the resistance in the process that started with the effect of Arab Spring and resulted in the democratic elections won by the Muslim Brotherhood and Mohammed Morsi in 2012. The overthrow of Morsi with the military coup in 2013 was rigorously condemned by Turkey. The reaction of Turkey put Ankara and Cairo at loggerheads. On the other hand, the relations with Israel that had relatively got better at the beginning of the 2000s, are corrupted with Turkey's international activism for the Palestinian case and harsh criticism of the Jewish state against the handling of this issue by Turkey. (Febien, 2020:3).

The author contends that, because of these bad relations, Turkey was excluded from the regional cooperation initiatives in the East Mediterranean. Greece, the Republic of Cyprus, Israel, and Egypt created the East Mediterranean Gas Forum (EMGF) to expand their gas reserves. But Turkey was not invited to the forum. On the contrary, EastMed Gas Pipeline projects to transform the gas of the East Mediterranean from Greece to Israel via the Republic of Cyprus and eventually to Europe by leaving Turkey out of the equation. (Febien 2020:3).

The regional initiatives which aim to exclude Turkey increased the concern of Turkey about accessing East Mediterranean energy resources and reducing its dependency on energy import. Turkey is driven by the Blue Homeland Doctrine (Mavi Vatan) in foreign policy, counteracted with confrontation, and took serious steps to make itself evident in the region. (Febien, 2020:3).

The Blue Homeland Doctrine is a naval doctrine that was introduced in 2006. It is a conception that protects the interests of Turkey in the seas. It projects a more assertive Turkish stance in the seas which surround Turkey including the Mediterranean. The ultimate aim of the doctrine is to increase the regional and international influence of Turkey and provide access to energy resources to support economic and demographic growth by reducing external dependence. However, the doctrine emerged in the half of the 2000s, it has gained importance in recent years in Turkish foreign policy discourse. The doctrine corresponds to the ambition of Turkey to revive the glory of the Ottoman Empire and expanding its influence. The author argues that the Republic of Turkey's Directorate of Communication published a video in September 2019. The video makes an analogy between the Ottoman victories against Christian nations in the East Mediterranean in the 16th century and the existence of the Turkish navy in the East Mediterranean today. (Febien, 2020:3).

As a reaction to the exclusion of Turkey from the regional cooperation, Ankara made a widely criticized Maritime Boundary Delimitation agreement with Libyan GNA in September 2019. The agreement is perceived as one of the concrete steps of the Blue Homeland doctrine. The Exclusive Economic Zones that were determined by the sides block the EastMed Pipeline, ignore the Greek islands as continental shelf. The legitimacy of the agreement is objected by some East Mediterranean States including Greece, Greek Cyprus, Israel and Egypt and the EU. The escalation increased with the Exclusive Economic Zone Agreement that was signed between Greece and Egypt on 6 August 2020 that contradicted to the agreement between Greece and Libya. Thus, to explain today's conflict in the East Mediterranean, it is needed to look at Turkey's shifting foreign policy towards a neo-Ottomanist ideology and reasserting the Blue Homeland Doctrine in its policies towards the seas around itself. (Febien 2020:4).

Aziz ur Rahman and Zafar Abbas also focus on the neo-Ottomanist foreign policy of Turkey in the East Mediterranean. They argue that Turkey has revisioned its history under the leadership of President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan. Particularly for the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region., Turkey determines its agenda under the frame of neo-Ottoman policy. After Turkey's revisionist policies towards Syria and Egypt had started, now it revises its foreign policy against the West and North

Africa. The East Mediterranean policy of Turkey is driven by the Blue Homeland doctrine. The Blue Homeland doctrine is about expanding Turkey's existence in the Mediterranean, the Aegean, and the Black Sea as it was in its Ottoman past. Thus, the reason behind the tension in the East Mediterranean is precipitated by the Blue Homeland doctrine, which has led Turkey to pursue an ambitious foreign policy to recover Turkey's its lost territorial and economic influence in its vicinity. (Rahman, Abbas, 2020:133-140).

Ioannis N. Grigoriadis also explains destabilization in the East Mediterranean with the Blue Homeland Doctrine To him, one of the most important factors that increases the tension in the region is the Blue Homeland vision and its rising mainstreaming. The author argues that the Blue Homeland ambitions of Turkey are to turn into a major naval power and consolidate its hegemonic role in the East Mediterranean. In recent years, this vision is increasingly taken into consideration by pro-government media and official statements. The involvement of Turkey in the domestic war in Libya and the dependence of the GNA side to Turkey gained the opportunity for signing memorandum with Libya on 27 November 2019 that is interpreted as the first step for the realization of "the Blue Homeland. (Grigoriadis, 2021:38-41). Ioannis Mazis also stresses the importance of the neo-Ottomanist ideology in explaining the tension. (Mazis, 2021:24-25).

In the same vein, Yazgı Nur Akin resorts to the ideology change in handling the topic. She uses the role theory as a foreign policy analysis tool to examine national role conceptions of Turkey and its implications over the East Mediterranean. The thesisShe aims to associate with the national roles of Turkey with its political and economic policies in the East Mediterranean by following the studies of several academicians such as K. J. Holsti who researches the role of the beliefs, images, and identities of the foreign policy elites that rule the state. To offer a comprehensive perspective, her work examines the official foreign policy speeches of high-level decision-makers since 2018. She utilizes the content analysis method based on word count by using roles and related keywords. The most emphasized 10 roles were visualized, and the same method was used to show the actor-based roles. The basic argument of the thesis is that the role theory has more explanatory power to

understand the foreign policy decision of Turkey about the East Mediterranean compared to mainstream theories. (Akin, 2021: 1-2).

Akin argues that until 2002 when the AK Party came to power, Turkish Foreign policy had been shaped by bureaucratic and military elites for many years. With the AK Party rule, Turkey has started to be interested in regional developments and changes instead of western-oriented foreign policy. Identity, cultural and historical heritage gained importance in foreign policy understanding. Especially after 2011, the Arab Uprisings facilitated Turkey to play a more active role in North Africa and the Middle East. Thus, while the previous leaders and other foreign policy actors had more moderate roles in the country, the condition has changed with the AK Party period. (Akin, 2021:70-71).

When the number of speeches of Recep Tayyip Erdoğan evaluated, it could be understood that he is very active in Turkish Foreign policy, and they have consistent with Minister of Foreign Affairs Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu in their speeches. There is a complete harmony between the general role concepts of Turkish Foreign policy and roles in the East Mediterranean. The most emphasized national role conceptions of Turkish foreign policy are “regional leader”, “protector of the oppressed”, “leader of the Muslim world”, “rule maker”, “central country”, and “active independent” after The Arab uprisings while these roles were a “defender of regional peace and stability”, “regional subsystem”, “collaborator”, “good neighbor”, “mediator”, “a bridge between civilizations and trade state” in the past for MENA. The national role conceptions of Turkish decision-makers were found extremely consistent with the “leader”, “protector”, “decision maker” in foreign policy initiatives of Turkey for the East Mediterranean. Also, the thesis argues that the model of Turkey which has a sense of ownership against regional problems and offers solutions at the regional level is a comprehensive concept in Turkish Foreign policy. With the new explorations of oil and natural gas, the strategic importance of the East Mediterranean increase. The region becomes the focus of global powers with increasing threats, risks, and opportunities. In parallel, the responsibility of Turkey to solve the problems of not only Turkey but also the whole region will increase. For the future, in addition to political, economic, military measures and national role

conceptions, Turkey should apply the public diplomacy method and use a complementary language. (Akin, 2021: 72-73).

Also, there is a mention of the criticism of national role conceptions. The role theory is not able to explain the foreign policy decisions completely because it ignores international pressures and social setting factors that can be caused a quick and unexpected change in the conceptions. (Akin, 2021:74).

According to this view, Turkey aims to expand its regional and international influence and revive the glory of the Ottoman Empire. In other words, Turkey aims to be the hegemon in the region such as Ottoman Empire. But in this situation, it needs an opportunity to bring this policy into action. As it is explained before, in recent years, there are set of geopolitics, economic and technologic developments in the Middle East that unsettle the hegemon role of the US and have forced it to focus on other areas by withdrawing from the region. Even if the US has protected its geopolitical advantages and economic and military power, being hegemon power singly has become impossible for the US because its power has declined relatively against its rising opponents China and Russia. These developments show their influence in the region. Now, there is not an order maker of global power in the Middle East. The power vacuum is an opportunity to follow neo-Ottomanist or revisionist policy.

Also, there are contradictions in neo-Ottomanism thesis. Firstly, Cihat Yaycı, who is the mastermind behind the Blue Homeland Doctrine, is a retired rear admiral. He is not a neo-Ottomanist in his ideological stance. Secondly, Greece has already signed an energy agreement with the neighboring states before Turkey had begun to follow the Blue Homeland strategy in the region. The first move came from Greece and not from Turkey. Turkey is just reacting to the initiative started by Greece and other anti-Turkey countries to contain Turkey or leave it outside the sharing of newly discovered energy resources. So, the ideology change, or neo-Ottomanism should not be the primary explanation of the conflict as well.

The other thesis that attempts to explain the conflict in the East Mediterranean is the role of the leader or populism approach.” argues that there is a trend of

personalization in the foreign policy decision-making process, nationalization in the implementation of the foreign policy, and civilization in the foreign policy discourse. Particularly after Gezi Parkı protests in 2013 and the military coup attempt in 2016, the anti-Western tone of the AK Party government has increased. The problems such as terror attacks, refugee inflows and the S-400 crisis have triggered this opposition. Eventually, Turkey has come to the point of “precious loneliness” that is used by the government spokesperson Ibrahim Kalın to define Turkey’s current state in international politics. The foreign policy discourse of President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan explains the conflict as a clash between West and Eastern civilizations. He emphasizes that they will defend the rights of Turkey despite the threats posed by the West in the East Mediterranean. To President Erdoğan, it is claimed, the West is evil and has turned the Mediterranean, which is one of the oldest civilizations, into a graveyard after upon the death of thousands of refugees who sought to cross to Europe from the North Africa. To Taş, there is an integration of Kemalism and Ottoman/ Muslim nationalism in the foreign policy discourse of Erdoğan. He makes references from the discourse of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk which canalizes national powers to evoke Muslim nationalism against the Western powers. To Cem Gürdeniz, who proposed the Blue Homeland doctrine even before the others, the Exclusive Economic Zone claim of Greek Cyprus includes the invasion of the East Mediterranean and it reminds the Treaty of Sevr which ended World War I and divided Turkish territory among the Western powers. President Erdoğan defines the agreement between Libya and Turkey as a maneuver that reverses the influence of the Treaty of Sevr. (Taş, 2020: 14-18).

The East Mediterranean policy of Turkey could be interpreted with the role of the leader or populism approach to an extent. However, it fails to provide a satisfactory explanation as we consider the fact that the role of the leader approach focuses on the end point not the starting point. What this means is that it is interested in the revisionist policy of Turkey more than the reasons that motive Turkey to follow this policy. And even worse, it mistakenly suggests the Turkey’s revisionism as the cause for the conflict instead of the effect. The starting point is the emerging power vacuum in the region due to the US’s withdrawal. The end point or the effect is Turkey’s move to fill the vacuum and meeting the security threat posed by the anti-Turkey coalition in the region.

Another explanation for the tension in the East Mediterranean is the defensive revisionism approach which refers to the struggle of Turkey to break the power block that aims to surround and contain it in the region. Tuğrul Oğuzhan Yılmaz. Yılmaz, for instance, argues that Turkey is under a geopolitical surrounding from Aegean to East Mediterranean, from Syria to Libya and Cyprus. The western camp that wants to end the activity of Turkey in the Aegean, the East Mediterranean, and Cyprus, aims to disconnect the country with the seas by confining it to Anatolia. Thus, the East Mediterranean policy of Turkey occupies an important position. Particularly, the initiatives against Turkey that are driven by the US, Israel, Greece, and GCASC have turned into a systematic alliance formation against Turkey. In this framework, it could be expressed that Turkey and the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus are aimed to push out of the equilibrium in the region considering the sharing of hydrocarbon reserves in the East Mediterranean. The US and Israel indirectly target Turkey by carrying joint military exercises out with Greece and the Greek Cyprus. (Yılmaz, 2020: 7).

To Yılmaz, it is very important to follow the triple alliance between Israel, Greece, and GRNC about the share of energy corridors in the East Mediterranean. In this sense, he remarks that the East Med Project that is pursued by the states in question with reconciliation with other states in the region. The East Mediterranean Pipeline Project that is named as the East Med project is only one of the initiatives to the direct detriment of Turkey. The joint ventures of Israel, Greece, and Greek Cyprus directly concerns the interests of Turkey in the Blue Homeland. Because the pipeline routes of the project violate the Exclusive Economic Zones of Turkey with the project it is desired to carry the natural gas to Greece with pipelines that are passed underwater until Crete to export the natural gas from Israel to Europe. The East Med that is defined as the energy corridor of the EU also aims to transform natural gas to Italy and Balkans through the East Mediterranean. (Yılmaz, 2020:8).

Also, to Volkan Özdemir, the East Med Project has a high cost to serve the energy need of Europe, and Israel's gas does not have important export potential. In addition, the passing of relevant lines through the continental shelf of Turkey opens the legitimacy of the project up for discussion beside the legal ground. Also, in this context, it is expressed that Italy wanted to be included in the agreement between

Israel, Greece, and the GRNC. Also, the contacts and joint projects which are driven by Greece and the GRNC with Egypt could be considered as an attempt to expand the cooperation against Turkey. Besides the dialogue process with the states such as the US, Israel, and Egypt for the East Med, Greece and the GRNC have increased the tension in the region with joint military exercises such as Medusa and Noble Dina which directly target Turkey. Moreover, Greece has to make negotiations with Palestine, which is supported by Turkey for a long time, and embark on a quest for implicit support. Also, Greece and the GRNC have driven an intensive dialogue process with the states such as France, Jordan, and the United Arab Emirates purposes to push Turkey out of the equation. (Yılmaz, 2020:8).

Yılmaz argues that when the current developments are considered, it could be expressed that Turkey is attempting to be isolated in the East Mediterranean. Turkey should tend towards regional cooperation to defeat the threats that are intended for it. But primarily, to hold on to the existing equation in the East Mediterranean, making several changes in foreign policy seems an inevitable necessity for Turkey. The agreement that was signed on 27 November 2019 draws a line at the initiatives of Greece and the GRNC against Turkey. Thus, Turkey has not only made a maritime border determination agreement with a riparian country for the first time, but also announced to the international public that it is dependent on legal instruments and diplomacy. To sum up, the main objective of Turkey in the East Mediterranean is to remove the power bloc that aims to exclude it from the regional cooperation in the seas and confine it to Anatolia. The initiatives that are taken by Turkey in the region can provide the collapse of the project against itself. And the agreement with Libya is an important step in this process. (Yılmaz, 2020:18-19).

Volkan Tibet Gür, too, offers a similar explanation To Gür, the reason behind the tension in the region is the isolation of Turkey from the regionalization process in the region. This explanation is made by intensifying on the East Med Gas Forum that is explained before. He argues that the potential of Turkey to be a regional hegemon is perceived as a threat by the littoral states. And this threat forces the states to cooperate against Turkey. Isolation from a regionalization process where the ideas are institutionalized, and cooperation is provided has directed Turkey to seek other

alliances to prevent exclusion. The agreement between Libya in 2019 is the result of this pursuit. (Gür, 2020:98-100).

The official declaration of the spokesperson of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Hami Aksoy as a response to the question regarding the signature of the Agreement on the EastMed Project has coincided with this approach. According to the statement, the signature of the agreement about the EastMed Project is an example of the vain steps that aim to exclude Turkey and the TRNC in the region. No project can be successful that ignores Turkey, which has the longest coastline, and the Turkish Cypriots that have equal right in the natural resources in the Cyprus island. Turkey is the safest and the most convenient way for using natural resources in the East Mediterranean and transforming them to the consumer markets in Europe. Despite this, refusing cooperation with Turkey is an indicator of the seeking for ineffectual political motivations rather than cooperation. The statement ends with the expression that we will remind the owner of the project that such sordid plans will continue to fail as in the past. (Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs: 2020).

As explained above, the assumption is that Turkey struggles to break off the circle that surrounds it in the East Mediterranean. But the same problem with previous explanations is also valid for this assumption. Is the defensive revisionism as the primary approach to explain the conflict between Turkey and Greece? Like the role of leader approach, the defensive revisionism focuses on the effect rather than cause. The first thing that is needed to be explained that how the anti-Turk coalition has emerged. In this approach, the underlying reason behind formation of the bloc against Turkey is missed. The factor that triggers this bloc is the power vacuum in the region due to US's withdrawal.

Hence, it is not possible to deny the explanatory power of all these perspectives about the question. The role of the enemy stereotypes between Turkey and Greece, the nationalist-historical approach, the energy-economy approach, the neo-Ottomanist or ideology change approach, and the defensive revisionism approach, have contributed a lot to understanding the reasons behind the conflict in the East Mediterranean. But these perspectives fall short of explaining the change in the unipolarity of the international system and the reflections of this change to the East

Mediterranean. In this research, it is argued that offensive and neo-classical realism which assumes that the international system has an anarchic structure and states pursue to maximize their powers for protecting their interests and ensuring their existences, offers a proper point of view to interpret the regional policies in the light of recent developments.

Robert Gilpin, for instance, argues that states always make cost benefit analysis within the international system, which is dynamic and unstable. Not only international change but also changes in the domestic politics can cause a change in national interest understanding of the states. Thereby, the changes in both national and international structures could break the status quo and change the interests of the states. If this change reaches to a critical level, it leads the system a new order that is based on a new balance of power and institutional structure. The transformation is carried out through hegemonic wars. And the agreements after the war shape the new system. In other words, even it is possible to solve some cost and benefit crisis within the existing international structure in peaceful ways, the war is perceived as the main tool to solve the crisis. (Gilpin, 1993:149-152).

Also, Schweller criticizes the status quo bias of some realist scholars. Defensive realists such as Kenneth Waltz and Stephan Walt believe that states are willing to preserve the values that they have and they pay high cost and take great risks to defend the values they already have, while they pay a little cost and take low cost to improve their positions in the system. They ignore the presence of the existence of dissatisfied states in the system. The satisfied states tend to protect what they already have. Yet the dissatisfied states have different and opposing purposes. They seek to increase their powers and improve their positions in the system. (Schweller, 1994: 85-86). Also, Schweller criticizes the idea that balancing and bandwagoning are opposite terms each other. They are only applied with different motivations. In other words, rather than being opposite behaviors, they should be associated with the opposition in the international system. While balancing is associated with status quo, bandwagoning is used in the change. (Schweller, 1994: 106-7).

All in all, the international system can be found in two states: the status quo and the revisionist periods. And states follow two generic forms of foreign policy revisionist

in times of structural instability and pro-status quo in times of stability. The next chapter grapples with these theoretical issues to provide a basis to the discussion of the topic at hand.



## CHAPTER III

# CHANGE AND STABILITY IN THE INTERNATIONAL SYSTEM

### 3.1. Introduction

This chapter is on stability and change in the international system. The aim of the chapter is to provide the best explanation for the instability in the international system in recent years by examining different theoretical perspectives. The power shift in the international system has been explained from a realist perspective, which explains the system through power elements and derivatives.

The realist paradigm is a set of various approaches that differ from each other. Although different types of approaches within realism have many common assumptions about the international system, the international system reveals different approaches to stability and change. Some realists view change as changes in the distribution of power in the international system, while others view it from a broader perspective. Hans Morgenthau, one of the most important representatives of classical realism, attributes the instability in the system to the deterioration of the balance between revisionist states and status quo states in favor of revisionist states, while structural realists such as Kenneth Waltz and Stephan Walt attribute this to the excessive or neglecting balancing. According to Gilpin, change or destabilization occurs as the result of the decrease in the power difference between the hegemonic power and other actors in the system as result of political, economic, and technological developments. Randall Schweller, who has a similar point of view, claims that the stability in the international system would disrupt with the rise of revisionist states.

Accordingly, in this chapter, the views of the classical realist Morgenthau, Waltz and Walt, who have a defensive point of view, and the offensive realists Gilpin and

Schweller, on change in the international system will be examined respectively. In conclusion, the reason for the instability in the international system today is that the current power distribution created by the rise of revisionist powers such as Russia and China do not reflect the unipolar order that emerged after the Cold War. The regional power vacuums created by this global power shift have mobilized regional revisionist forces.

### **3.2. Classical Realism**

According to Morgenthau who is one of the most important names of realism, the desire to dominate is a constitutive element of all human associations from family affairs to state. For instance, at the family level, the conflict between the mother-in-law and the child's spouse is the power struggle between the defense of the existing power and the desire to establish a new power. As such, it is a miniature of the conflict between the policies of the status quo and policies of revisionism at the international level. Not only families but social clubs, associations, faculties, and business organizations are places of constant power struggles between groups seeking to retain or gain more power they already have. The entire political life of a nation, in particular a democratic nation, from the local to the national level, is a constant struggle for power. In periodic elections, voting in legislative assemblies, court cases, administrative decisions, and executive measures, men seek to maintain or to establish their own power over other people. Morgenthau argues that given this prevalence of power struggle in all social relations and at all levels of social organization, it is not surprising that international politics is necessarily a struggle for power.

Since the international system is a power struggle and states are in pursuit of power, two types of states will emerge. These are revisionist and status quo states. According to Morgenthau, status quo policy aims to maintain the distribution of power that existed at a particular moment in history. It could be said that the status quo policy performs the same function for international politics as a conservative policy does for domestic relations. (Morgenthau, 1948: 21-22). While revisionism is defined as a policy devised to overthrow the status quo by Morgenthau. (Morgenthau, 1948:27). Status quo states are states which are in an advantageous

position in the current conditions and pursue to maintain their positions in the international system. (Morgenthau, 1948:21). Contrary to status quo states, revisionist states those which are dissatisfied with their current positions and power in the system and try to turn the distribution of power in the system to their own advantages. (Morgenthau, 1948:27). While revisionist states desire power to gain an advantageous position, status quo states chase for power in order to maintain their position in the system.

The struggle between revisionist states and status quo states in the international system would reveal the war. The greed for power of many nations, each trying to preserve or overthrow the status quo, necessarily leads to a constellation of the so-called balance of power and policies aimed at maintaining it. (Morgenthau, 1948:125). According to classical realism, equality between the powers of states can be seen as a disincentive for each other. In classical realism, the inability to balance revisionist states is seen as a factor that increases the possibility of war. The reason for the First World War was that the failure of Great Britain and France to balance Germany which was a revisionist state. (Morgenthau, 1948:153).

In addition, according to Morgenthau, there is a structural change in the dominant balance of power that started with the First World War and became more evident with the Second World War. When the First World War broke out in 1914, the main weights in the balance were European: Great Britain, France, and Russia on one scale, Germany and Austria on the other. By the end of the Second World War, the structure of the balance of power had changed worldwide: major weights of all scales were either completely non-European, as in the US, or predominantly non-European, as in the Soviet Union (Morgenthau, 1948: 148-149). This might be evidence that the failure to balance the revisionist states will cause war, and war will cause a structural change in the balance of power.

To summarize, Morgenthau defines the international system as a power struggle between status quo states and revisionist states and attributes the stability of the system to the balance of power between these two forms of states. If we put the status quo states on one side of the scale and the revisionist states on the other, the balance of the scales will ensure the stability of the system. On the other hand, if the

balance of the scales changes in favor of revisionist states, instability in the system prevails. Moreover, Morgenthau argues that the mission of maintaining a balance between status quo states and revisionist states falls to another status quo actor called “holder” or “balancer”. Whichever of the sides predominates the holder would bring the scale back into balance by shifting their weight to the other side. (Morgenthau, 1948:142). The main criticism of Morgenthau's approach is that a multipolarity that formed in this way, will create chaos and this confusion will cause instability rather than stability

### **3.3. Defensive Realism**

Kenneth Waltz, one of the most important representatives of Neorealism, approaches the issue of international change from a different perspective. First of all, according to Waltz, unlike national systems, which have a hierarchical structure, the international system has an anarchic structure. And for this reason, the actors that make up the system never feel safe. For this reason, the primary purpose of the states within the system is to achieve their survivals. States want to maintain their current position in the system. Power is not an end for them, but a means to achieve security. (Waltz, 1979:126). That's why states always tend to join the weaker of the two coalitions. (Waltz, 1979:127). In other words, since states will always find it riskier to bandwagon a rising state or coalition in the system, they will prefer to balance it by opposing that power.

Waltz argues that states will always choose to balance, whether balance is not eventually achieved. Because the system induces states to balance strongly. The difference of Waltz's balance of power from the balance of power in classical realism is that it is the structure of the system, not the will of a conservative state that provides the balance. What is meant here is not that the balance will never be disrupted, but that even if it is disrupted, it will be restored. That is, the balance in the international system occurs recurrently. (Waltz, 1979:128). For this reason, it has been criticized for having a status quo perspective. In addition, Waltz says that the text of the international system remains extremely constant, and that the patterns and events repeat themselves endlessly. According to Waltz, international relations rarely change rapidly. (Waltz, 1979:66).

As will be explained in more detail below, Gilpin states in his book *War and Change in International Politics* that systemic change occurs in the distribution of power, in the hierarchy of prestige, in the rules or institutions that regulate the system, or rarely in both or all of them. Waltz does not completely reject change in the international system. However, he takes it from a narrower perspective than Gilpin. According to Waltz, change in the system occurs only with a change in the distribution of power capabilities. (Waltz, 1979: 108). In other words, anarchic systems are transformed only by changes in the principle of organization and the consequential changes in the number of their main parties. Even if the great powers that make up the system change, there cannot be a systemic change unless the bipolar or multipolar structure of the system changes. In other words, the system continues to exist even if the identity of the actor changes. Indeed, the multipolar system continued for three centuries. Because while some states have fallen from the top ranks, others have risen by increasing their relative capabilities. (Waltz, 1979:162). To say that an international-political system is stable means two things: first, that it remains anarchic; secondly, no consequential change occurs in the number of main parties that make up the system. (Waltz, 1979:161-162). Also, according to Waltz, although every change in varieties does not mean a change in the system, there is a connection between the change in the varieties of great powers in the system and the change in the international system. Waltz also referred to the difference between bipolar and multipolar systems, two types of systems observed in history. The difference between bipolar systems and systems with three or more is the way they balance. Waltz criticized the view of classical realists that the balance of power would be achieved by the presence of at least three or four parties. Conversely, Waltz claims that bipolar structures are the most stable form of international system. Because bipolar systems are quite simple and clear structures. Since there are two superpowers in the system, it is easy for them to follow each other. In other words, two power is able to deal with each other better than more. According to Waltz, the instability of systems of three powers is peculiar. Because the other two powers can unite against the third, share the spoils and transform the system bipolar. The most stable of multipolar systems is the one with four actors. The more polars in the system, the greater instability. Because, according to Waltz, the flexibility of multipolarity actually means complexity. (Waltz, 1979:163).

An important point to note here is that Waltz, who says less is better, did not mention a unipolar order in his *Theory of International Politics* book, but only explained bipolar and multipolar systems. Since single polarity radically changes the anarchic structure to a hierarchical structure, it appears contradictory to the origin of Waltz theory. Waltz's theory states that stable unipolarity is not possible. Because this means that the end of this power is the end of the balance, but the international system would also transform into a hierarchy by passing through an extremely radical change. As mentioned above, change in Waltz's theory of international relations consists of a change in the distribution of power within an anarchic structure. Therefore, the unipolar system will not be stable and will be balanced by other actors.

As a matter of fact, although the unipolar system that emerged after the Cold War continued for more than two decades, Waltz always continued to defend this idea. Indeed, in his later writings, Waltz emphasizes that hegemony will lead to balance. According to Waltz, the post-Cold War equilibrium means that it has emerged slowly and unsteadily as the benefits that the US can give to other actors are not exhausted and some states are accustomed to living an easy life because the US has taken on a significant part of their responsibilities. (Waltz, 2008:37).

Another defensive realist, Stephan Walt, agrees with Kenneth Waltz that the constant element of the international system is anarchy, and the variable element is the distribution of power in the system. Also, Walt, as Waltz, argues that states act to minimize their losses rather than maximizing their power and therefore they exhibit a risk-averse behavior. Therefore, Walt, like Waltz, argues that the tendencies of states are mainly balancing rather than bandwagoning because, a state usually prefers a alignment that preserves most of its freedom of action to accepting subordination under a potential hegemony. (Walt, 1985:15).

However, unlike Waltz, Walt argues that the balance of threat theory can historically provide more meaningful explanations for the international system than the balance of power. According to Walt's balance of threat theory, alliances are made against threat, not power. Walt argues that not every power poses a threat. In other words, states define the security problems caused by an anarchic system by considering not

only the military and economic capacities of possible threats, but also other factors that affect the mobilization of this capacity and emphasize the purposes of use. (Walt, 1985: 8-9). Walt states that for an actor to pose a threat, four elements must come together. These elements are power, geographic proximity, offensive intentions, and offensive capabilities. (Walt, 1985:9). In short, it can be said that Walt's balance of threat theory is a revision of Waltz's structuralist balance of power.

Thus, both according to Waltz's and Walt analysis, it is their survival instincts that really determine the behavior of states. Accordingly, states struggling for survival should adapt their decisions to this motive, no matter what. Since the states have never felt safe in the anarchic system, they have to stand together with the weaker against any actor that will become stronger in the system in order to ensure their survival. In their theories, the interests of states and their desire for expansion were ignored. For this reason, they have been criticized for having a status quo perspective.

Gilpin and Schweller, on the other hand, do not assign a central role to the supposed survival element produced by anarchic structure. They are based on a ranking from strong to weak in the international system. All states in the system are self-interested and act rationally.

### **3.4. Offensive Realism**

Gilpin, in his book *War and Change in World Politics* discusses the problem of international political change in detail. Gilpin assumes that states are constantly in a cost-benefit calculation and therefore the international system is a dynamic and ever-changing structure.

According to Gilpin, there is a dominance of great powers based on the distribution of power among states in the international system. The power distribution has been characterized by three types of international systems throughout history: hegemonic or imperial structure, bipolar structure, and balance of power in which three or more states control each other's actions through diplomacy, alliances, or conflict. While Gilpin finds the bipolar system, in which the two powers control the interaction

within their sphere of influence, more short-lived and unstable, he thinks that the balance of powers is not a contemporary structure since it was last seen before the First World War. According to Gilpin, the hegemonic system in which powerful states dominate less powerful states is more common in modern times, and the international system tends to be a universal empire. (Gilpin, 1981:29).

On the other hand, Gilpin emphasizes that the counterpart of authority in domestic politics is the hierarchy of prestige in foreign policy and refers to Dahrendorf's definition to explain authority: "Authority or prestige is the probability that a command with a given specific content will be obeyed by a given group of persons." In short, not only dominance of power distribution, but also hierarchy of prestige indicates that a dominant state or states control the less strong states in the international system. Although prestige is largely economic and political capabilities of the states, it is primarily achieved through especially victory in the war. One of the main functions of the hegemonic war that will be explained above is to determine the hierarchy of international prestige and therefore to determine which actors will dominate the international system. (Gilpin, 1981:30).

Moreover, Gilpin divides change into three as system change, systemic change, and interaction change and draws attention to the difference between system change and systemic change. System change refers to a change in the nature of the actors that constitute the system, while systemic change refers to a change in the governance of the system. In other words, while the focus of system change is the rise and fall of state systems such as nation-states or empires, systemic change is the rise and fall of states that govern the system. (Gilpin, 1981:42). Systemic change is in a way related to the change in the distribution of power, the hierarchy of prestige, and rules and rights in the system. Gilpin related systemic change to the fact that actors within the international structure want to transform the system in order to increase their own economic, political, or security interests. Therefore, change is completely dependent on the interests of states and the differential growth of power. The change in the interests and differential growth in the powers of states bring the international system from a condition of equilibrium to a condition of disequilibrium. (Gilpin, 1981:43).

Also, Gilpin has shaped his book on five basic assumptions about international political change regarding the behaviors of states. First, the system is stable as long as, any state thinks it will gain a benefit from the change of the system. Secondly, if the benefit of any state exceeds the harm it will bear, the state wants to change the system for its own benefit. Third, the state desires to maintain economic and political growth until the marginal cost is equal to or greater than the marginal benefit. Fourth, expansion stops when an equilibrium is reached between the benefits and costs of the new change. Another issue Gilpin draws attention to here is that the second assumption, which points to the revisionist state, and the fourth, which corresponds to the status quo state, serve as mirrors to each other. Finally, if the disequilibrium in the international system is not resolved, the system will change, and the new equilibrium will reflect the new distribution of power. (Gilpin, 1981:11-12).

Gilpin argues that the change of power occurred through hegemonic war and that a new equilibrium will be formed in the system at the end of the war. (Gilpin, 1981:198). The power that is the hegemon in the system is in favor of the continuation of the status quo. But being in a hegemonic position brings some costs. So, hegemonic states are increasingly spending more and investing less. (Gilpin, 1981: 191-192). As a result of the rise of a dissatisfied state by coveting the position of the hegemon, the power inequality will start to decrease, and this will pose a danger to the current hegemon. As a consequence of persisting disequilibrium, the hegemonic war will occur in which all actors of the system will be included in some way. (Gilpin, 1981:197). Hegemonic war changes the system according to the new international distribution of power and reorganizes the basic components of the system. Victory and defeat re-establish the hierarchy of prestige in the system and determine who will rule the international system and whose interests the new order will serve. (Gilpin, 1981:198). Thus, hegemonic wars are inevitable for the world. The result of one hegemonic war means the beginning of a new cycle of growth, expansion, and decline. (Gilpin, 1981:210).

In short, according to Gilpin, the hierarchy of prestige dominates the international system. In a hegemonic order in which one of the states in the system is stronger than the others, stability in the international system is ensured. The large power difference between the hegemonic state and other actors discourages the other states to seek for

balancing or replacing hegemonic power. With this logic, the reason for the US's existence as a hegemonic power for many years is that other actors in the system cannot cope with the cost of confronting the US.

On the other hand, Gilpin assumes that states are in a continuous cost-benefit calculation. Gilpin's assumptions about change are abstracted from a complex reality and do not describe the actual decision-making processes of statesmen. But differences in the state's perception of benefits and costs may also result from internal changes. Therefore, the economic, ideological, or security interests of states that change with national and international factors, and the differential growth of the power with the economic, political, technological developments in the existing powers may overwhelm the status quo. (Gilpin, 1981:14). Moreover, it becomes costly and difficult for hegemonic powers to maintain their current position. Thus, over time, an inconsistency emerges between the settled hierarchy of prestige and the existing distribution of power between states. changes in states' actual capabilities are in the forefront of the prestige perceptions. The ability of the sovereign state to impose its will on others and/or to protect its interests is diminished. As long as the necessary reasons for the transformation of the system do not occur, minor adjustments ensure the continuity of the system. The other way round, the disequilibrium replaces the equilibrium, and the world goes to a new era of conflict. (Gilpin, 1981:14-15). This has always been so, and it will continue to be so until states achieve either self-destructing or devising an effective mechanism for peaceful change. (Gilpin, 1981:210).

Another name, Rendall Schweller, who evaluated the problem of change in the international system from an offensive realist perspective, criticizes that contrary to traditional realists such as H. Carr and Morgenthau, modern realists view the world from the perspective of status quo states. Modern realists assume that states typically take great risks and pay higher prices to preserve the values that they possess while taking small risks and paying lower prices to improve their current situation. (Schweller, 1994:85).

As stated before, for Waltz, power is a mean, not an end. The highest end is security for the states. States can only pursue goals such as tranquility, profit, power if their

survival is guaranteed. If states wanted to maximize their power, they would join the stronger of the two coalitions. But they tend to join the weaker. Since the primary purpose of states is to maintain their current position in the system, the system induces them to do the balancing. Schweller agrees with Waltz that states that wish to preserve their power will balance. The critique of Schweller is the idea that the primary objective of all states is to maintain their current position. For example, Mussolini's participation in Hitler's Germany in 1936, rather than the weaker Britain-France coalition, falsifies this generalization. Satisfied states may aim to prevent relative losses, but revisionist states' primary purpose is not only to maintain their current position but also to improve the existed status. Also, according to Schweller, defining the international system through threat, like Walt, results in neglecting the motivation to gain, which is the main determining factor. In this way, Schweller argues that modern realists have a status quo perspective, referring only to satisfied states. (Schweller, 1994: 85-86).

Schweller argues that even if systemic conditions affect the behavior of states, different states will act differently in the same conditions. At this point it classifies the states and assigns different characters to them. The concept of “returning revisionist states” was used by Schweller to explain this difference. (Schweller, 1994).

Schweller states, categorizes over animals. In this classification, smaller states with revisionist goals are called jackals, while great powers that are not satisfied with the existing order, that is, want to change the status quo, are called wolves. Since the jackal state will not have the power to change the status quo alone, the wolf does bandwagoning to the states. (Schweller, 194:103-104). Opposite the wolf is the lion-type state, which has an interest in the continuation of the existing order, that is, represents the status quo. (Schweller, 1994:101). The last type of state is the lamb type state, which represents small powers and is not expansionist but status quo. The purpose of lamb-type states is to avoid risk. Sometimes they side with the source of the threat to incur less damage, and sometimes they follow a great power that is the status quo to ensure their safety. (Schweller, 1994:102).

At the systemic level, the explanation of the types of states, on its own, is not sufficient to explain the stability of the system. According to Schweller, the stability of the system depends on the balance between the revisionist and status quo states in the system. On this point, he has a similar point of view as Morgenthau. The fact, that conservative states are stronger than revisionist states, indicates stability in the system. On the contrary, if the balance destabilizes for the benefit of the revisionist states, it means that the system undergoes a change. (Schweller, 1994:104).

Moreover, Schweller criticizes the idea of modern realists such as Walt and Waltz that bandwagoning and balancing are opposite terms. These two terms are policies applied in opposite system conditions, rather than being opposite to each other. (Schweller, 1994:106). Balancing is associated with stasis, while bandwagoning refers to change. This does not indicate that the bandwagon is always undesirable. In this context, the reason for bandwagoning matters. While bandwagoning an rising expansionist state or coalition that seek to overthrow status quo -which Schweller calls jackal bandwagoning- causes instability in the system, joining a strong status quo state or coalition increases the stability of the system. Whatever the effects on the stability of the system, generally bandwagoning is motivated by profit and relatively low cost. (Schweller, 1994:107).

Contrarily, since balancing is a very costly as a security policy, if there is no valid danger, state neither need nor do balancing. As a matter of fact, from 1815 until the Crimean War, when France gave up accepting the status quo in order to establish hegemony, Concert of Europe became the status quo instead of the balance of power with the acceptance of all the great powers. On the contrary, such concert could not be achieved after two world wars because some of the great powers did not find this new system legitimate. (Schweller, 1994: 105-106). By the same logic, Schweller attributes the stability in the post-Cold War system to the satisfaction of all developed states. According to Schiller, states' satisfaction with the status quo may not last long and the state of stability may change. General point is that Schweller's balance of interest theory can explain this change by focusing on the differences in the preferences of the actors. (Schweller, 1997:929).

Schweller presents some situations that destroy the stability. Firstly, states pile on the victor in a major war to take advantage of the victorious state, or at least to avoid the wrath of the peace settlement. Sometimes, the new order rises with peaceful means. For instance, the 1993 accord between Palestine and Israel created a bandwagon effect between Arab states to make their settlements with Israel. Finally, the status quo was sometimes destroyed with a fall of a hegemon such as the democratic movements after the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1989. (Schweller, 1994:107).

### **3.5. Conclusion**

In summary, Morgenthau's *Politics Among Nations* book still contains one of the best revisionism discussions, although it does not cover the issue of change in the international system. Morgenthau attributes stability to the balance between revisionist and status quo states in the system and claims that the balance is achieved by a “holder” or “balancer” power. Walt and Waltz, who consider change only as a change in the distribution of capabilities in the system, claim that stability will be achieved with a balance of power or threat, but unlike Morgenthau, this balance does not depend on the will of a holder, but the anarchic nature of the system directs states to balance. The main difference between Waltz and Walt's views on change in the international system stems from the distinction between defensive realism, which prioritizes security, and offensive realism, which focuses on gain.

Schweller criticizes the neo-realists such as Waltz and Walt, who emphasize that the ultimate aim of all states in the system is to survive, for only viewing the world from a status quo perspective by emphasizing the existence of revisionist states seeking to improve their position in the system. On the other hand, Schweller agrees with Gilpin on many points regarding change in the international system. Both believed that if all major powers were satisfied with the status quo, stability would be achieved in the system. Contrary to popular belief, both support the idea that bandwagoning is a more common behavior than balancing. Both Gilpin and Schweller argue that states act in line with their changing interests. Schweller as Gilpin states that hegemonic power seek to prevent the possible rise of their rivals and non-hegemonic powers will increase their capacities as much as possible to use the advantage of the increase in

their capacities. And lastly, both think that the inability to prevent the rising revisionist power by the dominant power is the main reason for the instability in the system. As a matter of fact, Schweller states that Gilpin's book *War and Change in World Politics* is a good example of systematic theory explaining why some states are status quo and some revisionist. If the prestige hierarchy in the system no longer reflects the distribution of power in the system, the disequilibrium resulting from the rise of a revisionist power that is dissatisfied with the current status quo leads to a hegemonic war that destroys the status quo and establishes a new order that reflects the existing power distribution. (Schweller, 1997:99).

As mentioned above, although Gilpin does not completely reject peaceful changes, he claims that systemic change is possible through hegemonic wars. The theory of hegemonic warfare falls short of explaining the peaceful transition of the system to a new order in which US is hegemon after the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1989. However, as Schweller stated, a change in the system may be possible by bandwagoning the victor of a major war, or a power shift may occur in the global system with the rise of revisionist states without a war. In recent years, Russia has become more influential in Europe and the Middle East, and China has become more influential all over the world, especially in Asia and the Pacific, causing such a power shift in the international system. Although US still has tremendous technological and military power, it is now impossible to rule the world alone, as its power is relatively weakened against its rising rivals Russia and China. In other words, the hierarchy of prestige that has continued since the Cold War does not reflect the current distribution of power capabilities in the system in recent years. The power shift has shaken US's hegemon role, especially in the MENA. (Middle East and North Africa) region. And it made it necessary to withdraw from the region and focus on other areas.

Great powers ensure stability in the regions they dominate by taking on the role of balancing states. The withdrawal of the US from the East Mediterranean caused the struggle of all regional powers to increase their power in the region. After the powers that have withdrawn from the sphere of influence due to a decrease in power or a grand strategy, these regions will be the regions of conflict. The current instability in the East Mediterranean is also the result of such a conflict environment.

# **CHAPTER VI**

## **EAST MEDITERRANEAN CONFLICT BETWEEN TURKEY AND GREECE AND INTERNATIONAL SYSTEM**

### **4.1. Introduction**

Recent developments in the East Mediterranean have made this region one of the critical axes of the international balance of power. In fact, the East Mediterranean has been of great importance throughout history. Since the mentioned region is one of the crossroads of international trade, it has attracted the attention of great powers in almost every period from past to present. However, the rapidly increasing uncertainty and instability in the last few years has transformed the East Mediterranean into a geopolitical area with its dynamics.

The struggle for influence between regional powers is one of the important dimensions of the ongoing uncertainty in the East Mediterranean. In this sense, the rising tension between the prominent regional powers Turkey and Greece in recent years is important in terms of the fate of the instability in the region. The East Mediterranean crisis between Turkey and Greece, which started with the claim that Turkey was excluded from regional gains by Greece and Greek Cyprus, rapidly escalated after Ankara signed a maritime jurisdiction agreement with the Libyan Government of National Accord at the end of 2019. Months after Turkey's diplomatic move, Greece also signed an exclusive economic zone agreement with the Egyptian government, aiming to thwart the Turkey-Libya agreement. In this tense diplomatic process, the two countries have almost reached the point of the war. As a result, the tension between the two countries has become an issue that closely concerns both regional and global powers due to the increasing geopolitical importance of the East Mediterranean.

There are various explanations in the literature regarding the increasing conflict between Turkey and Greece in recent years. This study focuses on five theses

explaining the conflict between these two countries: nationalist-historical approach, the ideology change, or neo-Ottomanist approach, energy-economy approach, the role of the leader approach, and defensive realism approach.

Although the nationalist and neo-Ottomanism approaches contribute significantly on explaining the conflict between the two countries, both approaches fall short of explaining the changing interests of the countries and the alliances they have made with other countries. The interests, goals, and formations of alliances are closely related to the condition of the international system as well as domestic politics. Therefore, approaches such as nationalism and neo-Ottomanism may be factors that support the conflict between Turkey and Greece, but it is the material interests of the states rather than abstract reasons such as ideology that triggers the conflict.

Also, the energy-economy thesis that evaluates the conflict between Turkey and Greece as an energy problem in the context of the Cyprus problem, is an important component in explaining the conflict between the two countries, considering the energy resources discovered in the East Mediterranean in recent years. However, the increase in energy resources cannot be handled independently from the security problem. The most important reason for increasing insecurity in the East Mediterranean is the instability in the region. This study claims that the power vacuum in the region is the cause of the instability. It is this vacuum that allows energy competition. Again, the role of the leader approach, which argues that the conflict between Turkey and Greece is the result of the image of Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan in the region, and the defensive realist approach, which claims that it is the result of Turkey's effort to destroy the bloc surrounding it in the region, are approaches that focus on the result rather than the cause. First of all, the questions to be asked are, what is the motive that triggers Erdogan's revisionist policies? Or how did the anti-Turkey bloc form in the East Mediterranean? should be.

In this context, this study presents a new thesis that argues that the East Mediterranean crisis between Turkey and Greece is due to the power vacuum in the international system. In this context, the subject of change, which causes a power

vacuum in the international system, is discussed from the perspective of classical, defensive, and offensive realism

#### **4.2. The Power Shift in the International System**

As mentioned earlier, Waltz claims that the structure of the international system pushes other actors in the system to balance a rising power. (Waltz, 1979: 127). Also, to Waltz, the bipolar system is the most stable. Because bipolar systems are simpler and more understandable than multipolar systems. Since there are only two superpowers, they can easily follow each other, and since the other actors are not strong enough, switching sides between poles will not affect the balance. (Waltz, 1979:163).

Waltz attributed the sustainability of the Cold War period, which is also called long peace and continued peacefully for more than 50 years, to the existence of the bipolar system and nuclear weapons. But the peaceful end of the Cold War and the transformation of the system into a unipolar structure, contrary to the expectations of the defensive realists such as Waltz brought the correlation between stability and balance of power back into the discussion. Because, to Waltz, the balance of power will be re-established even if it is disturbed under any conditions where anarchy and survival instinct exist. If one of the actors of the bipolar system disappeared, the only superpower remained, and therefore the international balance shifted in favor of the single superpower. In this case, the states with the survival instinct in an anarchic system will have to unite against this single superpower. (Waltz, 1979:128). Contrary to this claim, although more than two decades have passed since the end of the Cold War, there was no move from other actors in the system to balance the US. This situation refuted the claim that a unipolar structure would certainly cause instability in the system.

As Gilpin and Schweller have stated, if all the powers in the system are satisfied with the status quo or if no actor in the system can afford the cost of confronting the hegemon, the international system remains stable. (Schweller, 1997:121).

The post-Cold War the US-led order was provided by some developments. First, with the defeat of communism, there is no major or global ideological project left to balance the US. Second, with the disintegration of the Soviet Union and its accompanying infrastructure of institutions and partnerships, weak states lacked alternative support outside the US and its Western allies to provide them with military, economic, and political support. Another reason for the US's hegemony to continue stably was the success of the US in applying policies suitable for the dynamics of each region to various parts of the world. While the emergence of the United States as a unipolar power was largely due to the disintegration of the Soviet Union, the persistence of this unipolarity over the next two decades was due to the satisfaction of its Asian and European allies to pledge allegiance to US hegemony. Therefore, as Gilpin and Schweller argue, a situation emerged in the post-Cold War era in which non-hegemonic actors did not try to disrupt the status quo.

However, as Gilpin said, elements weakening the power of the hegemon may emerge over time. Because being the dominant power in the international system brings some costs. Over time, hegemonic powers begin to consume more and invest less. In addition, the other great powers in the system constantly calculate their profit and loss, and they revise their interests with the effect of developing technological opportunities. (Gilpin, 1981:191-192).

After the September 11 attacks, US President George W. Bush put the post-cold war world into a new divide by saying “you are either with us or against us” (Bush, 2001). According to the US's new strategy, the Middle East is a swamp that breeds terrorist groups and should be rid of terrorists and introduced to liberal democracy. Utilizing the advantage of being hegemon in the unipolar system, the United States intervened in Middle Eastern countries such as Iraq, Afghanistan, and finally Syria, the legitimacy of which is highly questionable. Thus, the starting point for the US's decline was its over-expansion, massively increasing its military operations in the Middle East, and its military presence in different parts of the world after the September 11 attacks. These failed military adventures not only did the anti-United States increase rapidly both in the region and in the world but also cost trillions of dollars in the 2000s; and made the US one of the most indebted countries in the world. (IMF, 2017).

In this process, the economic recession and crisis that started with the 2008 Financial Crisis, which turned the lives of middle and lower-class Americans, upside down in the US and spread to the world, triggered a social, then political, and finally a systemic upheaval. As a result of the global financial crisis, which emerged from the financial system in the United States and spread rapidly to other economies, valuable materials such as gold and oil gained the highest value in its history, while the value of the American dollar decreased significantly against almost all other currencies. (TCMB, 2008).

During the recessions that followed the financial crisis, China started to rise as an economic, technological, and cultural power. China distributes loans to developing countries on favorable terms and receives substantial concessions in return. Also, the modern silk road, called the 'one belt one road' which China launched for the first time in 2013, is a project to connect Europe and China with highways, railways, and ports. (China Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2013). It was envisaged that this project would cause the world's economic and financial centers to change and eventually the power would shift from west to east. Although China was also affected by the 2008 global crisis, it became the fastest-growing economy in the world in the following period. (The World Bank, 2019).

China's economic development trend is rapidly reflected in technological developments such as computers, space studies, artificial intelligence, and expenditures in the defense industry. Between 2000 and 2019, defense spending of the US increased by 53%, while China's increased by 400% in the same period. (SIPRI, 2019).

In summary, the economic, military, and technological balance between the United States and China continues to shift rapidly in favor of China. Moreover, China's network of alliances in the US's spheres of influence such as the Middle East, Africa, and Latin America, and its desire to be the hegemon in Asia and the Pacific made it difficult for the United States to maintain its hegemonic position.

On the other hand, Russia draws attention as another rising power with its revisionist policies in the international system in recent years. Even though it experienced a great economic and political collapse in the 90s, Russia entered into a great leap

forward with the Putin era. In recent years, the US. has faced a challenging Russia, especially in the Middle East and Asia. It is possible to say that Russia is one of the most important military powers, even though its defense budgets lag behind the US and China due to its ongoing economic problems. In addition, they can make high vertical designs and use them effectively, as seen in the example of the S-400 in terms of technology. Putin's statements that the unipolar world order and the US-led Western policies are wrong, that NATO is not a world institution, that Russia will be more active in matters concerning its interests, and that they will not allow the United States to have a say in this matter, supports the revisionist goals of Russia. (Çevik, 2015: 183-184).

As explained in the previous chapter, the system remains stable as long as no government in the system thinks that changing the system will benefit them. But if any actor thinks that the benefits of change will outweigh the costs, it will desire to change the system. And these states maintain their desire for growth until the cost of growth outweighs the benefit. That is, the international system largely reflects or is compatible with the interests of hegemonic powers. However, over time, there may be shifts in the balance of power according to the differences in the economic and technological levels and the interests of the actors. While some states gain power due to economic and technological developments, it becomes impossible for the hegemonic power to maintain its current position as it will be difficult to overcome the responsibilities brought by hegemony. When the current distribution of power in the system does not reflect the hierarchy of prestige, the status quo breaks down and the system enters a process of instability. It is possible to interpret the current change process from this perspective. The current change in the international system can be explained not by the states allied with security concerns against the rising power, but by the existence of some states that think that their interests will increase with the change of the system. After the Cold War, all the states in the international system, including Russia and China, thought that it would not be in their interests to change the system, so there was a status quo. However, over time, the US's loss of power and Russia and China's revisionist policies influenced by technological and economic developments negatively affected the status quo. Based on Schweller's animal analogy, we can compare the US to the lion, the representative of the status quo in the system, and China and Russia to wolf states that are dissatisfied with the

status quo and desire change. Schweller attributes the instability in the system to the deterioration of the balance in favor of the revisionist states. Therefore, the current instability in the system is due to the rise of revisionist powers such as China and Russia.

The gradual rise of the revisionist states China and Russia caused a power shift in the global system. The process of change created by this power shift made it impossible for the US to maintain its dominant position in every part of the world, so it had to withdraw from some regions. The East Mediterranean is one of these regions. The claim of this study is that the power vacuum created by the withdrawal of the US from the East Mediterranean, which is the hegemon, as a result of the global power shift, triggered the conflict between Turkey and Greece in the region. Accordingly, in the last part of this chapter, historically, the conflict between Turkey and Greece in the East Mediterranean will be discussed from the perspective of the power vacuum thesis.

#### **4.3. The Historical Evaluation of Turkey and Greece Conflict in East Mediterranean in the Framework of the Power Vacuum Thesis**

The East Mediterranean region has historically been a region of strategic value as it has hosted the world's important trade routes. The region maintained its strategic importance during the Cold War years as one of the important scenes of the rivalry between the US and the Soviet Union. Apart from this, some important international conflicts of world politics are also the determining factors of the geopolitics of the region. The Arab-Israel Wars, The Gulf Wars, and the Cyprus Problem are among the conflicts that affect the international system. The East Mediterranean tension between Turkey and Greece arose from the Cyprus problem in the process after Second World War and continued for a long time within this framework.

With the end of World War II, the activities for the connection of Cyprus to Greece, called Enosis in Greece, along with the Greeks, gained momentum. Greek Parliament; took a decision to annex Cyprus to Greece on 28 February 1947. On 21 November 1949, the Greeks applied to the United Nations for Enosis. After this application, the Greeks started plebiscite work on the annexation of the island to

Greece. The Turkish Government strongly opposed this attempt of the Greek Cypriots. Already, the United Nations has rejected Cyprus' claim of the right of self-determination. On the other hand, the Turkish Cypriots put forward the idea of “partition”, which aims to divide the island into two as the Turkish side and the Greek side, in response to the Greeks' claim to Enosis. Thus, the emergence of the long-lasting Cyprus problem was laid between Greece, which wanted to annex Cyprus, and Turkey, which supported the partition plan of the Turkish Cypriots. (TR Ministry of Foreign Affairs).

The destruction caused by the Second World War pushed Britain, which was influential in the East Mediterranean and the Middle East before the war, to reconsider its policies, and the independence process of the British colonies began with the effect of the rising of the Soviet Union and the US as world hegemon. Even before the end of the Second World War, there were organizations in Cyprus that demanded the separation of the island from Britain. While the Greeks wanted to connect the island to Greece, the Turks also organized against this demand. The uneasy atmosphere on the island led Britain to convene the London Conference in 1955, but no result could be obtained from it.

Although Egypt had established a sovereign state in the 1950s, the Suez Canal was under the control of a company controlled by western states. Many western states, especially France and Britain, were receiving oil from the Gulf countries through the Suez Canal. (Kasım, 2007:58-59). Gamal Abdel Nasser, who came to power in Egypt in 1952, announced the nationalization of the Suez Canal in 1956. In response to this, France and Britain began to occupy the Sinai Peninsula. However, as this invasion rarely drew reactions from both the US and the Soviets during the Cold War, and the Soviets threatened Britain and France with nuclear weapons, these two countries had to withdraw from the region. (Serbest, 2017: 689).

Since the date, Britain has lost its influence in the region. Cyprus is the last piece of land left in its hands, so its importance has increased for Britain. But the turbulence on the island has also grown. At the end of the London and Zurich conferences, the Republic of Cyprus was established in 1959 under the guarantee of Britain, Turkey

and Greece, and after this date, Britain continued to exist on the island for a while only as a guarantor. (TR Ministry of Foreign Affairs).

Therefore, the beginning of the Cyprus problem between Turkey and Greece, which has occupied the international public opinion for many years, coincided with a period when Britain's influence in the Middle East and East Mediterranean declined after the Second World War, lost its power, and withdrew from its colonies in the region.

The 1960s and 1970s were quite turbulent in terms of the Cyprus problem between the two countries. The events initiated by the Greeks in 1963 with the idea of uniting the island with Greece brought the end of the established state. , President Makarios of Cyprus who desired to implement the Enosis plan, presented to the guarantor states and the Turkish side on 30 November 1963 a proposal to amend Article 13 of the Cyprus Constitution, which includes the establishment of separate Turkish municipalities, the appointment of 30% of Turks to state posts, and the veto right of the Turkish Vice President. This proposal, which reduced the Turkish Cypriots to minority status, was rejected by Turkey and Turkish Cypriots. Upon the rejection of the constitutional proposals, the Greeks launched attacks on 21 December 1963, which went down in history as "Bloody Christmas", to ensure the expulsion and destruction of the Turks from Cyprus. The Turkish Cypriots, who had to leave their places of residence, had to take shelter in a very small part of the island. In addition, the Turkish Cypriots were dismissed from their state duties, so the implementation of the Constitution was abandoned. (TR Ministry of Foreign Affairs).

In 1964, the Cypriot government declared its plan to change the island's constitution. This statement encouraged the Greeks to attack. Thereupon, Turkey decided to intervene because of the violation of the agreements and the arming of the Greek Cypriot side. The military activity also increased in Greece. However, the letter from the US President Lyndon B. Johnson to Turkish Prime Minister İsmet İnönü on 5 June 1964 was a deterrent for Turkey. (TR Ministry of Foreign Affairs).

The crisis in 1964 flared up again when the junta of colonels established in Athens provoked the Greek nationalists in Cyprus in 1967. One of the turning points on the island was the attack of the Greek army on Geçitkale and Boğaziçi villages on 15

November 1967. On 17 November, the Turkish Grand National Assembly decided to go to war with Greece if the attacks continued. Upon this reaction, the Greeks withdrew from the villages they occupied, and released the Turkish prisoners. After these attacks, on 28 December 1967, the Turkish Cypriots declared the Provisional Turkish Administration because they were excluded from the House of Representatives. After a while, the term 'provisional' in the name of the Turkish administration was removed and its name remained as "Turkish Administration". Thus, Cyprus took the form of a federated state. (TR Ministry of Foreign Affairs).

In 1974, the Greek junta, which was going through hard times, staged a coup against President Makarios in Cyprus, through the Greek National Guard, and announced Enosis, a plan to annex Cyprus to Greece. Turkey invited the guarantor countries to intervene, but it did not get results. Thereupon, the Ecevit government ordered the Turkish Armed Forces to intervene militarily on its own. After the Turkish government's intervention, which was called the Cyprus Peace Operation, Cyprus was divided into two. The Greeks in the North and the Turks living in the South had to leave their settlements. (TR Ministry of Foreign Affairs). With this action, although Ecevit was seen as a hero who successfully defended the rights of the Turks in Cyprus in the eyes of the majority of Turks, this action pushed Turkey into isolation from an international perspective. An arms embargo imposed on Turkey by the US, which was only to be lifted gradually in 1978, was an indication of the isolation.

On the other hand, the first disagreement between the two countries on the rights to the sea broke out in these years. Turkey's declaration in 1973 that it started an exploration of mineral oil activities over the maritime jurisdiction area that Greece claims to belong to in the Aegean, alarmed the Greek armed forces. The settlement process was interrupted by Turkey's intervention in Cyprus, and maritime rights remained a permanent element of confrontation between Turkey, Greece, and Cyprus. (Axt, 2021,135).

If this period of conflict between Turkey and Greece is evaluated in terms of the international system, the efforts of the Soviet Union to turn to the region and to establish influence in countries such as Syria, Egypt and, Algeria, along with the

effectiveness of NATO and the US during the Cold War period, brought the region to the base of international problems. Both Turkey and Greece, which were the addressees of the problem in the bipolar world order, were in the Western bloc, and the US, as the leader of this bloc, followed a policy of pacifying the conflicts within the alliance. Since the 1960s, a softening in the cold war period has been entered all over the world. The softening and the decrease in threat perception also brought the conflicts within the bloc to the surface. As the inter-bloc threat and security concerns decreased, the problem between the countries within the same bloc with each other became visible. (Oran, 2001:716). Accordingly, Greece has started to pursue an active international policy towards the goal of annexing Cyprus.

On the other hand, during this period, the US was not only hegemon in the East Mediterranean as in the rest of the world. As in every period of history, the Soviet Union continued its goal of landing in the East of the Mediterranean during the Cold War Period. The Cypriot president Makarios had good relations with both the Soviet Union and the Non-Aligned Group. Because the US Makarios took advantage of the tense atmosphere of the Cold War Period, requested help from the Soviet Union to balance the US and NATO activity in the Cyprus problem, and because of its close relations with this state, it was tolerant to the communists on the island. (Altunay, 2020:12). Moreover, even though Britain lost its dominance in the region before the Second World War, it continued its existence in Cyprus as a guarantor country. Therefore, in this process, even if Britain is no longer a hegemon in the region, but a new power had not yet fully established hegemony.

When Turkey and Turkish Cypriots failed to achieve results from their attempts to prevent Enosis and "partition" with Greeks and Greece between 1977-1983, the Turkish Cypriot Representatives Assembly used the right of self-determination of Turkish Cypriots on 15 November 1983, and the independent Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus was established. Turkey has become the first and only state in the world to recognize the TRNC. Greece found this unacceptable and sent a protest note to Turkey. At the same time, this state was declared legally invalid by the UN Security Council. (TR Ministry of Foreign Affairs).

In 1990, the Greek Cypriot Administration applied for full membership to the European Union, representing the entire island. The EU granted candidate status to Cyprus in 1995. In 1997, at the Luxembourg Summit, and decided to start negotiations with the Greek Cypriot side. Negotiations that started on 31 March 1998. On 1 May 2004, the Greek Cypriot side, as the "Republic of Cyprus" ended up as a member of the EU, representing the whole island. However, according to the Zurich, London, and Guarantor agreements, Cyprus can't join a union where Turkey and Greece are not members together at the same time. (Vatansever, 2012:1519).

The year 1995 was a turning point for Turkey in terms of the Cyprus problem. On 6 March 1995, it signed a Customs Union agreement with the EU, which would be valid since 1996. And as a precondition for this agreement, it has committed not to object to the EU full membership negotiations of the Greek Cypriot Administration. In addition, according to the agreement, Turkey, which had to make a trade agreement with Turkey until 2001, recognized the Greek Cypriot Administration of Southern Cyprus, which it had not recognized until that day, as a state. (Vatansever, 2012:1520).

As can be seen, in this process, the Cyprus problem has developed generally within the framework of relations with Turkey, the Greek Cypriot Administration, and the European Union. The tension in Turkey-Greece relations, on the other hand, was lower than in previous periods. Of course, the Cyprus problem, which could not be resolved between the two countries, continued to exist in this period as well. However, the relations between Turkey and Greece, which came to the brink of war four times in December 1963, June 1964, August 1964, and November 1967, never reached this level in the 1980s and 90s. (TR Ministry of Foreign Affairs).

This period of calming in the relations between Turkey and Greece coincides with the period when the softening period in the international system ended and the tension was raised by the United States during the Cold War. The Soviet Union, which lagged behind the US in the race of economy and technology, also lost its influence in the East Mediterranean region. The first step of the US hegemony in the East Mediterranean was established with the peace agreement signed at Camp David between Israel and Egypt in 1978 under the auspices of the US and the normalization

of relations between Egypt and Israel. Thus, the US achieved an important win in its purpose of encircling the Soviet Union and balancing the pro-Soviet Arab regimes. An order in which the US was hegemon, was established in the region in the 1980s and 1990s. This structure, which is based on regional partnerships established between countries such as Israel, Turkey, and Egypt, which established close relations with the US, ensured the stability of the region. (Ozan, 2020:164).

Although the US's interventions in Iraq and Afghanistan in the 2000s significantly affected the stability of the East Mediterranean, the US maintained its hegemon position in the region. Also, in addition to the geopolitical importance of the East Mediterranean, the hydrocarbon resources discovered off Cyprus as of the 2000s have increased the significance of the region. Due to the new energy basins discovered and waiting to be discovered, there have been some ongoing problems between the riparian countries today.

Since this date, the East Mediterranean issue between Turkey and Greece has ceased to be a national cause only in Cyprus and has become a tension between the two countries in terms of energy. The problem of the East Mediterranean hydrocarbon resources and maritime jurisdictions and the Cyprus problem are interconnected. Because the Greek Cypriot administration takes its steps on behalf of the Republic of Cyprus. Turkey did not accept that Southern Cyprus makes maritime jurisdiction delimitation agreements, organizes hydrocarbon tenders, and carries out joint projects for the marketing of hydrocarbon resources to neighboring countries.

The activities which are carried out by the Greek Cypriot Administration regarding the proclamation of the exclusive economic zone are narrowing the geopolitical space of Turkey, day by day. And the attempts of Greece and the Greek Cypriot Administration to protect the marine environment also leads to various confrontations in the East Mediterranean. The fact that Turkey had not yet declared an EEZ in the Mediterranean until that time allowed trying to restrict its rights and interests based on international law in the East Mediterranean by Greece and the Greek Cypriot Administration.

On April 2, 2004, the Greek Cypriot Administration of Cyprus declared the EEZ in the name of the "Republic of Cyprus" ignoring the rights of the TRNC and Turkey in the East Mediterranean arising from international law. In this sense, EEZ delimitation agreements were signed with Egypt on February 17, 2003, with Lebanon on January 17, 2007, and with Israel on December 17, 2010, to invalidate Turkey's theses. Even though such attempts of the Greek Cypriot Administration of Southern Cyprus drew the reaction of Turkey, the relations between Turkey and Greece remained stable in this period. The tension did not rise too much. (Yılmaz, 2020: 6).

On the other hand, the claims of Turkey and Greece regarding the maritime jurisdiction areas in the East Mediterranean contradict each other. Greece bases its claims on the East Mediterranean on the Seville Map prepared by Juan Luis Suarez de Vivero, an expert in human maritime geography at the University of Seville, Spain. It argues that the borders of the area that Greece claims as the continental shelf in the Aegean and Mediterranean Seas and the EEZ declared by the Greek Cypriot administration in 2004 are the official borders of the EU. Greece claims that a maritime jurisdiction delimitation should be made in the East Mediterranean based on the Crete, Kasot, Kerpe, Rhodes, and Meis lines. Turkey, on the other hand, rejects the statements made by Greece according to the principle of distance by assuming the island parts as "mainland" and the claims about the creation of a continental shelf area of 40 thousand square kilometers by an island with a surface area of 10 square kilometers, 2 kilometers from Anatolia and 580 kilometers from the Greek mainland by emphasizing that it is not a rational thesis by international law. (Yaycı, 2019:44).

The stable relations between Turkey and Greece in the 2010s came to a point of conflict again in 2019. The tripartite alliance established between Israel, Greece, and the Greek Cypriot Administration on the issue of sharing energy corridors in the East Mediterranean play an important role in the tension. In this sense, it is necessary to draw attention to the East Med Project, which plans to push Turkey out of the equation in the East Mediterranean by making agreements with other countries in the region. The East Mediterranean Natural Gas Pipeline Project, called "East Med" is an attempt directly against Turkey. Joint ventures by Israel, Greece, and the Greek Cypriot Administration directly threaten Turkey's interests in the Blue Homeland.

Because the pipeline routes of the project violate possible EEZ borders of Turkey, even though Turkey has not announced it yet. (Yılmaz, 2020: 9-10).

East Med, whose full name is East Mediterranean Pipeline is a natural gas pipeline project and aims to transport natural gas to the Balkans and Italy via the East Mediterranean. However, the fact that this line passes through the Turkish continental shelf makes it necessary to question the legitimacy of the project as well as opening the legal ground for discussion.

In this direction, the East Mediterranean Gas Forum was hosted by Egypt, with the participation of the Greek Cypriot Administration of Southern Cyprus, Egypt, Greece, Israel, Italy, Jordan, and Palestine without the invitation of Turkey. Turkey reacted to this initiative that excludes Northern Cyprus and from the energy cooperation in the region. (TR Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2020). As a response, the state signed the Turkey-Libya Maritime Boundary Delimitation Agreement with the Government of Libyan National Accord on 27 November 2019 to determine maritime boundaries between two states. This agreement is Turkey's second agreement to determine the maritime jurisdiction areas in the region after the agreement with the TRNC in 2011. With this agreement, Turkey responded not only to the alliances that excluded it from the region but also to the approach that a maritime jurisdiction should be given to the Greek islands in the south and southeast of the Aegean Sea and Meis Island. It has also been accepted by Libya with the treaty. Another important reflection of the Treaty is that Turkey has provided a legitimate basis for natural resource exploration and operation activities in the region in question. The border determined by the agreement between the two countries may constitute a legal basis for such activities. The agreement signed with Libya and Turkey caused a reaction from the point of view of Greece, which is making cooperation plans with the Greek Cypriot Administration of Cyprus, Egypt, and Israel in the East Mediterranean energy policy. Greece strongly opposed the agreement between Turkey and Libya by sending a letter to United Nations, with the claims that there is no maritime border between Turkey and Libya, the Government of Libyan National Accord is not authorized to agree on behalf of Libya and the agreement violates Greece's rights arising from international maritime law in the region. Also, according to the article 8, paragraph 2 (f), of the Libyan Political

Treaty, the agreement is invalid and void, since it was not ratified by the Libyan House of Representatives. (Kökyay, 2020: 2518).

Meanwhile, the NAVTEX announcement, known as a maritime warning, which stated that Turkey's research ship Oruç Reis will research the sea areas between the Greek island of Meis and the island of Crete on 21 July 2020, alarmed the Greek Armed Forces. (TR Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2020). The NAVTEXs, which were mutually announced by the two countries, brought the navies of the two countries face to face.

The next significant move in the tension between the two countries came from Greece. Greece signed an exclusive economic zone agreement with Egypt on 6 August 2020. Greece and Egypt began negotiations in 2005 on the determination of maritime jurisdiction areas in the East Mediterranean. However, Egypt, which did not want to be a part of the conflict between Turkey and Greece, claimed that Greece should have reached an agreement with Turkey earlier, so the parties could not reach an agreement before. However, the legal and political developments in the region in recent years have pushed the two countries to finally make an agreement. At the forefront of these developments is the Maritime Boundary Delimitation Agreement that Turkey signed with the Government of Libyan National Accord in 2019. The reason that encourages Egypt to make an exclusive economic zone agreement with Greece is the defense and cooperation agreement that the two countries signed with this agreement, rather than the agreement between Turkey and Libya on the determination of the maritime zones. Egypt emphasized that the memorandum of understanding on military cooperation allows for various forms of military and security cooperation and the transfer of ammunition, thus clearly violating the Security Council's resolutions on Libya. In short, Egypt was uncomfortable with Turkey's good relations with the Libyan National Accord government, with which it had been at odds since the 2013 military coup. On the other hand, Greece aims to "ineffective" this agreement or preventing Turkey's activities in the region by signing an exclusive economic zone agreement with Egypt in the same area, which is shared with the Turkey-Libya agreement. (Acer, 2020:15-17).

Turkey, on the other hand, with the statement made by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, claimed that there is no maritime border between Egypt and Greece, therefore the agreement was ignored by Turkey, and that the agreement violated not only Turkey's but also Libya's rights in the region. Turkey emphasized that it will not allow any activity in the region, and it will continue to resolutely defend the legitimate rights and interests of both Turkey and the Turkish Cypriots in the East Mediterranean. (TR Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2020).

Thereupon, Turkey declared NAVTEX again on 10 August 2020 and sent the Oruç Reis to the south of Meis Island again. (TR Ministry of Foreign Affairs). With this new NAVTEX declaration, the Turkish and Greek armed forces were once again on the alert. The term president of the European Union, Germany, decided to act as a mediator in order to reduce the tension between the two countries that were on the brink of war. German Foreign Minister Heiko Maas also met with the Foreign Ministers of both countries on 25 August 2020 and invited the parties to dialogue and diplomacy separately. Although the officials of both countries stated that they were open to an agreement, Germany's efforts were ultimately fruitless. (TR Ministry of Foreign Affairs).

Tensions between the two countries continued to rise from time to time during the ongoing process. Turkey's next NAVTEX announcement was on 11 October 2020. This time NAVTEX continued until 29 November 2020. In this process, Greece demanded to impose some economic sanctions and arms embargo from the EU if Oruç Reis was not withdrawn to the port. However, after the NAVTEX period expired, a new negotiation process was started between Turkey and Greece, and the EU was only able to warn Turkey.

In summary, Turkish-Greek relations have gone through a more tense period than ever before in 2020. The last serious tension between the two countries took place on the Kardak cliffs in 1996, lasting three days. (BBC, 2020). The tension experienced in 2020 started in November 2019 and continued until the beginning of 2021.

It has been inevitable for Turkey and Greece to conflict with interest within the international organizations and alliances of which they are both members. In this

context, while it is possible to talk about balancing in diplomatic conflicts in organizations where both countries are members, it is not possible to mention this balancing in organizations like the EU where only one of the parties is a member. As a matter of fact, Turkey claimed that the EU applied double standards in the East Mediterranean problem, as it did in the Cyprus and Aegean Islands problems and offered unilateral conditions to Turkey. Under these circumstances, the EU couldn't mediate the tension between the two countries. In other words, while both Turkey and Greece are the parties to the tension in the East Mediterranean, the fact that the carrot-stick diplomacy, which means rewarding good behavior and punishing bad behavior, is applied only to Turkey, eliminates the possibility of a fair mediation by the EU. Also, although Germany, as the term president, made an effort to mediate between the parties on behalf of the European Union, France, one of the most important countries of the union, is clearly opposite Turkey in the East Mediterranean and this situation reduces the reliability of EU for Turkey. (TR Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2020).

NATO of which both countries are members stepped in to reduce the risk of conflict among member states in the region. NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg met with the officials of both countries and invited the parties to dialogue. However, no tangible progress was achieved as a result of the negotiations. One of the crucial reasons for the escalation of the tension in the East Mediterranean was the fact that the US was not involved in the tension between the parties. As stated above, Turkey and Greece last came to the brink of war 25 years ago, on January 3, 1996, with the Kardak crisis in the Aegean Sea. A Turkish ship named Figen Akat docked on the island called Kardak in Turkey and Imia in Greece. There was a conflict between the two countries over the dominance of the island, and both countries planted their flags on the island from time to time, escalating the tension. (Özgör, 2021:648). With the instruction of the US President Bill Clinton, the US Deputy Secretary of State Richard Holbrook called the parties, and a compromise was reached on the formula "No flags, No ships, No troops". (Özgör, 2021: 653). After 25 years, the sides have come very close to a hot conflict in the East Mediterranean this time. However, this time, the US President Donald Trump called the presidents of both Turkey and Greece from time to time and invited them to reach an agreement and dialogue, but unlike in 1996, diplomatic steps were not taken to prevent conflict between the

parties. In summary, the US has continued its abstention policy in the Middle East and East Mediterranean in recent years in the conflict between NATO allies Turkey and Greece, and this abstention has been effective in the continuation of the conflict for a long time.

If this period of conflict between Turkey and Greece is considered in terms of the international system, as stated above, it can be mentioned that Russia and China have become much more assertive and effective actors around the world than before. At the same time, in this period, the US is gradually losing its will and capacity to maintain the world order established after the Second World War. The US, whose power is relatively weakened in the face of the rise of its rivals, is getting harder to rule the world alone.

Regionally, the good relations that the US has maintained effectively with Egypt and Israel for many years were interrupted when Hosni Mubarak was overthrown from power as a result of the 2011 Arab Spring actions. The US placed an arms embargo on the country after the coup in Egypt, but lifted this embargo in 2016, citing the Daesh threat in the region. Although, after the coup in 2013, Egypt's relations with the US and Israel returned to the same line, as Russia's visibility in the region increased, the importance of bilateral military relations between the US and Egypt decreased, while Egypt establishes closer military ties with Russia.

The US's relations with Turkey, another ally in the region, came to a breaking point when Turkey claimed that the US had secretly supported the attempt during the military coup planned by the FETO terrorist organization in Turkey on 15 July 2016. In 2018, Turkey rejection of the extradition of the US cleric Andrew Craig Brunson, who was sentenced to 35 years in prison for allegedly committing crimes and spying on behalf of terrorist organizations and who was under house arrest, to the United States in 2018 brought Turkey- the US relationship to a point of no return. The Andrew Brunson crisis, which caused the tensest days in the history of the US-Turkey relations and brought the two countries to the point of imposing mutual sanctions, was resolved with the release of the US priest.

Another indication that the US has lost its hegemony in the region is the Syrian civil war. Although the US's strategy of not deploying troops to the conflict zone in Syria is uncertain, this uncertainty of the US comes first among the factors that encourage Russia to become involved in the Syrian Civil War and to increase its military presence in the East Mediterranean. Although it supported the opposition during the Obama era, the US was not involved in the war to the extent that it would overthrow the regime. As a matter of fact, even in the face of the Assad regime's use of nuclear weapons, the US continued its determination not to be actively involved in the war. The rhetoric of Trump, who was elected as the US President in 2016, such as "I will not be the president of the world" "I will make America Great Again" and his definition of the Middle East as a nuisance are other proofs that the US has reduced its influence in the region. After the emergence of Daesh, the US revised its Syria policy and gave priority to the fight against Daesh. During this period, the US government saw the fight against terrorism and extremism as the responsibility of Muslim countries and focused only on the fight against Daesh and al-Qaeda. (Ozan, 2020:165-166).

The vague policies of the US in Syria and the East Mediterranean, in general, made room for actors such as Iran and Russia in the region and also led to the isolation of the US's allies in the region. Russia, which has come to a critical position in the civil war in Syria, has also made its military presence permanent. Russia's presence in Syria is an important step towards increasing its effectiveness in the East Mediterranean.

Not only Russia but also China, another global power, is closely related to the East Mediterranean. As mentioned above, China's one belt and one road initiative announced in 2013 was planned as the modern silk road. The sea part of this project, the 21st Century Sea Silk Road, passes through the East Mediterranean. To establish dominance in the East Mediterranean, China first established commercial relations with Israel and took over the operation of the Haifa Port for 25 years as of 2021. Seeing Cyprus as part of its plan to dominate the region, China is investing in telecommunications, renewable energy, and satellite communications on the island.

In short, Russia and China have become global powers that threaten the US's world leadership as a result of their revisionist policies, and the US has begun to lose its dominance in the region due to the difficulty of managing the world alone and the turbulent nature of the East Mediterranean region.

Today, there is no global power in the region, such as Britain after the First World War and the US since the 1980s, establishing or imposing order. It was this power vacuum in the region that triggered the current conflict between Turkey and Greece. It can be argued that the weakening of the US's hegemony based on regional partnerships encouraged Greece to make alliances for energy cooperation in the region. On the other hand, Turkey's involvement in the Libyan civil war, which emerged as a result of the inability to establish an order in Libya after the Arab Spring, was also by taking advantage of this power vacuum. Turkey has signed not only the Maritime Limitation Agreement with Libya, but also a Security and Military Cooperation Agreement with the Government of Libyan National Accord. This agreement can be seen as a response to Libya's support for Turkey's intentions to delineate maritime zones in the Mediterranean. The Security and Military Cooperation Agreement between the Government of the Republic of Turkey and the Government of the Libyan State of National Accord can be seen as a response to Libya's support for Turkey in determining the maritime jurisdiction areas in the Mediterranean. The aid provided by Turkey to the government of Prime Minister Fayez Mustafa al-Sarraj in Libya consists of military training, goods and services. The British newspaper *The Guardian* claims that Turkey has placed 35 military advisers and 2,000 Syrian rebels in Libya to fight against Tobruk-based Haftar, the other side of the war. In this respect, he played an important role in the conclusion of the war in favor of The Government of Libyan National Accord. (Axt, 2021, 136-137). In the second civil war in Libya, which could not achieve its political unity since the Arab Spring, states such as Egypt, Russia, France, Saudi Arabia and the US supported the Tobruk-based Haftar forces, while Turkey, together with international organizations such as the EU and the UN, found the Tripoli-based National Government of Reconciliation to be legitimate. Although it made statements in favor of Haftar's forces, the US did not get involved in the civil war in Libya, as it did to countries experiencing internal turmoil in the past, which has allowed Turkey to make agreements in the East Mediterranean that are in line with its interests.

In summary, as can be seen, the first conflict between Turkey and Greece in the East Mediterranean began after the second world war, when the US and the Soviet Union rose in the international system and Britain lost its power in the Middle East and the East Mediterranean. The 1960s and 1970s, when the US was not able to achieve full hegemony even though it was effective in the region, were the years when the relations between the two countries in the region were extremely tense, and the parties came to the brink of war many times at various times. In the post-1980 period, when the US got ahead of the Soviet Union in the global power struggle and established regional alliances, and achieved hegemony in the East Mediterranean, relations between Turkey and Greece remained calm on a regional basis. With the newly discovered energy resources since the beginning of the 2000s, the East Mediterranean has become the focus of global powers and the importance of the region has increased for both countries. However, the tension between the two countries rose to the level of conflict, again at a time when the US gradually lost power both in the world and in the East Mediterranean and withdrew from the region because it could not maintain its hegemon position.

In fact, this period could be associated with the post- World War II period, when Britain began to lose its colonies and its influence in MENA region. In the pre-World War II period, the inclusion of Cyprus in the Greek territory was a controversial issue, but the conflict intensified after the Britain lost its hegemon position. Again, today's conflict began to show itself in the early 2000s with the discovery of hydrocarbon resources and disputed maritime jurisdictions. However, an intense conflict between the two counties that kept the international community busy for a long time flared up as the US began to lose its dominance in the region.

Turkey and Greece have permanent disagreements on many issues due to their common historical background and geopolitical position. The Cyprus problem in the East Mediterranean is one of them. However, the tension between the two countries in the region decreases from time to time and the parties come to the point of hot conflict from time to time. Conflicts between Turkey and Greece in the East Mediterranean escalate when there is no hegemony in the region. It is not possible to say that this situation is a coincidence. The conclusion to be drawn from this is that the withdrawal of great power from the region will create a regional power vacuum

and this power vacuum will cause instability in the region. Instability in the region causes the revisionist forces to take action, or at least becomes a trigger for them.



## **CHAPTER V**

### **CONCLUSION**

In every period of history, the East Mediterranean has maintained its geopolitical importance as it hosts very important trade routes and has the most fertile lands in the world. However, with the addition of newly discovered new energy resources in the region, which has been struggling with problems such as the Arab Spring and the Syrian civil war in the last ten years, both regional competitions have increased, and the region has attracted the attention of global actors. Thus, the East Mediterranean entered a new process of change and transformation. This transformation in the East Mediterranean covers many areas, especially energy, economy, security, social, humanitarian, and ideological problems. Therefore, it will not be sufficiently explanatory to consider this transformation from one perspective.

One of the transformations in the East Mediterranean in recent years is due to the transformation in the international system. Although it still has enormous military and economic power, the US has begun to lose its position as the sole hegemonic power in the world, which it gained with the disintegration of the Soviet Union, with the rise of Russia and China to become global powers. The US, whose power has weakened relatively against its rising rivals China and Russia, is losing its power to control every region it had in the past. Therefore, the power shift in the international system forces the US to withdraw from some regions. The East Mediterranean is one of these regions with its turbulent structure.

On the other hand, the turmoil in the region also manifests itself in the bilateral relations of the countries bordering the East Mediterranean. The sudden rise of tension between Turkey and Greece in recent years is the most important example of this. Considering that it and the TRNC are excluded from alliances and collaborations for the sharing of energy resources in the region, Turkey signed a maritime jurisdiction agreement with the government of Libya National Accord in

2019. Greece, which opposes this agreement on the grounds that it violates its continental shelves, and that the Libyan nation-state government is not authorized to make a deal on behalf of Libya, signed an Exclusive Economic Zone agreement with Egypt for the same region by 2020 to abolish this agreement. This agreement between Greece and Egypt was deemed to be contrary to international maritime law and therefore null and void by Turkey, which defended the thesis that the islands do not have a continental shelf. In the ongoing process, the NAVTEXs that both countries mutually announced in the East Mediterranean from time to time increased the tension, and the two countries came to the brink of a hot conflict at various times. The relations between the two countries, which had many historical and geopolitical conflicts such as the Cyprus Problem, the Aegean Islands problem, and the minority problem in the past, have been strained again in the East Mediterranean after a long time.

Like other problems in the East Mediterranean, the conflict between Turkey and Greece arose out of a combination of many factors. Therefore, linking the conflict between the two countries only to the problem of sharing maritime jurisdictions will not be sufficiently explanatory. In this sense, this study aims to explain the rising tension between Turkey and Greece in the context of the power shift in the international system and argues that the power vacuum in the region increases instability and therefore triggers the revisionist policies of Turkey and Greece.

In this direction, in the first chapter of the study, the existing explanations regarding the cause of the conflict between Turkey and Greece are examined under the headings of the nationalist-historical thesis, the ideology change thesis, the energy-economy thesis, the role of the leader thesis, and the defensive realism thesis. And it has been claimed that each of these explanations contributed to explaining the conflict between the two countries, but these explanations ignored the reflections of the change in the international system in the region. Later, this study introduces a new explanation called the power vacuum thesis to fill the gap in the literature.

In the second chapter, the theoretical framework of the study is drawn. First of all, it is argued that various approaches of realism have different explanations for the stability and change situations in the international system, and the explanations of the

classical realist Hans Morgenthau, the defensive realists Kenneth Waltz and Stephan Walt, and the offensive realists Robert Gilpin and Rendall Schweller about the change in the international system is placed. As a result, in this section, it is claimed that the current process of change in the international system can be explained with offensive realism, which argues that the factor causing the change in the system is the closure of the power gap with the hegemonic power with the rise of revisionist powers.

In the third and last chapter of the study, first of all, the weakening process of the US's power due to the costs of being hegemon in the system against Russia and China, which has become a rising and global power, is explained and the global power shift is presented from the offensive realist perspective. In the second part of the chapter, the conflict between Turkey and Greece in the East Mediterranean has been analyzed in the context of the processes of stability and change in the international system historically since the end of the second world war. At the end of this study, it was concluded that the instability in the international system caused a power vacuum in the region and the tension between these two countries increased more in the periods when there was no hegemon in the region. In other words, there is an ever-present conflict between Turkey and Greece. And this conflict has times of fall and rise. The rising periods of the conflict between these two countries in the East Mediterranean coincide with the periods when there was no hegemonic power in the region. For this reason, it can be claimed that the power vacuum in the region triggered the conflict between Turkey and Greece.

After Russia became a part of the war in Syria, it increased its presence in the East Mediterranean and became a permanent actor in the region. Russia played an active role not only in Syria but also in the civil war in Libya. The weakening of the US's leadership has improved the balance in the region in favor of Russia. On the other hand, the US still has vital interests in the East Mediterranean, even though its interest in the region is waning. The US, which has lost its hegemon position in the region, supports alliances established in the region in order to prevent other great powers from dominating as a new strategy. Therefore, it remains unclear whether Russia will be able to preserve the gains it has made in the region.

In the East Mediterranean, not only Russia but also China is a part of the global power struggle. China, which is the world's largest energy importer, is interested in the energy struggle all over the world due to this position. On the other hand, as stated above, China's "one belt and one road" project aims to establish economic contacts with East Asian, Central Asian, Western Asian, African, and European countries both by land and sea and thus to develop economic cooperation between countries. The East Mediterranean is also critical in that it is on the route of the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road, which is the Maritime section of this initiative announced by China in 2013.

The dominance of a state in the seas plays an important role in becoming a global power. Dominating the seas provides both military-strategic superiority and economic control of maritime trade. The US owes its hegemonic position after the Cold War to keep the world maritime trade under control and military superiority in the seas. The importance of the East Mediterranean in having both the world's important trade routes and rich energy resources is well-known. Therefore, all major powers have critical interests in the East Mediterranean. It does not seem possible for a power to re-establish dominance in the region in the short term. Since none of the global powers will give up on their interests in the region, the power struggle in the system will continue to exist in the East Mediterranean for a long time.

Since the beginning of 2021, relations between Turkey and Greece have again entered a trend of softening. Officials of both countries state that they are in favor of an agreement, not conflict with each other in the region and that they are ready for negotiations. However, since the two countries' theses on the East Mediterranean are opposed to each other, no positive progress can be made in the negotiations. Both countries accuse each other of having maximalist goals and expect them to give up on these goals.

Although the tension between the parties, which reached its peak in 2020, has left its place in a calmer atmosphere, the conflict between the parties will flare up from time to time in the following period. Because of the power vacuum in the region, both countries will continue their revisionist goals until the end. The goal of both Turkey and Greece is to develop new strategies by taking advantage of the turbulence in the

region and thus to have a say in the future of the East Mediterranean. For this reason, in the coming period, Turkey will seek to make maritime jurisdiction agreements with more riparian countries, while Greece, together with the Greek Cypriot Administration, will continue to lead energy cooperation activities that exclude Turkey and the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus. The important issue to be noted is that all these projections are made by ignoring the dynamics in the domestic policies of the countries. Especially in Turkey, a change of the government may lead to significant transformations in the foreign policy of the country including the East Mediterranean.



## REFERENCES

- Acer, Y. (2020). Doğu Akdeniz’de Yunanistan-Mısır Deniz Sınırı Antlaşması ve Türkiye, *Adalet Dergisi*,0(65), 13-26. Retrieved from:  
<https://dergipark.org.tr/tr/pub/adaletdergisi/issue/58576/846373>
- Akın, Y. (2021). *Turkey’s National Role Conceptions and the Implications in Eastern Mediterranean*. (Master Thesis, Bilkent University Graduate School of Economics and Social Sciences Ankara). Retrieved from  
<http://hdl.handle.net/11693/76653>
- Algür, B.(2020). “Kıbrıs ve Doğu Akdeniz’deki Son Uluslararası Gelişmeler Işığında Değişen Türkiye, ABD ve NATO Politikaları”. *Anadolu Strateji Dergisi*, 2 (2), 55-70. Retrieved from  
<https://dergipark.org.tr/en/pub/anasamasd/issue/56231/775595>
- Altunay, A. (2020). Kıbrıs Sorununun Ortaya Çıkışı ve Soğuk Savaş Döneminde Türk Yunan İlişkilerine Etkisi. İstanbul Ticaret Üniversitesi Dış Ticaret Enstitüsü Working Paper Series, Vol263.  
<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.4025040>
- Axt, H., J. (2021). Troubled Water in the Eastern Mediterranean. Turkey Challenges Greece and Cyprus Regarding Energy Resources, *Comparative Southeast European Studies*, 69 (1), 133-152. Retrieved from  
<https://www.degruyter.com/document/doi/10.1515/soeu-2021-2006/htm>
- Çevik, A. (2015). *Tek Kutupluluktan Çok Kutupluluğa Doğru Yeni Dünya*. (Master Thesis, Başkent University European Union and International Relations Institute, Ankara). Retrieved from <http://hdl.handle.net/11727/2123>
- Ercan, M, Kılınç, M. (2020). Bölgesel ve Küresel Aktörlerin Ortadoğu Merkezli Doğu Akdeniz Politikaları “Kıbrıs Çatışması ve Libya Mutabakatı”. *Anadolu Strateji Dergisi*, 2(2), 15-28. Retrieved from  
<https://dergipark.org.tr/tr/pub/anasamasd/issue/56231/775582>
- Erçakıca, M. (2021). Doğu Akdeniz’de Yaşanan Güncel Gelişmelerin Kıbrıs Sorunu ve Uluslararası Deniz Hukuku Çerçevesinde Değerlendirilmesi. *Erciyes Üniversitesi Hukuk Fakültesi Dergisi*, 16(1), 301-334.Retrieved from:  
<https://dergipark.org.tr/en/pub/eruhfd/issue/62059/929264>
- Gilpin, R. (1981). *War and Change in World Politics*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Grigoriadis, I. (2021). The Eastern Mediterranean as an Emerging Crisis Zone: Greece and Cyprus in a Volatile Regional Environment, Michael Tanchum (Ed.), in *Eastern Mediterranean in Uncharted Eaters: Perspectives on Emerging Geo-political Realities* (38-46 pp.). Ankara, Konrad Adenauer Stiftung.

Greek Ministry of Foreign Affairs. (2020, August). *Statement of the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Nikos Dendias, following the signing of the agreement on the delimitation of EEZ between Greece and Egypt* [Press Release]. Retrieved from: <https://www.mfa.gr/turkey/tr/the-embassy/news/statement-of-the-minister-of-foreign-affairs-nikos-dendias-following-the-signing-of-the-agreement-on-the-delimitation-of-eez-between-greece-and-egypt-cairo-august-2020.html>

Greek Ministry of Foreign Affairs. (2020, October). *Yunanistan Dışişleri Bakanlığı'nın Oruç Reis'in Faaliyeti için Yayınlanan Navtex'e dair Açıklaması Hk.* [Press Release]. Retrieved from: [https://www.mfa.gov.tr/no\\_-244\\_-yunanistan-disisleri-bakanligi-nin-oruc-reis-in-faaliyeti-icin-yayinlanan-navtex-e-dair-aciklamasi-hk.tr.mfa](https://www.mfa.gov.tr/no_-244_-yunanistan-disisleri-bakanligi-nin-oruc-reis-in-faaliyeti-icin-yayinlanan-navtex-e-dair-aciklamasi-hk.tr.mfa)

Gür, V.T.(2020). *Turkey's Isolation from Regionalization Process in East Mediterranean: A Case Study of East Mediterranean Gas Forum*, (Master Thesis, Bilkent University, Ankara). Retrieved from <http://hdl.handle.net/11693/53997>

Kasım, K.(2007). Soğuk Savaş Dönemi Sonrası Kıbrıs Sorunu. *Gazi Akademik Bakış*,1(1), 57-72. Retrieved from <https://dergipark.org.tr/tr/pub/gav/issue/6530/86588>

Kökyay, F. (2020). Neorealizm Kuramı ve Türkiye'nin Doğu Akdeniz Enerji Politikası- Neorealism Theory and Eastern Mediterranean Energy Policy of Turkey, *İnsan ve Toplum Bilimleri Araştırmaları*, 9(3):2504-2528. <http://dx.doi.org/10.15869/itobiad.755012>

Mazis, I. (2021). The Mediterranean-Balkans-Middle East Complex and the Western Strategy in the Greek-Turkish Conflict (elements of Power and Law). *Journal of Humanities and Social Science*, 26(2):19-31. Doi: 10.9790/0837-2602031931

Merz, F. (2020). Trouble with Turkey in East Mediterranean. *Center for Security Studies*, 275. Retrieved from <https://css.ethz.ch/content/dam/ethz/special-interest/gess/cis/center-for-security-studies/pdfs/CSSAnalyse275-EN.pdf>

Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China.(2013). *President Xi Jinping Delivers Important Speech and Proposes to Build a Silk Road Economic Belt with Central Asian Countries* [Press Release]. Retrieved from [https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa\\_eng/topics\\_665678/xjpfwzysiesgjtfhshzzfh\\_665686/t1076334.shtml](https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/topics_665678/xjpfwzysiesgjtfhshzzfh_665686/t1076334.shtml)

Morgenthau. H. (1948). *Politics Among Nations: Struggle for Power and Peace*. New York: Alfred A. Knoph.

Ozan, E. (2020). Doğu Akdeniz'de ABD-Rusya Rekabeti ve Türkiye'nin Güvenliği. *Uluslararası Kriz ve Siyaset Araştırmaları Dergisi*, 4 (1), 159-188. Retrieved from <https://dergipark.org.tr/tr/pub/uksad/issue/54632/745317>

- Oran, B., (2001). *Türk Dış Politikası Kurtuluş Savaşından Bugüne Olgular Bulgular Yorumlar*. İstanbul:İletişim Yayınları.
- Özgör, F. (2021). Ege Denizi'nde Egemenliği Belirsiz Coğrafi Oluşumlar Sorunu'nu Ortaya Çıkaran Kardak Krizi; Türkiye ve Yunanistan'daki Etkileri. *Troy Academy*, 6 (2), 643-668. Doi: 10.31454/troyacademy.958321
- Rehman, A.U. and Zafar, A. (2020). Mediterranean Sea Struggle between Turkey and Greece and its Implications for the Existence of NATO and the Way Forward. *Acta Universitatis Danubius Relationes Internationales*, 13 (2). <https://dj.univ-danubius.ro/index.php/AUDRI/article/view/766/1123>
- Serbest, M., B. (2017). Süveyş Kanalı'nın Ulusallaştırılması Sorunu ve Süveyş Bunalımı, *Sosyal Araştırmalar Dergisi*, 6 (4), 690-710.
- Schweller, R., (2004). "Unanswered Threats: A Neoclassical Realist Theory of Underbalancing." *International Security*, 29(2), 159-201.
- Schweller, R. (1997). Neorealism's Status quo Bias: What is Security Dilemma? *Security Studies*, 5(3), 90-121.
- Schweller, R. (1994). Bandwagoning for Profit: Bringing the Revisionist State Back. *International Security*, 19(1), 72-107.
- SIPRI, (2019). *Data for All Countries From 1988-2020 in Constant*. Retrieved from <https://sipri.org/sites/default/files/Data%20for%20all%20countries%20from%201988%E2%80%932020in%20constant%20%282019%29%20USD%20%28pdf%29.pdf>
- Şen, Y., F. (2015). Türk Milliyetçiliği ve Öteki Algısı: Yunanistanla Çözümeyen Ege Sorunu. *Türk İdare Dergisi*, 480, (179-228). Retrived from <http://www.tid.gov.tr/Makaleler/Türk%20Milliyetçiliği%20ve%20Öteki%20Algısı%20Yunan%20istan%27la%20Çözümeyen%20Ege%20Sorunu.pdf>
- Taş, H. (2020). The formulation and implementation of populist foreign policy: Turkey in the Eastern Mediterranean. *Mediterranean Politics*, London & New York: Routledge <https://doi.org/10.1080/13629395.2020.1833160>
- TCMB. (2008). *Gösterge Niteliğindeki Merkez Bankası Kurları*. Retrieved from [www.tcmb.gov.tr/wps/wcm/connect/tr/tcmb+menu/istatistikler/doviz+kurlari](http://www.tcmb.gov.tr/wps/wcm/connect/tr/tcmb+menu/istatistikler/doviz+kurlari)
- TR Ministry of Foreign Affairs. (2020). *Statement of the Spokesperson of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Mr. Hami Aksoy, in Response to a Question Regarding the Signature of the Agreement on the EastMed Project* [Press Release]. Retrieved from [https://www.mfa.gov.tr/sc\\_-1\\_-eastmed-projesine-iliskin-anlasmanin-imzalanmasi-hk-sc.en.mfa](https://www.mfa.gov.tr/sc_-1_-eastmed-projesine-iliskin-anlasmanin-imzalanmasi-hk-sc.en.mfa)

- TR Ministry of Foreign Affairs.(2019, December). *Statement of the Spokesperson of the Ministry of the Foreign Affairs, Mr. Hami Aksoy, in Response to a Question Regarding the Statements Made by Greece and Egypt on the Agreement Signed With Libya on the Maritime Jurisdiction Areas* [Press Release]. Retrieved from [https://www.mfa.gov.tr/sc\\_-73\\_-yunanistan-ve-misir-aciklamalari-hk-sc.en.mfa](https://www.mfa.gov.tr/sc_-73_-yunanistan-ve-misir-aciklamalari-hk-sc.en.mfa)
- TR Ministry of Foreign Affairs. (2020, July). *Statement of the Spokesperson of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Mr. Hami Aksoy, in Response to a Question Regarding the Statement of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Greece Concerning the Survey Activities of the Vessel Oruç Reis in the Eastern Mediterranean* [Press Release]. Retrieved from [https://www.mfa.gov.tr/sc\\_-66\\_-yunanistan-disisleri-bakanligi-nin-oruc-reis--dogu-akdeniz-deki-arastirma-faaliyetine-iliskin-yaptigi-aciklama-hk-sc.en.mfa](https://www.mfa.gov.tr/sc_-66_-yunanistan-disisleri-bakanligi-nin-oruc-reis--dogu-akdeniz-deki-arastirma-faaliyetine-iliskin-yaptigi-aciklama-hk-sc.en.mfa)
- TR Ministry of Foreign Affairs. (2020, August). *Dışişleri Bakanı Sayın Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu'nun Almanya Dışişleri Bakanı Sayın Heiko Maas ile Ortak Basın Toplantısı* [Press Release]. Ankara retrieved from: <https://www.mfa.gov.tr/disisleri-bakani-sayin-mevlut-cavusoglu-nun-almanya-db-ile-ortak-basin-toplantisi-25-agustos-2020.tr.mfa>
- Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Dışişleri Bakanlığı. (nd.). *Kıbrıs Meselesinin Tarihçesi, BM Müzakerelerinin Başlangıcı*. Retrieved from: [https://www.mfa.gov.tr/kibris-meselesinin-tarihcesi\\_-bm-muzakerelerinin-baslangici.tr.mfa](https://www.mfa.gov.tr/kibris-meselesinin-tarihcesi_-bm-muzakerelerinin-baslangici.tr.mfa)
- Walt, S., M. (1987). *The Origins of Alliances*. New York: Cornell University Press.
- Waltz, K., N. (1979). *Theory of International Politics*. New York: Random House.
- Vatansever, A. (2010). Kıbrıs Sorununun Tarihi Gelişimi. *Dokuz Eylül Üniversitesi Hukuk Fakültesi Dergisi*, 12,1487-1530. Retrieved from <https://dergipark.org.tr/tr/pub/deuhfd/issue/46934/588952>
- Yaycı, C.(2012). Doğu Akdeniz'de Yetki Alanlarının Paylaşılması Sorunu ve Türkiye. *Bilge Strateji*, 4(6),1-70. <https://dergipark.org.tr/tr/pub/bs/issue/3804/51021>
- Yaycı, C.(2019). *Sorular ve Cevaplar ile Münhasır Ekonomik Bölge (MEB) Kavramı*. İstanbul: Deniz Kuvvetleri Komutanlığı.
- Yılmaz, E. (2020). Doğu Akdeniz'deki Gelişmeler Doğrultusunda Türk Dış Politikası'nın Dünü ve Bugünü. *Karadeniz Uluslararası Bilimsel Dergi*, 12 (48), 27-48. DOI: 10.17498/kdeniz.791715
- Yılmaz, T. (2020). Doğu Akdeniz'de Türkiye'ye Yönelik Jeopolitik Kuşatma ve Libya Meselesi. *Türkiye Günlüğü*, 141, 5-36. Retrieved from [https://www.academia.edu/45686589/Doğu\\_Akdenizde\\_Türkiyeye\\_yönelik\\_jeopolitik\\_kuşatma\\_ve\\_Libya\\_meselesi](https://www.academia.edu/45686589/Doğu_Akdenizde_Türkiyeye_yönelik_jeopolitik_kuşatma_ve_Libya_meselesi)

## CURRICULUM VITAE

### Personal Information:

Name- Surname: Hasene ER

### Education:

2012-2017 BA in Political Science and International Relations, Istanbul Sabahattin Zaim University, Turkey

2015-2019 BA in Faculty of Law in Istanbul Sabahattin Zaim University, Turkey

2019-2021 MA in Political Science and International Relations, Ibn Haldun University, Turkey