


## Article

# The Role of Powerbroking in the Mediterranean Hydrocarbon Issue and Its Impact on Environmental Crisis—A Kin-State Case Dimension on Cyprus

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**Abstract:** The Mediterranean Sea is prone to pollution as it is almost entirely enclosed by land and its warm waters need more than 80–90 years to clean and revive themselves. The dynamic environment and climate variables affect this region, known as the cradle of civilization. Many studies have examined the Mediterranean hydrocarbon issue through varying approaches that explain how cooperation or conflict is promoted in the region. The regional security complex approach, securitization theory, resource regionalism, location theory, and the materialist school have been considered to analyze the Mediterranean basin's hydrocarbon relations. These approaches have focused on the issue's political, economic, security, and geographical aspects, while there needs to be more analysis on the role of the kin-states. However, the interests of each country and regional conflicts have marginalized environmental problems. This study suggests that studying the role of Greece and Turkey in Cyprus as kin-states contributes to the direction of stability for hydrocarbon gas exploration and highlights the environmental threats. It applies a new approach to the issue of Mediterranean hydrocarbon relations by utilizing the concept of kin-states and emphasizing the environmental hazards in the Mediterranean region. At the same time, hydrocarbon development is deemed a high priority for the world in general and specifically for Europe. This study reveals the role of kin-states as powerbrokers as a significant hindrance to the progress of the peaceful development of the hydrocarbon infrastructure, ensuring clean energy in the region and reducing the vulnerability of the entire island. It recommends a multilateral approach that puts kin-states at the center of hydrocarbon cooperation. Thus, the matter of environment is analyzed by interpreting the theoretical contribution to international relations.

**Keywords:** environment; hydrocarbon; kin-state; Mediterranean; multilateralism; resource regionalism



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## 1. Introduction

Climate change and environmental problems as a catastrophe to humanity, waters, and air have become prominent topics in the science of international relations. Pollution has various sources and causes, including natural gas production and oil transportation via the seas. The Mediterranean Sea has a significant role in transporting oil to the world, and natural gas has been produced on its shores for more than 10 years. Is there an opportunity to not marginalize the environmental issue? At the same time, the natural gas and oil market still has strategic importance and is seen by the world as a significant need.

The Eastern Mediterranean, as E. Badarin and T. Schumacher (2022) [1] argued, is a diverse and complex geopolitical space where the European, Asian, and African continents, religions, civilizations, and trading routes intersect. It is understandable that regional and international powers have paid close attention to this area and competed to impose their political and spatial imaginations on it. Recent discoveries of gas and oil resources have thrown new variables into the region's geopolitical equation, reigniting maritime

conflicts. On the surface, these disputes appear to revolve around overlapping and unrestricted Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZs) where offshore natural energy resources and transportation routes exist—or could be discovered. However, they attribute the conflict in the Eastern Mediterranean to objectively identifiable variables (such as EEZs, gas quantities, and commercial values) apart from the local, regional, and international geopolitical landscape [1].

The Mediterranean hydrocarbon issue is a regional issue regarding the exploration of offshore gas among several states in the region. The countries that are directly involved include Cyprus, Greece, Egypt, France, Italy, Israel, Jordan, Palestine, Turkey, Syria, and Lebanon. They form a sub-systemic group as they represent direct stakeholders in the exploration of gas in the Eastern Mediterranean region [2]. The systemic analysis provides the explanatory variables which contribute to understanding these sub-systemic groups of states. Systemic approaches have yet to be enough to understand the hindrances to cooperation in the Mediterranean. Understanding threats among these actors and their responses analyzed through offensive and defensive realists within the regional power struggle must shed more light on the problem [3]. So, this study explores alternate approaches for comprehending the conflict in the area by focusing on the involvement of certain actors.

Hence, the endeavor begins by exploring the contribution of alternative theories; namely, the regional security complex theory, securitization theory, materialistic theory, location theory, and resource regionalism. These theories investigate how the natural gas pipeline can bring about regional stability. In the assessment of these theories, it is observed that their analyses focused on the regional level and missed the sub-regional level. However, there are sub-regional elements that have hindered cooperation in the region. Although these approaches touch on sub-regional elements in their analyses, it is significant to craft an approach that coherently analyzes this element. Therefore, this study progresses to introduce the kin-state approach to the hydrocarbon issue in the Mediterranean as a sub-regional analysis. The kin-state approach focuses on Greece and Turkey's role in Cyprus as they play the role of parent countries [4].

This study argues that the kin-state approach is beneficial to understanding the dynamics of cooperative or conflictual relations in the Eastern Mediterranean hydrocarbon issue. It examines the kin-states' role within the hydrocarbon context of the Mediterranean region. Currently, there are two states in the Mediterranean; Greece and Turkey, which play the powerbroker role towards their ethnic communities in Cyprus [5]. Our study highlights the implications of this role and how it has hindered cooperation by examining the shift in the behavior of actors toward conflict resolution since the discovery of hydrocarbon gas. It argues that the powerbroking role, while it is significant in conflict resolution and can push ethnic communities towards cooperation, increases the cooperation gap between the ethnic communities within the context of hydrocarbon. This study presents empirical evidence by exploring the details of the powerbroking states on the ethnic communities and how they hinder local capacity in determining the future of environmental hazards and hydrocarbon in the region.

However, the repetitive nature of disputes between Turkey and Greece is based on the territory; it is more conflictual within the Cyprus hydrocarbon. The tense relations between Greece and Turkey put pressure on both nations to coordinate and access the hydrocarbon fields in Cyprus to boost their economies and military advantages in the new era of hydrocarbon [4]. Finally, our attempt concludes with an analysis that merges the kin-state approach, multilateralism, and resource regionalism to create a hybrid cooperation approach in the Mediterranean. This will reduce the impact of the increasing tension between Greece and Turkey over hydrocarbon in the Mediterranean and how it affects the regional security system.

## 2. Assessing the Regional Security Complex and Securitization Theory

This approach proposes that energy politics in the Eastern Mediterranean region is a bottom-up regionalization process in the region rather than a top-down dimension of cooperation. It argues that the structure of the international system promotes the top-down approach. Accordingly, it is such a strategy that the decision-making procedure occurs at the highest level and is then communicated to the rest of the other participating units. The regional security complex theory holds that, rather than viewing security from a global perspective, the regional level of analysis displays a more existential threat to states sharing geographical adjacency [6]. The regional security complexity extends beyond the anarchical structure of the system that emphasizes the role of powerful states towards a socially constructed approach which is securitization. Hence, in addition to the states, other actors contribute to the security pattern within a region through the process of interaction. Nevertheless, the regional security complex theory has been employed by scholars to highlight the low level of regional cooperation, amity, and enmity in the Eastern Mediterranean region. The regional security complex introduces the top-down approach within a sub-systemic interaction of states within the same region to establish stability. The pollution problem, for example, begins in a specific region, such as with gas extraction in the Eastern Mediterranean and oil transportation or naval maneuvers. Later, this becomes a threat to global security. The energy security in the Mediterranean region interlocks many actors; namely Cyprus, Egypt, France, Greece, Jordan, Israel, Italy, Turkey, the Palestinian Authority, and the Greek and Turkish Cypriot communities in the hydrocarbon security dynamics of this region [7].

Y. A. Stivachtis (2021) [6] has a different view and counters that the spectacle in the Mediterranean has solely related to a fundamental threat: The global change through the Cold War and shifting of the international structure from the bipolar system to the more polycentric power structure has increased the role of regional power and amity between the kin-states. Therefore, we take advantage of the Regional Security Complex System (RSCS) in defining the Mediterranean region. For that purpose, we should consider the environmental, economic, energy, and other phenomena, such as the refugee flow, in defining the dynamics of the Mediterranean region. Thus, this can be utilized to realize a conduit to peace and stability [6].

The formation of the Eastern Mediterranean Gas Forum (EMGF), which includes state members and is based on hydrocarbon exploration results, provides empirical support for the top-down approach. The EMGF, which excludes Turkey, was established in 2018 as a forum for discussing energy in the region between Cyprus, Egypt, France, Greece, Jordan, Israel, Italy, and the Palestinian Authority. Despite its isolation, Turkey is described in the RSCS as having changed its posture in regional energy affairs to become a bold insulating state [7,8]. According to O. Kocadal (2016), the concept of “insulator” refers to a state’s role as a middle ground of opposing ideas or power within a system.

Turkey, for example, seeks to play this role by positioning itself to manage the historical Western-Middle Eastern relations in the context of the Syrian refugee migration crisis and the Russia’s invasion of Ukraine. Concerning the refugee crisis, Turkey has agreed to accept a significant number of refugees on its territory, mitigating the negative impact of the Syrian refugee flow to the European countries. In the case of Russia’s invasion of Ukraine, it has contributed to grain-passage agreements to avoid starvation or blockade. Turkey’s ambition has been to play the role of an insulator [4].

Barrinha (2014) [8] explained that Turkey is significant in the sense that its achievement of regional dominance might result in becoming a great power while playing its ambitious insulator role. This can only take place as an Eastern Mediterranean regional power. The constraint to this is the treatment of Turkey as an “outsider”; for example, not being fully a part of the Mediterranean region’s attempt at a cooperation forum. Barrinha argued that such exclusion of Turkey in such a regional security complex ignores the role of states in constructing a threat perception in the region. While Barrinha’s study identifies that state agency is important in constructing and deconstructing security perspectives, he does not

examine the role Turkey and Greece play as a kin-state in the issue of Cyprus and how it affects regional security [8].

Rumelili et al. [9] pointed out that the EU played a socializer's role between Turkey and Greece to mitigate conflict in the Aegean Sea and Mediterranean region as an attempt to de-securitize the territorial conflict. Nevertheless, it misses the opportunity to improve the socialization process between the two states in the issue of the Cyprus conflict; therefore, recognizing the kin-states in its discussion. However, since the 2000s has transformed into the role of regionalizing actor by aligning its discourse towards regional interdependency through cooperation in energy investments with states and business groups. This policy was constructed through the elite's foreign policy normative principles which emphasize their cultural and historical heritage with the neighbors [9]. Nevertheless, the current Turkish foreign policy on the issue of Cyprus and its spillover to the Mediterranean energy security reflect tensions in the region and securitize the hydrocarbon issue. This form of analysis, while identifying the link between Cyprus and regional stability, does not explore the role of the kin-states in the energy policy [10].

Iseri's (2019) [11] study exploring the perspective of securitization theory towards the Mediterranean energy issue recommends that the energy sector should be added to other security sectors because of its uniqueness and the immediate challenges and opportunities that come with the securitization of the energy sector. The shift in Turkey's policy on the issue of Cyprus, with an emphasis on energy discoveries, transportation, and security, positions the energy discourse as another sector of securitization that inter-relates with other sectors [11]. This analysis does not explain the role Turkey is playing as it shifts its policy over the years on the issue of Cyprus. It focuses on securitization leaving out the socialization between Cyprus and its two kin-states.

### **3. Location Theory Is a Geo-Economic Approach**

This approach is related to modern geopolitical theory, which investigates countries' geographical locations [12]. It emerged from an approach that tries to evaluate the international political discourse to understand the political and economic significance of the countries' geographic locations. Hence, it argues that the interaction between states and multi-national corporations takes place based on national interest, military power, and energy resources as found within a location. Location theory specifically emphasizes the importance of locational determinants that impacts the behavior of actors in a resource area. Hydrocarbon is a determinant that is enmeshed within the geopolitics around the location where it can be found [13]. The limited hydrocarbon energy resources that are exportable and increasing scarcity increase international competition and conflict. The location theory tries to achieve, through commercialization, a win-win scenario for all energy actors. Market rationality is prioritized above all forms of passion and pride that support the development of a regional energy model. Creating a regional energy model for the Eastern Mediterranean hydrocarbons through rational choice that promotes the marketplace in energy politics will ensure cooperation among countries. Economic pragmatism, diplomacy, shared regional resources or neutral zone are mechanisms employed to solve the increasing competition among states [14].

### **4. Is There Room for Environmental Concerns in the East-Med Gas Project?**

The majority of the world's seas are plagued by environmental issues. However, the nature of the conflict in the Mediterranean, particularly in its eastern region, has turned it into a battlefield where many are unconcerned about the extent of the devastation. Furthermore, because disasters do not strike in isolation, its waters are among the most vulnerable to global climate change. The water temperature is rapidly rising, reaching 0.12 degrees Celsius per year. The Mediterranean coasts are also regarded as one of the regions most affected by the rising sea levels, as the majority of industrial and tourism activities in the basin countries are concentrated in low coastal lands [15].

As stated by T. Chondrogiannos (2022) [16], in November 2021, the European Commission decided to include the East-Med gas pipeline in its fifth list of Common Projects. Greek geopolitical interests are driving the initiative, and the EU is supporting it while ignoring its climate goals. Despite the political hype, the pipeline offers customers little more than more expensive energy and a worsening climate disaster. Methane and carbon dioxide, the two most significant greenhouse gases, are released during natural gas extraction and combustion. Methane is the more potent of the two. Methane is approximately 90 times more powerful than carbon dioxide at warming the atmosphere over a 20-year period [16]. While the cause of pollution is varied in the Mediterranean Sea, an important one is “oil pollution” since about 30% of the world’s ship traffic operates through the Mediterranean Sea. This pollution is not a new phenomenon in the Mediterranean basin, as UNEP has warned in its reports for decades. For example, in the 1990s, the economic activities related to oil were divided into a northern region that consumes “Europe”, which accounts for about 65% of the total oil pollution; and a southern region that produces oil makes 35% of the oil pollution because of the tanker traffic. According to the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP), ships have dumped more than one million tons of crude oil into the Mediterranean [17].

The EU and Germany have set themselves ambitious climate and energy policy goals. Given the need to reduce emissions in all sectors of the economy, they now have a different view of the energy situation in the Eastern Mediterranean than they did a few years ago.

Therefore, offshore natural gas imports from the Eastern Mediterranean lose relevance in favor of the region’s prospects for participating in the EU’s emerging green energy economy. Given Europe’s rising demand for renewable electricity, intercontinental power interconnections between European, African and Middle Eastern power grids could become the new normal via the Eastern Mediterranean. It also has regional potential to play a role in the EU hydrogen strategy [18].

Nevertheless, on 11 January 2022, an informal letter sent by the US Secretary Department to the energy departments in Greece, Cyprus and Israel’s foreign minister confirmed that the United States withdrew support for the East-Med gas pipeline. The project has created regional tensions, and the excess gas reserves in the region should be used through joint electricity cables to generate and run the regional electricity project and instead make the region’s problems more committed to serving environmental issues [19].

Although there is ambiguity about the natural gas production in the Eastern Mediterranean and its extended pipeline, is this issue entirely economic and political? Or is it related to geopolitical changes and regional conflicts? Or may it get a chance as a new opportunity to protect the environment and create a regional environmental network? Or will environmental concerns eventually be ignored as geopolitical and economic interests take precedence?

According to the “European Green Deal”, Europe targets to achieve zero environmental neutrality by 2050. By this roadmap, Europe will no longer rely on oil and natural gas, neither in export nor import. The EU’s hegemony has increased in the Mediterranean region after the end of the Cold War. Europe and the countries on the Mediterranean Sea signed the “Barcelona Declaration” agreement in 1999 to promote peace, security, and prosperity and increase cooperation and coherence in the region. Afterwards, they formulated another common agreement named the “Euro-Mediterranean Partnership”, which was changed to the pact of “Union for the Mediterranean” in 2008. By this means, the EU intervened in the countries in the Mediterranean region to maintain security and prosperity and promote environmental plans [15,20]. However, we see political conflict and changing regional reality over energy instead of highlighting climate change as a dangerous phenomenon.

Many believe that the natural gas production in Cyprus and Israel, followed by the reserves in Egypt and Lebanon, will be an energy revolution. But a decade passed with little energy impact. The US State Department’s adviser on global energy security Amos Hochstein is one of the skeptics about the East-Med gas pipeline, calling the project a “false dream”, as former Israeli Energy Minister Yuval Steinitz enthusiastically advocated.



According to Simon Henderson, a senior fellow at the Washington Institute for Near East Policy, the project has been described for ten years, but there has never been such a large amount of gas to fill the pipeline. Henderson has also indicated that Europe needs 540 billion cubic meters of oil annually, while Israel exports only 10 billion cubic meters from the Leviathan field, and the rest is used for domestic consumption. According to BP Statistical Review World Energy, Israel's reserves at the end of 2020 were 600 billion cubic meters or 0.3 percent of the world's gas reserves [20]. In addition to this, investors are following Israeli Energy Minister Karin Elharrar's statement at the end of 2022 that they confirmed her office would focus on renewable energy, especially wind and solar [21].

Therefore, the US administration has called for the suspending and withdrawal of the East-Med gas project and recommended that it should be conducted following European environmental policies. The establishment of a large joint power line to transport and use the excess gas produced off the coast of Cyprus, Israel and Egypt with Greece; thus, three neighboring countries on the continent are different from the environment. But this is not so easy since the project covers a large area of more than 1300 miles, and it will also cause Turkey's objection. Legally, these waters have been designated by the UN as an exclusive economic zone (EEZ), which mostly passes through Turkey's borders [20].

In conclusion, there are two strong arguments as to how to deal with the natural gas projects in the Eastern Mediterranean. The first is that after the US Secretary Department's decision in early 2022, the gas in the Eastern Mediterranean will be only for the Mediterranean and not for Europe. Instead of political tensions and military maneuvers, the project should lead to the giving of a common electricity grid, greater awareness of climate change, and environmental protection in this sensitive region of our planet.

The second argument is that natural gas and oil have connected with the global energy security and economic crisis, especially after the outbreak of war between Russia and Ukraine. In addition, the western powers needed Turkey to help them confront Russia, and the East-Med project has caused bother for Turkey for a decade. That's why the US and EU wanted to make a rapprochement with Turkey before sparking the war in Ukraine. Finally, hydrocarbons can be viewed as a common ground: European countries in the Mediterranean basin, such as Greece, Italy, France, and Spain, will eventually get a piece of the pie.

##### **5. Materialistic Theory, Another Approach for Cooperation between States**

International relations theories provide different perspectives on the analysis of the Mediterranean energy issue. Materialism attempts to reintegrate culture with the material world. The cultural materialist viewpoint is closely related to institutional economics. Because they propose the institutionalization of state cooperation, it can provide a framework for a more sensitive approach to economic analysis. As a result, the current events of alliance or forum formation in the Mediterranean energy issue can be discussed from a materialistic standpoint [22]. The Eastern Mediterranean forum is explained as the tool for dialogue on how the gas in the region will benefit its members of it. This included the monetization of natural resources through investing in the construction of pipelines that links the region to Europe. The materialist approach, as analyzed, recognizes the weakness of the forum, highlighting the exclusion of Turkey and Lebanon and only focusing on gas cooperation. Hence, it is stated that materialistic theory recognizes the inclusion of all members in the institution that would offer sustained cooperation among states and in more than one area. The outcome is a multi-level and multi-issue approach. For instance, materialistic scholars question the outcome of a unilateral approach from any actors in the region, such as military exercises on the seas and increased investment toward exploration within the exclusive economic zones [23]. The absence of shared values and objective among the actors have created an exclusive path to achieving their materialist goal in the region, evidenced by the inclusion or exclusion of actors. The protracted conflicts, such as the Cyprus conflict and how Greece and Turkey have influenced the outcome, as well as the Palestinian issues and how Israel has affected the current outcome, show limited

regional cooperation. Other issues include the internal instability challenges facing Libya and Syria, which limit their participation in the region and highlight the low degree of stakeholders in the region's gas exploration. The impact of the kin-states' roles in Cyprus on the low degree of cooperation has not been examined in the materialistic theory despite Turkey and Greece's claims and rights to exploration.

## 6. Resource Regionalism between States, an Envisage towards Dispute Resolution

Resource regionalism, in addition to the materialistic approach, emphasizes the interconnectedness of producers, consumers, and pipeline routes to monetize resources. Effective collaboration in infrastructure development creates economic incentives for states participating in the gas supply chain. A key assumption of resource regionalism is that peace will prevail in countries where energy infrastructure, such as pipelines, has been installed [24]. One significant mechanism identified in the theory is the complexity and costly nature of the energy infrastructure, which will require cooperation in policy coordination among multiple actors for mutual gain and development. This theory envisages that this pushes states toward dispute resolution. Furthermore, the continuous existence of the pipelines signals the continuity of cooperation among states as they will continue to generate incentives that keep states at peace. Another assumption, as highlighted to be the basis of resource regionalism, is the high-level communication and channels resulting from international political and business interests in the region. Lastly, it is assumed that cooperation that begins within the issue areas, such as natural resources, mostly spreads to other areas, which incorporate bilateral and multilateral efforts to protect the energy infrastructure and sustain incentives [25].

The resource regionalism approach identifies three empirical cases to justify itself. Firstly, the creation of the Economic Coal and Steel Community in 1951 and the European Atomic Energy Community in 1957 mitigated the hostility between Germany and France, which became the foundation of European regional stability. Secondly, the gas delivery contract between the Federal Republic of Germany and the Soviet Union in the 1970 and 80s displayed the resolution of enmity between the two adversaries as they signed the 20-years agreement. Both the FRG and the Soviet Union initiated their partnership through gas, and it expanded into the post-Berlin war and post-Soviet period. The last example is the US foreign policy toward the construction of an oil pipeline between Azerbaijan and Armenia as an attempt to resolve the conflict between the two nations into cooperation [26].

The case of Cyprus is *sui generis* about resolving conflict through the gas pipelines. Unlike many other conflicts, the Cyprus conflict is primarily an internal conflict rather than an interstate conflict, as can be observed in the three examples of resource regionalism. The internal division in Cyprus is a result of civil war; therefore, the island does not have a unified foreign policy on the energy issue or the capacity to fully engage in a unified negotiation with other countries regarding the exploration of hydrocarbon gas, but rather negotiates with itself to resolve the conflict and partitioning of the island before proceeding to the energy issue. Conflict over the sharing of political and economic resources within a country hinders a unified front that could allow for resource regionalism. (See Libya and Syria's absence in EMGF as additional examples.) Therefore, internal conflict resolution becomes a prerequisite for resource regionalism in the Mediterranean [27].

The partitioning of Cyprus created the separation between the Greek and Turkish Cypriot communities with independent governments. Furthermore, the conflict exists between a *de-jure* country and a *de-facto* state, which signals that a government (Republic of Cyprus) is recognized as the representative of the whole island while the other government (Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus) is unrecognized yet has an established political structure with features of an independent country [28].

Resource regionalism in the case of Cyprus is only possible within the context of kin-states. Firstly, the two sides of the island have historically strong ties with their kin-states that cannot be detached. For example, Northern Cyprus has increased closeness to Ankara in policies toward conflict resolution. The absorption of TRNC into Turkey rather than

an unrecognized independent country has been on the agenda with the transportation issue of making it a domestic airport for economic benefits. The Greek political influence on the Republic of Cyprus in its ascension to the European Union and local elections, in addition to that ministerial position occupied by pro-Greece ideologies, have been consistent. Secondly, the two kin-states are regional actors seeking cooperation and resource interest in the Mediterranean. Thirdly, the kin-states can play roles that reduce the impact of conflict within the island to promote resource regionalism. Fourthly, the kin-state approach contributes to resource regionalism in understanding and proffering possible paths to regional stability in the Mediterranean [29].

Greece and Turkey are two separate kin-states with recurring territorial disputes. They have worked to resolve territorial disputes over the years, similar to previous examples of resource regionalism. Both countries compete for regional significance in the Mediterranean. This study uses the concept of kin-states to identify the role of Greece and Turkey as kin-states to the Republic of Cyprus and Northern Cyprus, respectively, in hydrocarbon energy politics. So, the article discusses the concept of the kin-state in the following sections: How could the kin-state issue help Cyprus's energy capacity play a significant role in the Eastern Mediterranean stage? Does the environmental protection protect economic, political, and geostrategic interests, or the production, exportation, and importation of oil and natural gas?

## 7. The Concept of Kin-States in the Hydrocarbon Dialogue

The direct or indirect involvement in the affairs of a co-ethnic group beyond the borders of a state should, for ethnic, religious, political, or economic ties, introduce the concept of a kin-state. Kocadal (2016) [4] stated that kin-states exist when a dominant ethnic group in a state identifies with the same ethnic group existing in another state. Unlike a diaspora population, this co-ethnic community has citizenship and rights and has significantly long historical connections with the hosting state where they exist.

Kocadal (2016) [4] expressed his research in terms of the mediating role of kin-states in international conflict through his typology. He identified that kin-states could play four different roles: *promoter*, *quasi-mediator*, *powerbroker*, and *enforcer*. Analyzing the role of kin-states as a promoter, he presented loose ties towards the co-ethnic community by playing a role that supports the needs of the ethnic community rather than taking the lead in seeking the demands of the community. The quasi-mediators shift towards closer relations with the co-ethnic community. The enforcer's role focuses on pushing the kin-state to provide support during a state of war to their ethnic communities. Because they are focused on powerbroking, kin-states do not play the promoter, quasi-mediator, or enforcer roles. Using Kocadal's conceptualization of roles, this investigation builds and explores the powerbroking role played by kin-states in the hydrocarbon dialogue. The more this concept is explained, the closer the study gets to the conclusion of how environmental issues become secondary issues in the region.

### 7.1. The Powerbroking as a Mediation Role

The powerbroking role of kin-states occurs as an extensive control of the process of mediation by the kin-state through mechanisms of manipulation to push ethnic communities toward changing the dynamics of the conflict. These mechanisms involve re-orienting the local actors about their ties to the kin-state, providing political and financial support to the locals, and ensuring that locals who support kin-state objectives can achieve political dominance in the ethnic community. Overall, the position of the local community is shaped so that its involvement in both formal and informal negotiation aligns with the kin-state. This role is assumed by the kin-state when there is a high level of dependency of the co-ethnic group on the kin-state and has limited capacity to oppose the kin-state. As powerbrokers, unilateral action is possible by the kin-state based on the dependency of the smaller community. This, therefore, becomes an intrusive form of intervention in



the conflict. This study argues that the discovery of natural resources in the conflict region pushes kin-states to play the power brokering role [30].

### 7.2. *Shifting Roles of Greece and Turkey*

The role of kin-states in the hydrocarbon issues is observable in the case of Cyprus. Ethnic and economic resources are a justification of kin-states in playing a role in the ethnic community. Greece and Turkey are involved in helping their ethnic communities in Cyprus to seek access to land and power. The grip of both kin-states on the Greek and Turkish Cypriot communities has become stronger with the discovery of hydrocarbon in Cyprus [11].

Before the independence of Cyprus, Greece played a significant role in promoting the interest of its Greek community in Cyprus. This form of interaction with the Greek Cypriot community began gradually with a limited form of engagement (such as diplomatic, economic and financial support, etc.) [30]. This includes seeking Cyprus's interests at the international level through negotiating for independence and post-independent arrangements with the other ethnic community, Turkish Cypriots in Cyprus. The internationalization of the Cyprus issue [31] has been lobbied consistently by Greece at the international level to push for different statuses, such as independence and recognition of the Republic of Cyprus as the representative government of the island while sanctioning the Turkish Cypriot government area that proclaimed the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus [32]. Further action includes getting the Greek Cypriots to say no to the Annan Plan in 2004 and promoting the ascension of Cyprus into the European Union. At this stage, the ties with Cyprus have continuously become stronger and therefore shift from promoter to powerbroker, a move that is currently common in Turkey and the TRNC government [33]. The powerbroking role of Greece has involved lobbying internationally and unilaterally seeking actions and sanctions against the TRNC. The question is whether, without Greece's lobby in favor of Cyprus, there would be this current level of sanction against the TRNC. Before 1983, the Turkish Cypriot community had the opportunity to participate in the international areas of postal, aviation, and sports; however, the Greek Cypriot lobby, supported by their strong ties with Greece, has been able to ensure international sanction on Northern Cyprus [34].

Negotiations and "getting to say yes" to the Annan Plan of 2004 in the referendum, on the other hand, were pushed by Turkey's interactions with the Turkish Cypriot community in the TRNC. Furthermore, it forced the Turkish Cypriot community to accept bi-communality, which it previously favored; however, it is becoming less popular. As the kin-state retreats in its part of the bargaining, the gap between the communities widens [10,29]. Subsequent negotiations took place during the previous two TRNC governments; however, the current government is moving away from negotiation.

Derviş Eroğlu (former TRNC president, 2010–2015) has advocated for peace, but Turkey has emphasized North Cyprus' attachment to the "mother land". Mustafa Akıncı (former TRNC president, 2015–2020) has supported many aspects of the Geneva talks, as well as several informal meetings with Greek counterparts, to reunite the island. He has consistently advocated for a bi-zonal bi-communal federation and a rotating presidency for the island. He has had more contact with the president of Greece and the Greek Cypriot community than his predecessors and successor. However, the divide between the two communities has grown since the current president, Ersin Tatar, was elected in 2020. President Tatar has strengthened ties with the "mother land" and made a statement that widens the divide between Cyprus's communities.

As a result, Turkey's role as a kin-state shifts from the quasi-mediator to powerbroker rather than promoting only the interests of the ethnic community [35]. The hydrocarbon and gas exploration issue would encourage the powerbroking role of Turkey and make it less likely to move toward quasi-mediator status if it is continually ignored in the EMGF.

### Powerbroking in Hydrocarbon Issues Hinders a Common Agenda

Powerbroking is important since it is a mediation style for achieving peace. However, when the context changes and the powerbroking negotiation style is not discontinued by the kin-states, it hinders achieving a common agenda in an issue area. While both Turkey and Greece had represented the Turkish and Greek Cypriot communities in the pre-independence era, power brokering at the stage supported the independence of Cyprus [34]. However, the post-independence powerbroking role has become a spoiler, especially in the exploration of hydrocarbon in the island's offshore oil fields.

#### *7.3. Europe Pushed Cyprus (RoC) into an Alliance with Israel to Explore Natural Gas*

As Europe is experiencing a significant rise in the price of oil, alternative sources of oil and gas supply for Greece are most crucial, and it has been making efforts by pushing Cyprus (RoC) into an alliance with Israel for the creation of pipelines for the exploration of gas [34,35]. Turkey's relationship with suppliers such as Iran and Iraq, where the Kurdish minority has gained a presence, is a mix of cooperation and competition; but the oil and gas supply is critical to Turkey. To avoid supply disruptions, an alternative oil and gas source is critical for Turkey's energy diversification, taking the lead in brokering the direction of TRNC oil and gas exploration. As a means of maintaining the status quo for its drilling objectives, Turkey has used its drone and naval power presence, upgrading the military facility on the northern part of the island and political empowerment of Turkish Cypriots advocating for a two-state solution rather than the bi-communal federation. The uncoordinated drilling efforts from both sides pushing their kin-state into alliance or actions for exploration have heightened tension in the region as they challenge each other's rights to drilling [35].

#### *7.4. Power Brokering Is Exercising Intrusive Power toward Ethnic Communities Abroad*

There has been a limited directional move on the side of Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot communities toward explorations. Analyzing the statement of President Nicos Anastasiades, his emphasis has been on opposing Turkey's drilling action of dispatching its ship in the offshore region of Northern Cyprus, where the RoC has claimed to be its Exclusive Economic Zone. There is less statement on the pipelines and alliance from President Nicos Anastasiades, as Greece has been playing the role of a powerbroker in leading its kin-state in alliance with Israel and Egypt, amongst others. Barely has the Turkish Cypriot community also carved a direction for its exploration of gas independently of its "mother land". Rather, the Turkish government has stated that the primary objective of its hydrocarbon exploration around Cyprus is to safeguard the right of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus. Both Turkey and Greece have a significant influence on the kin communities in Cyprus. This limits the communities themselves from charting a course for the future of the country and the hydrocarbon resource [36].

With the global energy price rise, all states are searching for the next closest alliance to seek oil supply. Since there is a heavy dependency of the kin communities on their kin-states, the kin-states justify their action of pursuing a national interest in gaining access to energy. Greece and the EU are drawing closer to paying much attention to the oil and gas and seeking means to push the supply to the mainland. Greece's economic crisis has positioned it as a country that regularly seeks a bailout from the European Central Bank. Access to control energy supply through Cyprus would change the trajectory of its relations as one of the worse economies within the EU [37]. The Turkish Cypriot community is more highly dependent on Turkey than the Greek Cypriot community. It has received, apart from direct financial support, several supplies ranging from water to the supply of electricity from Turkey. Therefore, the mother-child relationship persists as the kin-state continues to justify its presence and role in the management of the offshore resources of the kin communities. The outcome is that the ownership of the process of accessing the resources might be up to the kin-states', and this is more so for the Turkish Cypriot community than their counterparts. Hence, the power-brokering role makes the local communities lack

ownership of the outcome of negotiations on hydrocarbon energy because of the pursuance of national interests by the kin-states. Further justification posits that the national interest of the kin community and kin-state barely differs, and when it does, the kin-state interests take precedence [38].

### 8. The Role of Clean Energy in Improving the Energy Security of Cyprus

Energy security is a significant metric for ascertaining development orientation in different countries and regions. There is a limitation of energy resources, while energy demand is increasing, and there is continuous development in countries. This has created substantial energy needs, suggesting that energy security is a significant priority in each country's development. The fundamentals issue of energy security according to the EU energy security strategy, a projection of the EU's net import dependency for 20 years was made. It was stated that the EU's net import would increase from about 62% of demand recorded in 2010 to 65% in 2020. The dependency projection for 2030 was set at 72–73% [39]. However, there has been an unfortunate collapse of the EU gas supply. The data from the BP Statistical Review of World Energy showed that the projected net gas imports for 2030, after the subtraction of domestic production, were reached in 2016. Although Cyprus as an island appears to be surrounded by gas reserves, it does not use any gas in its energy mix, despite efforts to import gas in LNG form to generate electricity that has been ongoing since 2007 [40]. This has created a huge gap in the demand and supply of energy on both sides of the island. According to the vulnerability index study carried out by [41], which considered indicators like energy intensity, energy import dependency, the ratio of energy-related carbon emissions to TPES, electricity supply vulnerability and non-diversity in transport fuels, to assess the energy security of a country, their study showed that the greatest level of vulnerability amongst European nations was recorded in RoC, with a score of 0.75. Another study by [42] investigated the energy security of the European nations by taking into consideration of eight basic indicators (energy intensity, carbon intensity, import dependency on oil, gas and coal, and primary energy production). Their result showed that the greatest energy security risk was measured for Estonia, Slovenia, and the RoC. Studies have reported that Cyprus is highly energy-dependent and shows a very low value of the energy security index (below minus 25) [43], with a high possibility of a continuous decline in the energy security trend. A study by [44] also investigated the energy security index of 28 European states using environmental and social aspects of the countries. Their study conclusively found that the highest level of energy security was recorded in Estonia, while the lowest was in the RoC and Malta. With the RoC being the most developed part of the island, it also represents the challenges faced in Northern Cyprus.

Since the creation of the European Union, the energy industry has experienced a constant modernization process. While guaranteeing supply diversification and energy security, a complete shift to sustainable, clean energy is being achieved [45]. The 1997 release of the European Commission's White Paper on Renewable Energy Sources (RES) marked a significant shift in this process. Since then, the RES development and promotion have been acknowledged as a game-changing and essential component of the EU climate and energy security. The energy mix diversification index, which is an indicator of energy security, will show that Cyprus could become an energy-secure country if the renewable potential in the island is harvested towards energy production using a multilateral approach led by the kin-states. This will reduce energy dependence and imports. In the context of energy mix diversification, a study by [46] showed that countries like the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Hungary are highly dependent on the main supplier of natural gas (Russia). In the environmental dimension, the low share of renewable energy in the energy mix in Poland resulted in the country having a low sustainable energy security index.

## 9. Multilateralism as a Path to Mediterranean Hydrocarbon Coordination

Multilateralism in international relations has a long history that can be traced to the League of Nations and the United Nations; however, beyond trade and security, the energy sector is moving towards more multilateral cooperation and therefore being recommendable for the Mediterranean and hydrocarbon issue [47]. In this context, multilateralism does not refer to multilateral institutions or international organizations but to rather a method of cooperation upon which the behavior of the states hinges upon. Cooperation through an ordering principle that is applied to all members is not necessarily the creation of an institution, but the coordination that holds substantive qualitative principles that are adaptive and reproductive. The adaptive and reproductive nature simply refers to meeting the immediate need for the peaceful development of the energy sector in the Mediterranean. The achievement of this will lead to the expression of the reproductive character of multilateralism in other areas. For multilateralism to be effective in the region, it must accept the legitimacy of all members within the energy issue, creating an indivisibility of interest, reciprocity within the energy sector, and dispute settlement in the production, pricing, and distribution of gas [48].

### *Acceptance of the Legitimacy of All Members*

The inclusion of parties directly connected to the hydrocarbon issue is key to achieving a multilateral that will enhance resource regionalism. Several coordinates have not been accepted in the attempts at collective coordination, such as Turkey, Lebanon, Libya, and Syria. The argument has been the unstable nature of the political atmosphere in Libya and Syria; however, Turkey and Lebanon, which have a stable capacity to independently begin exploration, should not be excluded. Subsequently, in the post-crisis era of Libya and Syria, they must also be added to the multilateral arrangement that will promote the region's effective management of the resources [48,49]. The goal is to avoid unilateral or bilateral approaches, which will heighten tension in the exploration of gas in the region. The benefits of multilateralism in trade (within the principle of the most favored nation, as in the case of the World Trade Organization) and security (within the principle of collective defense) mandates multilateralism in the energy trade and energy security in the Mediterranean [49].

## 10. Conclusions

The phenomenon of hydrocarbon rivalry in the East Mediterranean does not seem like an opportunity to protect the environment. But the countries of the Mediterranean basin -particularly Turkey, Cyprus, Greece, Israel and Egypt- view the natural gas issue as a sensitive opportunity related to national security in order to improve their economic interests and gain more power for themselves. Out of all the theories that attempted to explain the hydrocarbon cooperation issue in the Mediterranean, none of them examined the role of kin-states. Therefore, this study contributes to the literature on the Mediterranean by examining the two states that have kin communities: Greece and Turkey. This selection of countries is because all the other countries in the Mediterranean have no conflictual relationship, which hinders any form of cooperation. However, Greece and Turkey are each other's strongest adversaries in the region because of the historical feud and the ongoing Cyprus issue. The discovery and exploration of hydrocarbon, oil, and gas have further increased the tension between the two countries. Building upon the roles the kin-states play towards their kin communities, this study shows that from being a promoter or quasi-mediator, Greece and Turkey have moved toward becoming a powerbroker as the conflict continues to linger until the talks about rights to hydrocarbon discovery and exploration. Their role as powerbrokers has hindered the progress of the peaceful development of hydrocarbon infrastructure in the region; since powerbroking heightened tensions between the two countries, exercised an intrusive power leading to unilateral actions, and pushed the interests of kin-states rather than the ethnic communities while overpowering them in interaction with other actors in the region. This study suggests that the ideal multilateralism involves the acceptance of the legitimacy of the actors who are directly involved in the

region, including both kin-states, hence establishing an indivisible energy interest by unifying national policies without creating an exclusive club. This would promote an energy infrastructural development that favors all parties despite the lingering Cyprus conflict. The argument is that energy like coal and steel in Europe would unite and integrate the region to serve as an alternative gas hub for Europe and the world at large. Policies of any cooperation arrangement in the Mediterranean should consider these qualitative substances of multilateralism beyond the inclusion of three or more states. Through multilateralism, the suggestion of a resource regionalism approach can be furthered in the region, creating a stable and orderly Mediterranean.

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