

HOW DOES THE DISCOVERY OF HYDROCARBON
RESOURCES IN MARITIME BOUNDARY DELIMITATION
ZONES AFFECT INTERSTATE CONFLICT?

A Master's Thesis

by

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Ankara

August 2020

To The Memory of My Grandfather, Abdullah Altıntaş

HOW DOES THE DISCOVERY OF HYDROCARBON RESOURCES IN
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INTERSTATE CONFLICT?

The Graduate School of Economics and Social Sciences

of

İhsan Doğramacı Bilkent University

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In partial fulfillments of the Requirements for the Degree of
MASTER OF ARTS IN INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

THE DEPARTMENT OF

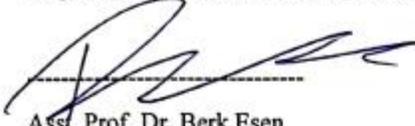
INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

İHSAN DOĞRAMACI BILKENT UNIVERSITY

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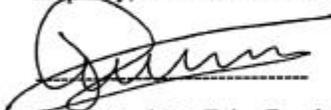
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ABSTRACT

HOW DOES THE DISCOVERY OF HYDROCARBON RESOURCES IN MARITIME BOUNDARY DELIMITATION ZONES AFFECT INTERSTATE CONFLICT?

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August 2020

This thesis analyzes how the discovery of hydrocarbon resources in the maritime territories affect interstate conflict based on a paired comparison of: the Eastern Mediterranean Sea and the South China Sea conflicts. According to the United Nations Convention on the Law of Sea, littoral states have to define their exclusive economic zones to use their sovereign rights of exploring and exploiting seabed, subsoil, and natural resources out of their territorial waters. In the existence of an exclusive economic zone, maritime boundary delimitations states' cannot exercise these rights before solving their ongoing disputes. Despite their structural differences in the Eastern Mediterranean Sea and the South China Sea maritime boundary delimitations, the existence of abundance hydrocarbon resources intensified the existing conflict. The thesis concludes that states' relative gain calculations determine their actions. A direct ratio exists between the severity of the conflict and the abundance of resources. The findings of the thesis indicate that hydrocarbon sources affect the states' perception of relative gains when the coastal states' believe that their expected earnings will increase; it is observed that they become more demanding in their territorial claims.

Keywords: Eastern Mediterranean, Energy, Exclusive Economic Zone, Maritime Boundary Delimitation, South China Sea

ÖZET

DENİZ SINIR BÖLGELERİNDE KEŞFEDİLEN HİDROKARBON KAYNAKLARI DEVLETLERARASI ÇATIŞMAYI NASIL ETKİLER?

Altıntaş, Yüksel Yasemin

Yüksek Lisans, Uluslararası İlişkiler Bölümü

Tez Danışmanı: Dr. Öğr. Üyesi Berk Esen

Ağustos 2020

Bu tez Doğu Akdeniz ve Güney Çin Denizi gibi, deniz yetki alanları sınırlandırılma anlaşmazlığı olan bölgelerde hidrokarbon kaynakları bulunmanın devletlerarası çatışmayı nasıl etkileneceğini Doğu Akdeniz ve Güney Çin Denizi örnek vakaları üzerinden incelemektedir. Milletler Deniz Hukuku Sözleşmesine göre kıyı devletleri kara sularının dışında kalan bölgelerde deniz yataklarından, yer altı ve doğal kaynaklardan kendi kara sularındaymış gibi yararlanabilmek için münhasır ekonomik bölgelerini ilan etmek zorundadır. Münhasır ekonomik bölge çatışması olan bölgelerde taraf ülkelerin deniz yataklarından, yer altı ve doğal kaynaklardan yararlanabilmesi için devam eden anlaşmazlıklarını çözüme kavuşturmak zorundadır. İç dinamiklerindeki farklılıklara rağmen hem Doğu Akdeniz de hem de Güney Çin Denizin de hidrokarbon rezervlerinin bulunması var olan bölgesel çatışmaların şiddetini arttırmıştır. Bulunan rezervlerin büyüklükleri ile çatışma şiddetinin artması doğru orantılıdır. Tez bulguları hidrokarbon kaynaklarının taraf devletlerin göreceli kazanç hesaplarını etkilediğini, beklenen kazancın artacağına inanılması durumunda kıyı devletlerinin bölgesel talepleri konusunda daha talepkâr olduğu gözlenmektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Deniz Yeki Alanlarının Sınırlandırılması, Dođu Akdeniz, Enerji, Gney in Denizi, Mnhasır Ekonomik Blge

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

First and foremost, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to my advisor Asst. Prof. Dr. Berk Esen, for his patience, guidance, and encouragement throughout my academic life and thesis process. I also would like to thank the rest of my examining committee members, Asst. Prof. Dr. Tudor A. Onea and Assoc. Prof. Dr. Tolga Demiryol for their constructive suggestions and insightful comments.

I am thankful for the support, guidance, and teachings of all of my professors at Bilkent University throughout my undergraduate and graduate studies.

I would also like to thank my father, S. Cumhuri Altıntaş, and present my appreciation for my supportive family members and close friends for their emotional and academic support. My heartfelt gratuities go to three special women in my life whom I admire by their dedication and strength: my sister Neşe Gülay Altıntaş, my mom Ayşe Gül Koçak Altıntaş and my grandmother Yüksel Altıntaş. I am eternally grateful for their presence in my life.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT.....	V
ÖZET.....	VII
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS.....	IX
LIST OF FIGURES.....	XIII
LIST OF TABLES.....	XIV
CHAPTER 1.....	1
INTRODUCTION.....	1
1.1 Hypothesis.....	4
1.2. Research Design and Methodology.....	7
1.3. Data Collection and Limitations.....	9
1.4. Role of Hydrocarbon Recourses in Interstate Disputes.....	10
1.5. Comparison of the Eastern Mediterranean Sea and the South China Sea Disputes.....	11
CHAPTER 2.....	14
THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK.....	14
2.1. Differences between Land-Based Territorial Disputes and Maritime Territorial Disputes.....	16
2.2. Importance of Energy Resources and Geographic Location.....	19
2.3. Role of Natural Resources in Territorial Disputes.....	21
2.4. Theoretical Approaches to Conflict Studies.....	24
2.5. Connection of Natural Resources and Maritime Boundary Delimitations.....	30
2.5.1 Case 1: The Eastern Mediterranean Sea Dispute.....	31
2.5.2. Case 2: The South China Sea Dispute.....	32

CHAPTER 3	34
MARITIME BOUNDARY DELIMITATION IN THE EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN SEA	34
3.1. Geographic Location and Structure of the Eastern Mediterranean Sea	34
3.2. Historical Importance of the Eastern Mediterranean Sea and Cyprus	36
3.2.1. Cyprus	37
3.3. Maritime Boundary Delimitations in the Eastern Mediterranean Sea and the Cyprus Conflict.....	38
3.3.1. History of the Conflict	38
3.4. Maritime Boundary Delimitations after the Exploration of Potential Hydrocarbon Resources	41
3.5. Greek Administration of Southern Cyprus	42
3.6. Greece.....	45
3.7. Egypt	50
3.8. Israel.....	52
3.9. Lebanon	54
3.10. Syria	55
3.11. Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC).....	56
3.12. Turkey	57
3.13. Chapter Summary	63
CHAPTER 4	68
MARITIME BOUNDARY DELIMITATIONS IN THE SOUTH CHINA SEA	68
4.1. Importance of the South China Sea.....	68
4.2. Importance of Hydrocarbon Reserves and the Role of Energy Security	71
4.3. Disputed History of the Region	72
4.4. Common Features of Spratly and Paracel Islands	75
4.4.1. Spratly Islands	79
4.4.2. Paracel Islands.....	81

4.5. China (People's Republic of China)	81
4.6. Taiwan (The Republic of China)	87
4.7. The Philippines	89
4.8. Vietnam	91
4.9. Malaysia	93
4.10. Brunei Darussalam	94
4.11. Theoretical Analysis of States' Actions in the South China Sea	95
CHAPTER 5	97
CONCLUSION	97
5.1. Implications and Policy Recommendations	100
5.2. Recommendations for Future Studies	104
APPENDIX A: ABBREVIATIONS	107
APPENDIX B: UNCLOS MARITIME ZONES	110
BIBLIOGRAPHY	111

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1 Overlapping Territories	44
Figure 2 Overlapping Territories And Licensed Areas	44
Figure 3 Route Of Eastmed Pipeline	47
Figure 4 Comparison Of Greek And Turkish Eez Borders	48
Figure 5 Map Of Israel-Lebanon Maritime Dispute	55
Figure 6 Trnc Claimed Disputed Territory	57
Figure 7 The Exploration Licenses Granted To Tpao By The Turkish Government And TRNC Government.....	59
Figure 8 Offshore Hyrdocarbon Reserves And Eez Claims	75
Figure 9 What Makes An Island?.....	77
Figure 10 Occupation Status Of The Features In The South China Sea	78
Figure 11 Locations' Of Spratlys And Paracels	79
Figure 12 Spratly Archipelago	80
Figure 13 Chinese Eez Claims: U-Shape Eez Map.....	82

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1 Major Gas Reserves Discoveries In The Eastern Mediterranean Sea Between 1999-2015	52
Table 2 Maritime Disputes In South China Sea.....	73

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

How does the discovery of hydrocarbon resources in maritime boundary delimitation zones affect interstate disputes? According to UNCLOS, coastal states have to declare an exclusive economic zone (EEZ) to gain their sovereign right to explore and exploit the seabed and its subsoil and benefit from all living and non-living maritime resources, in their territorial waters. However, littoral states can only exercise these rights if the other coastal states approve their claimed EEZ. The majority of maritime boundary delimitations are occurring as a result of overlapping EEZ claims. Disputant states can choose to adopt a cooperative strategy to settle their ongoing disputes, which will benefit all parties by allowing them to use seabed, subsoil, and maritime resources. However, if disputant states believe that settling the dispute will harm their benefits in the long run, to increase their relative gains, they will choose a delaying strategy. States' choice of delaying strategy can explain by greed theory.

In the Eastern Mediterranean Sea (EMS) and the South China Sea (SCS), littoral states overlapping EEZ declarations create maritime boundary delimitations create territorial disputes in the region. If coastal states settle their disputes, they can benefit from maritime resources. However, in each case, states did not demonstrate a willingness to compromise tone down their claims to settle the conflict. Disputants' believes that increasing their power in the region they can force their opponents to compromise. To gain control of their claimed territory, some disputants like China and Turkey rely on their military capabilities, more specifically their naval power. As a response to certain nations' usage of gunboat diplomacy, some nations like the Greek Administration of Southern Cyprus and the Philippines prefer to form alliances. Depending on the nations' capabilities, these

alliances can be formed among equivalent nations, balancing, or with a relatively stronger nation, bandwagoning. States' can also choose buck-passing to secure their interest in the system, which is dominated by a strong potential threat. In the buck-passing, stronger allies confront' with the challenger states' instead of a weaker nation (Richey, 2020). Sino-US rivalry and US-led alliances in the Asia-Pacific region can be given as an example to buck-passing. After the exploration of hydrocarbon reserves in the disputed regions, tension increased in the last decade, especially in EMS and SCS. The duration of these disputes harms all sides since neither state can effectively explore and have access to these resources in the conflicted regions.

In accordance with coastal states expanding energy dependency and needs, not settling the existing disputes prevent them from accessing energy resources that are required. Therefore rise of tension in the maritime boundary delimitation after the exploration of hydrocarbon reserves is a puzzle since conventional wisdom would suggest cooperation, which could be beneficial for all parties involved. Nevertheless, as argued in this thesis, the outcome is the opposite, in the sense that the discovery of hydrocarbon resources intensifies interstate conflict due to maritime disputes. Exploration of hydrocarbon resources in the conflict existed territories escalate the conflict rather than settling them.

Mearsheimer indicates that in the international arena, states compete with each other to gain power. In the anarchic structure of the international politics, being a powerful player is the only way to secure their survivor (Mearsheimer, 2006). States aim to expand their aggregate power to become more powerful actors in the international arena. A nation's aggregate power can be measure by its resources like population, military capabilities, and technology (Walt, 1985, p. 9). Territory provides necessary ground for population expansion and resources for a nation to expand its technological, industrial, and material capabilities like rare earth minerals. Therefore states' compete with each other to expand their aggregate power.

Gaining territory has always been a significant motivation for states to improve their relative power by allowing them to expand their material capabilities and resources. The regional rivalry is another factor that triggers or intensifies conflicts; when states compete with each other to become the dominant state in their region, the intensity of the conflict

increases. If a state is more powerful than its opponents, in a case of conflict, its' likelihood of achieving its' demands increases (Mearsheimer, 2014). Therefore states choose to invest in their military capabilities or expand their military power by forming alliances. States' choice of strategies, including their alliance formations, should be considered as a means to an end, which is maintaining or expanding states' power.

In general, territorial and boundary disputes are caused by material claims (Guo, 2018). Some disputes evolve peacefully through mediation or negotiation; however, some disputes escalate and cause violence. Disagreements over states' borders cause intensification on the interactions of the states. Some scholars argue that the duration of the disputes is connected with the level of hostility. The longer the dispute takes, the likelihood of settling the dispute in a peaceful way decreases (Jones, Bremer, and Singer, 1996). Thus territorial disputes are taken as the main causes of interstate wars (Vasquez, 2000).

When states' expected gains increase, the likelihood of interstate aggression level increases; however, few scholars have carried out a detailed case study exploring why and under which conditions certain interstate disputes resolve more peacefully while others become violent. Scholars argue that geographical proximity is the most important factor affecting the aggression level in conflicts and their likelihood of escalating into the war (Stenberg, 2012). However, the majority of aggressive territorial conflicts occur over the recourse rich territories. Border disputes between Bolivia and Peru, Ecuador and Peru, Nigeria and Cameroon, Algeria and Morocco, China and Vietnam, and Iraq-Iran war can be given as an example to territorial conflicts over recourse-rich regions. Territorial conflicts occur not only in land-based territories. The number and intensity of maritime boundary delimitations on the resource-rich maritime regions such as the Caspian Sea, East China Sea, Eastern Mediterranean Sea, and the South China Sea are increasing rapidly.

After the 1970s, the Arab oil embargo, the number of academic works that analyze the relationship between natural resources and conflict studies increased (Bayramov, 2018, p.74). Studies indicate that there is a positive relationship between conflict and resource scarcity (Mildner, Lauster, and Wodni, 2011, p.157). Therefore it can be argued that

natural resources have a more significant impact than geographical proximities on the duration of territorial conflicts. In certain conflict, existing regions like Eastern Mediterranean, East, and South China Sea exploration of hydrocarbon resources affects the duration of the conflict by changing states' expected gains from the region, which they have already been competing for.

This thesis conducts a paired comparison of the Eastern Mediterranean Sea and the South China Sea disputes to argue that the discovery of hydrocarbon resources contributes to the intensification of interstate disputes as a conflict escalator factor by using most different system designs paired comparison study. In this chapter, Chapter 1, hypothesis, research design and methodology, comparison of selected cases, and the summary of the selected theoretical framework, realist paradigm is discussed. Chapter 2 introduces the literature review and theoretical framework. Chapter 3 applies the main arguments of this thesis to the Eastern Mediterranean Sea case to explore the interstate conflict in the region. In the fourth chapter, after presenting the historical background of the SCS dispute, common features of the selected two sub-cases are introduced: the Spratly and Paracel disputes. This part will be followed by the examination of disputed states' actions and concluded by the theoretical analysis of disputants' actions. Chapter 5 provides a summary of the results in accordance with the selected hypothesis.

1.1 Hypothesis

Hypothesis: Discovery of hydrocarbon resources in conflicts existing regions does not serve as a settling factor; in fact, by serving as a triggering factor, it intensifies the depth of the dispute.

This study contributes to the conflict literature by examining state actions regarding their expected gain-loss calculations in the selected cases: the Eastern Mediterranean Sea and the South China Sea. It argues that the exploration of hydrocarbon resources in the conflicted regions does not promote cooperation among the conflicting sides. Instead, it serves as a triggering factor and escalates tension among the disputed actors. Exploration of hydrocarbon resources in the conflict existed regions complicates the exiting

competition in the region. Whichever state gains control of the energy resources, it not only increase its' economic power but also by reducing its energy dependency to other nations. Also, controlling energy reserves can significantly improve that nation's power.

Therefore controlling energy resources creates power imbalances and security concerns in the conflict existing regions. Nations become more demanding over their claims, and their likelihood of compromising to settle the exiting conflict reduces. As a result of the disputant states' demanding attitudes conflict escalates. Hydrocarbon resources conflict escalating effects in the conflict existing maritime territories can be measured by the number and the tone of press releases given by the disputant states' leaders, by comparing the number of verbal notes (note verbale) issued by regional states regarding to each others' actions in the disputed region before and after the exploration of the hydrocarbon resources and by the comparison of disputant states' naval forces' existence in the disputed territories before and after the exploration of hydrocarbon reserves.

In the intensified disputes, states try to increase their power by expanding their military capabilities, forming new alliances, and deepening their existing partnerships as a balance of threat strategy. With the rise of global energy needs, motivated nations started to issue drilling licenses on the disputed hydrocarbon blocks. Energy companies' attempts to conduct operations in the disputed regions served as conflict triggering factors. Thus by creating blocs hydrocarbon resources strengthens the exiting cooperation among the states. Still, they do not end the current conflict among the actors by forcing them to cooperate with each other.

Structural Realism is dominantly used in the thesis to analyze states' motives. Relative and absolute gain perceptions of the disputants' significantly affect their strategies. Based on relative gain calculations, disputants may choose to settle, maintain, or act aggressively to reach their claims in a conflict. Hydrocarbon resources are non-renewable energy sources, and because of their limited global reserves in some studies, they are analyzed under scarce resources category. On the contrary, based on the size of hydrocarbon reserves, hydrocarbons are analyzed under the resource abundance category in certain regions. Because of its' global scarcity and regional abundance by increasing disputants' expected

gains, energy reserves significantly increases the degree of conflict. Greed theory can be used for explaining states demanding actions in such regions.

In the anarchic international system states concerns about their survival. To ensure their security, states compete with each other to enhance their capabilities. According to Mearsheimer, great powers try to maximize their power to be able to dominate the system (Mearsheimer, 2001). Before the Great War, until the establishment of the USSR international system carried the features of a multipolar system. In the Cold War period, the international arena became bipolar. After the fall of the Berlin wall under the US hegemony, unipolarity dominated the international system. However, with the rise of regional powers, the international arena started to shift from unipolarity to multipolarity (Muzaffar, Yaseen, and Rahim, 2017). Multipolarity increases competition among the states; therefore, it increases the likelihood of interstate disputes (Deutsch and Singer, 1964).

Imbalance in military power can prevent the rise of conflicts in bipolar or unipolar systems. However, in a multipolar world order, it leads to an arms race, which usually leads to a security dilemma. In SCS, the rise of the People's Liberation Army Navy (PLAN) reduces the other disputants' likelihood of willing to engage military confrontations with China. On the contrary, if disputants' military capabilities are equivalent to each other, their likelihood of avoiding military confrontations decreases. Even though the quality and quantity of offensive military capabilities vary, all states own offensive military capabilities (Mearsheimer, 2001). In the selected cases, disputant nations use their offensive military capabilities as deterrent power to protect their claimed regions, like the increasing existence of PLAN in SCS to protect its' claimed islands or Turkish military vessels' sailing next to Turkish seismic vessels as deterrence in the disputed EMS. Hence disputants try to restrain the rise or domination of a potential rival within their region.

States can never be sure of other states' intentions; therefore, to secure their claimed territory, they rely on their military capabilities. By investing in their military capabilities and forming alliances, disputant states aim to improve their military and economic weaknesses. Both in SCS and EMS, disputants try to improve their strength by forming

alliances. In SCS, disputant states form various alignments with the regional and non-regional states. Alliance formation can be seen more significantly in EMS. Unlike SCS, in EMS, two main alliance blocks were formed by the regional governments: Israel, Egypt, GASC, Greece versus Turkey, Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC), Government of National Accord (GNA).

1.2. Research Design and Methodology

In terms of methodology, the paired comparison method was used in this thesis. In the selected cases process-tracing method is used to measure the effects of hydrocarbon resources discoveries in the conflict in maritime territories. According to Beach and Pedersen (2019), process tracing can be done in three ways. Theory testing process tracing (hypothetical deductive approach), theory-building process tracing (inductive approach for proving theoretical explanation using case-specific evidence), and explaining the outcome process tracing. In outcome, explanation process tracing scholars can choose deductive or inductive approaches. In this thesis, inductive reasoning is used to assess the contribution of hydrocarbon resources discoveries in the conflict-existing maritime boundary delimitations. By using empirical evidence, the causal mechanisms between the independent (existence of hydrocarbon resources) and dependent variables (escalation of conflict) are examined in the selected cases. As a part of data analysis, the frequency of disputant states' press releases and international objections regarding their disputants' actions before and after the exploration of hydrocarbon resources in the disputed maritime territory is examined. Also, disputant States' military presence in the conflicted region and frequency of their military exercises are analyzed.

The case study provides more specific information to the readers and allows them to compare the developments. Such comparisons can be made among multiple cases, or historical developments can be compared with the current situation with a single (or multiple) case study. The paired comparison allows authors to conduct explicit analyses that cannot be maintained with large-N studies (Tarrow, 2010, p.243). Even though it is

harder to generalize small-N findings, the small-N paired comparison method allows researchers to examine their selected cases more comprehensively.

Process-tracing is one of the most common methods used in quality analysis. Scholars can examine causal mechanism within a case or cases (Bennett, 2010). Some scholars perceive process tracing as another form of storytelling due to its' descriptive nature; they criticize the process-tracing method (Tarrow, 2010, p.239). Contrary, by providing a deep background knowledge of the examined systems or nations, it allows authors to conduct exclusive analysis. Process tracing can be done by *hoop test*, *smoking gun test*, and *straw in the wind test* (Mahoney, 2012). Hoop tests eliminate the given hypothesis, but it does not explain why the hypothesis is rejected by providing direct supporting evidence (Bennett, 2010). On the contrary, smoking gun test confirms hypothesis (Mahoney, 2012, p. 572). Suppose the selected tests indicate considerable doubts and some evidence which both in favor and against the given hypothesis, smoking gun and hoop test becomes straw in the wind test. Straw in the wind test neither confirm nor rejects the given hypothesis (Collier, 2011). In this thesis explaining the outcome process-tracing method, a smoking gun test is used for exploring causal mechanisms.

Researchers tend to choose comparative methods when statistical or experimental methods cannot be employed in the selected research. The comparative method allows for the systemic analysis of the differences and the similarities among the selected systems. Compared to quantitative methods, the case study method enables researchers and readers to make interpretations during the process tracing. Researchers can obtain and present patterns and regularities among the systems more clearly. Data collection and analyzing large data sets takes more time in case studies. However, small-N quantitative studies cannot be easily generalized. Since they allow researchers to make interpretations and assumptions during the process tracing, the results of the case studies are more likely to be subjective. Comparative studies can be conducted in cross-regional studies, global comparisons, comparisons across institutions, to compare particular behaviors or in thematic studies (Casey, 2012). This method is one of the most used methods in conflict studies. Case comparison can be made among the units (communities, countries, regions,

etc.), which have several things in common (i.e., culture, historical background, language, religion, and so on) or one thing in common. If the selected cases have many similarities but differ in their outcome, this method is called the most similar system (MSSD).

On the contrary, if selected cases carry very different characteristics from each other, yet they all have one factor in common that serves as the explanatory factor for the same outcome this method is called the most different system design (MDSD, aka least similar system), where the similarity is taken as a key for the research. MDSD is a theory-driven small-N analysis method (Mills, Durepos, and Wiebe, 2012). MDSD allows researchers to conduct multi-level analysis, comparison between, and within the system can be easily made in this method (Anckar, 2008). MDSD is used in this study to examine the contribution of the exploration of hydrocarbon resources' potential to ongoing maritime territorial disputes.

1.3. Data Collection and Limitations

In the data collection, the majority of qualitative comparative academic studies are used. Historical written documents, documentaries, reports, political statements, academic studies (books and articles), and media sources (internet broadcastings, interview-based videos, speeches, and newspapers) are used in this study. For accessing these resources: EBSCO, JSTOR, Willey, Springer databases are mostly used. Because of the linguistic limitations, only Turkish and English academic and non-academic sources are used in this thesis. Due to the uncertainties of the potential value of the recoverable resources and the extraction costs, explicit assessment potential of the contribution of the hydrocarbons to the disputants' economy could not be analyzed.

In the South China Sea disputed islands have different names. Each demander calls the island with a different name according to their native language. For instance, one of the rocky islands located within Paracel Island is called Pattle Island in American, Shanhu Dao in Chinese, Shanhu Island in Taiwanese, and Dao Hoang Sa in Vietnamese documents (Center for Strategic and International Studies, n.d.). Due to the differences in the islands' names and the high number of disputed islands in the SCS data collection

become harder. Studies conducted in English uses American terminology in their researches to identify islands. Thus, in order to avoid confusion, the most common names of these islands, American names, will be used to identify them in this thesis.

1.4. Role of Hydrocarbon Recourses in Interstate Disputes

States need energy for economic, industrial, and technological developments. Even though the share of renewable energy is increasing, nations still rely on hydrocarbon resources as primary energy sources (International Renewable Energy Agency, 2019). Globally increasing energy demands and decreasing supply of hydrocarbons causing nations to compete with each other to access or gain control of the fossil fuels (Hall, Tharakan, Hallock, Cleveland, and Jefferson, 2003). To protect human development and economic growth, states have to maintain energy security (Çelikpala, 2014).

Various energy security definitions exist in the literature, yet they all emphasize the importance of supply security and interdependencies between the exporter and importers (Winzer, 2012). Energy security can be defined as protecting the physical security of the supplies and inhibiting the disruption of the energy flow. Disruptions if the energy flow can cause severe problems for energy importer nations. A nation should diversify its energy provider to reduce its dependency on specific energy exporter nations. Such dependencies can cause energy export nations to gain leverage over energy importer nations in the international arena. Energy security literature is dominated by oil and natural gas trades. Sustainability and economic efficiency of the resource have a significant impact on states' preferences. If a state has the potential to meet its energy demands, it will be less vulnerable in the international arena. Moreover, by exporting energy, a nation can get specific leverages over its every receiver.

Globally, between 1965 and 1990, 73 intrastate and 18 interstate conflicts have been occurred or triggered by states' desire to control energy resources (STWR, 2020). Numerous interstate conflicts occurred or intensified because of the disputant states' claims over the oil resources in Africa (such as Angola, Cameroon, Chad, Congo-Brazzaville, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Nigeria, and Sudan) (Basedau and Wegenast,

2009). Moreover, increasing interstate tensions in the Arctic, Eastern Mediterranean, the East, and South China Sea can be given as an example to the hydrocarbon resources conflict triggering effects. Historical and current competition over energy resources shows the importance of energy for humans. For instance, despite the existing conflict, until the early 2000s, the SCS region remained relatively stable. Post-colonial states independency and their maritime territorial claims increase the number and the tension of the maritime boundary delimitations. With the technological developments and economic growth states', such as China and states which emerged as sovereign nation-states after the delocalization, both regional and global energy demand increased. Therefore nations' competition over energy resources increased.

1.5. Comparison of the Eastern Mediterranean Sea and the South China Sea Disputes

Eastern Mediterranean and South China Sea are both characterized as a semi-closed sea. The maritime territorial conflict in these two regions long existed in the selected regions before the exploration of hydrocarbon reserves. In each case, one country (Turkey in EMS and China in SCS) is seen by its neighbours as a revisionist in comparison to other disputant states. Apart from the decades-long maritime boundary delimitation and rising tensions after the exploration of hydrocarbon resources, there are various structural differences exist among EMS and SCS.

In the Eastern Mediterranean maritime boundary, delimitation coastal states do not compete with each other to possess the rock, islet, and islands in the disputed region. The biggest obstacle to the settlement of the dispute is the status of GASC, TRNC, and GNC. On the contrary, in South China Sea ownership claims of reefs, islets, atolls, cays, shoals, seamounts, islands and rock formations and their status increases the complexity of the dispute. In SCS, numerous natural and artificial formations exist, only Spratly archipelago consists of over 200 identified formations (McGill University Geography Department, 2007). Disputant states claim the ownership of these formations. Moreover, the Beijing government started to build artificial islands and expanded the existing formations. These constructions increased the tension in the region.

In both cases, significant actors, Turkey and China, appear as one of the most aggressive disputants' yet their motives differ. Rising Turkish aggression is caused by the fear of isolation from the region. Turkey serves as an energy interconnector between Asian and European continents. After the discoveries of hydrocarbon resources around Cyprus Island, Greece and GASC introduce new energy transit routes alternatives. In order to protect its existing status as an energy interconnector nation and benefit from these resources, Turkey adopted more aggressive policies. Meanwhile, as a strong regional power, the domination of energy-rich seabed and subsoil can significantly reduce Chinese energy dependency on other nations. As a large, industrializing, and rising nation, Chinese energy dependency is increasing, which is increasing Chinese security concerns. Especially in the existence of supply shortages, energy importer states become more vulnerable to the energy exporter nations. Thus if China can control hydrocarbon reserves, it can emerge as a stronger nation in a relatively shorter time by minimizing its energy-related security concerns.

The amount and type of hydrocarbon resources also differ. SCS contains more abundant oil, natural gas hydrate, and natural gas reserves than EMS. On the other hand, EMS contains mostly hydrocarbon and a limited amount of oil reserves.

The strategic importance of a region, number of disputants, and rigidness their claims all play an essential role in the conflict settlement. In the modern era of global politics, territorial disputes are the leading reasons for violence and interstate conflicts (Fravel, 2010). Even though territorial conflicts usually occur among regional states; however, because of the global impacts of certain disputes, non-regional states can involve regional conflicts (Fravel, 2010) like the US involvement in SCS. In EMS, except for the non-regional national oil companies' confrontation with regional states' military forces, non-regional actors do not appear as significant third party.

According to the realist paradigm, states seek to expand their power to ensure their existence in the anarchic world, territorial possessions, control of natural resources, and power expansion allows states to secure their existence. This thesis analyzes state choice of strategy in maritime territorial conflicts with the help of realist paradigm. Its findings indicate that in maritime territorial disputes, states determine their course of action, based

on absolute gain calculations. If the value of disputed territory increases, states become more motivated to dominate that territory. For example, maritime boundary delimitation in EMS emerged as a serious topic after the failure of Turkey and Greece to resolve the Cyprus conflict. However, EMS dispute further intensified following the discovery of the Zohr gas field in the region in 2015 as evidenced by the arms buildup and intensification of verbal challenges as well as military confrontations among states in the region, and their balancing efforts.

CHAPTER 2

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The roots of the territorial conflict can be traced back to the very beginning of history. Since 1816 more than 800 territorial disputes occurred among nations (Mitchell, 2016). Over the years, the importance of territory increased, and territory becomes one of the most significant causes of disputes, for example, between 1950-1990, 129 territorial disputes emerged in the international arena (Huth, 1996).

Territorial disputes can lead to war more often than other types of conflicts (Kim, 2019), therefore, the territory is considered one of the most significant causes of interstate conflicts by scholars. When a state attaches value to territory by associating it with regions or nationalistic symbols, or because of its strategic location, states' likelihood of willing to use violent strategies increases (Johnson and Toft, 2014, p. 9). Some territories may have a significant connection to nations' pride and identities like Liancourt Rocks, which causes disputes between South Korea and Japan (Schults, 2015). In some cases, interstate disputes can be caused by natural resources like water, fisheries, and precious earth-minerals (especially hydrocarbon resources) (Guo, 2018).

In the territorial conflict studies, one can see that the majority of the researches are conducted in the 1990s (Diehl, 1992; Diehl and Goertz, 1988; Hensel, 1992; Gibler 1997; Wallensteen, and Sollenberg, 1996; Kacowicz, 1994). Starting from the early 1990s, territorial conflicts became more of the subject of intra-state cases than interstate cases. After a period of lingering in territorial based interstate conflict studies with the change of environment factors, maritime-based interstate conflicts started to increase again (Djalal, 1990; Grossman 2013; O'Rourke, 2015; Nemeth, Mitchell, Nyman and Hensel, 2014; Nyman, 2015; Østhagen, 2020, Pomeroy, Parks, Mrakovcich and LaMonica, 2016; Blake, 2002). Territorial disputes gained scholarly attention in the 1970s (Toft, 2014). Monica Duffy Toft's (2014) work indicates that between 1994-1997, 2003-2006, and

2009-2012 number of scholarly examinations on the connection of territory and war significantly increased.

Throughout the 1970s, territorial clashes became less a subject for war, whereas national self-determination became more prominent (Diehl, 1992, p. 337). Yet, states still tend to confront with each other over the domination for territory (Heldt, 1999; Kocs, 1995; Hensel, McLaughlin Mitchell, Sowers and Thyne, 2008; Hensel and Mitchell, 2005; Hensel, 2001; Vasquez, 1993; Mitchell and Prins, 1999; Vasquez, 2004; McLaughlin Mitchell, and Thies, 2011). Territorial borders also significantly affect the duration of the conflicts and their likelihood of escalating to war (Hensel, 2000; Vasquez, 2001; Vasquez and Henehan, 2010).

After World War 2 (WW2) states, especially the democratic ones, the likelihood of engaging in war with each other decreased (Daniels and McLaughlin Mitchell, 2017). However the literature indicates that there is an expanding militarized maritime dispute occurs in the international arena (Daniels and McLaughlin Mitchell, 2017). According to the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea 1982 (UNCLOS), coastal states have to declare exclusive economic zone (EEZ) to expand their sovereign rights of exploring and exploiting seabed, subsoil, and all living and non-living natural resources which fall out of their territorial waters. UNCLOS Article 57 indicates that EEZ allows littoral states to expand their territory up to 200 nm. States' desire to expand their maritime territory creates overlappings in their claimed territories. According to UNCLOS, disputant states have to settle their disagreements to gain the right to exploration and exploitation of maritime resources. Scholar indicate that in comparison to the first decade of the 2000s by 2030, global energy demand will rise by 45%, and international food demand will expand by 50% (Evans, 2009). Due to its fishery, renewable (like offshore wind) and non-renewable (like hydrocarbon) resources, maritime territory started to attract more coastal states. In the absence of effective international maritime laws and regulations, due to the interpretational differences of UNCLOS, states tend to compete with each other more for the domination of maritime territory (Pomeroy, Parks, Mrakovcich, and LaMonica, 2016). Therefore the number of maritime conflicts increased in the last decades with states EEZ declarations.

Maritime cooperation benefits coastal states by reducing illegal fishing operations, protecting sea lanes of communication, allowing littoral states to use their sovereign rights of exploring and exploiting maritime resources, promoting sea tourism and confronting direct threats like drug-trafficking, piracy, illegal migration to maintain the maritime security (Rahman, 2017; Bradford, 2005; Schofield, 2011; Damayanti, 2017). In the conflict-existing maritime territories to benefit maritime resources like hydrocarbons, states can sign a joint development agreement. To harmonize, cooperation seems to be the most profitable way to for disputant states to promote regional security and secure coastal states' interests (Damayanti, 2017).

However, neorealists claim that states care about their absolute economic gains; therefore, cooperation is not a common state practice (Schopmans, 2018, p. 103). Waltzian perspective focuses on who gains what; if a state gains less than its opponent, it will be less likely to cooperate with other nations (Waltz, 1959). If a stronger state believes that it can gain more by not cooperating than a powerful state will force the weaker state to settle into an agreement with unequal terms (Schopmans, 2018, p.102). Therefore states will not prefer to settle their conflicts' unless they perceive themselves as the strongest actor in the dispute.

In the upcoming sections, the importance of maritime territory, the effects of exploration of energy resources in the conflict existing territories, and the most common strategies adopted by disputant states to expand their territory in the maritime boundary delimitations are explained.

2.1. Differences between Land-Based Territorial Disputes and Maritime Territorial Disputes

Territorial expansion can be seen as one way to increase state capabilities. To gain control of natural resources and secure them, states tend to adopt more violent foreign policies (Johnson and Toft, 2014; Sone, 2017). That is why states used to compete with each other more to expand their land-based territory, especially during the self-determination period in the mid-1900s (Kocs, 1995). However, in 21st-century, land-based territorial

expansion without engaging in war is not a realistic option for states because, in the current system, it is unlikely for states to find an unclaimed land to expand its territory. In the new age, instead of expanding their power by enlarging their territory, states are trying to expand their diplomatic and economic power in the international area (Nye, 2008; Mitchell, 2016). As a result of that, we see a sharp decrease in interstate land-based hard power used territorial conflicts. However, this does not mean that nations avoid engaging in interstate disputes. Even if states' likelihood of engaging in conflicts with each other over land-based territories reduced, they still compete with each other to expand their control in other unclaimed territories, such as air, space, and maritime. Without engaging in military activities or strategic trade-offs, a state can enlarge its territory by expanding its maritime boundary if it has a coast. However, due to geographic differences and the sea's potential in some regions, the expansion of maritime boundaries can cause disputes. In semi-closed¹ or enclosed seas, in resource-rich waters or strategically important regions degree and the duration of the dispute can be higher. After WW2, with the establishment of independent states after the end of colonization and augmentation on the maritime resources, the number of maritime boundary delimitation disputes increased, and scholars predict that such maritime delimitations will continue to occur in the future (Hasan, Md. Wahidul Alam, and Azam Chowdhury, 2019). In general, international maritime boundaries delimitations occurs in the non-predetermined regions. Overlapping in the claimed territories increases the deterioration and dispute risks among the states (Otto, 2020).

In comparison to land-based territorial disputes, it can be harder to settle maritime disputes. To begin with, a state can claim its full sovereignty within its land-based territory. It can enforce its laws and benefit from its resources. However, a coastal state cannot exercise its full sovereignty over its maritime boundary. International law provides different sovereignty zones in the sea; based on these zones, states sovereignty and rights differ. For instance, a coastal state has to allow other nations vessels to navigate through its territory (UNCLOS, 1982). Moreover, the state's right to explore the maritime resources and jurisdiction varies on its TW, CS, and EEZ. States usually use topological

¹ According to UNCLOS Part IX, Article 122 enclosed or semi-closed sea refers to gulf, basin or sea surrounded by at least two coastal states (UNCLOS, 1982).

features to draw their borders. Due to the topographical differences in the sea, it is harder to draw maritime boundaries (Guo, 2018, p. 301). Lack of the international consensus of the state's maritime boundaries increases the risk of conflicts.

UN Charter Article 2 paragraph 7 limits state power outside their territory. In order to expand their power and resources, states seek alternatives. UNCLOS was created not only for regulating usage and determination of maritime territories internationally but also for political demand expressed by the developing nations (International Union for Conservation of Nature, 2012). UNCLOS allows coastal states to fully benefit from the maritime resources and exercise their jurisdiction within their territorial sea, which cannot extend more than 12 nm from the baseline (United Nations, 1982). However, UNCLOS allows states to expand their right to benefit maritime resources by declaring an exclusive economic zone. EEZ can be extended up to 200 nm from the baselines, which allows the coastal state to benefit its sovereignty rights over the natural resources and exercise its jurisdiction over some cases (United Nations, 1982). By declaring EEZ, coastal states expand their right to exercise their sovereign rights over the living and non-living resources' strengths, specifically economic- power.

Malawi Tanzania dispute over Lake Nyasa, Chad Libya dispute over Aouzou Strip, Maritime delimitation dispute between Somalia and Kenya, Maritime and territorial boundary delimitation dispute between Cameroon and Nigeria can be given as an example to resource caused conflicts (Sone, 2017). Moreover, researches indicate a relationship between the potential of hydrocarbon resources of territory and state the likelihood of engaging in militarized conflicts over the hydrocarbon-rich territory (Schults, 2015, p. 1581). Conflict over hydrocarbon resource-rich territories can be analyzed under '*resource wars*' literature. Oil resources dominate hydrocarbon related resource war literature. The significance of natural gas is less studied, due to the scarcity of non-renewable resources, oil (hydrocarbons), abundance, and dependence, increase the risk of dispute initiation (Strüver and Wegenast, 2018).

Climate change and environmental degradation started to change the geography; thus, it affected state interactions by changing baselines, clearing, or causing the appearance of new islands. As a result of the melting of glaciers, depletion, or the rise of new rocky

islands, states started to compete with each other to gain control of these unclaimed territories and resources (Goertz and Diehl, 1992). In some cases, these environmental changes cause disputes among states. In others, states were already engaged in a dispute with each other, but the environmental changes affect the duration and intensity of the conflicts (Goertz and Diehl, 1992).

It is argued that mostly three environmental factors: fish, water, and soil contribute to interstate conflict (Stalley, 2003). In natural resources caused or related conflict literature, scholars tend to focus more on water, rare earth minerals, and oil, in comparison to these studies, the literature lacks natural gas-related natural resources contribution to interstate territorial disputes. Oil explorations dominate Energy-related researches, and they usually provide a connection between intra- and inter-state conflicts (Humphreys, 2005). Existing works on hydrocarbon conflicts mostly focus on hydrocarbon resources contributions to widening the gap between the developing and developed world (John, 2007) and their role in intra-state conflicts (Tang, Xiong, and Li, 2017). Moreover, these studies are mostly conducted in land-based territorial conflict cases. With the rise of interstate maritime boundary delimitations, the number of works that includes a natural gas contribution to interstate disputes started to increase the number of studies yet is not enough. On the other hand, there is no consensus exists in the literature regarding the role of hydrocarbon resources in the ongoing disputes. Some scholars argue that energy resources strengthens the cooperation among disputant states others reject that view (Karbuz and Baccarini, 2017). First sight is offshore gas discoveries that create greater economic interdependence, thus contributing to the settling process of the regional outstanding political disputes (Castlereagh Associates, 2019). On the contrary, some scholars argue that the discovery of energy resources in conflicted regions serves as a conflict-driven factor by increasing the aggression and competition among the states (Colgan, 2013).

2.2. Importance of Energy Resources and Geographic Location

Globally, technological advancements and growing population rates increased energy demands. Certain nations depend on energy resources more than others to maintain their

position in the international system. Energy resources can be analyzed under two categories, renewable (i.e., sun, geothermal, wind) and non-renewable (i.e., oil, natural gas, coal) resources. Renewable energy resources need fossil-fuels; without the non-renewable energy, alternative energy equipment like solar panels or windmills cannot be produced (Gibbs, 2019). In the current system, the storage of alternative energy resources is not the time or cost-efficient. Their transportation is limited compared to the storage of non-renewable resources (World Nuclear Association, 2020). States desires to access and control high efficient, reliable energy resources. If a state needs to import energy, the affordability of the resources and diversification of the energy suppliers plays a crucial role. Energy importer states avoid purchasing all of their energy from single suppliers to reduce their dependencies on a particular nation.

In general formation process of hydrocarbon resources does not vary. However, types of organic waste (animals, plants, and planktons), the quality of the fossils, sedimentary and impermeable rock's thickness and permeability (which traps these organic wastes and provides the necessary environment for the chemical reaction to occur) varies (US Energy Information Administration, 2019). Geographical differences, formation period of hydrocarbon resources (70% of total reserved occurred in Mesozoic age, 20% occurs in Cenozoic age, and 10% occurred in Paleozoic age) and external variables like heat and pressure causes different forms of hydrocarbon resources (University of Calgary, 2019). The seabed basins' geological structure significantly affects the potential and value of the hydrocarbon resources (Theodos, et al., 2013). According to the formation era of the potential of the basin and the recoverable rate of the hydrocarbons, their calorific values vary (Lopes and Bourgoyne Jr., 1997).

Oil can be categorized based on its viscosity, sulfur content (sweet or sour), and API (American Petroleum Institute) gravity degree (heavy, medium, or light) (Exxon Mobil, 2020). It is harder to categorize natural gas yet as a result of natural gas condensate²

²Gas condensate is a hydrocarbon liquid stream separated from natural gas. It consists of higher-molecular-weight hydrocarbons that exist in the reservoir as constituents of natural gas but which are recovered as liquids in separators, field facilities, or gas processing plants" (Speight, 2015).

(Barnum, Brinkman, Richardson, and Spillette, 1995) and geographical difference natural gas can be categorized as deep natural gas, shale gas, tight gas, coalbed methane, or methane hydrates (National Geographic, 2020). Therefore type-wise offshore and onshore hydrocarbons extracted in the same region can show differences. These factors affect the feasibility of the extraction of these resources (Altıntaş, et al., 2019).

2.3. Role of Natural Resources in Territorial Disputes

Interstate territorial conflicts can occur due to various reasons. Vasquez (2009) states that, in general, states are sensitive against territorial threats and prepare to defend their territories by using force. Contiguous states aim to continue to control their territories; meanwhile, new states try to expand their territory to expand their capabilities. New states' territorial expansion demand threatens contiguous states' territorial unity, which may cause significant inter and intrastate disputes that occurred (Sone, 2017). Africa and some parts of Asia can be given as an example of these regions. The primary reason for interstate conflicts is the nations' desire to control natural resources.

Literature indicates that scarcity of resources leads to conflict, violence, and instability in the disputed region (Maxwell and Reuveny, 2000; Mildner, Lauster, and Wodni, 2011; Lujala, 2018; Bannon and Collier, 2003; Strüver and Wegenast, 2018). Even if a region contains few natural resources, states can act very aggressive strategies to gain control of that region. The scarcity of resources can cause or trigger conflicts in two ways. Deprivation of essential needs, *grievances theory*, or states desire to dominate the resources, *greed theory*. According to greed theory, regardless of the amount of the resources, resources cause interstate conflicts (Mildner, Lauster, and Wodni, 2011, p. 168). Vast hydrocarbon reserves increase the likelihood of occurrence of interstate conflicts because greedy states desire to control abundant hydrocarbon reserves. The abundance of resources increases the conflict potential in that region (Strüver and Wegenast, 2018, p. 99).

Some scholars analyze non-renewable energy resources like hydrocarbon resources under the scare resources category (Bareis, 2018), some consider them as abundant resources

(Koubi, Gabriele, Bohmelt, and Bemauer, 2014; Strüver and Wegenast, 2018). Since hydrocarbon resources are non-renewable, energy resources and global hydrocarbon reserves can be estimated. In comparison to renewable energy resources like sun or wind, when the reserves are depleted, the formation of new hydrocarbon reserves will take a million years to form. One may argue that hydrocarbon resources fall in to scare resources. In the resource connected conflict studies, scholars focus on the amount of the selected resource in the given region. Therefore, in general, literature does not consider hydrocarbons as scare resources.

In the literature, it is argued that hydrocarbon resources cannot be taken as a direct cause of an interstate conflict (Månsson, 2014). To begin with, due to the data limitations, it is problematic to find the exact discovery dates of the hydrocarbon resources and their value. Moreover, in some cases, states may suspect the potential before the discovery of the hydrocarbon reserves (Schults, 2015, p. 1582). That is why hydrocarbon resources should not be considered as the root causes of conflict. Nevertheless, they can affect the duration of the conflict by influencing states' motivations. Resources scarcity, the strategic importance of the region, disputant's domestic politics and geopolitical competition with each other and cultural differences affect the duration of the territorial conflicts (Guo, 2018).

A significant number of studies that examine the connection between natural resources and conflict through the resource scarcity argument use neo-Malthusian theory to explain their arguments (Gausset, Whyte, and Birch-Thomsen, 2005; Gizelis and Wooden, 2010; Schlosser, 2009; El-Anis, 2013). The Malthusian theory argues that a positive relationship exists between the population growth of a nation and its increasing demand for resources due to its excessive consumption. This competition can even lead to the occurrence or escalation of violent disputes among states (Bareis, 2018).

Two opposing views dominate the conflict literature regarding the contribution of natural resources effects on the ongoing conflicts. Some scholars argue that the discovery or existence of natural resources serves as a peacebuilding opportunity in conflicted regions (Bavinck, Pellegrini, and Mostert, 2014; Matthew, Brown, and Jensen, 2009; Mosello, 2008). These scholars tend to use water as a form of natural resource instead of non-

renewable energy resources. Others argue that natural resources can cause or serve as triggering factors and intensifies conflicts (Spittaels and Hilgert, 2008; Nichols, Lujala, and Bruch, 2011; O'Lear and Diehl, 2011). The literature lacks a consensus on resource and conflict connections; some natural resources are the leading causes of the conflicts for some, but they are not the root causes but only contributors (Månsson, 2014).

In some cases, natural resources serve as a setter factor in some as the triggering factor. Disputed actors' interactions with each other, involvement of the international community, and actor's perceptions throughout events determine their strategy. However, energy resources related to conflict studies; the literature indicates that resources tend to serve as an escalating conflict factor (Owen and Schofield, 2012). Natural resources like rare-earth minerals and petroleum sources usually serve as conflict, causing or triggering factors (Spittaels and Hilgert, 2008). Because of the security competition, states always try to maximize their power (Mearsheimer, 2001). This power maximization can be accomplished in various ways. These include aligning or developing both offensive and defensive military capabilities, which always carries the potential of creating a security dilemma in the international system (Collier and Hoeffler). To secure their interests, states have to expand or at least maintain their power (Mearsheimer, 2001), and one way to do that is to increase their economic resources. Economically powerful states can use their financial power to improve their military capabilities (Hatipoglu and Palmer, 2012). Thus, their productions, commodities, and resources play a significant role in their stance in the international arena. For that reason, states can compete and conflict with each other to gain control of natural resources. Due to the same reasons, third party involvement in conflicts can serve in both ways. Third parties can serve as negotiators or outside powers, which forces disputed states to solve their issues. At the same time, if they have any significant cultural, historical, ethnic, or national attachments with one of the disputed sites, they can also complicate the interactions, i.e., the involvement of Greece and Turkey to Cyprus conflict.

2.4. Theoretical Approaches to Conflict Studies

In the case of disputes, based on their perceptions, states can choose to settle their disputes, do not make any effort regarding conflict, and set the issue aside to be solved in the long run or continue to demand their claims. It should be noted that even though a pattern can be obtained in conflict studies, due to the differences in participants' cultural, historical backgrounds, demands, root causes of their actions, motivations, and goals, every conflict should be analyzed as a unique case in qualitative studies. That is why there are different conflict resolution, and reconciliation methods exist. There are many resource scarcity driven or triggered conflicts cases that exist in the literature. There is a consensus on natural resources' contribution to existing conflicts (Petzold-Bradley, Carius and Vineze, 2001).

In some cases, natural resources, such water can be the main reason for the conflict, in some as triggering factors. In general natural resources alone are not seen enough on their own to start an interstate conflict. Various theories are used in the literature to explain the territorial and resource conflicts. Some studies provide alternative solutions to existing conflicts by using different theories.

Democratic peace theoretic claim argues that democracies do not engage in war with each other. This theory has become one of the most common assumptions in 20-century international politics (Mello, 2014). Nevertheless, it remains incapable of explaining state behaviors and motivations in conflict studies. Measuring states' democratic consolidation is the primary problem. Based on the set criteria definition of democracy can be changed. Scholars argue that theory is measuring the degree of democracies empirically untraceable (Schedler, 2001, p. 67). Moreover, conflicts among democratic states or cooperation between non-democratic states can be seen in the international arena. Democratic peace can be useful for studies conducted in stable regions. However, in tension existed areas, even if states do not engage in active war with each other by firing guns, they can easily engage in conflicts without firing guns. According to the democratic peace, theoretic thinking states are expected to solve their issues using diplomatic channels. However, for states to do that first, they need to recognize each other.

Liberal theory indicates that the possibility of emerging conflicts can be reduced by creating economic dependencies (Souva and Prins, 2007; Oneal and Russett, 1992). Economic interdependencies lead to more peaceful political interactions by increasing the cost of conflict for both sides. Souva and Prins (2007) argue that if a commercial state confronts a conflict, its likelihood of resolving the dispute is higher than non-commercial states because it is assumed that commercial states can emphasize negotiations and side payments more efficiently. Moreover, by improving communication, international trade prevents bargaining breakdowns. Using the monadic level of analysis method, Souva and Prins examined interstate conflicts between 950 and 1999. Their findings reveal that internationally trading states are 37% less likely to opt for military conflicts against other states (Souva and Prins, 2007, p. 194). On the contrary, scholars who combine liberal theory with a game-theoretic perspective indicate that states' economic interdependency thresholds indicate their action preferences (Beriker, 2009; Crescenzi, 2003). If a state believes that competing for resources or territory provides better gains than continuing existing economic relations, then, despite its economic interdependency state chooses to compete.

Due to the anarchic and self-help structure of international politics, states emphasize relative gains (Waltz, 1959). If countries perceive each other as a potential threat, they may be afraid that appealing to diplomatic channels will put them in a position of a weak state in front of the other country. Thus they can avoid being the first one to approach the other side. Instead of solving their problems with each other, states can choose an alternative way and invest in their military and alliances. In that case, instead of solving their problem, they can generate more significant problems because their permanent alliances seeking actions may end up polarizing their regions, which is precisely what happened in the Eastern Mediterranean. Examples include a warlike stage in Gaza, civil conflict in Syria, decades' long Cypriot dispute, astatic relations of Turkey and Syria, Egyptian-Turkish trifle, and Egypt's approachment to Greece, unrest in Libya.

Liberals claim that shared economic interests can facilitate political cooperation in a conflict-ridden region. For instance, in the case of the Eastern Mediterranean sea, according to liberal perceptions to speed up the access of hydrocarbon resources, states

will be incentivized to peacefully resolve conflicts that would otherwise result in a loss of absolute gains. On the other hand, realists argue that interdependence is irrelevant for improving interstate cooperation; contrary, it provides a fertile ground for emerging or escalating existing conflicts. Geopolitical Realism deduction states that "a state competition necessarily involves all states globally and that war outcomes are a deterministic, linear function of power disparities between states in conflict" (Duffy, 1992). According to realist perceptions, reliance poses that asymmetric gains from cooperation are never allocated equally. This uneven distribution of resources will make some states more vulnerable against others by leading disproportional share of power, which will be more likely to cause further conflicts. This means the potential hydrocarbon discoveries will not settle the disputed nature in the region; moreover, it will serve as a conflict triggering factor and intensive disputed nature within the disputed region. Therefore liberal-oriented theories remain incapable of explaining resources triggered conflicts in the context of the Eastern Mediterranean and the South China Sea disputes.

The realist paradigm assumes that conflict groups exist in the anarchic structure of world politics. Conflict groups are organized as unitary political actors that pursue rational and distinctive goals from each other and pursue these goals; they select different strategies (Legro and Moravcsik, 1999, p. 12). States choose the most efficient strategies by considering external uncertainties and incomplete information to pursue their aims. Paradigm argues that state preferences are fixed and uniformly conflictual; thus, it would be delusional to assume that any actors have a naturally harmonious interest (Legro and Moravcsik, 1999, p. 13). That is why states' actions occur in accordance with zero-sum or positive-sum gains calculations (Legro and Moravcsik, 1999, p. 17). States' decisions to settling or continuing to demand their claims in maritime disputes can be analyzed through their expected gains. Morgenthau argues that power is the ultimate and the universal goal of the states. To reach that goal, states' can choose to cooperate with each other. States' cooperation preferences or the degree of cooperation is decided by considering the relative capabilities ensured with the cooperation (Grieco, Powell, and Snidal, 1993). States' alliance preferences and duration can be formed to balance the interests (Schweller, 1997). Therefore realist paradigms are the most suitable approach for analyzing energy triggered maritime territorial disputes.

To use force, states must believe that the use of force is the best option that serves their interests. If using force can negatively affect states further interests or is considered a costly option, states will hesitate to adopt this strategy (Grieco, Powell, and Snidal, 1993). In the maritime territorial disputes with than two disputants, by considering states international economic interactions and international laws, the extreme level of using force will be the last option disputants. Because, as Snidal argues, when the number of participants increases, their expected relative gains decrease (Grieco, Powell, and Snidal, 1993, p. 732). In a system with a high number of disputants, the cost of fighting increases (Grieco, Powell, and Snidal, 1993, p. 734).

Some states solve their disputes by using diplomatic channels, for instance, by signing bilateral agreements, getting outside help such as carrying their case their dispute to the International Court of Justice (ICJ)³ or asking for a mediator, which is called cooperation strategy. This strategy does not include the threat or use of force (Fravel, 2008) in which states either seeks to find common ground because parties believe that cooperation benefits them more than retaining the conflict (Fearon, 2018). In general, that kind of compromises precedes the final settlement of the conflict in a bilateral treaty or agreement. On the contrary, if the conflict occurs over things like a territory which is highly valued by states for its strategic importance, or economic resource potential than regardless of states' their regime type and alienation behavior, states the likelihood of not compromising increases (Fravel, 2008).

Militarily stronger states are more likely to use force in order to achieve their goals. These states aim their opponents to give up on their claims by increasing the cost of conflict or potential war. This is called the escalation strategy, where states use force or threat to compel the other side to drop its claims to seize whatever it wants (Fravel, 2008). Escalation strategy indicates that disputants values to cause of conflict; thus, their tolerance of cost increases (Carlson, 1995). Exploring hydrocarbon resources in conflict-existing regions increases the value of that territory for the disputants, which motivates

³ The dispute between the USA and Canada over the Gulf of Maine can be an example of maritime territorial disputes settled by ICJ (International Court of Justice, n.d.)

them to become more demanding. Increasing the Turkish navy's existence in EMS and the Chinese navy in SCS in the mid-2000s can be given as an example.

States can prefer to do nothing if settling, engaging in war, or other alternatives perceived costly. Status of Cyprus or Chinese actions towards Taiwan can be given as an example of states delaying the behavior as a strategy in the conflict, instead of ending the conflict. In some instances, delaying strategy allows states to benefit from the conflict so that states' may not be able to benefit if they settle their dispute. Taiwan occupies Itu Aba, the biggest island in Spratly. Nevertheless, other disputants like the Philippines and Malaysia located closer to the Itu Aba islands. Occupation of rocky islands, shoals and coral reefs in the SCS by China, Taiwan, Vietnam, the Philippines, Malaysia, and Brunei regardless of their mainlands' distance to occupied formations can be given as another example. In a case of negotiation, disputant states need to re-arrange the occupied islands' ownership before settling their borders. In such environments, states may think that cooperation will be costlier than maintaining existed conflict (Fravel, 2008). That is why actors avoid engaging in any actions which might cause them to compromise. Delaying strategy neither uses force nor offers concessions, and states maintain their claims over the disputed territory (Fravel, 2008).

In some cases, states may encounter domestic social unrest and demonstrations if they are willing to compromise to settle disputes. In the case of EEZ disputes, states may not fully benefit from the disputed territory until they settle their dispute. However, in the period of dispute, they also inhibit other sides' ability to benefit from that region's resources. In these cases, states calculated their relative gains and lost them according to their calculated assumptions (Goertz and Diehl, 1992). Turkish opposition to GASC's unilateral drilling activities in the disputed territory and 2018 sending its warships to prevent ENI's hydrocarbon drilling activities in the GASC claimed disputed territory can be given an example to the delaying strategy.

Root causes of the conflict, parties' grievances, and their persecutions about relative gain and loss calculations affect their choice of actions, strategy. In addition to that, the international community's position significantly affects parties' actions (Evans, 1994). The direct involvement of the international community (i.e., UN peacekeeping operations)

in non-violent conflicts will be less likely than violent conflicts. None violent states are more likely to get international support. Threats targeting a state's relative power, thus changing the balance among the actors, affect the likelihood of the states of compromise. If the international community isolates a state whereas other states support its opponent, that state may think that maintaining its position, harms its benefits in the long run. In such an environment order to avoid sanctions, the state's likelihood of willing to settle the dispute increases (Brubake and Dörfler, 2017). A state which engages in a conflict can secure its territory and maintain its economic activities for a long time as long as it does not confront the international community. To avoid such confrontations, states tend not to use violent tactics or frighten the international community by not following international protocols laws and regulations (Icelandic Human Rights Centre, n.d.). In the absence of external threats, states can delay the settlement and insist on their demands. If the international community does not support any of the parties, disputes can be settled in a shorter time because settling the conflict will benefit sides more than maintaining the dispute in the long run (Melin, 2015).

On the contrary, when the number of third party involvement increases, disputed sides feel more secure due to the expansion of their alliance and potential power that its alliances provided. The more extended third parties involved in the conflict harder it gets to settle the dispute. After a certain period, third parties can become as one of the main parties in the conflict (Melin, 2015). Like the Ankara and Athenian government approach to Cyprus conflict. Thus their needs also have to be met to settle the conflict and avoid re-emergence (Collier and Hoeffler). This means third party involvement can serve as a settling factor, but it can also tangle up the situation. In the case of the Cyprus dispute, if neither of the sides would receive third party or international community support, their likelihood of settling their dispute would increase.

In every conflict, the root causes of the dispute should be identified. Diehl and Goertz's research indicates that states' likelihood of engaging in military actions over the territorial disputes and making them more violent decreases if that disputed territory does not carry any significant ethnic or national values for the participant states. Strategic location and economic values of that territory also affect the state's actions (Goertz and Diehl, 1992).

South China Sea dispute can be given as an example where states' attached intangible values to the maritime territory located in a strategically important region.

2.5. Connection of Natural Resources and Maritime Boundary Delimitations

In maritime boundary delimitations, disputants' historical attachment to the sea (such as, if it exists, names of the islands, or the sea), the strategic importance of the region and the potential of natural resources plays an essential role in the indication of the intensity of the conflict. Guo argues that sea resources and potential maritime underground resources have generated various international, interstate disputes over the years (Guo, 2018, p. 307). Guo's argument is supported by resource scarcity caused by territorial conflict literature (Bayramov, 2018).

In maritime boundary delimitations, economic interests significantly influence states motivations. Even though military concerns generally exist in maritime boundary delimitations, it cannot be identified as the key drivers. Geographical proximities affect the states' willingness to engage in conflict over the territory (Brochmann, Rod, and Gleditsch, 2012). Controlling seabed and island(s) provide significant strategic resources (Orttung and Wenger, 2016). Being able to access hydrocarbon resources not only reduce states' energy security concerns by reducing their dependency to energy exporter nations but it also promotes that country's economic development, because of that reason states competes with each other to gain the control of the resources (Månsson, 2014). Economic developments allow states to invest more in their capabilities to increase their relative gains (Orttung and Wenger, 2016; Månsson, 2014).

Maritime disputes can be analyzed under three sections, disputes over claimed water, or claimed territory and conflict over the maritime activities in the claimed region. One or more of these conflicts can be observed in maritime disputes. In comparison to territorial disputes, the number of disputants will be relatively higher in maritime disputes. In Eastern Mediterranean maritime boundary delimitation, disputant states claim over water and the maritime activities in the region (Rapp-Hooper, 2020). On the contrary, in the case

of the South China Sea, boundary delimitations state disputes over territory, water, and maritime activities, which were permissible by international laws and regulations.

This research argues that the exploration or potential of hydrocarbon resources in the dispute existed territories, triggers the existing dispute instead of settling it. To testify this hypothesis, two cases were selected in different regions. Except for the long history of ongoing disputes and the potential of the exploration of hydrocarbon resources, other factors differ in the selected cases, which are: The Eastern Mediterranean Sea dispute (analyzed in the third chapter) and the South China Sea dispute (analyzed in the fourth chapter). States' claims in the disputed region, their blue economy dependence, number of islands, their status in the given regions, non-regional actors' influence to disputant states' behaviors, and strategic importance of the conflicted region for regional and non-regional states vary in both cases. This thesis argues, despite their differences, after the potential of the existence of hydrocarbon resources became significant, disputants started to follow more aggressive actions in their disputes, which intensified the ongoing disputes.

2.5.1 Case 1: The Eastern Mediterranean Sea Dispute

The literature analysis concerning Eastern Mediterranean maritime disputes and the contribution of hydrocarbon resources to state interactions is not widely studied. In general, Eastern Mediterranean politics are discussed over bilateral or multilateral interactions. That is why Turkish-Greek relations and Cyprus conflict dominate the majority of the Eastern Mediterranean dispute literature. When it comes to energy-related resource-based conflict, authors usually focus on Israel, GASC, Greece, Egypt, and Turkey as their case study. Other regional actors such as Libya and Syria were not presented as an essential players in EEZ disputes in the Eastern Mediterranean Sea until the recent studies. After the Libyan-Turkish alignment against Greece, GASC, Israel, and Egypt, Libya started to be seen an important actor in the Eastern Mediterranean dispute studies. Due to its currentness, it is hard to find academic studies that discuss Libya's status and importance in the literature.

By looking at the terminology that authors use concerning Cyprus divisions, readers can understand the authors' standpoints. As an example, scholars who support the Turkish side uses terms like Greek Administration of Southern Cyprus, Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus. In contrast, Greek side supporters use the Republic of Cyprus and Turkish occupied territory while explaining the course of events. These scholars mostly perceive Eastern-Mediterranean energy disputes as states' national security, sovereignty problem. Thus instead of focusing on the dispute resolution alternatives, they are either describing the existing problem or explaining why their supported actor(s) position is right against the other, unjust, actor(s). The amount of objectively written academic works number, which tries to analyze states' motivations, actions are limited. It is also hard to find objectively written non-academic works. If disputant states repeatedly failed to settle their ongoing disputes, they will be less likely to compromise in the upcoming peace talks or negotiations (Hensel, McLaughlin Mitchell, Sowers II, and Thyne, 2008, p. 126)

2.5.2. Case 2: The South China Sea Dispute

One of the most problematic factor in the South China Sea Dispute is the long history of the dispute and the changes in the disputants' status. There is no consensus on the exact date of the SCS dispute, yet it is known that the dispute started around the mid-1880s (Buszynski, The development of the South China Sea maritime dispute, 2013). Removal of non-regional states dominance in the region like France and emerge of independent states. After the end of colonialization, various sovereign nations, which historically claimes the ownership of maritime territories in the SCS region, emerged. Therefore, by causing further overlapping in the claimed regions and by increasing the number of disputants, decolonization increased the complexity of the SCS maritime boundary delimitation (I.Tkachenko, 2018).

Some scholars argue that the main reason for the escalation of the SCS conflict is energy security (Herberg, 2016). It is argued that high and volatile prices, the increasing energy consumption of the nations, and their desire to control energy transfer routes cause and the resources to create serious competition among the states (Herberg, 2016). However,

others argue that the increasing fishery competition overexploitation of the seafood resources is another factor that intensifies the tension in the region. In the literature, it is argued that states coast guarding their fisherman to protect them against the other nation's coastguard vessels in the disputed zones increases the strain (Buszynski, 2013). In general, the estimated hydrocarbon resources location overlaps with the fishery zones.

More studies have been conducted on SCS conflict concerning the region's energy potential in comparison to EMS conflict. Thus one can find more sources in the literature and analyze the reliability of the studies. The exact amount of hydrocarbon reserves is not known in the SCS yet. Like EMS, different sources indicate different hydrocarbon reserves in SCS. However, the gap in estimated reserves potentials in SCS conducted by different nations and research institutions is more extensive. Different sources indicate different reserve potentials, yet some experts claim that SCS hydrocarbon reserves' potential is exaggerated (Buszynski, The development of the South China Sea maritime dispute, 2013).

Studies conducted on SCS dispute mostly dominated by Chinese actions and claims. The number of studies that show the claims and actions of other disputants like Taiwan, Philippines, Brunei, Vietnam, and Malaysia is limited compared to China-oriented studies. There are lots of rocky island alike formations that exist in SCS. Some of these islands have different names in different languages, which complicates the researches. In addition to that, some islands do not have English names, that is why SCS dispute literature written in English omits analyses regarding these islands.

CHAPTER 3

MARITIME BOUNDARY DELIMITATION IN THE EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN SEA

In this chapter, the developments in the Eastern Mediterranean Sea (EMS) are analyzed as a case study to explain the main argument of the thesis: the existence of hydrocarbon resources does not settle but rather intensifies the conflicts. Recent developments in the region indicate that after the discovery of hydrocarbon resources, tension among the disputant states accelerated. This chapter starts with a description of the geographic location of the Eastern Mediterranean Sea. Basins affect the quality and the quantity of possible natural gas reserves; therefore, by effecting capital (CAPEX) and operational expenses (OPEX), geographic structure determines its value. Hence states' strategies change in accordance with their relative gain perceptions. In the following part, historical background of conflicts will be provided to underline the strategic importance of the region. Then, the developments will be contextualized under the existence of the two blocks organized by regional actors, the regional actors' strategies and policies will be made sense within this context.

3.1. Geographic Location and Structure of the Eastern Mediterranean Sea

The Mediterranean Sea defined as the region composed of, "Italy, Slovenia, Croatia, Lebanon, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Montenegro, Greece, Turkey, Syria, Israel, Palestine, Egypt, Libya and Tunisia" (Yaycı, 2012, p. 2) which constitutes of 1% of the world seas. Approximately 1/3 of the world maritime traffic passes through the Mediterranean Sea with the passage of more than 220.000 vessels per year (Yaycı, 2012, p.7). As intercontinental sea bypassing Mediterranean Sea vessels can access the Atlantic Ocean

by passing through Gibraltar strait. Only naval access to the Black Sea passes through Dardanelles Strait, Sea of Marmara, where vessels have to cross the Mediterranean Sea. Northeast of the Mediterranean Sea is connected to the Red Sea via Suez Canal.

Eastern Mediterranean Sea is a semi-closed sea formed by two major basins: the Ionian Basin and the Levantine Basin (Salah 2019). Ionian Basin is located under the Ionian Sea, and this basin ends on the western end of Crete. At the end of the Ionian Basin, on the south of Anatolia, Levantine Basin starts (Garfunkel 1998). Formation of these basins varies, which means depending on their formation period, the structure of the basin and its resource potential varies (Ben-Avraham, et al. 2002). Moreover, one can find sub-basins with different resource quality and potentials under the same main basin formation (Ben-Avraham, et al. 2002).

There are various geophysical researches conducted to discover the structure and the potential of Eastern Mediterranean basins. As a result of these works, researchers cannot achieve a consensus over the nature of the age of the crust (Ben-Avraham, et al. 2002). Because of the sea structure, it is hard and costly to gather information regarding the geographic structure's quality. To estimate the type and hydrocarbon potentials of the basins further researches needed (Çiner, Şengör and Khélifi, 2019).

EMS can be considered as a bridge which, links hydrocarbon-rich Middle East (ME) with the rest of the world. Former US President Eisenhower defined the ME as the most significant location when it comes to strategic because of its resources (Bağcı, 2004). In total, %30 of total global maritime trade, and one-fourth of the international oil trade occur through EMS (Özdemir, 2018, p. 230). Besides the significant place in world trade, the region is important for European security, by constituting a buffer zone between the unstable Middle East and Europe, which became visible during the migration crisis. In addition to that, EMS is crucial for the Chinese One Belt One Road Initiative, whose sea route, defined as the Road, is passing through the EMS to reach Europe.

3.2. Historical Importance of the Eastern Mediterranean Sea and Cyprus

Historically the Eastern Mediterranean Sea caused many disputes as a cradle of civilizations region. Due to fertile lands, many great civilizations preferred Mesopotamia, Anatolia, and Egypt region, aka Eastern Mediterranean region (Sağlamer, 2013). When these civilizations compete with each other to dominate the region and secure their selves controlling the sea was an essential factor for increasing their power (History World, 2020). From Alexander to Ottoman, Carthage to Persian Empire, EMS has attracted regional and global actors and has become the place of competition for hegemony. Moreover, three Abrahamic religions were born in the region around the EMS, which increases the value of the region for certain nations. EMS has been the center of trade; therefore historically many nations including European powers, attributed significance to EMS. For instance, the first British ambassador to Ottoman Empire was appointed for the sake of commerce in the Levant, and the capitulations that were granted to France by the Sublime Porte in 1530 that would keep France in Levant until mid-1940's were about the trade in Levant as well (Karpas, 2017, p.25-27). The continuing importance of the EMS can be seen in the Republican Era as well, which became more obvious in developments in the 1930s. Such as defining Italy as the main threat and Britain as the main ally, attempting to find Mediterranean Pact, or having clauses regarding the Mediterranean on 1939 Tripartite Alliance with Turkey-Britain-France (Hale, 2000).

Eastern Mediterranean Sea provides a significant economic contribution to its' littoral states. The set of human activities depends or occurs on the sea like tourism, fishing, sustainable development is called Blue Economy. After Carrabian Island, the second-largest cruise ship tourism occurs in the Mediterranean region. The region provides more than 353.000 direct employment in the fishery sector, aquaculture meets more than 50% of the regional fish consumption, and region holds significant wind power potential (Mediterranean Blue Economy Stakeholder Platform, n.d.). In addition to its' rich fishery resources, the region consists of abundant natural resources; for instance, Cyprus was a cooper rich island (Phillips, 1988). Moreover, the region contains rich hydrocarbon reserves (Vogler and Thompson, 2015).

3.2.1. Cyprus

Historically EMS has always been an important region for naval mobility; for a long time, EMS was an essential location for world trade routes, and it still maintains its strategic importance. Because of its strategic importance throughout history, many civilizations, including Hittites, Egyptians, and Byzantium, competed with each other to dominate the region and took control of the critical islands like Crete and Cyprus to establish or maintain their dominance in the region. In one of his writings, in 1841, former British Prime Minister Benjamin Disraeli emphasized the importance of Cyprus for strengthening their power in the region. He wrote that "Cyprus is the key to Western Asia" (Mallinson, 2016, p. 30). In the same text, Disraeli also stated that maintaining the control of Cyprus was rigid to protect Britain's interests, thus British foreign policy in the region shaped around the aim of not losing control of the island (Mallinson, 2016).

Cyprus and the EMS still maintain their strategic importance for regional and non-regional states. Usage of military bases in Dhekalia and Akrotiri by the UK during the Gulf War for carrying air attacks against Iraq or more currently airstrikes conducted against ISIS (The Operation Shader in 2014) can be given as an example to the usage of British Sovereign Bases and island's importance for the protection of non-regional states strategic interests (Tossini, 2018). Joint sham battles are conducted in the region like Noble Dina (occurs annually since 2012) exercise with the participation of GASC, the US, Israel, and Greece (Kogan, 2020). Increasing military cooperation among GASC, Greece, and Israel conduce to trilateral cooperation in other fields like economy, telecommunication, environmental issues, energy, and underseas (Kogan, 2020). This trilateral approachment and cooperation are supported by the US (Kogan, 2020).

In the upcoming part, the Cyprus conflict will be analyzed. Due to their historic inclusion, some non-regional states' involvement in the conflict can be seen in the first parts of the examination. However, since non-regional states like Britain or the US has no geographical connection to the region, they have no right to involve in the Eastern Mediterranean boundary delimitation. Therefore academic works usually exclude

concerningly discuss their effects on the Cyprus Dispute with respect to the EEZ declaration dispute. In this study, non-regional states' effects on the change in the duration of the conflict after the potential of hydrocarbon resources discovered in the region will not be explicitly analyzed.

3.3. Maritime Boundary Delimitations in the Eastern Mediterranean Sea and the Cyprus Conflict

3.3.1. History of the Conflict

Eastern Mediterranean Sea had a long history of the disputed structure. Controlling maritime territories and trade routes were one of the strongest states' main goals due to its geostrategic importance. For decades, states competed with each for the domination of EMS. This race did affect not only their foreign policy decisions but also created the oldest and ongoing conflict of the region: the Cyprus conflict.

In 1571 Cyprus was conquered and remained under defacto Ottoman control until 1878, and official Ottoman control until 1914 (Walsh, 2010). To turn the St. Stefano Treaty, which was signed after a significant defeat against Russians in 1877-78 Cyprus was rented to Britain in 1878 (Safty, 2011, p. 7). On June 4, 1878, a British protectorate was established over the Cyprus Island with the Cyprus Convention. Britain's protectorate status remained until November 5, 1914. When the Ottoman Empire joined World War 1 on the side of Central Powers, Britain annexed the island First, in 1920 with the Treaty of Serves, than in 1923 Treaty of Lausanne and finally in 1925 with the proclaimed declaration of The Crown Colony of Cyprus, island's annexation verified (Safty, 2011). The Turkish Republic officially recognized this annexation with the Peace Treaty of Lausanne (Republic of Turkey Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2020). With the Lausanne, Cyprus went under British control (Deputy Prime Minister and Ministry of Foreign Affairs Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus, n.d.).

After Turkey accepted the status-quo on the island, for the Ankara government, the Cyprus Question or the Cyprus Case did not emerge until the 1950s. Greeks and Turks lived

peacefully on the island, as relative stability and peace were prevailing under British rule, except for some unrest in the 1930s for ENOSIS (political demand for the unification of Cyprus Island with Greece). Starting from the mid-1950s, the Greek-Orthodox Church launched in unification campaigns with Greece (Safty 2011, p. 116). Although Turkey warned Greece not to do that, Greece submitted the case for Cyprus' independence to the United Nations (UN), which started Turkish involvement in the diplomatic table with London Conference in August-September in 1955. This problem has been the most important problem between two NATO-allies since then, remaining still unsettled. The island's population consisted of Turkish and Greek communities, which made Turkey and Greece follow protective diplomacy as if the island was a part of their territory. In comparison to Turkey, Greece followed more irridendalist policies on the case of Cyprus (Kalelioğlu, 2008).

Greek attempts for ENOSIS were not confined with diplomatic ones, but violent tactics and terror were used. With the support of Greece, a paramilitary group, EOKA (National Organization of Greek Fighters) emerged in 1955, against British rule and started to engage in paramilitary alike activities (Şahin, 2020). Within a short time, EOKA's actions became violent against British authorities and Turkish Cypriots (Republic of Turkey Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2020). Many Turkish Cypriots were forced to leave their villages between 1955 and 1958 (Republic of Turkey Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2020).

On February 11, 1959, the Republic of Cyprus's basic structure formed via Zürich agreement (North Cyprus, 2020). Increasing violent protests got the attention of the international community. With the international community's support, Cyprus declared its independence on August 6, 1960 (Deputy Prime Minister and Ministry of Foreign Affairs Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus, n.d.). Then Treaty of Guarantee signed at Nicosia on August 6, 1960. The independence of Cyprus and limitations of Turkish, Greek, and British governments' involvement in the Cypriot politics set (Treaty of Guarantee signed by the United Kingdom, Greece and Turkey, 1960). The Cypriot constitution and internal structure were not well designed enough to prevent conflicts among the ethnic divisions within the Island (TBMM, 1961). After the independence of Cyprus, disagreements between Greco and Turkish Cypriots increased gradually. On November 30, 1963, under

Greek Cypriot President Makarios various changes made on the Cypriot constitution to eliminate some of the provisions (aka 13 Points), these changes were opposed by Turkish Cypriots. On March 4, 1964, intrastate violence increased in Cyprus to prevent the further escalation of the conflict UNSC adopted resolution 186, which allowed stationing UNFICYP (UNFICYP, 1964). Between 1963 and 1974, certain clauses in the Cypriot constitution violated by not allowing Turkish Cypriots to codetermination (Hadjipavlou, 2007).

In 1964 domestic unrest escalated in Cyprus among the Greco and Turkish Cypriots. To protect the Turkish Cypriots Ankara government considered sending troops to the island and informed the USA about their plans. By doing so, Ankara was hoping the USA to stabilize the domestic unrest on the island. Contrary to Ankara's expectations USA warned Turkey and stated that in case of an intervention to Cyprus, the US would not help or protect Turkey under the obligation of NATO requirements, which means Turkey will be left alone in the case of potential USSR invasion threat (Johnson and İnönü, 1966). Because of its limited capabilities and security concerns, Turkey mostly supports Turkish Cypriots in the international arena. However, within a decade, Turkish capabilities (mostly military power) gradually improved; meanwhile, the degree of ongoing domestic tension and violence among the Cypriots did not decline. Turkey shifted its policies towards Cyprus from soft power-oriented involvement to hard power politics. On July 20, 1974, Turkish innovation of Cyprus (Atilla Harekâtı is also known as Kıbrıs Barış Harekâtı), started and a year after the Turkish Federated State of Cyprus declared (Vatansever, 2010). The United Nations and Greek Cypriots opposed this declaration by claiming that federal state structure contradicts with 1960 agreement (Vatansever, 2010). In 1983 the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus declared its independence (Vatansever, 2010). Many states, particularly European Union members and the USA did not recognize TRNC as a sovereign state. Starting from that date, numerous peace talks, and negotiations conducted among the sides.

Due to nationalistic and religious ideological similarities, there was popular domestic support and concern for the future of their consanguine both among Turks and Greeks, which led Turkey and Greece to involve in the Cyprus conflict as if it were was occurring

within their territories. This involvement started decades ago, and it still affects Turkey and Greece's standing points. Moreover, public opinion affected Turkish and Greek leaders so that even if they want to compromise to reach a solution, they could not. In order not to lose their citizen's support, they followed aggressive policies towards each other, which fostered the untrustable structure of Greco-Turkish relations and put the Cyprus dispute into a deadlock.

Apart from Cyprus's status, the exploration of offshore hydrocarbon reserves influenced state positions in the region. Exploration of hydrocarbon resources in the Eastern Mediterranean Sea accelerated a few decades ago, and the reserves mostly remain unexplored (Andrei 2019). Thus their actual and recoverable sized have not evaluated, yet for some scholars' exploration of energy in the region perceived as a last chance to bring peace to the region and argued as 'peace pipeline' in the literature (İşeri, 2019). This literature claims that if states become economically dependent on each other, their likelihood of cooperation increases (Apodaca and Greensfelder, 2019). Peace pipelines create economic interdependencies; thus, it promotes conflict mitigation and energy security. However, for peace pipeline theory to work, as a first thing, conflicted parties should settle their disputes. In the case of EMS, the current energy cooperation of the regional actors creates two blocks. Dominant actors of these groups can be categorized as GASC, Greece, Egypt, Israel versus TRNC, and Turkey. To apply peace pipeline theory, all of these major regional actors should be able to work with each other to promote and protect regional energy security. For some scholars in the current situation, due to the ongoing 'Cyprus' conflict, it is not likely to see Turkish TRNC and GASC energy cooperation (Pflüger, 2013).

3.4. Maritime Boundary Delimitations after the Exploration of Potential Hydrocarbon Resources

In the case of EMS territorial dispute, serious controversies occurred among the regional states specifically between TRNC, GASC, Greece, and Turkey after the potential of hydrocarbon resources discovered in the region. In addition to that, bilateral disputes like Lebanon-Israel EEZ delimitation also exist in the region. This section will focus on the

Cyprus maritime boundary delimitation due to the size of the disputed territorial field and the high number of disputants.

The maritime territorial conflict has existed since the deceleration of TRNC's sovereignty. The Eastern Mediterranean discovery of offshore natural gas started in 1999, in the Noa gas field, on Israeli-Palestinian territories' costs, followed by the discovery of the Mari-B reservoir in 2000. More natural gas reserves were found in 2009, in the Tamar field, and 2010, in the Leviathan field. Leviathan was the most significant deep-sea discovery of the decade in the region up until that time. In 2011 Aphrodite field was discovered on the southern coast of Cyprus. In 2015 the largest natural gas field of Eastern Mediterranean sea, Zohr, was found within the Egyptian borders. After 2011, the rapid discoveries of significant hydrocarbon reserves increased the importance of the EMS, and the tension in the disputed zone started to escalate.

According to international laws and regulations, to benefit from these resources, states have to settle their dispute and finalize their EEZ borders. Nevertheless, none of the disputants are willing to make any move to settle the dispute by agreeing on EEZ. Disputants continue to act based on their bilateral agreements and avoid their opponents' agreements and actions in the field. Lack of information about the potential and the location of the hydrocarbon reserves is one of the most significant reasons motivating states to continue insisting on their demands.

3.5. Greek Administration of Southern Cyprus

Greek Administration of Southern Cyprus denounced rights of Turkish Cypriots on the resources and presented itself as the sole owner of whatever exists around the Island. The main purpose of the GASC is to use EMS hydrocarbon resources as leverage against Turkey to take advantage of the Cyprus Question. To this end, GASC has been cooperating mainly with Greece. Moreover, it has also been benefitting from deteriorating relations between Turkey-Egypt and Turkey-Israel; and hence, taking Egypt and Israel's support. Furthermore, by using its EU member status, GASC is trying to internationalize the conflict and gain the international community's support.

In 1988 GASC signed the UNCLOS and, in 1993, declared 12nm territorial waters which was accepted by the UN in 1996 (United Nations, 2020). First, escalating point of the EMS EEZ dispute emerged after the EEZ delimitation agreement signed by GASC and Egypt on February 17, 2003 (United Nations, 2004). On March 2, 2004, Turkey objected to this agreement via the UN by claiming that it violates Turkey's sovereignty and TRNC (United Nations, 2020). As a response on April 5, 2004, GASC declared 24nm CZ and 200nm EEZ. On October 10, 2005, Memorandum of Understanding on Cooperation in Science and technology between the ministry of commerce, industry, and tourism of the GASC and the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research of the Arab Republic of Egypt signed (the Republic of Cyprus and the Arab Republic of Egypt, 2005). Article 5 of this agreement allows states to cooperate and implement specific joint activities, including hydrocarbon resource exploration activities (Republic of Cyprus and the Arab Republic of Egypt, 2005). In 2007 GASC signed an EEZ agreement with Lebanon. As a response, Turkey issued a diplomatic note which caused the Lebanese Assembly not to ratify the agreement (Foundation Orient Mont-Pelerin, 2012). In 2011, GASC signed an EEZ agreement with Israel (United Nations, 2020). Starting from 2011 with the hydrocarbon research activities of GASC, Turkish-GASC relations become worsened, which also affects Turkish-EU relations because of the foreign energy companies' involvement in the conflict. Cyprus announced 13 different blocks on its claimed EEZ. As a response, Turkey announced its EEZ map in which overlaps with GASC claimed 1,3,4,6, and 7 blocks (Ritter, 2019).

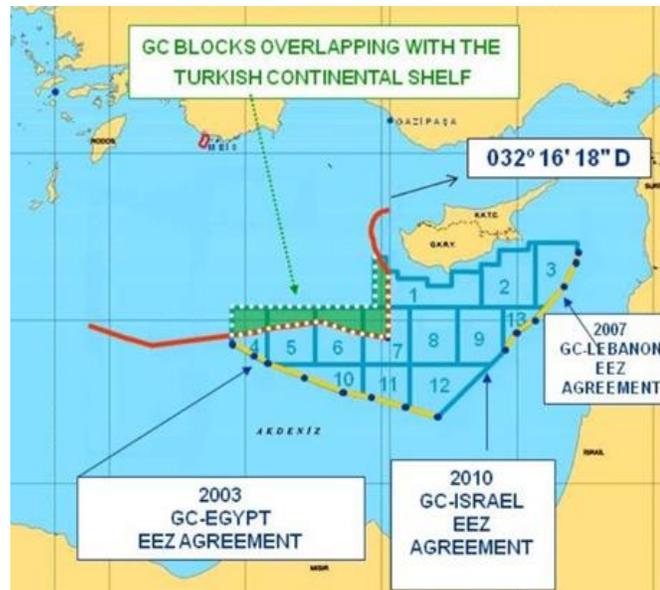


Figure 1 Overlapping Territories

Source: Sigma Turkey, 2019

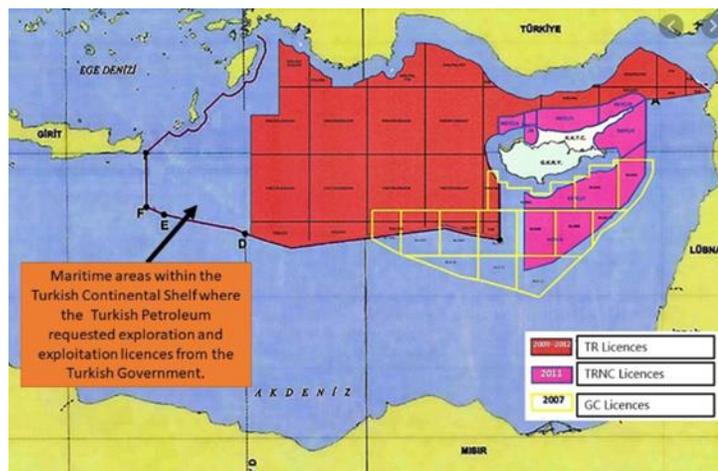


Figure 2 Overlapping Territories and Licensed Areas

Source: Pamir, 2019

In addition to bilateral maritime boundary delimitation agreements, GASC signed different contracts with different energy companies. On January 26, 2007, GASC made an agreement with Petroleum Geo-Services (PGS) for the exploration of underground resources from south of Cyprus till the Egyptian border (PGS, 2020) and another

agreement conducted with French Petroleum Institute and Beicip-Franlap for the analyzing the data found by PGS (Leblond, 2007). Hydrocarbon exploration and drilling license of 2nd 3rd and 9th parcels were given to ENI, and Korea Gas Cooperation 10th and 11th were given to TOTAL and 12th were given to Noble Energy by GASC (Alhas, 2019). In 2011 Noble Energy discovered Aphrodite Gas Field, which holds an estimated 198 billion cubic meters of natural gas (Gürel and Le Cornu 2013, p. 7). In 2017 GASC give the 10th parcel's license to Qatar Petroleum consortium and ExxonMobil (Alhas, 2019). In the drilling of Glaucus-1 estimated 5-8 trillion cubic feet natural gas was discovered. ExxonMobil's Exploration president Steve Greenle stated that after this discovery, the likelihood of exploration of new fields evaluated; thus, they encourage further explorations in the area (NS Energy, 2019).

Offshore hydrocarbon exploration and drilling activates are costlier than onshore resource research and drilling activities. They require more sophisticated methods and technical equipment (Jian, 1997). Due to its costliness, offshore hydrocarbon exploration and drilling actives are riskier than the onshore operations. In general, coastal states sign a contract with certain energy companies for offshore operations because only well-equipped companies can conduct such costly operations. National energy companies may not be able to handle such operations on their own. Multinational or energy giant companies tend to avoid engaging any kind of operation in disputed regions if the coastal state cannot promise their protection. Costly operations and insecure regions frighten international energy companies and foreign direct investors (Jian, 1997, p. 601). GASC agreements with various energy companies between 2007 and 2011 can be used as an indicator to assess the level of tension in the EMS.

3.6. Greece

Although the Greek mainland is miles away from the EMS, Greece has been trying to take part in EMS by its islands, such as; Meis, Crete, and Rhodes. According to Greece, islands should be granted full maritime limitations, which would favor itself and limit Turkish

exclusive economic zone (EEZ) claims. Greece aims to isolate Turkey and cooperate with GASC for this manner, together with Egypt and Israel.

In EMS, all of the coastal states desire to become an important actor in regional energy politics. Owning rich hydrocarbon resources provides an advantage; however, transportation of these resources also matters because energy transferred countries also hold significant power. Therefore, by expanding its maritime boundary Greece aims to appeal as an important player. Right now, Greece cannot engage in any hydrocarbon drilling activities on its own due to financial limitations and the disputed nature of the maritime borders. However with aligning Egypt, Israel, and GASC, Greece can emerge as an essential energy transit state for Europe. Some experts argue that in the short run using LGN facilities can create opportunities for regional trade and cooperation (Diriöz and Kibrik, 2020). Yet, using LNG facilities to transfer natural gas may not be feasible in the long run for the transfer, storage, and distribution of the gas. To eliminate Turkish influence in regional energy politics and transfer Eastern Mediterranean gas, which is located in the disputed waters of the island of Cyprus, Greece and its allies introduced the Eastern Mediterranean Pipeline (aka EASTMED) project. In December 2019, EASTMED project adopted, this pipeline aims to connect East Mediterranean offshore natural gas extracted from GASC claimed EEZ territory and Levantine Basin to Europe bypassing Crete and Greece (IGI Poseidon, 2020). With EASTMED pipeline protection of European energy security is aimed by diversifying the suppliers. The latest design of EASTMED covers 1.300km offshore and 600km onshore pipeline, which can transport 10Bcm/y. Exit points of the pipeline will be located in Greece and GASC, yet it is planned to connect EASTMED's exit in Peloponnese to Poseidon Pipeline (IGI Poseidon, 2020). The US and EU support EASTMED, which is expected to be complete in 2025 and meet 10% of the European energy demand (Berberakis, 2020).



Figure 3 Route of EASTMED Pipeline

Source: Ellinas, 2018

According to many sources, EASTMED is a non-feasible project (Demiryol, 2019; Diriöz and Kibrik, 2020). Apart from the legal problems of extracting any resources from EEZ declared by GASC, financially constructing such pipelines under different geologic offshore platforms is problematic. Due to changes in construction depth and length, the number of technical challenges increases (Energy World Magazine, 2019). Various drilling equipment and pipeline materials will be needed, making the EASTMED project the most expensive energy transfer solution among its alternatives. According to US geologic research institutes report, Eastern Mediterranean gas can be transported to Europe via three different ways. The first option is the EASTMED project, which will cost up to 20 billion dollars (Demiryol, 2019, p. 450). Different resources provide different estimations of the cost of the project. Some sources indicate that EASTMED's investment cost will be 6 billion USD, but they do not estimate the development cost (Akyener, 2017). The second option is using Egyptian LNG terminals or building new LNG terminals to GASC (Energy World Magazine, 2019). The third option is using Turkey as a transit country, which costs 1/3 of the EASTMED pipeline (Aksan, 2020). However construction of EASTMED is expected to reduce European dependency to other energy exporter nations like Russia and energy transit nations like Ukraine and Turkey by increasing their energy exporting routes.

Apart from being an energy transit country, Greece could also become an energy producer in the long run. In 2012, a study conducted by the Athens-based Flow Energy indicated that Greece holds natural gas reserves in the Aegean, south of Crete, and Ionian Seas, making around €600 billion worth of offshore natural gas production over the next 25 years period (Pappas, 2013). Researches show that natural reserves are gathered in the waters south of Crete, showing geological similarities with the Levant basin (Kampouris, 2020). It is estimated that offshore reserves on the southern parts of the Crete contain around 3.5 tcm (123.6 tcf) of natural gas, which is enough to cover over six years of EU gas demand, in addition to 1.5 Bbbl of oil reserves (Protopapas, 2014). Potential of these reserves causes another maritime boundary delimitation with Turkey. Greece argues that Crete and Mesi islands should be taken into consideration in EEZ delimitations, Turkey opposes that argument. Turkey argues that EEZ boundaries should be determined according to the main states Turkey, Libya, and Egypt (Casin, 2019). Turkish Greek relations have never been outstandingly friendly. However, approximately four decades ago, when the Cyprus conflict and Aegean Continental Shelf dispute erupted, Greco-Turkish bilateral relations got negatively affected. In the map below Greek (red line) and Turkish claimed (blue line) EEZ territory can be seen.

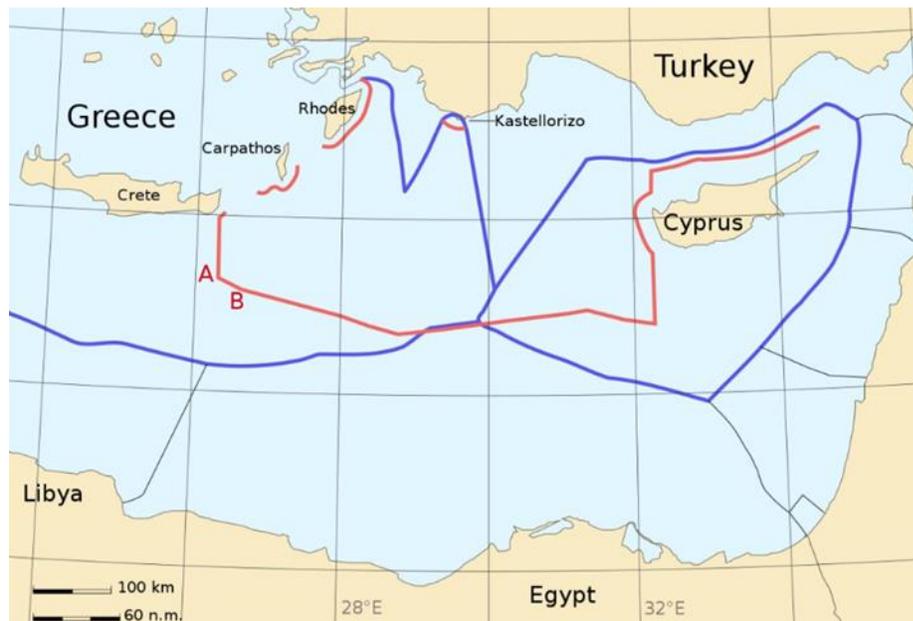


Figure 4 Comparison of Greek and Turkish EEZ Borders

Source: Pamir, 2019

On May 4, 1997, Greece signed a maritime delimitation zone agreement with Italy; this border is set by the connection of 16 points, determined by the midline (aka equidistance) principle. UNCLOS Article 56 did not indicate any information regarding islands allowance of EEZ declarations. However, ICJ's decision in the Tunisia-Libya case in 1997 indicates that "the continent dominates the sea" (Erciyas, 2012). Moreover, International Court of Justice's (ICJ) British-French Continental Shelf Arbitration case in 1977 indicates that states' claims should be in accordance with the principle of equitable or equidistance (United Nations, 1978). ICJ, primarily, uses the equal distance principle in the EEZ disputes between coastal states. According to this principle, coastlines' length and shape affect the equidistance's outcome in which a median line drawn between the disputants' shores determines their EEZ's (Maritime Boundary Office, 2018). In accordance with ICJ preliminary cases and UNCLOS articles, as a signatory of UNCLOS, littoral states like Greece should act based on the principle of equidistance to prevent the escalation of existing tensions with other disputant states like the Turkish government. Greece's also claims certain territory in the southern parts of the Crete can create further disputes with the Tripoli government.

Due to EEZ declaration delimitations, legal, financial, and technical exiguousness, Greece cannot conduct drilling operations under its claimed territory. In the case of the potential discovery of a high-calorific valued natural gas in the disputed Eastern-Mediterranean region, states have to find a way to specify their EEZ's. If Greece, Turkey, TRNC, and GASC cannot find a way for reconciliation, legally, none of the states can extract than natural gas. Even if international law allows states to extract that gas –which is not likely under the existing regulations- none of the states have enough capacities to operate offshore extraction. They need to agree with other energy firms: multinational energy corporations or other states' national energy companies that were capable enough to conduct the extraction on behalf of the coastal state.

The discovery of hydrocarbon resources increased cooperation among certain nations like Egypt, Israel, Greece, and GASC in the region. However, one should not forget that these nations were not engaged in maritime boundary delimitation disputes with each other.

Even though discoveries increased the regional cooperation among certain states, it also intensified existing tension in the region by forming blocks. On November 8, 2014, the first (Hellenic Republic Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2014) and on April 29, 2015, the second trilateral summit conducted between Greek Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras, President of GASC Nikos Anastasiadis, and the President of Egypt Abdulfettah El Sisi to strength and develop their cooperation in the EMS (Hellenic Republic Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2015). The final declaration of the trilateral summit conducted on October 11, 2016 (Hellenic Republic Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2016). Security of EMS, recognition, usage, and the cooperation of the maritime resources were the common issues emphasized in all summits. In the first summit Turkish Republic was accused of violating GASC EEZ and called the Ankara government to refrain any activities, like conducting seismic reaches, which *will* violate the rights of GACS (Hellenic Republic Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2014). On January 8, 2020, Foreign Ministers of GASC, Egypt, France, and Greece met in Cairo. It issued a joint declaration in which they accused Turkey and the Presidency Council of Libya by violating international law by signing EEZ agreement and infringing the sovereignty rights of coastal states in EMS (Hellenic Republic Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2020).

3.7. Egypt

With 552 miles, Egypt has the second largest coastal line in EMS (Central Intelligence Agency, 2020). In 1958 Egypt declared the extension of its territorial waters from 6nm to 12nm (United Nations, 1958). Egypt started to produce natural gas in 1975 in the Abu Madi field, which was discovered in 1967 (Egyptian Gas Association, 2020). Egyptian production continued in the Nile Delta and different parts of the EMS. In 2003, 42 billion m³ of natural gas reserves were found in the Nile Delta and 15 exploration licenses issued in 2012 (İlgen, 2019). In addition to 15 exploration licenses issued in 2011 in the coasts of Egypt (İlgen, 2019). In 2015 ENI got a license for conducting exploration activities in Egyptian waters, and they discovered the Zohr field in the same year (Cozzi, 2020). ENI

officials indicated that the Zohr gas field is believed to be the most significant discovery in the region, with 850 billion cubic meters potential (Cozzi, 2020).

Egypt was one of the first nations which supported Greek Cypriots against British colonial rule and recognized them as an independent state, the Republic of Cyprus in 1960. It has known that Egyptian leader Nasser established good relations with Greek Cypriot leader Makarios and had close ties since then. In 2003 Egypt sign the EEZ delimitation agreement with GASC; the EEZ border did not decide based on the principle of equidistance, which caused Egypt to lose significant maritime territory. If Egypt signed a maritime boundary agreement with Turkey, it would gain approximately 12.000km² (İlgen, 2019). Moreover, if Egypt signs an EEZ agreement with Greece since Greece accepts statues and the rights of islands equal to mainland Egypt will lose further territory, 7,400 km² (İlgen, 2019). Considering the rich hydrocarbon reserves potential in the region, exploring a rich hydrocarbon base in the region or an administrative change in one of the nations can create tension among the nations.

Egypt was ruled under Hosni Mubarak from October 14, 1981, till February 11, 2011 (United States Institute of Peace, 2019). With emerge of the Arab Spring, he was forced to resign, and Mohamad Morsi came into power (Kienle, 2012). Morsi government's foreign policy perspective was different from the Morsi government. Cancellation of Egypt-GASC EEZ agreement in March 2013 by the Morsi government can be given as an example of administrative perception differences (Cankara, 2016). Because of their ongoing offshore drilling activates, cancellation of the GASC-Egypt EEZ agreement made the legality of Egyptian actives in the region questionable (Tarakçı, 2013). However, it significantly improved Turkish-Egypt affairs (Ritter, 2019). Yet, when the Morsi government toppled with a coup d'etat, the new government, Sisi administration, signed another EEZ agreement with GASC on December 12, 2013 (Ritter, 2019).

In 2014, the Greek Prime Minister Antonis Samaras announced that both Greece and GASC would use their membership in the EU to promote Egyptian-European relations presented themselves as the ambassadors of Egypt in the EU. In the following period, Egypt, Greece, and GASC periodically conducted trilateral summits, which were held in Cairo (2014), Nicosia (2015), Athens (2015), Cairo (2016), Nicosia (2017), Crete (2018)

and Cairo (2019). The Cairo Declaration was signed in 2014, and the Nicosia Declaration was issued in 2015 to promote further cooperation among the states (Hellenic Republic Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2015). Furthermore, these three countries signed a memorandum of understanding in the fields of maritime transport and cooperation (including maritime training), and tourism. After the exploration Zohr gas field in 2015, the state's expectancy of exploring another right natural gas reserve in the region is increased. After the emerge of the Sisi government, due to political disagreements, Egyptian-Turkish relations deteriorated. GASC take advantage of the deteriorating Turkish Egyptian relations and GASC-Greek-Egyptian bloc formed after the fall of the Morsi government. Expanding GASC-Greek-Egyptian alignment created security concerns and motivated the Turkish government to invest more in its military capabilities to internally balance the emerging alliance, against its' benefits.

3.8. Israel

In 1990, Israel declared its territorial waters as 12nm. Eastern border of Israel is defined with the 2010 Israeli-GASC agreement; however, the northern border of Israel is still problematic due it is to the ongoing dispute with Lebanon (Durham University IBRU: Center for Borders Research, 2011). With the exploration of gas reserves, Israel globally became one of the most important natural gas exporter states (Israel Ministry of Energy, 2018).

Field	Country	Discovery date	Estimated reserves (bcm)
Noa	Israel and Palestine	1999	1.2
Mari B	Israel	2000	30
Tamar	Israel	2009	280
Leviathan	Israel	2010	510
Aphrodite	Cyprus	2011	120
Tannin	Israel	2012	34
Karish	Israel	2013	50
Zohr	Egypt	2015	845

Table 1 Major gas reserves discoveries in the Eastern Mediterranean Sea Between 1999-2015

Source: Demiryol, 2018

Lebanon claims that Leviathan and the Tamar fields are located in the border between Lebanon and Israel; thus, states need to share these resources (Kamel, 2016). UNCLOS 1982 aims to solve disputes by allowing states to carry their conflict to international arbitration mechanisms like ICJ. If a state does not ratify UNCLOS 1982 and allows it to be solved by arbitration, then other disputant states cannot bring their case to international arbitration. Some experts argue that the reason for Israel's not signing UNCLOS 1982 is its' fear of being faced with biased arbitrators in a case of dispute (Kamel, 2016). Israeli-Lebanese tension can be given as another example to tension creator or escalator factor of the hydrocarbon resources.

Turkey recognized Israel as a sovereign nation on March 28, 1949 (Jewish Virtual Library, n.d.). In 1990s, various military and economic cooperation agreements signed between Turkey and Israel. However, in the mid-2000s, after the Israeli Operation Cast Lead Turkish Israeli relations started to deteriorate.

In 2010 Greek Prime Minister George Papandreou and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu signed a multi-dimensional cooperation agreement in Moscow. A year later, a defense agreement was signed between Israel and Greece, which allowed Israeli air forces and navy to be hosted on Greek bases and conduct training in their airspace. In January 2012, the GASC minister of defense, Elides, went to Israel and signed a defense agreement with the Tel Aviv government. A month later, GASC permitted Israeli forces to use their airspace and territories waters. As a countermove, in April 2012, Turkey started drilling a 3000-meter-deep well near the town of Trikomo in Northern Cyprus, which is protested by GASC and GASC authorities declared that Turkey and the TRNC are violating the law by conducting drilling operations within their borders. Protesting declarations and research, drilling actions, and accusing authorities by violating international law become an expected move among the Turkish Republic, Greece, GASC, and TRNC authorities. Whenever one side signs a bilateral agreement or conduct a drilling operation, other parties condemn, oppose the action, and accuse each other since the 2010s; this pattern of action became a continuity in the regional interactions.

Energy cooperation can improve states' bilateral relations; however, it can also inadvertently harm them. GASC, Greek, Egypt, and Israeli political convergence can be

given as an example to the cooperative effects of energy explorations. On the other hand, this approachment, discovering the energy resources and sharing of that territory among certain states, caused various political deterioration like Israeli-Lebanese or Israeli-Turkish deterioration. In that respect, states geographical location, their bilateral relations with other regional actors, and the location of the hydrocarbon resources effects whether energy resources serve as cooperation promoting or conflict causing or triggering factors.

3.9. Lebanon

In 1983 Lebanon extended its territorial waters to 12nm. For five years between 1970 to 1975 Lebanese government was in search of hydrocarbon resources within its' maritime borders, yet experts stated that the exploration of estimated resources would cost more than the value of the resources (Abdallah and Salami, 2015). In addition to the outputs of efficiency calculations reports, political and economic instabilities in Lebanon caused the Lebanese government to end its hydrocarbon searching activities in the region. After the GASC-Israeli EEZ agreement In 2011 Lebanese government issued a letter to UN General Secretary by stating that the GASC-Israeli EEZ agreement is violating Lebanese maritime sovereignty by avoiding equidistant principle (United Nations, 2011). EEZ borders claimed by Lebanon and Israel, overlaps in 860 km² region (Akman, 2018), which might seem a small territory yet due to its rich hydrocarbon reserves states driven into a conflict. 8th, 9th, and 10th blocks are located in that disputed region. Lebanon issued official claims to the UN to demand *note verbale* publication (United Nations, 2017).

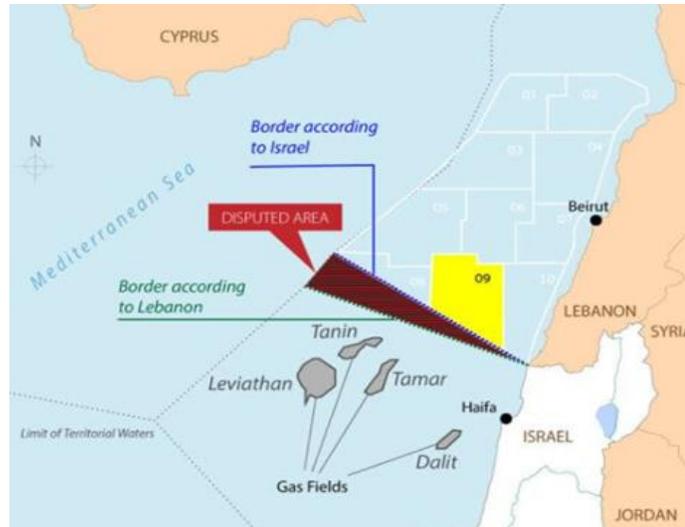


Figure 5 Map of Israel-Lebanon Maritime Dispute

Source: Pileggi, 2019

3.10. Syria

As a crude oil producer, Syria owns large onshore hydrocarbon reserves. Energy Information Administration's report Syrian proved offshore natural gas reserves estimated potential was 8.5 trillion cubic feet (Energy Information Administration, 2011). Due to the location of these reserves in the region and country's hydrocarbon potential, it is forecast that there is a chance of finding valuable offshore hydrocarbon resources in the Syrian waters. In 2003, Syria announced its territorial waters as 12nm and EEZ as 200nm. Four years later, in 2007, official talks were conducted by Syria and GASC regarding maritime boundary determinations, yet no agreements were signed. In 2004 Inseis Terra and Norwegian Global Geo Services made a contract with the Syrian government for hydrocarbon exploration activities. From 2007 to 2010, Syria issued further hydrocarbon exploration licenses. However, neither of the companies conducted any exploration activities in their licensed regions (İlgen, 2019, p. 60). Because of the domestic instabilities in the country, the Syrian government was not perceived as a reliable authority that can protect energy companies' interests and operations in the field by the energy companies. After the Syrian Civil War started on March 15, 2011, energy companies willing to conduct any exploration or drilling activities in Syrian waters were significantly

reduced. Currently, there have been no hydrocarbon resources exploration activities conducted in the Syrian issued parcels. Since northern parts of Syria's declared hydrocarbon exploration sites overlap with Turkish maritime jurisdiction areas if an energy company attempts to conduct hydrocarbon exploration activities in the disputed region, the Turkish Syrian conflict will be more likely to escalate (Küçük, n.d.). This overlapping can cause another bilateral conflict in the region in the upcoming decades.

3.11. Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC)

TRNC declared its independency on November 15, 1983 (Gözlem Gazetesi, 2018). Currently, Turkey is the only country that recognizes the TRNC. However, it is argued in 2011 that by signing a medical collaboration protocol, Libya de facto recognizes TRNC (Gürdeniz, 2020). There is no official meeting conducted with GASC and TRNC before GASC declares Cypriot EEZ (Faustmann, Gurel, and Reichberg 2012, p. 21). Therefore TRNC argues that GASC violates their rights by not asking their permissions or giving their shares. TRNC states that they own equal rights with GASC on the usage of hydrocarbon resources; thus, they claim a 50% share. After GASC issued EEZ agreements with regional states and started conducting hydrocarbon research and drilling activities on its EEZ declared territory TRNC signed an Oil Field Services and Production Sharing Agreement with TPAO. Ministry of Economy and Energy TRNC signed the agreement on behalf of the TRNC. The existence of precious hydrocarbon resources around the island rarifies the dispute on the recognition and the status of the TRNC. Turkish and GASC authorities started to issue warnings to vessels which did not get their permission to conduct drilling or exploration researches in the disputed maritime zones (Bellamy, 2019). Increasing tension in the region deadlocked Cypriot peace talks (REUTERS, 2018) last official negotiation talk conducted on June 28, 2017 (Turkish Republic of North Cyprus Deputy Prime Ministry and Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2020).



Figure 6 TRNC Claimed Disputed Territory

Source: South Front, 2019

3.12. Turkey

On May 15, 1964, the Ankara government set its territorial waters as 12nm in the Mediterranean Sea (US Department of State and Bureau of Intelligence and Research, 1971). Unlike other regional coastal states, the Ankara government did not declare and submit it as EEZ in the EMS boundaries to the UN (United Nations, 2020). On December 5, 1986, Turkey declared it is first and only EEZ in the Black Sea (Marineregions, n.d.). Turkey shows its political, military, and legal existence in the EMS by sending Turkish military vessels in the region, conducting national and joint military exercises in the region, and issuing *objection* and *information* notes to UNSG.

GASC claimed EEZ boundary contradicts with Turkish and TRNC claimed maritime territory. According to UN documents, Turkey issued various *objection notes* against GASC's bilateral EEZ agreements. The first Turkish agreement objection note for state interactions in the EMS was written on March 2, 2004, and on October 2, 2005, for the

GASC and Arab Republic of Egypt's EEZ agreement (United Nations, 2020). From 2005 to 2014, the Turkish Republic did not issue any *objection notes*. However, to assure its' territorial claims in 2011 Turkey signed a maritime boundary delimitation agreement with TRNC. On April 25, 2014, and May 30, 2014, the Turkish government issued two *information notes* (United Nations, 2020). Turkey issued sixteen letters: six in 2016, one in 2017 and one in 2018, five in 2019, and a third one in the first half of the 2020 July to UNSG regarding hydrocarbon blocks usage. In all of these letters, the Turkish government states that Greek Cypriot representatives violate Turkey's *ipso facto* and *ab initio* legal and sovereign rights in the EMS (United Nations, 2020). After 2011 frequency and the number of *objections* and *information notes* given to UNSG by GASC, Turkey, and Greece is significantly increased (United Nations, 2020). Since the major natural gas reserves discovered after 2011 and *objection* and *information notes* are connected to share of these reserves, exploration of the hydrocarbon resources in the EMS accelerated the tension in the region (Aydoğmuş, 2019).

Due to the statue of the Cyprus Island EMS region has already conflicted. However, with the exploration of rich hydrocarbon resources in 2011 and 2018, the level of tension significantly escalated in the region. In 2011 with the discovery of the Aphrodite field, the importance of the disputed district increased. Right after GASC initiated drilling 12th block, the Ankara government signed a CS delimitating agreement with TRNC. By giving a drilling license on its CS, TRNC provides a broader legal ground for the Ankara government to oppose GASC actions.

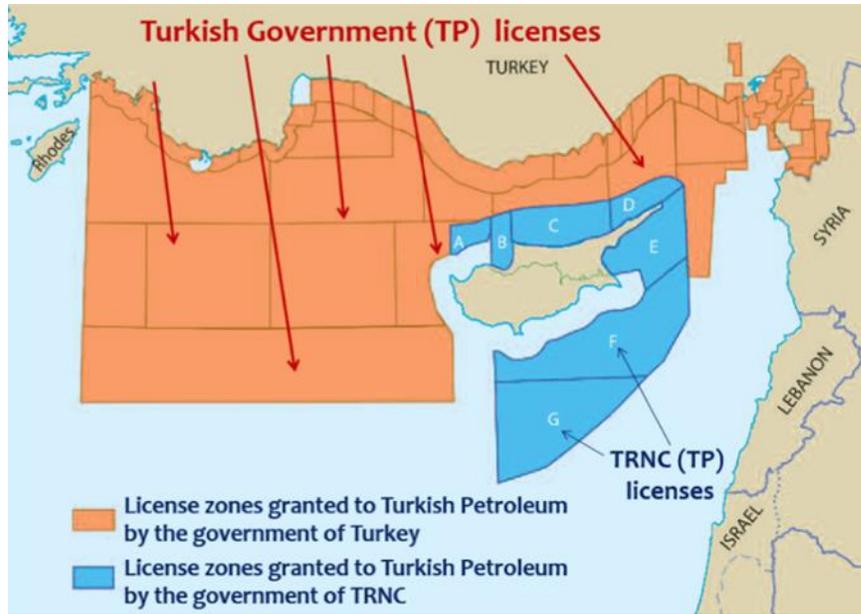


Figure 7 The Exploration Licenses Granted to TPAO by the Turkish Government and TRNC Government

Source: Pamir, 2019

Tensions between GASC and Turkey peaked when the GASC started exploratory drilling for gas in the Aphrodite gas field in September 2011, with the drilling works allocated to Noble Energy Company, a US firm with Israeli participation been conducting offshore drills in the Eastern Mediterranean for Israel since 1998. Since Turkey recognizes and respects Israeli maritime territory, it did not oppose the Israeli state's actions within its borders. In March 2011, Italian telecommunication company Alcatel's ship, R/Y Explora, violated Turkey's claimed EEZ borders while installing telecommunication infrastructure for GASC, Israel, and Egypt. Turkish authorities issued a diplomatic warning to the Italian embassy. On March 11 and stated that without the Turkish Republic's permission, R/Y Explora would not be allowed to operate in the region. Thus R/Y Explora has to leave Turkish EEZ. A day after On March 12, the Italian ship was escorted out the Turkish claimed EEZ with Turkish navy's vessel *TCG Bandırma* (Yaycı, 2012, p.31). Moreover, The Turkish authorities declared that the drillship violated Turkey's marine jurisdiction area and sent the Corvette *Bafra* to monitor operations. Another Turkish warship, the *Gelibolu*, engaged in planned maneuvers south of Cyprus ostensibly to ensure maritime safety in the Eastern Mediterranean. As a result, the president of Cyprus President Nicos

Anastasiades froze the latest attempt to negotiate with Turkish Cypriot leader Derviş Eroğlu a settlement to end the island's forty-year division.

In 2005, Turkey started conducting offshore hydrocarbon exploration researches in the EMS via TPAO. Exploration activities were mainly conducted on the coasts of Antalya, Mersin, and İskenderun (Erciyes, 2012) and in November 2011 a joint operation agreement signed between TPAO and Shell (T.C. Cumhurbaşkanlığı Yatırım Ofisi, 2011). Solely when GASC started conducting hydrocarbon exploration researches on the disputed region (on the 2nd, 3rd, 9th, and 12th parcels) (Erciyes, 2012), Turkish exploration activities location widened. After GASC started to conduct drilling activities in the disputed region, Turkey significantly invested in its' offshore exploration capacity. Due to the equipment limitations, TPAO could not conduct exploration activities with its vessels before the arrival of Barbaros Hayrettin Pasha (Anadolu Agency, 2013) and MTA Oruç Reis seismic research ships (Kenarlı, et. al., 2019). In 2014 TPAO started to conduct hydrocarbon exploration activities in it is licensed parcels around Cyprus Island. In addition to Fatih (2017), Yavuz (2018) drilling vessels in 2020, Turkey gets its third drilling vessel *Sertao* (Hürriyet, 2020). By using its license, the Turkish government sent seismic research vessels to the region, which intensified the region's tension. Due to the hostile environment, Turkish seismic, later on drilling ships were protected by the Turkish navy. Increasing Turkish military existence around the island boosts GASC and Greece's insecurities.

Tension in the EMS rapidly escalated, for the second time, on February 8, 2018, when ENI and Total discovered, a giant natural gas field which is estimated nearly as big as Zohr field, at the Calypso block off the Cypriot coast (Andrei, 2019). Three days later, Turkish military vessels stopped ENI's drillship, Saipem 12000, before it started drilling the 3rd block declared by GASC (Andrei, 2019). Based on UNCLOS, Part V states cannot engage in maritime resources extraction activities if they did not declare EEZ and their borders are approved by the other coastal states (United Nations 1982, p. 43-53). In the context of Turkey, GASC and TRNC because of the recognition problem, EEZ borders' settlements cannot be expected, which means legally neither of the states can engage in any drilling or hydrocarbon research activities. However, as if GASC claimed EEZ

borders were ratified by all regional coastal states Turkish navy's hamper of ENI's drilling activities in the disputed territory created a short scale diplomatic crisis among the participant states, including Italy (because of ENI) and France (because of Total).

In general, the Turkish government's actions were all done as retaliation responses to GASC moves. On November 27, 2019, an EEZ agreement was signed with National Accord Government. The agreement was ratified by the Ankara government (Avundukluoglu, 2019) and the Tripoli administration as an UN-recognized government. The Ankara government established close relations with the Gaddafi government up until he lost his popular support. When the regime changed in Libya, the Ankara government sided with the new regime. After the 2011 revolution, Turkey recognized the National Transitional Council as the "sole representative of Libyan people" (Henri J. Barkey, 2012). Turkey was among the first nations to appoint an Ambassador to Tripoli, on September 2, 2011, after the full control of Tripoli by the National Transitional Council. Due to the deterioration of security, the Turkish Consulate General in Benghazi and the Turkish Embassy in Tripoli had temporarily closed in 2014. Turkey has welcomed the signing of the Libyan Political Agreement (Government of National Accord (GNA)). GNA is an interim government for Libya that was formed under the terms of the Libyan Political Agreement, a United Nations-led initiative, signed on December 17, 2015. The agreement recognized the Government of National Accord as the sole legitimate executive authority in Libya. Turkish Consulate in Misrata has continued its operations without interruption; in 2017 Turkish Embassy in Tripoli resumed. Bilateral agreements signed by GASC and its EEZ declaration motivated the Turkish government to take actions to secure it has claimed EEZ by forming bilateral treaties. This can be seen as retaliation towards GASC and its EEZ agreements.

Even though Ankara government usually follows an eye to eye tooth for a tooth strategy in the Eastern Mediterranean maritime boundary delimitation, it also tries to find common ground. For instance before the discovery of the Aphrodite field, Turkey submitted a proposal to the UN Secretary-General. In that proposal, Turkey recommended stopping unilateral exploration activities and a unified committee from controlling and coordinating exploration efforts. However, with the announcement of GASC's discovery of the

Aphrodite field, Turkish diplomatic attempts failed. Due to timing failure, the Turkish proposal could not be performed; if it could have been accomplished, then the course of events would be significantly different from today's dynamics.

A response to *illegal* drilling activities in the disputed Cypriot territory, Turkey adopted gunboat diplomacy. By sending its exploration vessel to the disputed zone which was escorted by Turkish navy and air force, the Ankara government not only started drilling activities in the disputed region but also increased its military presence in the region. Towards the end of 2011, Noble Energy announced the discovery of gas estimated between 140 billion and 226 billion cubic meters in Aphrodite, after drilling procedures began, Turkey's Minister for EU Affairs Egemen Bağış issued a veiled threat to Cyprus, stating that for such reasons countries invests on warships, military equipment and train their navies (Burch, 2011). Similarly, Prime Minister Erdoğan referred to the joint Israel-Cyprus agreement and drilling as *madness* (REUTERS, 2011). These events served as a push factor between Israel and Turkey, lead a stalemate between Turkish-GASC relations while serving as a pull factor for Israel and GASC to deepened and extend their bilateral ties. In a way, we can say that the Turkish reaction caused Israel to ally with GASC.

To maintain the maritime security littoral states conduct joint military exercises in the region. For instance in 1998, the first Reliant Mermaid, military exercise occurred with the participation of the US, Israeli and Turkish navies. Since 1998 states met twice a year for Reliant Mermaid exercise, which lasts four to fourteen days. Throughout time, other European and Arab nations also invited to the exercise. In 2010 Turkey withdrew itself from Reliant Mermaid (Katz, 2010). With the withdrawal of Turkey, Greece fulfilled Turkey's spot, and the joint exercise practice Noble Dina emerged. In order to protect regional energy security since 2005 Turkish Navy conduct Mediterranean Shield sham battles (Yaycı, 2012, p. 10). The main motivation of this sham battle was GASC's violation of Turkish CS by its EEZ declaration (Gürdeniz, 2020).

After the emerge of Noble Dina and bilateral military accords among Greece and Israel, and GASC, Turkey, started to invest more in its military capabilities to build a stronger navy and air force. 2015 Noble Dina training was the most massive exercise conducted so far, focusing on the protection of offshore energy infrastructures from a hostile force.

Also, in that year, Greece and Israel signed a Status of Forces Agreement. Moreover, three years later, in 2017, the GASC navy participated Noble Dina as an observer state. The Israeli navy has started a program to improve its sea-to-surface missile capabilities, the Ministry of Defense wants to procure four advance patrol vessels for the navy that will ensure the protection of the natural gas infrastructure in the Mediterranean Sea against a broad range of threats (Lappin and JNS, 2020).

As a response to increasing military joint operations and investments, the Ankara government increased the frequency of simulated military operation in EMS. Turkish Armed forces conducted operational readiness training in the EMS with special force, navy, and air forces between 15 and 17 April 2020 (Sabah Gazetesi, 2020). On June 13, 2020, Turkish air forces conducted another military exercise in the EMS. Turkish combat crafts fly 8 hours over 2000 km² until the Libyan Territory (Sezer, 2020). States' increased number of military training and existence in the region to protect their claimed EEZ and hydrocarbon resources shows that in the EMS, hydrocarbon resources contribute to the intensification of the existing conflict. For Ankara, government hydrocarbon resources related developments in the region directly affected their regional power and energy hub-energy transit state positions. To not be left out in the allocation of resources, Turkey tried to form its block against GASC-Israel-Greece-Egypt alliances. Due to its strategic importance and resources controlling maritime territory in EMS significantly contributes state's power.

3.13. Chapter Summary

The discovery of massive hydrocarbon resources in the East Mediterranean intensified the current political tumult and security fears. The Eastern Mediterranean region in many of the countries is at loggerheads militarily or politically. The region holds deep-rooted conflict and competition. Depending on their political positions, states formed blocks in the region. Energy or any natural resource cannot be taken as the only conflict generator factor. State political standings, their perceptions about each other, and historical interactions also play significant importance in this process. However, in a conflict

existing region discovery of hydrocarbon resources in disputed waters intensifies the conflict among the contested states. If there are more than two states involved in such disputes, which is the case in Eastern Mediterranean, hydrocarbon resources strengthen the existing alliances in the region; by doing so, it creates sharp political dissidence among the states. Political dissonance creates blocks by effecting states the perception of threat. If a state thinks that other states are unifying against him or towards the ideas he supports, he feels insecure. To balance the threats and secure itself, states try to form new alliances and strengthen its existing alliances. By doing so, states strive to minimize the degree of danger.

Israel's hydrocarbon research and drilling activate started in the late 1960s; however, significant gas fields like Noa and Mari B found in 1999, more productive fields like Tamar (discovered in January 2009) and Leviathan (discovered on October 2010) discovered approximately a decade later. Also, since 2009 smaller fields like Dalit, Tanin, Dolphin, and Shimson were discovered by Israel. Currently, different researches indicate different hydrocarbon potentials in the EMS (Gürel and Le Cornu 2013, p. 5). Considering the Israeli explorations timeline and coastal state equipment limitations disputants' preference of delaying their dispute instead of aiming to settle, it is understandable. States like Turkey recently started to improve its offshore research and drilling capabilities.

Also, in 2010 US Geological Research Center's report indicated that the total reserve in EMS is equivalent to 30 billion barrels of oil, which was calculated as 1.5 trillion USD at that time (Bilge Adamlar Stratejik Araştırmalar Merkezi, 2013). This calculation is made by considering the Leviathan, Nil, and Heredot hydrocarbon bases potentials. However, further reserves explored after 2010, the discovery of Aphrodite in 2011, Zohr in 2015, and Glaucus-1 in 2019 is a sign for the region's potential. Thus states preference of not settling their border disputes can be understandable. Since no one knows or can guarantee the potential reserves in EMS, in order not to lose any reserves, states continue to insist on their claimed territories. Exploring the natural gas resources or the potential of hydrocarbon resources can increase regional cooperation and improve coastal states' economies in the long run by creating energy producer nations. However, currently, it

increased the tension of the existing problems. Existing dynamics indicate that the establishment of regional cooperation is unlikely unless the Cyprus conflict is solved.

According to UNCLOS, Article 22 and 23 states in semi-closed or enclosed seas should cooperate and solve their disagreements by following relevant UNCLOS articles (United Nations, 1982, p. 32). Article 74 and 83 states that in the CS disputes principle of equitability should be applied. The principle of the superiority of geography should also take into consideration (İlgen, 2019, p. 88). This principle divides the claimed region among the claimer states based on the length of their coastal lines proportion as a result states with longer coastal length gets wider CS or EEZ, territory (İlgen, 2019, p.89). Articles 246 and 300 indicates that even if states do not have any diplomatic interaction with each other, UNCLOS obliges them to solve their disagreements by showing good faith and not abusing their rights (United Nations, 1982, p. 119-137).

Based on the principle of proportional delamination EEZ boundaries of the coastal states should be calculated based on their coastal lengths. GASC territory violates Syria's, Israel's and Lebanon's territory. To begin with, UNCLOS lacks necessary guidance in the EEZ declarations of island states. Even if UNCLOS comes up with a clarification of this unclarified issue disputed structure of Cyprus has to be settled first. Cyprus has 1.8 times less coastal length than Lebanon. GASC's claimed EEZ borders violated Lebanon, and Israel's territory puts GASC in a position of illegally occupying 4600 square kilometers of an area that should fall under Israel's and 3657 square kilometers of an area which should fall under Lebanon's jurisdiction (Kaya, 2019). Based principle of proportional delamination, if Zafer, Baf, and Arnauti are taken as coastal lines of the island, GASC should get 21 thousand 500 square kilometers less of territory (Kaya, 2019). States do not have to base their bilateral maritime boundary determination agreements on UNCLOS principles. Yet they can use UNCLOS regulations as a guideline to avoid emerge of potential conflicts in the future. Apart from avoiding third parties, regional coastal states' oppositions, which is a direct cause of the treaties deemed invalid, states can renounce their agreements if a state believes that the agreement that they signed harms their benefits by losing territory with rich natural resources. If they can claim rights over that territory based on UNCLOS regulations, then a conflict can occur among these nations. In the area

mentioned earlier Turkish coastal line is 656 miles, whereas GASC's coastal line is 32 miles long (İlgen, 2019, p. 89). Similar disputes happened and settled by ICJ before such as Malta-Libya Continental Coast Dispute and France and Canada's dispute over Pierre and Miquelon Islands (Erciyes, 2012). Such cases can be used as exemplary cases for GASC-Turkey maritime boundary delimitation dispute. However, in the existence of the TRNC-GASC dispute, GASC's recognition as a legal, sovereign state, and potential of hydrocarbon resources in the EMS, it is not likely to achieve such settlement in the near future.

Exploration of abundant hydrocarbon reserves in the disputed EMS motivated coastal states to be more persistent on their regional claims by increasing their expected gains. Until 2019, Turkey was isolated in EMS regional schemes by GASC, Greece, Egypt, and Israel. To be able to compete with other nations, the Ankara government resorted to its naval power to continue its drilling activities and prevent other nations from expanding power in the region. The increasing presence of Turkish military in the EMS and increasing Turkish military drills, like Blue Homeland (one of the biggest military exercises conducted with 103 vessels) (Genc, 2019) motivated other littoral states like Egypt to invest more on their military capabilities by creating insecurities (DW, 2020). By delimiting its' maritime zones with Libya GNA, the Ankara government tried to strengthening its alliances. The idea of this agreement was to prevent growing Greek influence in the EMS; by limiting Greece's maritime territory, the Ankara government aims to weaken GASC. After this agreement, Turkey started military support to the UN-recognized GNA, which drastically changed the balance of power in the civil war. As a counter move, Egypt and Greece started supporting the Haftar administration. Blocks in the EMS and the parties of the Libyan Civil War started to become more dependent on each other. In the existence of GASC, Greek, Egyptian, Israeli alignment Turkish government could not find a coastal state to create its own block in the region, therefore as a first move, Ankara government adopted gunboat diplomacy to secure its' regional claims. Due to the status of TRNC and uncertainties in Libya, the Turkish government will continue to rely on its military capabilities to protect its' regional benefits.

Another factor that affects tension in the region is the involvement of international oil companies. GASC has been authorized various international oil companies to conduct drilling in its' claimed yet disputed territories such as Italian ENI, US Noble and Exxon Mobil, Qatar Petroleum, Israeli Delek, and French Total (Gökçe, 2018). Turkish opposition to these drillings and using its navy to prevent any drilling activities in the disputed territory increasing and expands the regional tensions allowing non-regional states to involve in the dispute. France's sending its warships to EMS to deter the Ankara government can be given as an example (Middle East Monitor, 2020) to increasing tension in the region.

In sum, this chapter argues that the hydrocarbon discoveries in the EMS has not settled the ongoing dispute, but intensified the existing conflict by added new dimensions. There has been an unsettled conflict between Greece-GASC and Turkey, and hydrocarbon reserves attracted new regional players. Greece-GASC has tried to isolate Turkey regionally. The bloc is composed of GASC-Greece-Egypt-Israel, supported by the US and the EU. Turkey's deteriorating relations with Israel and Egypt in the 2010s, after the Mavi Marmara incident in 2010 and coup d'etat in Egypt in 2013, contributed to the foundation of such approachment. It can be argued that what motivates these states to come together is the desire to isolate regionally and by-pass Turkey in energy transfer and balance its regional influence. Moreover, by issuing licenses to drilling blocks within the disputed territory, GASC increased the number of disputants.

CHAPTER 4

MARITIME BOUNDARY DELIMITATIONS IN THE SOUTH CHINA SEA

In this chapter, the conflict triggering effect of hydrocarbon resources will be analyzed under the South China Sea (SCS) dispute. Due to its strategic importance SCS, various conflicts exist in the region among the littoral states. After examining the importance of SCS for the regional states, the importance of hydrocarbon resources for states' development is analyzed. The definition of energy security provided before the explanation of the history of complex interstate maritime disputes in the SCS. Among the various territorial disputes, Spratly and Paracel Island have been selected as case studies. Before the examination of disputant littoral states (PRC, Taiwan, The Philippines, Vietnam, Malaysia, and Brunei Darussalam) positions, the importance of Spratly and Paracel Island explained. The chapter ends with a theoretical analysis of states' actions in the South China Sea.

4.1. Importance of the South China Sea

The South China Sea is approximately 3.5 million square kilometers semi-enclosed sea surrounded by the People's Republic of China (PRC), Vietnam, Malaysia, the Philippines, Brunei Darussalam, and Indonesia (Qi-zhou, Wen-zhi, Li, and Li, 1994). Due to it is a connection to Malacca and Hormuz strait SCS plays a crucial role in energy transportation. SCS is one of the world's busiest international seal lines, annually, 50% of the global merchant fleet sails in SCS (Rosenberg, 2010). Approximately 60% of maritime trade passes through Asia, and one-third of global shipping occurs in the South China Sea (Center for Strategic and International Studies, 2020). The amount of oil and natural gas

transported over the SCS is three times the amount transported through the Suez Canal and fifteen times the amount transported through the Panama Canal (Arslan, 2019, p. 41). More than half of the global supertanker traffic passes through The South China Sea (Global Investment and Business Center, 2011). It has significant importance in terms of international economic activities (Global Investment and Business Center, 2011). Being able to control these routes significantly affects coastal states' economic security. By considering its' population, technological developments, and growing demand for energy, controlling these reserves matters the most for China.

In the previous decades, the hydrocarbon reserves' potentials and exploration significantly increased the region's strategic importance. SCS contains 7.5 billion barrels of proven oil reserves (Brandenburg, 2011). It is argued that regions contain 28 to 213 billion barrels of oil reserves (Daiss, 2018). However, experts argue that oil comprises 30-40% of the total hydrocarbon reserves in SCS (Dirmeikis, 2018). The region contains abundant natural gas recourses. The majority of these hydrocarbon reserves are located around Paracel and Spratly islands. Coastal states overlapping claims and non-cooperative attitudes limit the extensive in-depth exploration reaches. A Chinese report estimates that hydrocarbon reserves around the Spratly islands contain 225 barrels oil equivalent of hydrocarbons; if 70% of these reserves consisted of natural gas, the region contains 900 trillion cubic feet natural gas (Ramkumar, et al., 2020). In 2016, more than 200 companies were actively conducting oil and natural gas exploration researches in SCS (Morton, 2016, p. 915).

All regional coastal states in SCS can be easily classified as large energy-consuming countries due to their economic growth. Experts claim that in the coming years, oil consumption of East Asian developing countries will gradually increase, and the center of oil consumption will shift to Asia (Liu Z., 2016). PRC can be given as an example of these developing energy needed states. Chinese energy consumption was gradually increasing, as in 2009, China was consuming 8 million barrels of oil per day; in 2019, Chinese daily oil consumption increased to 14 million barrels oil per day (STATISTA, 2020). In 2019 Chinese oil imports surpassed 10 million barrels per day (Barron, 2020). To reduce their energy dependency and to strengthen their position in the region, costal states compete

with each other to gain control of these maritime territories. Therefore, especially after the potential of the existence of hydrocarbon resources in the South China Sea, coastal states competition for expanding their exclusive economic zones intensified. The coastal states existing territorial disputes used to be caused by fishery rights or control of the international trade routes. Lately, states' demands to enlarge their hydrocarbon resources seem to become the dominant cause of regional conflicts.

The region provides rich fishery sources for the coastal states. Fishery resources in the SCS negatively affected the conflict by serving as a conflict triggering factor (Greer, 2016; Zhang H., 2016; Zhang and Bateman, 2017). For some scholars, fishery resources contribute to the tension between PRC and the Philippines more than hydrocarbon resources (Schofield, Sumaila, and Cheung, 2016). Approximately 12% of annual, global fish commercial output comes from SCS (Schofield, Sumaila, and Cheung, 2016). 40% of the world's tuna and roughly 22% of the Asian diet is provided from SCS (Dirmeikis, 2018, p. 26). Fishery resources not only meet a significant percentage of the coastal states' food consumption, but according to the registered workers' data, it provides job opportunities to more than 3.7 million people (Schofield, Sumaila, and Cheung, 2016). It is hard to assess nations' precedence of resources. However, over the last decade, with the intensification of territorial disputes and overlapping in the oil-natural gas licensing zones in the SCS, coastal states started to act aggressively towards other coastal states' fishers. For instance, the Beijing government prohibited all fishing activities on its claimed waters and started to arrest foreign fishers who engages in any fishery activities in the disputed zones (The Korean Times, 2020). Some nations can value hydrocarbon reserves more while others prioritize the control of fisheries; in either case, the nation's competition over hydrocarbon resources and their hydrocarbon block declarations effects their fishery zones. Because of the fishery dependence, if there is a possibility for a nation willing to compromise over the hydrocarbon blocks, they cannot. By effecting the share of other natural resources like hydrocarbon reserves, it also decreases the state's likelihood of settling their disputes.

4.2. Importance of Hydrocarbon Reserves and the Role of Energy Security

For a nation, securing the energy transit routes' is as essential as diversifying its' energy providers. In maritime energy, transportation piracy is another crucial problem that creates insecurities in the seas (Rosenberg and Chung, 2008). Between 1995 and 2013, 41% of the world's maritime piracy occurred in Southeast Asia (Mccauley, 2020). Between 2015 and 2019, 83 attacks and attack attempts occurred in SCS (ICC International Maritime Bureau, 2019, p. 5). Maritime security analysts indicate that due to the low reputation rate, the exact number of piracy attacks in the region is unknown (Mccauley, 2020). Ships that carry essential commodities such as LNG, LPG, and Crude oil tankers are more likely to be attacked compared to fishing, pipelayer, or wood chips carrier vessels (ICC International Maritime Bureau, 2019, p. 10). The majority of the piracy attacks in SCS occur on the coasts of Singapore and Malaysia's coasts, where Spratly archipelago is located (Mccauley, 2020). Over the past decades, energy security has become one of the most significant national security priorities for the regional states in SCS (Herberg, 2016). The regional insecurities can justify coastal states' militarization in the SCS. Coastal states' increasing military presence in the region may reduce piracy attempts and attacks. However, regardless of the nations' motivations, the existence of military presence in conflicted water creating security concerns among the disputants. A state that provides the security of a particular region may use its' actions to strengthen its claim in the disputed territory.

Different resources indicate different estimations about the hydrocarbon resources potential in the South China Sea. EIA 2013 reports estimates that the South China Sea contains 11 billion barrels of oil and 190 trillion cubic feet of natural gas reserves (Asia Maritime Transparency Initiative, 2020 ; U.S. Energy Information Administration, 2013). On the contrary, the Chinese government estimates that the same region contains 125 billion barrels of oil and 500 trillion cubic feet of natural gas (Saiidi, 2018). Even though the exact amount of reserves and their areas of concentration are still unknown, some experts claim that the Spratly islands' frontier contains 10% of the economically recoverable potential hydrocarbon resources (Global Investment and Business Center, 2011). In most of the cases, coastal states disagreements on the owners of these territories

turned in to a dispute among the coastal states within a short period. Due to their closeness to the hydrocarbon reserves, strategic position in the trade routes, and the fishery richness, the Paracel and the Spratly islands became one of the region's disputed territories.

Natural gas hydrates are ice-like solids composed of water and natural gas, mostly composed of methane (Xie, 2020). NGH is derivative form natural gas, and a unit of methane hydrate can release 164 units of natural gas (You and Flemings, 2020). Depending on their formation, location, and physical properties, natural gas hydrates can be categorized under seven types (You and Flemings, 2020). NGH is seen as an important alternative to oil and natural gas. Apart from its' abundant oil and natural gas reserves, SCS consists of rich NGH reserves (Liu, Yao, and Deng, 2011). In 2017, China became the first nation who extracted gas hydrate in SCS (The Maritime Executive, 2018). Even though the exact reservoir of NGH in SCS is unknown, researches indicate that the region has a high potential of rich NGH resources (Owen and Schofield, 2012). Existing studies on NGH reserves in SCS and its' effect on the exiting territorial dispute is insufficient. Current conflicts over offshore oil and gas reverses indicate that in the discovery of NGH reserves in the disputed regions, regional tension likely to escalate. Precious seabed energy resources in the SCS are affecting and will continue to affect regional interactions.

4.3. Disputed History of the Region

States in the South China Sea region had a long history of territorial disputes with each other. Over time, the disputed territories areas expanded. Unclaimed Islands and maritime territory's share in these disputes gradually increased. As shown in the table below, various maritime territorial disputes exist in the region.

Conflicted Parties	Disputed Territory	Hydrocarbon Discoveries
Indonesia, Malaysia, and the Philippines	Islands of Sabah and Ambalat	
PRC, the Philippines, and Taiwan	Cost of Palawan and Luzon	
PRC, Indonesia, and Taiwan	Natura Islands	
PRC, Malaysia, Brunei, the Philippines, and Taiwan	North of Borneo	
PRC, Taiwan, and the Philippines	Islands in Luzon Strait	
PRC, Taiwan, and Vietnam	Paracel Islands	In 1977 oil reserves discovered in the region. In 1980 existing disputes intensified; PRC occupied the Paracels (Britannica, n.d.)
PRC and Taiwan	Pratas Islands	
PRC and Taiwan	Macclesfield Bank	
PRC, Taiwan, and the Philippines	Scarborough Shoal	The conflict caused by fishery rights it intensified in 2012 (Heydarian R. , 2018)
PRC, Taiwan, Malaysia, the Philippines, Vietnam, and Brunei	Spratly Islands	In 1968 hydrocarbon reserves discovered in the region in mid-1970s dispute started (BBC News, 2016)
PRC, Taiwan, and Vietnam	Reed Bank	In 1978 Natural gas discovered by Philippines (U.S. Energy Information Administration, 2013)

Table 2 Maritime Disputes in South China Sea

Due to its geological importance, SCS has been tried to be controlled by various nations. However, the potential of hydrocarbon reserves and fishery resources contributed to the intensification of the naval domination competition in the SCS (Tonnesson, 2001, p. 15). SCS dispute has become more observable in the post-colonial era with the emerge EEZ. In mid-1950 British and American oil companies started to pay more attention to SCS because of the possible hydrocarbon reserves in the Spratly and Paracel area. The idea of controlling hydrocarbon resources (particularly the oil) motivated regional states to insist on their territorial claims (Tonnesson, 2001, p. 15).

More than 200 compact islands, reefs, and rocks exist in the South China Sea (Global Investment and Business Center, 2011). The majority of these islands have consisted of tiny islands where humans can hardly live, rocks, and reefs. Due to their habitat, neither these islands nor rocks or reefs are suitable for any living habitat or economic functions. However, because of their strategic locations, they consist of significant importance for coastal states. The number of nationalist maritime claims increased after the post-colonial period. New sovereign states were using irredentist claims to sustain their claims in the overlapping region (Tonnesson, 2001, p. 23).

To conduct our analysis Paracel and Spratly islands are selected as the most suitable cases. The majority of these territories fall under the unoccupied and *terra nullius* (empty land) category (Gonzales, 2014). Coastal states were in dispute with each other to expand their EEZ over this territory before the potential of the existence of the hydrocarbon resources. However, during the hydrocarbon resource researches, findings showed that these islands' surroundings contain precious hydrocarbon resources. After the exploration of hydrocarbon reservoirs, existing territorial disputes intensified (Global Conflict Tracker, 2020).

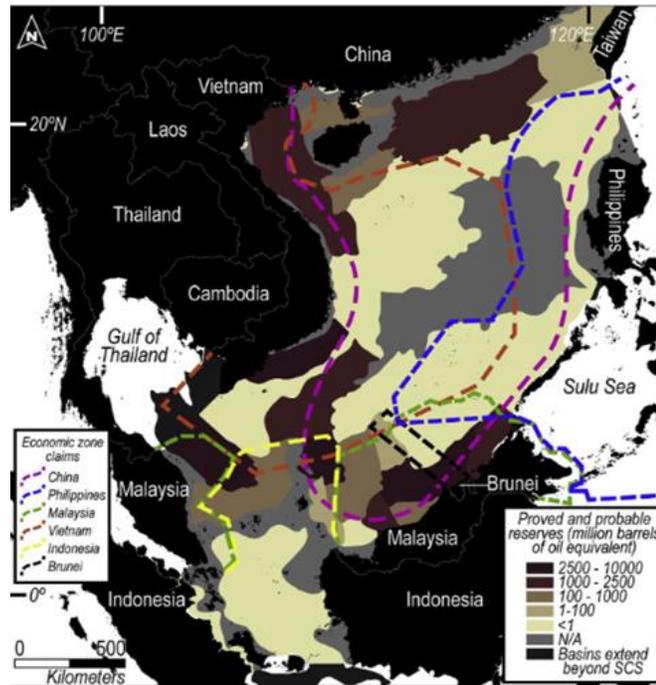


Figure 8 Offshore Hydrocarbon Reserves and EEZ claims

Source: Daiss, 2018

4.4. Common Features of Spratly and Paracel Islands

Islands historically controlled by British, French, Chinese, and Japanese Empires. China claims that Chinese geographers found Spratly and Paracel archipelagos during the Han Dynasty, around 200 BC (Lee, 1999, p. 9). In the 1730s British forces started to appear in the region, and in 1798 British forces built an observation tower to the Itu Aba islet (Taterova and Vladar, 2015). In 1887 France built a lighthouse to Amboyna Cay (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the People's Republic of China, 2009). Ownership of islets was changed among Chinese and British empires between the 1700s and 1900s. Starting from 1930, French-Japanese competition and occupations increased in the region (Granados, 2005). Between 1932 and 1935 Chinese government examined and recorded 132 islands in Spratly and Paracel archipelago and Macclesfield Bank (Granados, 2005, p. 459). In 1929 France occupied certain islands in the Spratlys and Paracels and 1933 France and officially claimed its sovereignty (Granados, 2005, p. 450-458). Between 1939 and 1944,

Spratlys were invaded by the Japanese empire (Tonnesson, 2002). In 1947 by giving Chinese names to 159 islands, islets, reefs, and shores, China expanded its claims (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the People's Republic of China, 2009). Even though British and French empires controlled these islands for some time, the first exercise of effective control of the island occurred in 1939 with the Japanese invasion (Gonzales, 2014). During the WW2 Islands in the SCS mostly used by the Japanese empire to conduct military exercises. When the islands were started to control and dominated by Japanese forces, none of the regional states legally opposed Japanese domination. After the end of WW2, with the withdrawal of the Japanese Empire from the region, coastal states started to compete with each other to control the unclaimed territories. On September 8, 1951, Japan signed a treaty in San Francisco with Allied power, in which Japan renounces all of its claims, rights, and titles to Spratly and Paracel Islands (Cheng, 1975, p. 275). The Treaty of San Francisco did not specify the status of the islands.

There are no official Chinese maritime boundaries delineating sovereignty over waters that existed in the islands region before the WW2 (Chung, 2019). However, in 1951 PRC started to claim territory in SCS by stating that SCS historically belongs to PRC. Some scholars argue that history plays a significant role in resolving sovereignty disputes by providing evidence for parties to sustain their claims (Tonnesson, 2001, p. 1). However, in the context of the SCS due to the long and complicated colonial domination of the region state's historical claims overlap. For instance, Beijing and Taipei government shares identical historical claims. Former French and British colonies claim overlapping regions. That is why some scholars argue that littoral states' historical claims, including the Chinese U shape line EEZ claim, does not fulfill the historical rationale (Beckman, 2013; United Nations Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea Office of Legal Affairs, 2017, p. 28).

Both Spratly and Paracel consists of islets shoals, sandbanks, rocks, and reefs. The majority of these formations' statues are not enough to declare EEZ. According to UNCLOS Article 121, islands' territorial sea, contiguous zone, and exclusive economic zones are determined, depending on their positions. However, in the rocks and other small islands where human habitation or economic life of locals cannot be sustained, exclusive

economic zone or the continental shelf (United Nations, 2020). UNCLOS also indicates that states cannot declare EEZ's for artificial islands. In the case of the South China Sea dispute, the PRC has been constructing artificial islands and transforming reefs and rocks to islands where human habitation can be formed. For instance, a rocky sandbank transformed into an island seaport with an airstrip within two years (from August 2014 to June 2016) by the Chinese government (The Economist, 2010). Cuarteron, Subi, Mischief, Johnson, Hughes, Gaven, and Fiery Cross Reefs, these seven reefs can be given as an example to the manmade islands in the South China Sea by the Chinese government (Economist, 2014). By generating, enhancing, and forming new island chains, PRC is expanding its existence in the South China Sea and claiming more extensive territories over these islands. These transformations are creating deadlocks in the existing disputes while escalated the existing tensions.



Figure 9 What makes an island?

Source: Hunt, 2016

As shown in the figure above, based on their qualifications, islands' controllers gain different rights. The international law of sea used "the *land determines sea*" principle⁴ as

⁴This principle is stated by ICJ in the 1969 North Sea Continental shelf judgment. The court stated that land territory and maritime areas hold a reciprocal relationship (Papanicolopulu, 2018).

one of its fundamental principles, yet the applicability to this principle to islands is not clear. Also, international regulations do not mention the changes in the rights of the characteristics of islands. By using this legal gap, coastal regional states like PRC tries to create islands out of rock and benefits the EEZ's of these man formed islands, which serves as another serious conflict causing problem in the case of the South China Sea.

In the EEZ's drawn by the coastal states in the South China Sea submerged, rock-islands and low-tide elevations are generally used as an EEZ extension reason, which causes severe and frequent overlapping on the claimed territories. In the figures below, one can clearly see the current occupation status of the unclaimed islands. The figure shows the general occupation status of the submerged, rock-islands and low-tide elevations occupation status in the region.

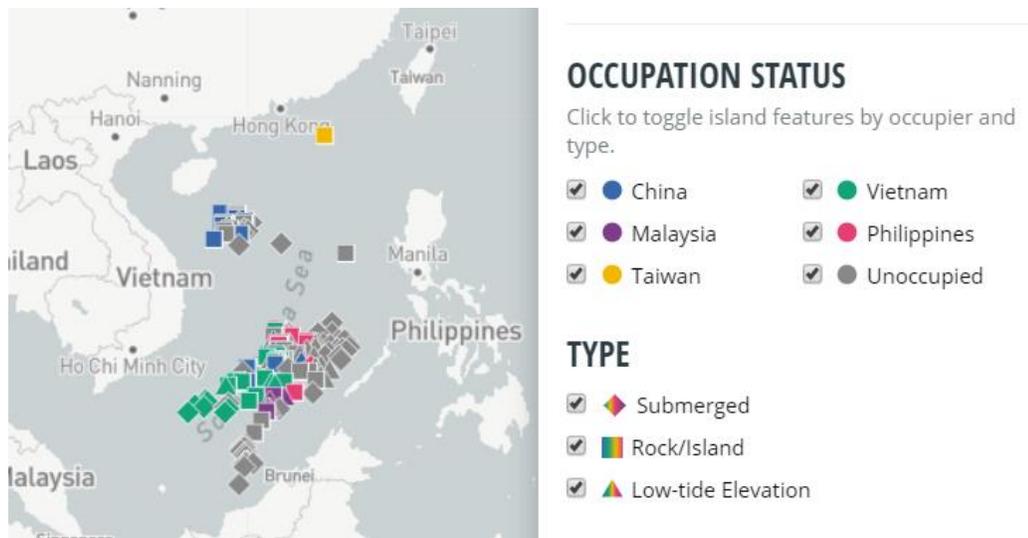


Figure 10 Occupation Status of the Features in the South China Sea

Source: Asia Maritime Transparency Initiative, n.d.

Chinese (blue) Vietnamese (dark green) Malaysian (purple) Philippines (pink) Brunei (yellow) Indonesian (light green) Joint development (grey: Malaysia and Thailand on the left, Malaysia and Brunei on the right) Resource: Initiative, Asia Maritime Transparency

Coastal states tend to use *the common heritage of mankind* principle which indicates that; certain common spaces, like Antarctica, are beyond the national jurisdiction (Franckx, 2010), and *res communis principle* territories which are legally not subjected to any state like high seas can be used by all nations (UN Division for Ocean Affairs and Law of the Sea, 1958) to justify the legality of their activities in the disputed regions.

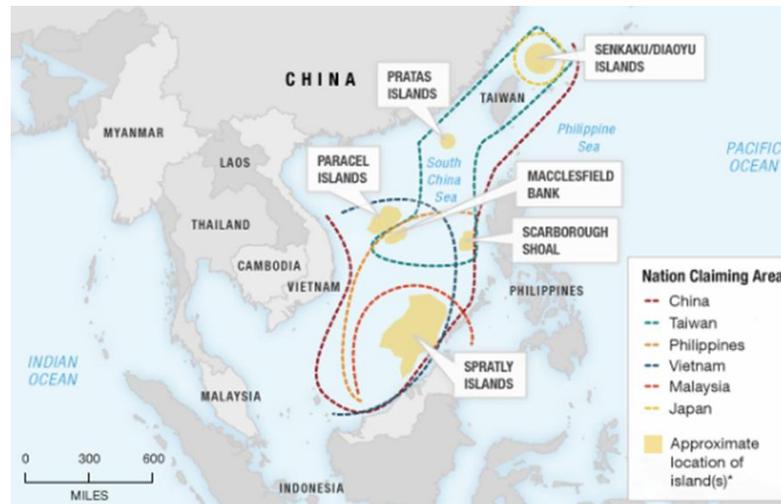


Figure 11 Locations' of Spratlys and Paracels

Source: Asia Maritime Transparency Initiative, n.d.

4.4.1. Spratly Islands

The Spratly Islands' total land area encompasses less than 3 square miles (U.S. Energy Information Administration, 2013). The Spratly sub-archipelago consists of 140 islets (Morton, 2016), shoals, sandbanks, rocks, and reefs. These 230 formations make approximately 38% of the SCS (Çubukçu, 2019, p. 6). Only 33 of these formations constantly remain above the sea level, and 26 of them have the makings of EEZ and C.S. (Çubukçu, 2019, p. 6). According to UNCLOS, less than 40 features of the Spratly sub-archipelago constitute island status (Morton, 2016, p. 917). By the mid-1980s, all features of the Spratly islands were occupied by the regional states. The Philippines occupied the east, Vietnam occupies the west, Taiwan occupied the Itu Aba; meanwhile, southern parts

of the Spratly's were occupied by Malaysia and Brunei (Tonnesson, 2001). However, when Taiwan lost its recognition, the largest island of the Spratly archipelago Itu Aba (*aka* Taiping Dao) was considered as part of PRC, according to the international community. Sovereignty claims over Itu Aba still exist. Brunei claims certain reefs, yet it has not occupied any territory. PRC's EEZ claims overlap with various nations, yet the widest overlapping occurs with Taiwanese claimed EEZ. According to the U.S. government, between 2014 and 2018, the Chinese government reclaimed more than 3 thousand acres in the Spratly islands (Asia Maritime Transparency Initiative, 2020). Economically viable natural gas reserves exist in the surrounding region.



Figure 12 Spratly Archipelago

Source: Torode, and Mogato, 2015

4.4.2. Paracel Islands

Paracel islands consist of 130 small reefs coral formations; approximately 30 of these formations considered as islands. Paracel islands are claimed by PRC, Taiwan, and Vietnam. The biggest island in Paracel archipelago is Woody Island, occupied by China and claimed by Taiwan and Vietnam. Woody Island has a permanent population of more than 1.000 people (BBC, 2016). SCS has been called as "the second Persian Gulf" due to its abundant energy reserves (Bouchat, 2014, p. 7). U.S. Energy Information Administration did not indicate any hydrocarbon reserves in the Paracel archipelago. However, EIA analysis indicates that, based on the geological structure and conventional examples, hydrocarbon reservoirs are more likely to exist in shallow coastal areas (Bouchat, 2014, p. 7). Paracel formations are located and surrounded by deeper waters, which reduces the possibility of exploration of economically feasible hydrocarbon resources. However, researches indicate that Paracel region promises significant NGH reservoirs (Bouchat, 2014, p. 7; Schicun and Nong, 2006; Shicun, 2007).

4.5. China (People's Republic of China)

Since 1949 PRC has been involved in various disputes with its neighbors a total of 23 areas (Fravel, 2016). Although PRC managed to settle most of its disputes via compromised settlements and peaceful negotiations, it still could not solve the majority of its maritime territorial disputes.

The rise of Chinese exports and trade interactions increased Chinese energy demands. Currently, PRC is the second-largest oil consumer after the U (Worldometer, 2020). Apart from its' geostrategic location, SCS contains abundant hydrocarbon resources. Controlling precious energy resources increases the nation's economic, political, and military power significantly. PRC is the most significant actor in the SCS dispute. After China, based on the states' claimed the territory's surface area and the aggression level Vietnam and the Philippines can be considered the second most significant actors. Taiwan, Malaysia, and Brunei remain relatively less aggressive disputants in the SCS.

PRC was the first nation that officially made a territorial declaration in the SCS based on 1953 Cairo and 1946 Potsdam declarations. In 1946 the Chinese government sent four military vessels to the region to protect their claimed islands (Dirmeikis, 2018). A year later, in 1947, PRC published its eleven dashes (also known as U-shaped map) line map. This map is designed based on the Chinese historical claims. According to Chinese archives, Chinese people lived in Spratly and Paracel islands since the Tang and Song Dynasties in the 2nd century (Arslan, 2019, p. 50). Thus Beijing government claims historical rights over these territories. Chinese maps also prove Chinese domination and claims over the island since the 9th century (Arslan, 2019, p. 50). In 1953 Chinese eleven dashes claims revised, and two dashes were transformed into Vietnam (Granados, 2006). Nine dash line covers approximately 80% of the SCS (Dirmeikis, 2018, p. 21). On September 9, 1958, PRC made its first official sovereignty claim in SCS with the Declaration of the Territorial Waters. PRC claimed sovereignty over almost every island in the region with this declaration, which was re-emphasized on February 25, 1992, with the Law on Territorial Water and Borderlands. Beijing government reaffirmed its claims in 1996 in the UNCLOS conference by referring to their previous laws and declarations. However, because of the complex regional dynamics and the portion of the territory claimed by PRC, the applicability of the U-shaped map seems unrealistic.

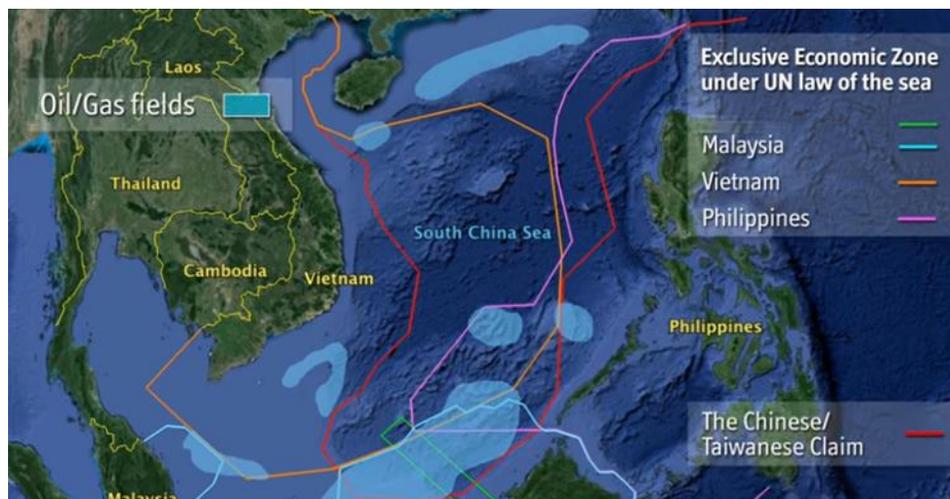


Figure 13 Chinese EEZ Claims: U-Shape EEZ Map

Source: Asia Maritime Transparency Initiative, n.d.

In 1958, PRC issued a statement on the Paracel and Spratly Islands' regional waters, which explicitly stated the Chinese domination (Tonnesson, 2002, p. 168). The Democratic Republic of Vietnam stated that it supports this declaration (Tonnesson, 2002, p. 168). Although PRC's statement did not explicitly mention the islands, Vietnam's support this statement appears to be a legal obstacle to Vietnamese claims in the future. Details of the Vietnam decision of endorsing then opposing Chinese claims will be discussed more detail under the Vietnam section.

States tend to prefer delaying strategy⁵ in controversial regions because it allows states to gain time while continuing their claims until they improve their power. PRC used the delaying strategy until the 1974 military confrontation with Vietnam (Arslan, 2019, p. 53). *Chinese Law of Territorial Sea and the Contiguous Zone* (1992) and *Law on the Exclusive Economic Zone and the Continental Shelf* (1998) intensified the regional conflict by creating the bases of the Beijing government's EEZ claims (Swarup and De Gurung, 2018, p. 7). After the end of WW2, the Chinese navy was not strong enough to assert its' territorial claims (Swarup and De Gurung, 2018).

In the 1970s, PRC started offshore oil exploration, in the past decades PRC and Vietnam issued oil exploration licenses in their claimed regions to secure their maritime claims. Overlapping in the license issued territory intensifies the tension among the nations. After the Oil crisis in 1973, the importance of hydrocarbon resources significantly increased and started global resource competition (Charney, 1999). The first significant escalation in SCS occurred in 1974 when PRC confront with Vietnam and forcibly took control of the Paracel Islands and the Spratly Islands. Both sides had lost troops, but Vietnam had more fatalities in compare to PRC. In 1986 Vietnamese first successful batch of crude oil production in the Bach Ho field caused the reescalation of the territorial competition between China and Vietnam (Swarup and De Gurung, 2018, p. 5). In 1992 PRC adopted

⁵ Delaying strategy allows states' to gain time while maintaining its' claim over a territory. States can invest in their military capabilities or tries strengthening their soft power in the international arena to reach their goals if a state believes that by not settling the dispute in the given time, it can receive better payoffs than a state will be more likely to adopt delaying strategy. This strategy allows states' to expand their relative power. When a nation becomes powerful than its opponent, it can use its' power to force its opponent to compromise. Thus it can increase its relative gains by delaying the settlement of a dispute.

new laws and regulations for the exploration of sea sources to an area claimed by Vietnam. In 1996 the Vietnamese government issued oil exploration concession for the same region. Due to the region's oil potential, tension intensified among the coastal states (Tonnesson, 2001, p. 21).

In the 1990s, Chinese-Philippian tension started to be more apparent in the region. After the hydrocarbon reserves discovery around the Kala'ya Islands in order to stop the Philippian expansion in the Spratly formations on February 8, 1995, by sending eight military vessels Chinese government invaded Mischief Reef (located on the eastern parts of the Spratly's) which was claimed by the Philippines (Meyer, 1996). In the same year, to maintain control of the island, PRC built non-complex structures (Rae, 2014, p. 97). Regional tension still exists and gradually increases in the SCS. PLAN's increasing power allowing the Beijing government to act more aggressively. For instance, to protect its' claimed territory in April 2012, the Philippian government send its warships and arrest Chinese fishermen who were fishing in their claimed territory (BBC News, 2012). As a response, PRC took control of the Shoal Scarborough Shoal, which falls under the Philippian EEZ (Mangosing, 2019). In 2020 Beijing government deployed coastguards to Scarborough Shoal and constructed an artificial island (Long, 2020). Even though Scarborough Shoal does not fall under Spratly archipelago, this incident indicates the Chinese aggression in the region.

In 2007, after the 19th National Congress of the Chinese Communist Party, PRC adopted a *united front strategy*. This strategy aims to weaken the enemy by limiting the number of alliances and supports that it receives. As a part of this strategy, PRC persuaded many countries not to recognize the Taipei Government. Currently⁶ 14 out of 193 UN member states recognize Taiwan as a sovereign state (O'Connor, 2019). Under the *One China Policy*, statues of Taiwan become problematic. In certain studies, Taiwanese territories in the SCS are considered Beijing's territory. Since Taiwan lost its' international recognition as a sovereign, powerful state and considered as a part of PRC by various nations,' China

⁶14 Countries that recognize Taiwan as a sovereign nation are: Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Tuvalu, Belize, Guatemala, Eswatini, Honduras, Haiti, the Marshall Islands, Paraguay, Nauru, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Nicaragua, Palau, and Saint Lucia. The Holy See also recognizes the legitimacy of the Taipei government.

can use Taiwan's status to exploit the natural resources that fall around the islands claimed or controlled by the Taiwanese government.

Different interpretations and applications of UNCLOS Article 121, is another factor that affects maritime disputes. The interpretive gap of the islands' status has a significant effect on the duration of the SCS conflict (Heydarian and Liberum, 2018, p. 289). Some nations like Taiwan and PRC claim that Spratly and Paracel formations consist of islands that can have EEZ; meanwhile, other nations like the Philippines and Malaysia argue that these rocky formations cannot be considered as islands (Heydarian, 2018, p. 290). The government cannot have an EEZ. These formations should not affect coastal states' EEZ declarations. Over the years, various note verbales have been issued by the disputant states regarding the status of Spratly and Paracel formations (Government of China, 2019). On March 30, 2020 Vietnam issued a note verbale to reject PRC's territorial expansion declarations and any regional claims which exceeds the limits provided by UNCLOS (Diep, 2020). In the note verbale, Vietnam explicitly focuses on Spratly and Paracel formations and their status which can be given as an example to previous note verbales' issued by other coastal states.

On November 4, 2002, the *Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea* was signed among disputant ASEAN states and PRC (ASEAN, 2002). Declaration aims to promote the peaceful, cooperative, and friendly environment in the region. Three out of ten clauses (1st, 3rd, and 4th) state that signatories should act according to UNCLOS regulations. Although this agreement seems as a cooperation promoter, it only presents nations' *goodwill*. This declaration has no formal binding; if a state violates the agreements, there will be an implementation of deterrent consequences. Although declaration indicates cooperation on maritime protection, navigation and communication safety, and scientific research, it does not provide a solution to the share of hydrocarbon or fishery resources in the disputed territories. Also, increasing military existence of the disputant states in the SCS under the name of securing the region and protecting the maritime safety created unrest among the disputant states. In addition to that, littoral states' interpretations of UNCLOS regarding the status of the island can be counted among the reasons why the conflict cannot be solved. Therefore it would be unrealistic to expect any

affirmative results from 1st, 3rd, and 4th clauses. There are various other multilateral and bilateral declarations that exist in the context of SCS. Even though some of them achieve to promote cooperation to a certain extent in general, they remain incapable of settling the regional tensions.

PRC used to try to avoid military confrontations in the SCS. In the 2000s, China appeared as a risk-taker nation that does not fear to engage in military confrontations with other disputants. PRC has always tried to occupy the most strategic locations for controlling the naval routes and maritime resources. By expanding its claimed territory and improving its military capabilities in these regions, the Beijing government tries to gain regional dominance. In 2013 balance of power in the Spratlys' shifted as a result of the Beijing government's island construction activities. PRC occupied the Fiery Cross Reef in 1988, which is currently considered one of the largest landmass in Spratly (Himmelman, 2020). PRC made 2.74 square kilometers expansion to Fiery Cross Reef in 2014. Expansions made reef to become large enough to contain tankers, warships, and a 63-hectare harbor, in addition to 3.100 meters long airstrip (Vuving, 2016). These expansions made Fiery Cross Reefs six-times larger than Itu Aba Island, which was the most significant natural island among the Spratly formations (Vuving, 2016). In the 1990s, this reef was used as a command center for maritime operations.

Over time PRC became a more aggressive player in the South China Sea; several islands were gradually militarized by the Beijing government (Santoro, 2019). Some scholars define PRC's strategy in the PRC Sea as *gray-zone* or *salami-slicing (aka divide and conquer)* strategy (Santoro, 2019). Maj. Gen. Zhang Zhaozhong of PRC's People's Liberation Army (PLA) stated their strategy as *cabbage strategy*, "by using its coast guard ships, naval ships and fishing boats Chinese government is surrounding, in some cases even occupying, these islands" (Santoro, 2019). Adopting these strategies helped PRC to increase its military presence and economic control in the South China Sea. Currently, none of the coastal states' navy is strong enough to venture, confronting with the PLAN. By establishing small coastguard stations' and lighthouses to its' controlled islands, the Beijing government preparing a legal basis to claim its' sovereignty over these islands. According to UNCLOS, islands that contain human habitations can declare EEZ. By

changing the status of the rocky formations, China can access larger hydrocarbon resources.

In territorial disputes, hydrocarbon resources serve as a conflict escalator factor (Tonnesson, 2002; Arslan, 2019; Smith, 2010). By transforming islets and rocky islands to the islands where human habitation can exist, PRC may aim to expand its' EEZ. Even if expansionist construction on the rock formations and building artificial islands does not provide EEZ to China, they can be used to provide logistic support to offshore drilling activities. Furthermore, via troops and coastguards located in these islands, the Beijing government can provide the security of the drilling platforms (International Crisis Group, 2016, p. 3).

1944 Convention on International Civil Aviation Law allows states to expand their sovereignty over territorial airspace; however, this space cannot extend their EEZ (Chicago Convention, 1944). By declaring the Air Defense Identification Zone, PRC hopes to provide sufficient bases for its future territorial declaration. Implementation of ADIZ can cause problems in the near future by threatening states' right to safe passage. In 2013 the Chinese Ministry of Defense indicated that the Beijing government would establish ADIZ in the Spratly, Paracel, and Pratas region (Times of India, 2020). In 2014 and 2015, Chinese island-building activities accelerated. Beijing government built military bases on these artificial or extended islands. PRC's actions are gradually increasing its presence in the South China Sea by changing the status-quo towards Beijing's favor. Beijing governments' actions are not vivid enough to justify a war, but its actions like militarizing islands that were claimed to be never militarized keep the insensitivity of the disputes (Santoro, 2019).

4.6. Taiwan (The Republic of China)

Until the end of WW2, Taiwan was the colonial state of the Japanese empire. After 1945, the ROC established in 1912 began exercising its jurisdiction over Taiwan (Government of the Republic of China (Taiwan), 2018). In 1949 Taiwan declared its' independence. Taiwan was among the founding members of the United Nations and recognized by

various states. Throughout the time, with the strengthening of PRC, the number of nations that recognize Taiwan started to decrease. In 1971 Taiwan was withdrawn from the U.N., and its' seat was replaced by PRC (BBC News, 2019). The position of Taiwan is not explicitly analyzed in contemporary SCS dispute studies because the majority of the international actors consider Taiwan as not a sovereign entity.

Taiwan was the first nation that occupied territory within Spratlys, including the significant islands like the Pratas Island (Dongsha Island), which is located 200 km southwest of Hong Kong. In addition to 500 islets (Jennings, 2018). In early 1992 Taiwanese Ministry of National Defense declared a 24 nm restricted sea 30 nm restricted air zone around the Taipei controlled regions (Lin, 1997, p. 325). In 1995, a result of Vietnamese violation of Taiwanese claimed maritime zone warning shots were fired (Lin, 1997, p. 325). Apart from such low-scale territory protection attempts, ROC was not engaged in military confrontations with other coastal states like other disputant actors.

Due to its economic and military capabilities and recognition limitations, ROC seems to be the most open disputant to the reconciliation in the region. ROC was excluded from the tripartite regional maritime cooperation agreement signed by Vietnam, the Philippines, and PRC in 2005 (Song, 2013). In order to be included in regional interactions, Taiwan introduced Spratly Initiative. The first clause aims to the promotion of regional cooperation. Whereas, *the* second clause of this initiative aims to prevent other disputant states control of Taiwanese claimed maritime recourses, including the hydrocarbon reserves (Song, 2013, p. 5). ROC avoids provoking ASEAN or Chinese disputants, yet it still defends its' claims.

Apart from that since 1990, nineteen Workshops conducted on Managing Potential Conflicts in the South China Sea and ROC were excluded in these workshops due to Beijing's *One China Principle* (Song, 2010). In the nineteenth workshop, in November 2008, Taiwan was invited as a participant. Taiwanese alignment with U.S. and military aid provided by the U.S. American government to the Taiwanese government's renovation during the Obama administration caused deterioration of Chinese Taiwanese relations (Turan, 2016).

4.7. The Philippines

The Philippines was ruled as Spanish, American, and Japanese control as a colonial state until July 4, 1946 (Herrera, 2012). The Philippines' first sovereignty claim on the Spratly Islands was submitted to the United Nations in 1946. In 1956 by referring to *res nullius* (empty property) concept and geographical proximity, the Philippines claimed the full sovereignty of the specific parts of the Spratly (Rae, 2014, p. 96; Zhao, 2012, p. 59).

In 1947 a Philippine Citizen Tomas Cloma discovered unsettled semi-island semi-islet formations, the *Kalaya'an Group Islands* within Spratly formations (Zhao, 2012, p. 59). Even though islands had Taiwanese flags in 1956, Cloma sailed to these islands with his friends and, by creating permanent landmarks, declared his sovereign territory. In 1978 formal declaration of the control of the KGI was made by President Ferdinand Marcos (Rowan, 2005, p. 421). Since then, this territory has been included in the administrative jurisdiction of the Province of Palawan (Ortuoste, 2013). None of the littoral states' opposed the Philippine settlement to KGI until the 1970s, till the region's potential of hydrocarbon reserves came to their attention.

In 1971, to ensure its presence in the region Philippine government conducted offshore drilling activities on the north-east of the Spratly archipelago in the ReedBank area. During the Marcos administration, The Philippines started to occupy certain rocks, islands, and reefs in the SCS. In 1970 Manila government send troops for taking possession of certain islands in Spratly. Chinese overlapping claims prevent the Philippines' expansion in the region. As a newly established sovereign state, the Philippine economic and military capacity was not sufficient for confronting China. Capacity-wise Beijing government was more powerful than the Manila government; therefore, any military confrontation would harm the Philippines more than PRC. Therefore the Manila government could not insist on its' regional demands, yet they did not withdraw their demands. Over the decades, the Philippine economy and military capacities gradually increased. Nonetheless, China's economic and military rise was superior to Philippine empowerment, which was perceived as a potential threat to the Philippines. Hence, the Manila government decelerate its expansionist actions in the SCS. Moreover, in 1975

diplomatic relations with China established (Baker, 2004). However, because of the Taiwan's status and disagreements on the SCS, Sino-Philippine relations deteriorated in the 1980s (Baker, 2004). In the 1990s, PRC and the Philippines military were confronted on five separate occasions for the control of the ReedBank region (Hendler, 2018).

After the end of the Cold War, in 1992 American government shut down all of its military bases (Clark Airbase and Subic Bay naval base) in the Philippines and stopped providing economic and military aid to the Manila government. (Sanger, 1991) Withdrawal of American aid caused the Manila government to reconsider its actions in the region. In 1995 Sino-Philippines relations intensified when the Philippine officials noticed Chinese military base construction on the Mischief Reefs, which is located 135 miles west of the Palawan Island claimed by the Philippines (Baker, 2004). In 1996, to secure itself Manila government started to conduct negotiation talks with the U.S. for drafting the Visitors Forces Agreement. This agreement would allow U.S. troops to deploy and conduct joint military exercises with the Philippines in Philippian waters. Agreement ratified in 1999 and the first joint military exercise conducted in 2000. With the increasing Chinese dominance in the SCS to secure its interest, the development of the Cooperative Security Locations (CSL) depend. CSLs are heavily infrastructured American military bases that can accommodate large troops within allied nations' (Philippines) military facilities (Castro, 2009, p. 415). To protect its national interest in the Spratly region, the Manila government tried to internationalize the Spratly dispute by carrying the issue to U.N. and ASEAN Regional Forum while maintaining its diplomatic interactions with the Beijing government (Baker, 2004).

In 2004, the Philippine National Petroleum Company and the China National Open Seas Petroleum Company signed an agreement (The Joint Maritime Seismic Understanding) to conduct joint seismic studies in the South China Sea. In 2005 Vietnam joined seismic researches due to its overlapping territorial claims. The cooperation lasted until 2008 (International Crisi Group, 2016). Disputants have different motives while signing the agreement, yet their main goal was the same. Beijing government tried to portray a less aggressive and more cooperative state in the international arena to avoid sanctions. On the other hand, the Manila government economically incapable of conducting seismic

reserves on its claimed territory. Conducting researches in the region strengthen states' territorial claims. By not opposing their seismic researches, disputant states technically ipso facto recognized the legality of the claims.

China and the Philippines issued various note verbale as a response to each other's expansionist actions in the disputed territory (Thang and Thao, 2012). In 2013 oil resources were discovered around the Kalaya'an Group Islands, which increased the tension in the region (Ortuoste, 2013, p. 248). Chinese claims in the Spratly and Paracels intensified after the vast offshore oil and gas deposits (Tonnenson, 2000, p. 202). After discovering hydrocarbon reserves, the Manila government applied to The Hague Tribunal to oppose Chinese claims in Kalaya'an Region (Pekcan, 2017, p. 65). Court's decision indicated that Chinese actions and claims had no legal bases, yet China rejected tribunal's arguments (Pertez, 2016). In 2020 Manila government still demands the Beijing government comply with the courts decision (Heydarian, 2020). Currently, 500 people live in Kalaya'an Group of islands (Umali, 2019). The status of the island is still problematic. Currently, the Philippines does not claim the main landmass in Spratly; it claims eight islets (Rowan, 2005, p. 421). The Philippian government argues that these islets are adjacent to the Philippines mainland. Moreover, due to their locations and settled human habitation, these semi-island semi-islet formations are strategically and economically crucial for the Philippines. In 2020 experts indicate that the U.S. navy exists in the SCS contributing conflict (Euronews, 2020).

4.8. Vietnam

Before 1975 Vietnam was divided into North and South Vietnam. South Vietnam's (Republic of Vietnam) claims over SCS was different from North Vietnam's claims. In 1975 after the victory of North Vietnam, North and South Vietnam unified under the Democratic Republic of Vietnam. Until the unification, North Vietnam avoided military confrontations with China by recognizing Chinese sovereignty in SCS. Therefore when PRC issued a declaration on its territorial sea on September 4, 1958, and claimed its sovereignty in Xisha and Nasha groups (Chinese names of Paracels and Spratlys) the

Democratic Republic of Vietnam recognized and supported Chinese declaration (on September 14, 1958) (Furtado, 1999).

Republic of Vietnam's sovereignty claims on both the Spratly and the Paracel formations are based on a historical claim dating back to the 17th century. In the 1951 San Francisco Peace Conference, Republic of Vietnam declared its sovereignty over Hoang Sa and Truong Sa (Vietnamese names of Paracel and Spratly islands) (Chang, 1991, p. 401). On July 31, 1971, the Vietnamese government published the *Declaration on the Sovereignty of the Republic of Vietnam over the Archipelagos of Paracels and Spratly*. On January 19 and 20, 1974, Vietnamese troops invaded six of the fifteen major Paracel Islands (Chang, 1991, p. 416). As a response, the Taiwanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs issues series of diplomatic protests (on January 25, August 9, August 27 and December 26, 1973) (Chang, 1991, p. 412). In addition to that, PRC sent its troops to the Paracel to force Vietnamese forces to withdraw from the region. Despite the military confrontations, until the Republic of Vietnam's collapse, the Vietnamese administration was not compromised (Tonnesson, 2000, p. 202-203).

After the Vietnamese unification Democratic Republic of Vietnam claimed the ownership of the maritime territories claimed by the former Republic of Vietnam. This declaration caused deterioration in Sino-Vietnam affairs between 1975 and 1979. Diplomatic deterioration was followed by the Sino-Vietnamese war in 1979 (Reilly, 2017). Territorial disputes continued in the 1980s. Apart from the 1979 territorial invasion, the second significant territorial conflict occurred in Spratly formations in 1988 (Tonnesson, 2002). During the maritime disputes, PRC was allied with the U.S. and some ASEAN states, whereas USSR's navy supported Vietnam. After the end of the Cold War with the dissolution of the USSR and the closure of American military bases in the Philippines, tension in the SCS was reduced until the 2000s (Tonnesson, 2002).

Towards the end of the 1990s, Sino-Vietnamese relations normalized. On the contrary, in the early 2000s, Vietnamese existence in the Spratly islands gradually increased. Currently, Vietnam holds the second expansive claim in the Spratly and Paracel formations after the PRC. Vietnam is making a similar irredentist argument to access an estimated 4.4 billion barrels of proven oil and nearly 24.7 trillion cubic feet proven natural

gas reserves in SCS (Stout, 2014). Since 2010 Vietnam's oil refinery capacity is increasing; on the contrary, its oil production is gradually decreasing (Tran, 2019, p. 211). Vietnamese proven gas reserves rapidly increase in 2016 (Tran, 2019, p. 211). However, on March 22, 2017 EIA indicated that half of these natural gas reserves were located in the northern deepwater areas of the Paracels, in the Song Hong Basin (Tran, 2019, p. 211). Vietnamese state-owned energy company PetroVietnam was conducting exploratory researches on its claimed blocks while Vietnamese navy was sailing around the PetroVietnam's drilling ships with 40 vessels to maintain their security. However, due to the rise of tension and Chinese pressure in the SCS Vietnam was forced to cancel its contracts (ARCHYDE, 2020). First in July 2017, then on March 22, 2018, Vietnam had to stop its exploration drillings in disputed blocks 135-136/03 and 07/03 (Hayton, 2020). If Vietnam can be able to control these hydrocarbon reserves, it can significantly improve its' economy. However, in the given conditions, due to the existence of a stronger disputant in the conflict, Vietnam cannot afford to confront China.

4.9. Malaysia

Federation of Malaya declared its independence on August 31, 1957, and joined commonwealth nations. In 1963 federation was re-named as Malaysia Federation. Malaysia had geographically separated two mainlands and consists of one federal territory and 13 federal states (Roach, 2014). Malaysian territory is separated into two Peninsular Malaysia and East Malaysia by 640 miles of SCS (Roach, 2014). In 1979 Malaysia declared its CS, which included seven formations in Spratly archipelago. Like the fifth, and last, claimer state Malaysia announced its' claims by publishing a map in 1979 (Roach, 2014).

One of Malaysian claimed islet is occupied by the Philippines (Commodore Reef/Rizal Reef) and two (Amboyna Cay and Barque Canada Reef) occupied by Vietnam. Malaysia occupied and constructed mini naval stations on the remaining four islets between 1983 and 1986 (Pao-Min, 1990, p. 24). Malaysian occupations created *fait accompli*. To inhibit further expansions, PLAN enhanced its' capabilities and presence in the Spratlys and prevented Malaysian expansion. Instead of using military power to pursue its' goals,

Malaysia issued a joint continental shelf extension declaration to the U.N. with Vietnam in 2009. A decade later, on December 12, 2019, Malaysia made another submission to the U.N. to extend its continental shelf (Thao, 2019). Both of these submissions were protested by the Beijing government via diplomatic notes. Expansion claims extended the total area of the disputed territory.

Malaysian and Vietnamese economies heavily rely on oil exports from the SCS (International Crisi Group, 2016, p. 2). Therefore, gaining control of hydrocarbon resources significantly important for Malaysian economic development. Malaysian claimed hydrocarbon blocks overlap with Chinese claimed blocks and contradict Brunei's claimed blocks, Block K and J (Buszynski and Sazlan, 2007, p.163). Nevertheless, the major confrontations that occur in the Chinese claimed blocks. Apart from the historical intentions since mid-April 2020, Malaysian drilling ships in Arapaima-1 in Block ND1 and Lala-1 in Block ND2 are confronting PLAN (Evans, 2020). The arrival of the Chinese navy and drilling vessels to Malaysian claimed territory, which falls under the U-shaped line, intensified the region's tension. AMTI stated that: "Southeast Asian governments and commercial operators will have to come to grips with the reality that new oil and gas exploration anywhere in the South China Sea without Beijing's permission will probably face the same level of high-risk intimidation" (Acosta, 2020).

4.10. Brunei Darussalam

Brunei has no claim over anywhere on the Spratly formations; it did not occupy or stationed troops in the Spratlys (Rowan, 2005, p. 419). However, in 1988 Brunei declared the expansion of its C.Z. to 350nm (Arslan, 2019, p. 69). Since Brunei's claimed C.Z. includes Spratly formations, Brunei is considered as a part of Spratly territorial dispute (Roach, 2014). With Brunei's claim of 200nm EEZ Louisa Reef, Owen Shoal and Rifleman Bank fall into Brunei's claimed territory (Hart, 2018). Brunei historically was not an aggressive or demanding actor in the SCS dispute.

Hydrocarbons consists important part of Brunei's economy. More than 95% of Brunei's exports and over 60% of its GDP consisted of the oil and gas sector. According to the

researchers conducted by U.S. Energy Information Administration and British Petroleum, Brunei holds 1,100,000,000 barrels of oil, which consists of 0.07% share of world reserves (Worldometer, 2020). Due to Brunei's location and its offshore reserves, it can be assumed that the likelihood of exploration hydrocarbon reserves on the territory claimed by Brunei and PRC is significant (Shell, 2015). Thus, PRC's possibility of abandoning its claims is unlikely, except for issuing statements to continue its' claims on the Spratly region (Ministry of Foreign Affairs Brunei Darussalam, 2020). Bandar Seri Begawan government is not showing any military presence or aggressive actions in the region.

4.11. Theoretical Analysis of States' Actions in the South China Sea

There is no consensus on the cause of states' motives in the South China Sea conflicts. Some scholars argue that states' main motives are more security-driven; some claim that the demand for controlling hydrocarbon resources mostly causes their actions. In light of the arguments made by various scholars, one should not distinguish states' security concerns and their desire to control hydrocarbon reserves. When a state imports energy from other nations, it becomes dependent on these buyers. In addition to energy security concerns, they spend a certain percentage of their budget on energy imports. If a state expands its energy resources, even if its energy consumption gradually decreases, it can still use that energy to meet its own energy needs or export its surplus. In either case, controlling energy resources makes states stronger (Umbach, 2017).

China has always been an aggressive and powerful actor compared to the other disputant coastal states in SCS. Due to the superiority of PLAN, disputant ASEAN nations choose to invest in their military capacities instead of giving the priority to the use of diplomatic channels (Gallagher, 1994). Exploration of hydrocarbon reserves in the region intensified the existing conflict by reducing the actors' comprising possibilities to settle the dispute. States are seeking their national interests before making any move in the region, which is eliminating the states' possibility of compromising for settling the dispute (Tonnesson, 2001, p. 24) in the given environment.

Mearsheimer argues that competition leads states to try to establish hegemony by dominating their region and eliminate the rise of a potential rival great power as a competitor in their region (Toft, 2005). In accordance with the offensive realist perspective, PRC tries to become a regional hegemon in its region. As a nation that shares borders with powerful states like Russia and Japan, in order to reach its goal, PRC has to ensure its domination in Southeast Asia. Without securing its position in SCS, PRC will be more likely to avoid engaging hard power competition with Japan or Russia.

Moreover, regional states' insecurities motivating them to seek stronger alliances. The Philippines' rapprochement to the U.S. can be given as an example. Increasing presence of another stronger nation in its' claimed territory causing the Beijing government to invest more in its' military capabilities and increase its' military presence in the region, which is intensifying the existing tensions by creating a security dilemma (Tang, 2009).

Apart from increasing a nation's resources, gaining control of territory allows that nation to increase its' military existence in the region (Carter, 2010). Thus it improves the state's military position against its opponent. When a challenger state faces a strong opponent, its' likelihood of using military force decreases. Vietnamese decision to stopping drilling activities in the disputed block because of the Chinese pressure can be given as an example. Economically valuable resources increase the likelihood of militarization in the conflict (Carter, 2010). Increased tension in the Kalay'an Islands after the exploration of hydrocarbon potentials supports this theory.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

The territory has always played significant importance in international relations. Historically various intra and interstate disputes occurred over the control of a territory. In the current system, the number of maritime boundary delimitations started to increase. To expand their power, states are competing with each other for domination maritime territories'.

With technological advancements and economic improvements in the 21st century, energy sources have become a more important factor in international relations by shaping states' interactions and affecting their security. The scarcity of certain energy resources, hydrocarbons, increased competition among the nations. Exploration of hydrocarbon resources in the unclaimed maritime territories motivated states to be more demanding to gain control of these regions. By using these abundant resources, energy-dependent nations can reduce their dependency on energy exporter states. On the contrary, if energy exporter states can control these regions, they can expand their influence and power on the energy importer states.

Most of the recent controversy in the Eastern Mediterranean and the South China Sea was triggered by the coastal states' demands to exercise their claimed sovereign rights, specifically their rights to explore and extract hydrocarbon resources. International maritime laws and regulations allow coastal states to have particular sovereign rights over the areas of sea adjacent to their territories. This includes internal waters (IW), continental shelves (CS), territorial seas (TS), and exclusive economic zones (EEZ). Coastal states have to declare EEZ to extend their right to benefit from the maritime resource out of their TS. This expansion allows littoral states' to use their sovereign rights in order to explore and exploit living and non-living maritime resources, subsoil, and seabed. According to

the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), Article 57 states can extend their EEZ's up to 200 nautical miles from their coasts. The right to an EEZ has to be claimed by a state and approved by the other second or third party states by agreements. Without the approval of neighboring, boarder sharing states, none of the state's EEZ declaration can gain a legal, international validity. In semi-enclosed or enclosed seas' because of the geographical limitations, coastal states' claimed territories overlap and creates maritime boundary delimitations. According to some scholars' existence of abundant natural resources in disputed regions serves as a conflict setting factor by motivating disputants to adopt cooperative policies. They claim that settling the disputes allows disputants' to access and allowing them to benefit from resources sooner. However, recent discoveries in the EMS and natural gas hydrate exploration researches in the SCS indicate that regions' may contain further potential undiscovered hydrocarbon reserves. Thus settling the existing dispute can harm disputant states' benefits in the long run by causing them to compromise from a resource-rich basin. Therefore in the selected cases, by intensifying the existing maritime boundary delimitations abundance, natural resources serve as a conflict triggering factor.

Discoveries of hydrocarbon resources in the disputed regions do not promote cooperation among the disputed parties. In such systems, instead of promoting political approachment, resources escalates the degree of the conflict. States forms alliances to balance other states' powers or to minimize the risk of threat. In general, these alliances are established based on expected gain calculations. This means in order to balance threats, states try to contain their existed alliances while trying to expand the number of their supporters. In bipolar, unipolar, and multipolar systems, state alliances preferences show alteration. In bipolar and multipolar systems, the more influential the state becomes, the likelihood of other nations to be side, align, with it increases. Based on the same logic, if a state's relative power declines, its allies' likelihood of drifting apart from their established alignment increases. Regional politics generates different sub-systems within global politics. The structure of the system affects states' choice of actions by contributing their expected relative gains and losses. States' alliances' preferences may also change due to their interactions with other states or superpowers. In the context of Eastern Mediterranean

alignment, the way states perceive each other plays a crucial role. Causes and effects can be subrogating each other's position.

States try to create and preserve a strong but benignant image in the international area. Escalating or triggering the use of force over the disputed islands harms states benignant images. Thus to avoid the occurrence of an aggressive state image, states tend not to engage in actions that significantly change the existed status-quo within a short span of time. Until the mid-2010s, disputants' states in SCS and EMS were less aggressive; they were issuing more note verbale and depending less on their military capabilities. However, after the recent hydrocarbon reserve explorations, disputant states, especially Turkey and China, started to depend more on gunboat diplomacy, yet their motivations were different. By enhancing its' military existence in the disputed maritime zones, Turkey aims to present itself as a strong actor against GASC-Greco-Egyptian-Israeli alignment. If Turkey could form alignments with internationally recognized, sovereign, and strong nations in the region, then the Ankara government could adopt less hard power-based, policies. Turkey is the only sovereign and internationally recognized nation among its allies. That is why to protect its' claims, in the existence of regional and non-regional allies, Turkey relies on its navy, as a deterrent power. Nevertheless, expanding Turkish military existence in the region, causing its' opponents to unite more against Turkey and invest in their military capabilities. Hence, its' creating a security dilemma in the region.

When a state highly values a territory (for symbolic, strategic or economic reasons) then it might adopt a delaying strategy over the dispute by thinking that waiting and holding out for the best possible deal instead of bargaining and compromising would profit the state more in the long run (Fravel, 2011). In the SCS and EMS cases, disputants mostly use delaying strategy. For the weaker states, in the current power dynamics, settling the dispute will harm their benefits by forcing them to compromise more. Meanwhile, powerful states' believes that by expanding their power, they can force weaker disputant states' to compromise more or even give up on their territorial claims.

States' aggregate power affects their position in interstate affairs. State's resources (military capabilities, population, technology, and industrial power), as well as its actions in the international arena, determines the degree of the potential threat it poses to its environment. Against an aggregate power, proximate threats can either decide to choose balance or a bandwagon to secure their selves. Thus it determines the dynamics of the regional blocks. Even though regional (aka sub-systems) do not contain a hegemon, the existence of hegemon's support changes the regional alliance dynamics. In each system, in the absence of an international superpower, at least one state falls into the category of aggregate power holding actor. Getting the support of a hegemon or great-powers can change the states' aggregate power capacities. This means howbeit, superpower, or hegemon does not directly involve in sub-system interactions, and it can directly influence the alliances' preferences of the states.

In the case of Eastern Mediterranean and the South China Sea maritime boundary delimitations existed before the exploration of hydrocarbon reserves in the disputed territory. After the exploration of energy reserves, the number of *note verbales* issues by littoral states to each other action increased. Withal the number of disputant nations' leaders' press releases regarding to maritime boundary delimitations, after the exploration of hydrocarbon resources increased. Besides the press releases tones became more aggressive. Moreover, especially in the last half-decade disputant nations' military existence in the conflicted region expanded. All of these factors indicate the conflict escalating role of hydrocarbon reserves in the maritime boundary delimitation zones.

5.1. Implications and Policy Recommendations

Territorial disputes serve as a deterrent factor over regional cooperation. According to UNCLOS, apart from their internal waters, states cannot declare full sovereignty over their maritime territory. In comparison to exercisable sovereignty rights in land-based territories, states' sovereign rights over their maritime territories is weaker. Coastal states are expected to allow other nations to benefit from the sea by authorizing them to exercise their freedom of passage and transit rights. To gain the upper hand, conflicted parties or

their allies can choose to sail their vessels on or around the conflicted waters, which exacerbates the maritime territorial disputes. In the case of SCS, because of maritime piracy, non-regional actors could support the PLAN's increasing power in the region to an extent. In the existence of PLAN's patrol merchant vessels the likelihood of an attack in the international waters is less likely. However, increasing the presence of PLAN and expanding military base constructions on the disputed islands in the SCS pushing other coastal states to form closer relations with the US. If China wants to reduce US presence in the region, instead of using gunboat diplomacy, it should rely more on diplomatic channels. For instance, it can start adopting necessary changes indicated in the ASEAN Code of Conduct⁷ to reduce the tension in the region.

In general, alliances are accepted as a possible state response to a threat. Both Balance of Power and Balance of Threat theories support this argument. Depending on the system's nature, states either choose to balance bandwagon or buck-passing. In a system that states' hold equivalent military capabilities, they will be more likely to choose a balancing strategy. In the Eastern Mediterranean Sea dispute, disputant states choose balancing strategy by forming regional and international alignments. Formation of Greek-GASC-Egyptian-Israeli and Turkish-TRNC-GNA blocks can be given as an example of balancing strategy. To gain the upper-hand, states' that choose will constantly be in search of new alliances. In the existence of third parties like French and US support to Greek-GASC-Egyptian and Israeli block, Turkey has to form new alliances while continuing to investing in its military capabilities.

If the sum of the states' capabilities cannot balance the aggressor's capabilities than balancing strategy will not be enough to create a deterrent effect to stop the aggressor's actions. In such systems, ' weaker states can choose to form alignments with the powerful-aggressor state, by doing so weaker states creates a deterrent power against other powerful

⁷ ASEAN issued a Code of Conduct in order to settle the existing conflict in South China Sea in 1992 and endorsed it in 1996. Between 2002-2005 China also participated the drafting process of the code of conduct and the non-binding 'Declaration of Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea' is issued. However, declaration did not adopted until 2011. Despite the conduct, since 2009 tension in the SCS is gradually increasing (Asia MaritimeTransparency Initiative, n.d.).

states which appear as a potential threat in the future. This strategy is called bandwagoning. In bandwagoning, weaker states' accept the dominance or the superiority of challenger, hegemon (Walt, 1985, p.14). North Vietnam's (Democratic Republic of Vietnam) relations with China can be given as an example to bandwagoning. In the current regional dynamics, weaker states' likelihood of choosing bandwagoning extremely low. In such systems like SCS, weaker states tend to choose buck-passing by aligning another stronger state. In that respect, alignments in SCS, like US-Philippian and Taiwan-US alignment, can be given as an example to buck-passing type alignments'. Weaker coastal states aim to establish alignment with a powerful state like the US, against a proximate threat like China, to secure their interests by increasing military confrontation costs for China. In buck-passing, weaker states rely on another strong state to prevent their likelihood of an attack. Regardless of the type of alignment strategy, by increasing the cost of engaging in a military confrontation, forming alignment helps disputant states' to secure their positions, at least for a certain period of time. In the context of EMS and SCS states, perceives alignment as a way to protect their valuable resources (Tjemkes, Vos, and Burgers 2017).

States' alliances' preferences can change over time in accordance with their expected gain-loss calculations. Aggressive states are more likely to provoke other nations, which causes the formation of balancing against the aggressor state (Walt, 1985). In SCS, China is the most aggressive actor who poses a direct threat to almost every littoral state in the SCS. In the future, rising Chinese dominance in SCS can serve as a unifying factor among the other disputants and motive them to settle their maritime boundary delimitations and unite against Chinese expansion. In SCS by choosing buck-passing strategy and aligning with US coastal states are not strengthening their positions against Chinese claims. In reality, by relying on the US's power, they are becoming more dependent on other powerful states; therefore, they are becoming more vulnerable in the international arena. To reduce their dependency on stronger nations, states' which prefer buck-passing, should negotiate and settle their disputes bilaterally. After resolving their disputes, they can form a stronger block against China and reduce their dependency on the US, which will allow them to become emerge as stronger actors in their region.

Some states may not be seen as the dominant actors in the selected cases like in Eastern Mediterranean maritime disputes due to their conflicted nature in their domestic politics. For instance, Libya and Syria both struggle with civil unrest; after the end of their civil unrest, their sovereign governments' position will change the regional power balances. Once these civil conflicts are settled, the winning side, may drastically change the dynamics of regional politics. According to current EEZ deceleration and maritime boundary delimitation agreements signed between GASC-Greece-Israel and Egypt, Turkey's bloc can provide wider EEZ to these nations. Meanwhile, Turkey's ties to various regional actors will impact its influence in the region depending on these proxy powers' trajectories.

To peacefully settle a conflict, each disputants' needs should be met to a certain extent (Lieberman, Levy, and Segal 2009), which means nations have to compromise. States' which involve in various similar ongoing disputes (like China in East and the South China Sea and Turkey in Aegean and Eastern Mediterranean Sea), may think that if they compromise in one dispute, they will be perceived as weaker actors by their opponents in the other disputes. Thus they will be less likely to choose cooperative strategies. If these nations' can start negotiating over the disputed regions at the same time, their likelihood of compromising can increase in the future. For instance, historically, China engaged in many territorial disputes, and since 1949 Beijing government managed to settle the majority of its' border disputes, yet seven out of twenty-three disputes could not be settled due to disputants' greed. The majority of these unsettled disputes are located in the energy-rich regions such as the South and the East China Sea maritime boundary delimitations. Controlling strategically important, energy-rich maritime regions significantly reduce Chinese energy dependency to energy exporter nations; thus, it increases China's power. China might think that if it compromises for settling the SCS dispute, then its' opponents (i.e., Japan) will perceive China as a weaker nation in the East China Sea maritime boundary delimitation. Therefore, they will act accordingly to force China to compromise in that dispute too. Because of that, nations that are actively involved in more than one maritime disputes will be less likely to compromise. In the case of EMS, apart from the

status of the Cyprus problem, without finding common ground in the Aegean Sea between Turkey and Greece, EMS dispute cannot be settled. The first status of the Island in the Aegean Sea should be clarified and agreed upon by Turkey and Greece.

Turkish government needs to declare EEZ in order to strengthen its claims and activities in its' declared territory. The existence and status of the unclaimed rocks, islets, and formations in the Aegean Sea serve as a deterrent effect for Turkey to declare its EEZ in EMS. Ankara government needs to create a strategy that will not harm them in either of these disputes. Considering these formations as null and void (has no legal validity or binding effect) serves Ankara government's interests in both cases by causing minimum costs.

To avoid further escalation over maritime territorial disputes international maritime organizations should be established. These organizations can provide reliable platforms for disputants' to gather and discuss their concerns. Moreover, interpretational problems of international maritime law and gaps in the UNCLOS, like the status of expanded islands (semi-artificial semi-natural islands), should be clarified.

5.2. Recommendations for Future Studies

If a nation realizes that maintaining its' existing alliance harms its' benefits in the long run by limiting its access to natural resources, it will relinquish its alliances. On the contrary, alliances may provide greater value to a nation than gaining the control of precious natural resources. In the case of EMS, if Egypt had signed a maritime boundary delimitation agreement with Turkey instead of GASC, it lost approximately 12.000km² (İlgen, 2019) maritime territory. Moreover, by signing another EEZ agreement with Greece, the Cairo government lost another 7,400 km² maritime territory (İlgen, 2019). In the given conditions, it is hard to estimate the exact location of the hydrocarbon reserves in EMS. By signing these agreements, Egypt is risking to lose hydrocarbon reserves. Walt (1985) states that proximate power affects states' alignment preferences. Therefore there is an inverse proportion that exists between states' distance to each other and their likelihood

of perceived as a proximate threat. States' domestic politics effects on their foreign policy decisions and their relative gain calculations can be analyzed in future studies.

Moreover, in the existing system, researches conduct their studies without knowing the CAPEX and OPEX costs of offshore drilling. Geographic differences affect the extraction costs of the reserves. Also, in offshore drillings, oil companies usually rent certain equipment from offshore drilling manufacturers or supplier companies'; the costs of these equipments are not accessible to the public. Hence according to literature, researchers' were not able to access the data they need to conduct more explicit financial analysis. By cooperating field experts and offshore drilling manufacturers or supplier companies' more explicit researches can be conducted.

The role of energy companies and international organizations in the maritime boundary delimitations should be analyzed more comprehensively. If energy companies reject operating in the disputed regions, states' can settle their maritime boundary delimitations in a shorter time.

Recent studies on the South China Sea and Eastern Mediterranean Sea is dominated by strategic security studies. Both academic and non-academic resources like US regional reports on SCS or graduate thesis written by Turkish academic' analyses state interactions and regional dynamics from a military perspective. These studies should be backed up by research derived from international relations theories.

It is argued that the occupation of disputed islands' by China and the existence of military bases or personnel on these islands prevents the escalation of military confrontations in the SCS (Fravel, 2010). When the disputed territory is occupied by a state, it increases other actors cost for occupying the same territory. Also, since such action can easily be perceived as a sign of revisionist behavior, any nation which attempts to control an occupied territory will run the risk of getting international communities reaction. Therefore in the Paracels and the Spratlys, currently disputant states are re-affirming their claims against the foreign occupation but not attempting to take over their claimed islands, which are currently occupied by other states. Due to its geographical similarities, to examine the role and importance of hydrocarbon resources in the conflict existing

maritime territories, most similar system studies can be conducted by using the Aegean Sea and South China Sea cases.

Due to the linguistic and environment limitations (COVID'19 pandemic), government archives could not use in this study. If the same study can be conducted after the examination of disputant nations' government archives, and by conducting interviews with experts and politicians, a more comprehensive analysis can be made.

Appendix A: Abbreviations

ADIZ: Air Defense Identification Zone

AMTI: Advanced Medical Technology Institute

ASEAN: The Association of South East Asian Nations

CAPEX: Capital Expenditures

CCP: Chinese Communist Party

CHS: Convention on the High Seas

CNOOC: China National Offshore Oil Company

CS: Continental Shelf

CSL: Cooperative Security Locations

CZ: Contiguous Zone

EASTMED/EastMed: Eastern Mediterranean Pipeline

EEZ: Exclusive Economic Zone

EIA: U.S. Energy Information Administration

EMS: Eastern Mediterranean Sea

EMS: the Eastern Mediterranean Sea

EOKA: National Organization of Greek Fighters

EU: European Union

GASC: Greek Administration of Southern Cyprus

GCCS: The Geneva Convention on the Continental Shelf

GCLS: Geneva Conventions on the Law of the Sea

GNA: Government of National Accord

ICJ: International Court of Justice

IEA: International Energy Agency

IGI: Interconnector Greece Italy

KGI: Kalaya'an Group Islands

MDSD: Most Different System Design

ME: Middle East

MID: Military Interstate Disputes

MSSD: Most Similar System Design

NATO: North Atlantic Treaty Organization

NGH: Natural Gas Hydrate

OPEX: Operating Expenses

PGS: Petroleum Geo-Services

PLA: People's Liberation Army

PLAN: People's Liberation Army Navy

SCS: the South China Sea

TPAO: Turkish Petroleum Corporation

TRNC: Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus

TS: Territorial Sea

TW: Territorial Waters

UK: United Kingdom

UN: United Nations

UNCLOS: United Nations Convention on Law of Sea

UNFICYP: United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus

UNSC: United Nations Security Council

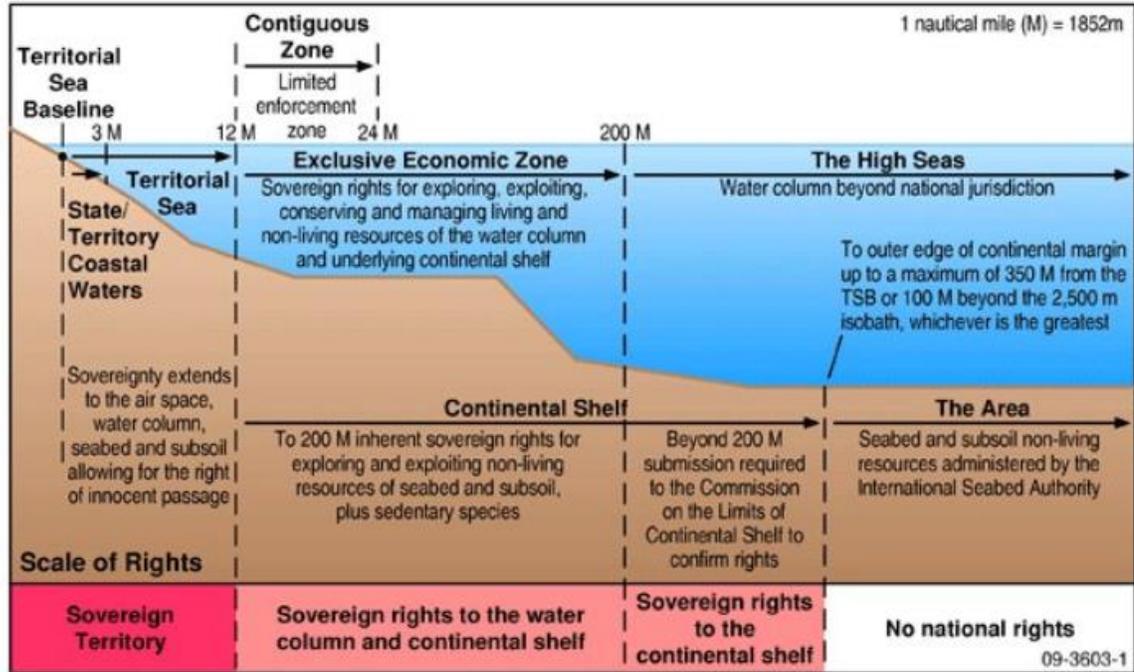
US: United States of America

USSR: Union of Soviet Socialist Republics

WW1: World War 1

WW2: World War 2

Appendix B: UNCLOS Maritime Zones



Source: Balla and Wounters, 2017

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