

Explosive Gas Pipeline in the Mediterranean

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Region: [Europe](#), [Middle East & North Africa](#)

Theme: [Oil and Energy](#)

In the Eastern Mediterranean, where large natural gas offshore fields have been discovered, a bitter dispute is underway for the definition of exclusive economic zones, up to 200 miles from the coast, where each of the coastal countries has the rights to the field exploitation. The countries directly involved are Greece, Turkey, Cyprus, Syria, Lebanon, Israel, Palestine (whose Gaza gas fields are in the hands of Israel), Egypt and Libya. The confrontation between Greece and Turkey, both members of NATO, is particularly tense. The stakes are not just economic. The real game being played in the Eastern Mediterranean is geopolitical and geostrategic, and involves the major world powers. The EastMed pipeline, bringing much of the gas from this area to the EU, fits into this framework.

Its realization was decided among Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu, Greek Prime Minister Tsipras and Cypriot President Anastasiades, at the summit held in Jerusalem on March 20, 2019. Netanyahu stressed that “the pipeline will extend from Israel to Europe through Cyprus and Greece” and Israel will thus become an “energy power” (which will control the energy corridor to Europe), while Tsipras stressed that “cooperation between Israel, Greece and Cyprus has become strategic having reached their sixth summit.” This is confirmed by the military pact signed by the Tsipras government with Israel five years ago (il manifesto, 28 July 2015).



Source: [Euronews](#)

The US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo attended the Jerusalem summit (its acts were published by the US Embassy in Cyprus), underlining that the EastMed project launched by Israel, Greece and Cyprus, “fundamental partners of the US for security,” is “incredibly timely” as “Russia, China and Iran are trying to set foot in the East and the West.”

The US strategy is declared: to reduce and finally block Russian gas exports to Europe, replacing them with gas supplied or otherwise controlled by the US. In 2014 it blocked the SouthStream pipeline through the Black Sea, which would have brought Russian gas to Italy at competitive prices, and is attempting to do the same with TurkStream which, via the Black Sea, carries Russian gas to the European part of Turkey to get it to the EU.

At the same time, the US is trying to block the New Silk Road, the network of infrastructures designed to connect China to the Mediterranean and Europe. In the Middle East, by the war the US blocked the energy corridor which would have transported Iranian gas through Iraq and Syria, under a 2011 agreement, to the Mediterranean and into Europe.

This strategy is joined by Italy, where (in Puglia) EastMed will arrive to bring gas to other European countries.

Italian Economic Development Minister Patuanelli (M5S) called the EU approved gas pipeline one of the “European projects of common interest,” and Italian Economic Development Undersecretary Ms. Todde (M5S) led Italy to join the EastMed Gas Forum, headquarters of “dialogue and cooperation” on Eastern Mediterranean gas, in which Egypt and the Palestinian Authority take part - in addition to Israel, Greece and Cyprus. Jordan is also part of it, although has no offshore gas fields not overlooking the Mediterranean, but imports it from Israel.

On the other hand, Lebanon, Syria and Libya are excluded from the Forum, despite the fact that part of the gas in the Eastern Mediterranean belongs to them. The United States, France and the EU have announced their accession to the Forum. Turkey does not participate in it because of the dispute with Greece, which NATO however is committed to settling: “military delegations” from the two countries have already met six times at the NATO headquarters in Brussels. Meanwhile, in the eastern Mediterranean and in the neighboring Black Sea, a growing deployment of US naval forces in Europe is underway, with their headquarters in Naples Capodichino. Their “mission” is “to defend US and Allied interests, and discourage aggression.” The same “mission” for the US B-52 strategic bombers flying over the Eastern Mediterranean flanked by Greek and Italian fighters.

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