

# Egypt-Greece Relations

A Rich History and a Promising Future





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## **PREFACE**

**E**gypt and Greece are joined together by geo-historical ties, for both being located on the two shores of the Mediterranean since the beginning of the human civilization. There were thus continued and uninterrupted interactions between both civilizations, but with alternating periods of convergence and divergence, and even contradiction, over the years. Most prominently is the period of Greek invasions led by 'Alexander the Great', which resulted in the establishment of Alexandria. It was then followed by the 275-year Ptolemaic rule of Egypt, helping the Greek community remain in Egypt to this day.

The current situation in the Mediterranean basin, shaped by the huge gas discoveries there, is perhaps what urges interactions between Egypt and Greece to become more reinforced and to transform into strategic relations in the future, thereby helping both countries maintain their economic rights and achieve stability in the whole region. That is because these discoveries have awakened the old Turkish ambitions for controlling over the assets of these countries who previously suffered under the shackles of Ottoman rule from having their assets plundered for hundreds of years, in addition to the exploitation of their territories and peoples in extending the Ottoman rule and influence over the region.

However, this fact was early realized by both countries who accordingly initiated a partnership with Cyprus to curb Turkey's ambitions. The main features of this partnership became clear in the two tripartite summits between the three presidents of Egypt, Greece and Cyprus in 2014 and 2015 to shape the pattern of cooperation between them. This led to a convergence of their views on all Turkish moves in the region—particularly after signing of the late 'Maritime Boundary Delimitation Agreement' between Turkey and the Government of National Accord (GNA) in Libya—and thus the three countries declared their unified position in a joint statement on these moves.

Later, these converged points of view evolved into clearer tactic steps between Egypt and Greece, among which are holding joint

military trainings between their naval forces in the Mediterranean, as well as exchanging several ministerial visits. This eventually led to a number of strategic arrangements between the two countries, top of which is their establishment of the East Mediterranean Gas Forum (EMGF) in collaboration with other countries. More importantly, a 'Partial Maritime Boundary Delimitation Agreement' was signed between the two countries, after being delayed for two decades at least. The agreement rearranged the whole political scene in the East Mediterranean and reinforced a position based on the Law of the Sea. That is in the terms of an international agreement preserving Greece's right to its complete Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) against Turkey's ambitions; while allowing Egypt to utilize the western area of its EEZ in the Mediterranean in the meantime.

Based on this, the Egyptian Center for Strategic Studies (ECSS) devotes this issue to give a detailed analysis of Egyptian-Greek relations across different levels, starting from the historical roots between them to identify the development stages of these relations and their most significant milestones, and thus help understand the current state of relations between both countries. The focus then turns to addressing the rapprochement between both countries at the level of historical economic relations, where we find that the Greeks are the largest and most diverse foreign community in Egypt. They played a prominent role in the economic activities in Egypt, and even in the formulation of the Egyptian identity. Their influence extended to the Egyptian economy, by contributing to the development of textile industry in Egypt since its inception, whereas currently they have formed a joint working group in April 2019 to strengthen economic cooperation between both countries during the next phase. These endeavors were preceded by signing a number of cooperation agreements in October 2018 in the fields of industry, trade and education, in addition to promoting startups and entrepreneurship.

On the other hand, this issue addresses the endeavors made by both countries, along with Cyprus, to strengthen technical and security-related coordination within the Mediterranean basin

through the East Mediterranean Gas Forum (EMGF) since October 2018. That is to shed light on how shared visions between the three countries were able to transform the EMGF from just an idea into an international organization. The Forum now contributes—realistically and with international recognition—to guaranteeing the rights of the EMGF member states, particularly after four more countries have joined the Forum along with France's and the United States' requests to join as a member and a permanent observer respectively.

Later, a closer look is given to the strengths of economic relations between both countries, particularly at the level of direct foreign investment. Egypt has become a main investment destination for Greece that is currently ranked as the fourth largest European investor in Egypt with around 208 Greek companies and a volume of investments exceeding \$2 billion by the end of 2018. Another focus is given to bilateral trade cooperation between both countries, which is based principally on the Egyptian-EU Association Agreement signed in 2001. However, due to prior efforts, cooperation has rapidly developed where Egyptian exports to Greece increased by more than 400% during a period of five years only, while Greek exports to Egypt increased by about 10% during the same duration. The Egyptian-Greek trade relations are likely to deepen, driven by the political and security-based rapprochement between both countries.

The issue ends with a focus on the main achievement by the strategic alliance between Egypt and Greece, namely the partial delimitation of maritime boundaries that serves the economic, national security interests shared between both countries. On the one hand, this delimitation obstructs the Turkish attempts to usurp wide areas of the Greek EEZ; and also strengthens the Egyptian national project—of transforming Egypt into a regional hub for exporting energy—by preventing Turkey from cutting off the geographical contiguity between both countries. On the other hand, it allows both countries to initiate immediate economic exploitation of their EEZs, located in southeast Greece and in northwest Egypt. The exploitation of these areas has been de-

layed for years due to the absence of coordination between both countries, despite of their huge gas reserves that add more strategic strength to their alliance—by transforming one of them into a southern energy transit state to Europe, while strengthening the other's role as an energy hub to the continent.

**H**ence, the aim of this given overview is to explain that there were efforts taken to transform the geo-historical ties into strategic steps by enhancing the political relations between both countries. In addition, building upon this, other countries were included in an initiative for establishing an East Mediterranean Gas organization to serve the economic interests of both countries and their partners within the basin. Such development has been clearly manifested in the 'Maritime Boundary Delimitation Agreement' between both countries. In that connection, this issue aims to shed more light on these perspectives, supported by evidence to all facts mentioned therein.



# Relations between Egypt and Greece:

## A Long History of Mutual Cooperation and Rapprochement

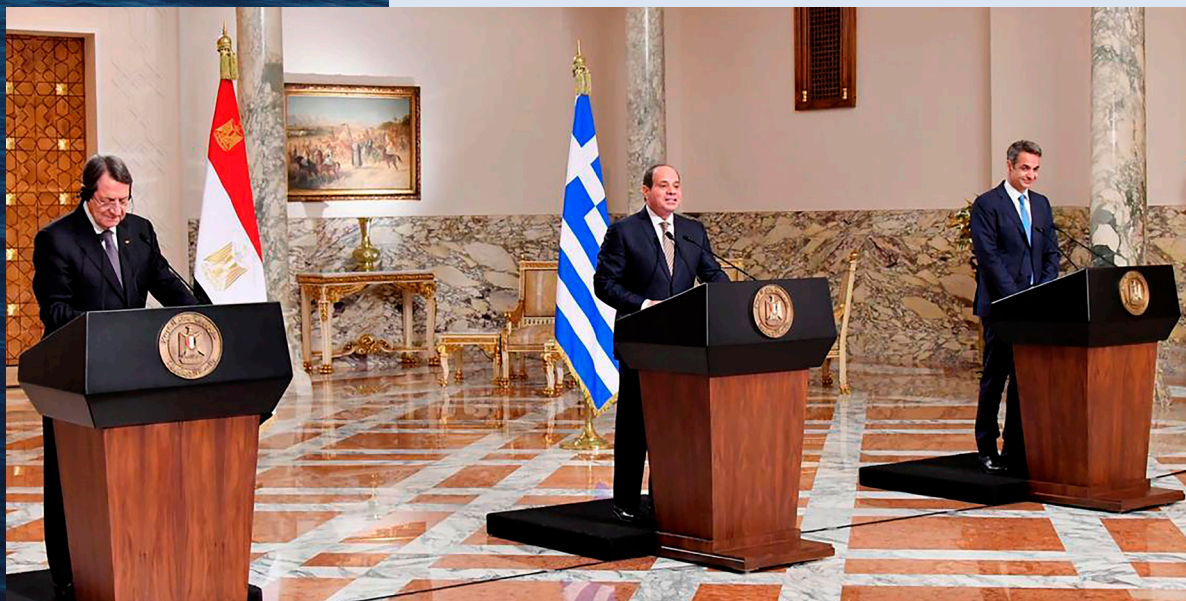
By Sara Nasseh  
Researcher at the ECSS

Relations between Egypt and Greece, dating back to 300 B.C., are among the most ancient international relations in the world. Both countries enjoy strong bilateral relations, with Egypt being Greece's gateway to Africa and Greece being Egypt's gateway to Balkan and East European countries. They share convergent views on different regional and international issues in general, which can be ascribed to the many historical, geographical and cultural ties between them. Another reason is the presence of a large Greek community in Egypt—which is one of the most prominent foreign communities in terms of population size, diversity and expansion—on the one hand, and the presence of a large Egyptian community in Greece on the other hand. Thus, this article gives a special focus on the development of historical relations between Egypt and Greece, as well as their efforts to strengthen their strategic relations and bilateral cooperation across various fields.

### **INTERACTION OF CIVILIZATIONS AND TRADE BETWEEN BOTH COUNTRIES**

#### ***Ancient Times***

Egyptian-Greek relations date back to early Pharaonic times almost during the reign



of King Menes, the founder of the First Dynasty of ancient Egypt, in the beginning of third millennium B.C. Many of the discovered Ancient Egyptian stone vessels, dating back to this period, had a later influence on the making of Greek stone vessels. Influence extended further to inspire the Greek writing system, known as Linear A, that consists of logographic signs (or logograms) somewhat similar to hieroglyphic writing. These cultural relations thereafter developed into broader trade relations.

Around the second millennium B.C., Greek influences on Egypt started to be more apparent. It was concluded in some ancient Egyptian attempts to imitate the floral style of Minoan (Crete) pottery, in addition to discovering many original Minoan stone vessels in Egypt. And even more so, Greek workers came to Egypt to assist in some construction works for a Middle-Kingdom pharaoh in the beginning of the second millennium B.C. Later in 570 B.C., Pharaoh Amasis II established a residence for the Greeks in east Alexandria. Egyptian-Greek relations continued growing until the Persian invasion of Egypt during the reign of Psamtik III in 525 B.C.

By the entry of Alexander the Great into the East, particularly in Egypt, and by his founding of the city of Alexandria in about 332 B.C.—then founding the Ancient Library of Alexandria, the beacon of knowledge in the ancient world; an influx of Greek students began to Alexandria to pore over the Library's thousands of collections and manuscripts and to study under its luminary scholars such as Aristarchus, Euclid and Archimedes. Since that time, culture has been playing a significant role in consolidating relations between the people of the two countries. During the reign of Alexander the Great, the city of Alexandria became the greatest harbor in the Mediterranean, mainly because of the Greeks' relentless efforts to revitalize Egypt's external trade—given that Alexandrian markets used to receive goods from Africa, India and China.

When Greek civilization evolved, merchants and sailors started flowing from Greece to Egypt. However, during the late period of ancient Egypt, Greeks came to serve as combatants in the Egyptian army against Assyrian and Persian invaders coming from the East. They were a helping hand for Egyptians to liberate their country more than once, and since then they assumed a significant position in Egypt.

As for trading in ancient times, Egypt used to import from Greece vessels made of stone and ivory in exchange for exports of oils and artistic artifacts to Greece, in addition to exporting metal tools that Egypt was famous for.

### ***Modern Time***

During the reign of Muhammad Ali Pasha, who came from Kavala in northern Greece, there was an increase in the Greek presence in Egypt. Greeks were renowned for constantly working in trade by engaging in different crafts and professions. Their number reached half of Alexandria's population during the reign of Khedive Ismail, but then continued to grow, reaching 37,000 people during the reign of Khedive Tawfiq in 1882.

The influxes of Greek immigrants to Egypt, as of the end of the eighteenth century, constituted a rich material for cultural and social heritage—amid a general consensus that these influxes contributed to the enrichment of diversity in Egyptian society. Greeks and Cypriots worked together with Egyptians to bring about a commercial, cultural and artistic renaissance, in addition to their engaging in different economic fields.

During the period from 1863 to 1933, Alexandria became the most famous center for learning philosophy and sciences in the Mediterranean region. It influenced many generations of Greek innovators throughout its history. In 1900, the Greek Embassy was established to strengthen bilateral relations between both countries.



Several Greek associations were established; the first was in Alexandria in 1843, then others followed across Egyptian cities. Since that time, the Greek community played an important role in Egyptian economy, particularly in the Alexandria Cotton Exchange. They established many schools, hospitals, clubs, stores, etc. The Greek community also prospered during the thirties of the past century, particularly when al-Yunani al-Mutamassir 'The Egyptianized Greek' Newspaper was first published in 1932 in both Greek and Arabic languages. That is in addition to the Greeks' significant role in the Egyptian cinema industry. In 1904, the Greek Association in Cairo, a distinguished cultural and social association in Egypt, was established.

In modern time, the Greek community in Egypt became a harmonious part of the Egyptian society. They were not a separate entity that constitutes an internal division within the upper class, but they were an integral part to most Egyptian classes, particularly newly-established ones. The community included senior capitalists working in new industries, businessmen, senior merchants and employees at different levels; in addition to senior, middle and

junior merchants, craftsmen, laborers and service workers. Greeks were also diverse in terms of culture and political affiliation. Their presence extended widely from large cities to small towns in urban and rural areas of Lower and Upper Egypt. Hence, the Greek presence in Egypt was never interrupted throughout their long history, but remained still—with staying members in Egypt who welcome new friendships and relations with Egyptians.

Members of the Greek community in Egypt worked across several sectors such as agriculture, beverage industry, cotton trade, tobacco industry and grain production, in addition to the financial sector. They obtained the ownership of a large number of stores, restaurants, cinemas, theaters and hotels; while many workers engaged in various activities of assistance to those in need in the city. In the beginning of the twentieth century, the number of Greeks in Alexandria increased to 120,000 people.

After the 23 July Revolution of 1952 and by the implementation of the Nationalization policy; the number of Greeks in Egypt declined; but they kept hoping to return back and established their own federations and associations.

## **CONTINUING RAPPROACHMENT**

In 2002, a bilateral protocol for the establishment and operation of cultural centers was signed between Egypt and Greece. Under the terms of this protocol, both countries recognized the establishment of the Greek Cultural Center in Alexandria—which stands as an overall Arab, not only Egyptian, beacon of culture that builds intellectual and cultural interconnections between both countries—and its Egyptian counterpart in Athens. That is in addition to the establishment of the Greek Cultural Center in Cairo. These cultural centers play a significant role in the rapprochement between both peoples through cultural exchange of artistic troupes, innovators and intellectuals from both countries, and also by achieving mutual understanding between academic institutions from both sides.

On the other hand, Egypt and Greece closely cooperate within the framework of the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM). The latest manifestation of such cooperation between them was the establishment of the East Mediterranean Gas Forum (EMGF) in 2019. The Forum aims to establish a regional gas market that serves the interests of EMGF members by ensuring supply and demand, optimizing resource development, rationalizing the cost of infrastructure, offering competitive prices and improving trade relations. It also aims to establish an international organization respecting the rights of members regarding their natural resources in accordance with the principles of international law, and to support their efforts to benefit from their oil and gas reserves in order to secure their energy needs for the well-being of their peoples.

Besides Egyptian-Greek economic and cultural relations, the geographical location of Greece contributed in strengthening military relations between both countries. In 2012, joint naval exercises began between the Egyptian and Greek Navies within Egypt's territorial waters. Exercises included combat operations in collaboration with the air forces to secure the tactical area of an Egyptian naval base and to destroy enemy units during periods of active combat operations of the enemy. Equipped with ships and aircrafts, exercises also included the implementation of support operations by Search and Rescue (SAR), transport operations, and maritime fuel supply; as well as practicing the right to visit and inspect of-fending vessels.

The Egyptian-Greek-Cypriot joint military exercise Medusa was launched in 2018, as a high-profile activity within the framework of the plan of joint exercises carried out by the Egyptian Armed Forces with Greece. That is to support distinguished relations, and strengthen military cooperation and exchange of expertise between them. The joint naval and aerial exercise was launched on the shores of the Mediterranean in Egypt. The training included the implementation of several activities, among which are the planning and management of joint naval and air combat operations to enhance the skills of commanders and officers, and the exchange of expertise between the Egyptian, Greek and Cypriot sides—in order to contribute to enhancing the combat efficiency of the participating forces to reach the highest levels of efficiency and readiness to carry out any joint tasks under different circumstances.

***Egypt and Greece closely cooperate within the framework of the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM).***



Six summits were held during the period from 2014 to 2018, bringing President Abdel-Fattah al-Sisi, together with the Cypriot President and the Greek Prime Minister. The three leaders, during these summits, reaffirmed their intent to enhance fields of mutual cooperation between their countries—particularly the energy field, and gas exploration and transit across the Mediterranean.

### **EGYPTIAN INITIATIVES FOR PEOPLE-TO-PEOPLE COMMUNICATION**

President Abdel-Fattah al-Sisi launched the ‘Roots Revival’ Initiative in 2018. The initiative is meant to strengthen relations between Egypt, Greece and Cyprus and to revive the historic tourism for the Greek and Cypriot communities that used to live in the country during previous times. It comes as a message of love on the part of Egypt toward everyone who lived on its land and left an impact or human heritage. It aims to organize visits for the Greeks to areas where they had lived and to link the new generations to the Egyptian civilization. Each visit would end with a forum to

discuss the participants’ ideas and recommendations, thereby submitting these recommendations to the top-level leadership layer for discussion and further consideration while enhancing relations at the levels of trade, culture and tourism.

After the first round of the ‘Roots Revival’ Initiative had achieved its set objectives, the Ministry of Immigration launched the second round in the end of 2018. It was meant to promote medical tourism between both countries. In addition, the second round witnessed promoting the ‘National Campaign to Combat Hepatitis C’ launched by President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi. The campaign came into force as of October 2019 and it included conducting comprehensive medical screenings for all Egyptians above 18 years old, with the aim of eliminating the disease completely.

The third round was launched in 2019 and was intended to strengthen trade cooperation between Egyptian, Greek and Cypriot communities living in Australia. This came by coordination for holding a number of meetings with Australian ambassadors, officials and representatives of the

three communities, in addition to other planned meetings with businessmen and members of Australian and Arab Chambers of Commerce in Melbourne.

In 2020, both countries discuss methods of launching the fourth edition of the 'Roots Revival' Initiative. This round aims to introduce new generations with the mutual culture, history and challenges between Egypt, Greece and Cyprus. Visits are currently organized for young people from Egypt, Greece and Cyprus, aged from 18 to 30 years old, to introduce them with the strength of mutual relations between their countries. Young participants would be hosted during these visits and a final documentary of the trip would be prepared to share their experience, standing as a message from Egyptian and Greek youth about the safety, security and tourism movement between their countries.

## **CONCLUSION**

As evident, current Egyptian-Greek relations are closely interlinked; they have witnessed unprecedented political and economic dynamism by the exchange of high-level visits between both sides. They have also witnessed the signing of some agreements and declarations, such as have not occurred probably during the last 30 years. That is in order to strengthen bilateral relations and promote consultations between both countries on regional issues of common interest.

The foregoing shows that the strategic relations between Egypt and Greece, extending throughout history to this day, are clearly reflected in their cooperation in various economic, cultural, political and

even military fields. However, this cooperation still needs to be elevated to a higher level, in conformity with the attributes and ambitions of both countries; while taking into consideration the possible benefiting from their memberships in some regional economic groupings.

It is expected that the year 2020 would be a real outgrowth of these historical relations between the two countries. It would include mutual understanding between both countries across various fields, exchange of visits between political leaders, increase in the bilateral trading volume, and momentum of cultural and tourism events, along with the ongoing expansion of the 'Roots Revival' initiative. In addition, there are several potential fields of mutual cooperation such as the energy sector as well as benefiting from the natural wealth in the Mediterranean Sea, particularly after the recent signing of the Maritime Boundary Delimitation Agreement between Egypt and Greece.

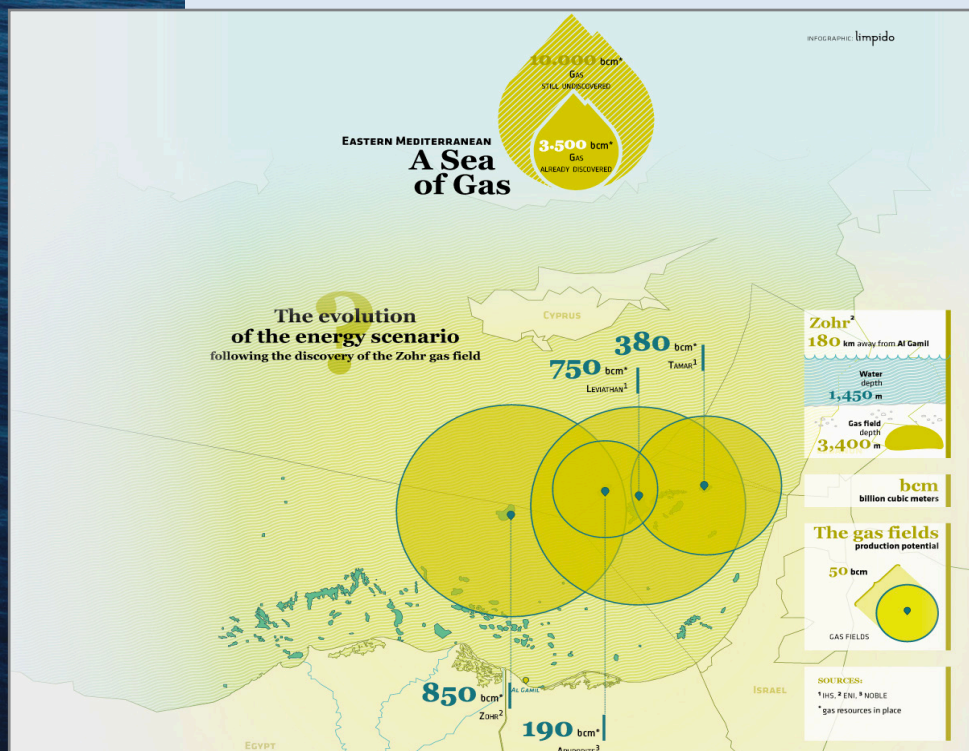
**After the first round of the 'Roots Revival' Initiative had achieved its set objectives, the Ministry of Immigration launched the second round in the end of 2018.**

# EastMed Gas Forum and Egyptian - Greek Relations

Dr. Omar Elhosseiny  
Researcher at the ECSS

The East Mediterranean Gas Forum (EMGF) has been established as an international body in Cairo at the beginning of this year, coinciding with the intensity of rivalry between the Mediterranean countries over natural gas exploration and extraction in the region. The Forum aims to establish a regional gas market that serves the interests of the members by ensuring supply and demand, optimizing resource development, rationalizing the cost of infrastructure, offering competitive prices and improving trade relations. This was the idea that Egypt, Greece and Cyprus called for at the very beginning.

In 2010, the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) estimated that the East Mediterranean basin area could hold about 3.5 trillion cubic meters of gas and 1.7 billion barrels of oil. This was before later studies in 2017 indicated the discovery of more than three trillion cubic meters of gas in the region, with the possibility of triple-double increase of these discoveries. Eni, the Italian oil company responsible for drilling operations at some of the natural gas sites found in the region, suggested that there could be a natural gas surplus of 40-50 billion cubic me-



ters per year, available for export. Despite that the current level of results in the region hardly reaches 1.5% of the world's natural gas resources; this remains a significant percentage within the territory for many political and economic considerations.

The Forum includes all East Mediterranean countries, with a total of seven member states, except the Republic of Turkey that is viewed as a source of threat by EMGF members.

### ***Inception of the EMGF Idea***

At first, Egypt, Greece, and Cyprus agreed to establish an East Mediterranean Gas Forum in October 2018. This came before the energy ministers of the seven states met in Cairo, on 14 and 15 January 2019, to discuss the establishment of the East Mediterranean Gas Forum (EMGF) at the invitation of Egyptian Minister of Petroleum Tariq al-Mulla. They announced their intention to respect the rights of members regarding their natural resources in accordance with the principles of international law, and to support their efforts to benefit from their oil and gas reserves in order to secure their energy needs for the well-being of their peoples. In addition, they explained the positive impact on the energy sector and economic development in the region.

The ministers agreed that the main objectives of the EMGF will include, but not limited to, the following<sup>1</sup>:

- a. To establish a regional gas market that serves the interests of the members by ensuring supply and demand, optimizing resource development, rationalizing the cost of infrastructure, offering competitive prices and improving trade relations.
- b. To ensure the supply and demand for members while optimizing resource de-

velopment, ensuring the efficient use of existing and new infrastructure with competitive pricing and improved trade relations.

- c. To strengthen cooperation by creating systematic dialogue and formulating common regional policies on natural gas, including regional gas policies.
- d. To deepen awareness of the interdependence and benefits that can be gained from cooperation and dialogue among members, in accordance with the principles of international law.
- e. To support members who have gas reserves and who are current gas producers in the region to capitalize on their existing and future reserves by enhancing their cooperation with the parties of consumption and transit in the region, taking advantage of existing infrastructure and developing more infrastructure options to accommodate current and future discoveries.
- f. Assisting consuming countries in securing their needs and encouraging their cooperation with the transit countries to develop gas policies in the region, thus enabling the establishment of a sustainable partnership between the actors at all stages of the gas industry.
- g. Ensuring sustainability and environmental considerations when it comes to gas discoveries, production, transportation and infrastructure construction, as well as improving the integration of gas and other energy sources, particularly renewable energy and electricity networks.

### ***EMGF to Guarantee the Rights of Members***

The East Mediterranean Gas Forum (EMGF) was established following the regional efforts led by Egypt, Greece and Cyprus, and particularly after being signed by the Fo-

1- <https://www.sis.gov.eg/section/529458/?lang=en-us>

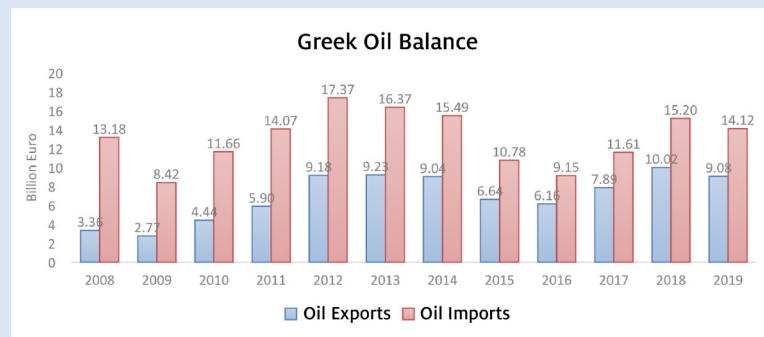


rum’s member states—including Egypt, Greece, Cyprus, Israel, Jordan, Palestine and Italy—and by major companies such as Eni and ExxonMobil. In addition, France and the United States officially asked to join the EMGF, as a member and a permanent observer respectively.

Greek Energy Minister Kostis Hatzidakis also invited the EMGF members to work on bringing Turkey into the fold, provided that Ankara would respect the international law. This comes after Turkey has escalated tensions in the Mediterranean region due to its legally-dubious gas exploration activities off the Cypriot coast and its maritime boundary agreement with the Government of National Accord (GNA) in Libya. Accordingly, this led to political clashes between Turkey and the interests of EMGF member states, particularly Greece whose political relations with Turkey have not been harmed to this extent since the late twentieth century.

For its part, Turkey’s Foreign Ministry described the Forum as an ‘unrealistic initiative’ started for ‘political motives’ designed to shut Ankara out of the East Mediterranean gas rush. The Turkish President also announced that Turkey would push ahead with its gas exploration efforts and begin drilling as soon as possible this year.<sup>2</sup>

2- <https://enterprise.press/stories/202019/01//eastmed-gas-nations-finalize-forum-charter-10012/>



### ***Greek-Turkish Rivalry over Gas Rights***

There is growing fear of possible military confrontation between Greece and Turkey, if the latter continued gas-drilling in the marine areas it considers part of its continental shelf area. However, Greece, together with the EMGF member states, considers these Turkish claims illegitimate as they deprive the Greek Islands of their continental shelf area, and of their exclusive economic zones (EEZs), even territorial waters. This may result in the need for a move to prevent violation of Greece’s sovereign rights.

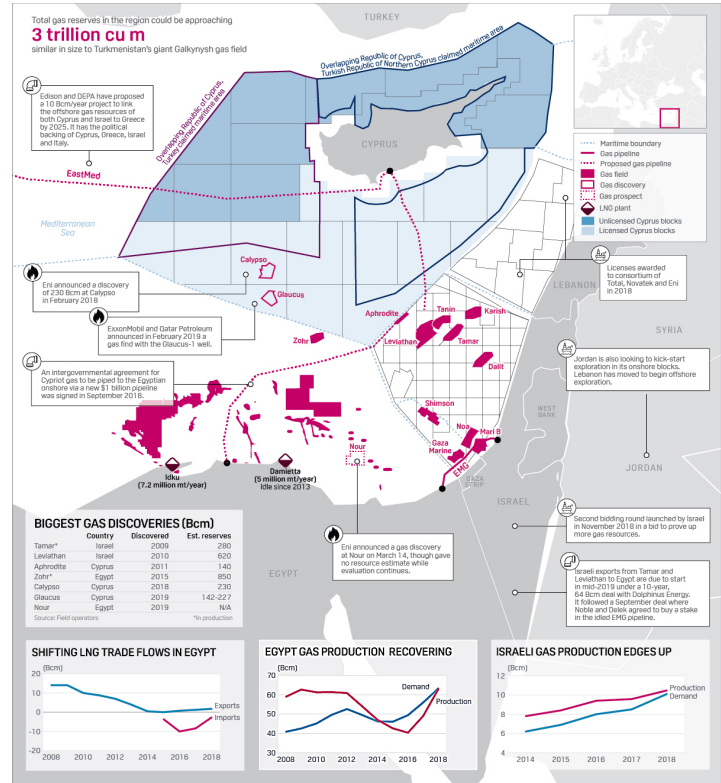
The EMGF member states condemned the Ankara-Tripoli Maritime Agreement signed in November 2019 of infringement upon the sovereign rights of some member states, particularly Greece, in terms of territorial waters. In addition, the Cyprus dispute is a deeply complex issue because of the so-called Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus, comprising the northern portion of the island, which has been only declared

by Turkey with no international recognition. The current reality is that Turkish research drilling is occurring without interruption in Cypriot waters. The European Union (EU) remains unable to play a decisive political role in the region and is attempting to accommodate the diplomatic pressure of Athens and Nicosia with its continued economic cooperation with Ankara. If Turkish vessels find natural gas in the EEZ of Cyprus, which has not yet happened, the crisis will enter a new phase, with unpredictable consequences.<sup>3</sup>

### Egyptian Support for Greece

Under these escalating circumstances, it appears that Egypt is Greece's most important ally in this conflict. Several times during past years, Egypt has diplomatically defied the continuous attempts by Turkey to explore for gas in Mediterranean areas, which are not owned by Turkey. It was the effort that markedly succeeded in restricting and slowing down Erdogan's unbridled expansionary ambitions. The credit for launching the EMGF, after being just an idea, goes to the shared vision between Egypt and Greece, helping the Forum make a realistic, and internationally recognized, contribution in guaranteeing the rights of member countries. Efforts of mutual cooperation between Egypt and Greece have been crowned by them signing the Maritime Boundary Delimitation Agreement that came in direct conflict with Turkey's attempts to gain international recognition for its controversial boundary delimitation agreement with the Government of National Accord (GNA) in Libya.

3- <https://besacenter.org/perspectives-papers/greece-israel-opportunity/>



Source: SGP Global Platts, SGP Global Platts Analytics, EIA, BP Statistical Review of World Energy, Israeli Ministry of National Infrastructures, Noble Energy, Egypt Ministry of Petroleum

### Challenges to the Future of East Mediterranean Region

**Efforts of mutual cooperation between Egypt and Greece came in direct conflict with Turkey's attempts to gain international recognition for its controversial boundary delimitation agreement.**

Still, many of the determinants of future cooperation in the East Mediterranean region are unpredictable. This is due to the accelerating pace of gas discoveries in the region and the inability to accurately estimate the total amount of gas reserves at each territory within the region. In addition, not all operations of development, export and transfer to Europe have been agreed yet. However, no doubt that the establishment of EMGF and the recent signing of the Maritime Boundary Delimitation Agreement between Egypt and Greece, open up a vast field for the development and optimum utilization of natural resources for the interest of their peoples. But the major obstacle continues to be the intransigent stance of Turkey which shows no respect to the International Law of Maritime Boundary Delimitation and acts unilaterally in opposition to all EMGF members, particularly to Egypt and Greece.

# Mutual Benefits: The Egyptian-Greek Maritime Boundary Delimitation Deal

Dr. Mohamed Shadi  
Researcher at the ECSS

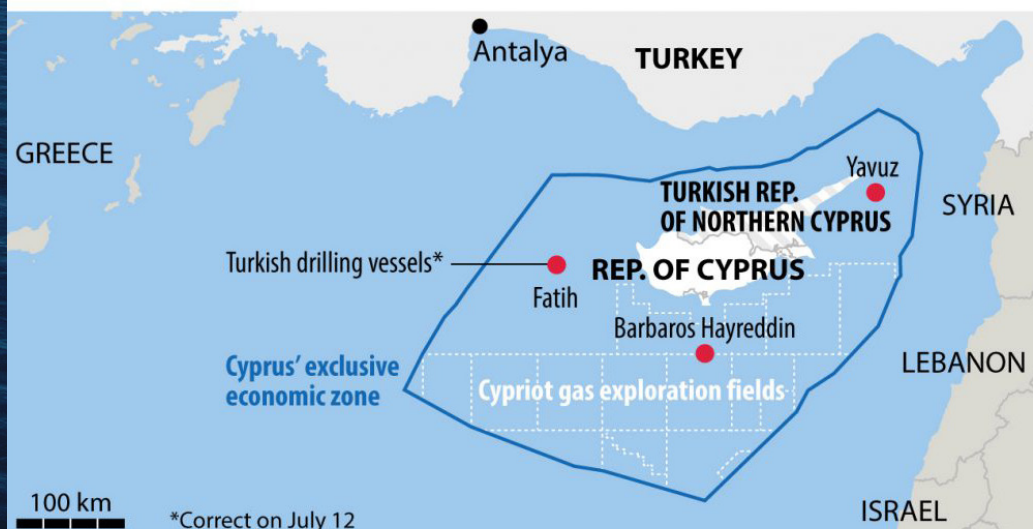
On 6 August 2020, Egypt and Greece signed a maritime boundary delimitation agreement to set up the exclusive economic zones (EEZ), at a time Turkey imposes maximum pressure within the East Mediterranean Basin, which mostly swindles the two countries of their economic interests. Thus, both Egypt and Greece have taken the initiative to delimitate the boundaries between them, thereby securing their shared interests. In this context, the article aims to explain the practices adopted by Turkey, and how the delimitation deal secures the interests of both Egypt and Greece at present, and stands as a beginning for future economic partnership between them.

## **FIRST: TURKISH OBSTACLES IN THE TERRITORY**

Turkey has made every effort to impede any economic exploitation of the natural gas discoveries in the Mediterranean. It has imposed itself on the territory in general to deduct, as much as possible, from this wealth of resources from which it is excluded by the rules of international law. It first began to conduct explorations in Cyprus' EEZ with the alleged claim of preserving the rights of Turkish Cypriots in

## **Natural gas dispute in the Mediterranean**

There are thought to be large gas deposits in the Mediterranean, south of Cyprus



dpa•30539

Source: dpa, Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung, vesselfinder.com, OpenStreetMap contributors

the Republic of Northern Cyprus that is ‘only declared by Turkey with no international recognition’. However, despite that this so-called Northern Cyprus region is bordering Turkey, those explorations went far beyond; they were conducted at the EEZ of South Cyprus, or the southern part of the island, as shown in the map.

From this map, it is apparent that the two drilling vessels: Fatih and Barbaros Hayreddin Pasa have entered into the EEZ of South Cyprus. They conducted several drilling operations—e.g. in July and October 2019—in exploration blocks that had been already licensed to ENI and TOTAL, and these violations were resumed back during July 2020, particularly in the two Cypriot blocks: 8 and 9. This was preceded by Turkey’s obstruction of exploration vessels belonging to Eni from operating their work in February 2018, though being licensed by the Cypriot government.

Moreover, in November 2019, Turkey opted to sign a boundary deal with the Government of National Accord (GNA) in Libya, whose legal mandate is expired, to define the maritime boundaries between Turkey and Libya, despite not being riparian to each other. This agreement came as a violation of the two EEZs of Cyprus and Greece, as shown in the following map:



The Turkish EEZ was ‘designated’ in such way to prevent the two producing countries: Israel and Cyprus, from building the East-Med Pipeline that is planned to transport gas from its two production areas to Greece,

then to consumption areas in Europe. It also aims to obstruct Egypt from extending electrical interconnection lines with Greece and then to Europe, without passing through the Turkish EEZ, thereby impeding any exploitation of the produced resources without Turkish involvement. That is why Egypt and Greece expedited delimitation of the undefined maritime boundaries between them to secure their interests and ease Turkish pressures.

## **SECOND: THE DELIMITATION DEAL AND PROTECTING THE INTERESTS OF BOTH COUNTRIES**

The signing of the delimitation deal has come as an end to decades of economic abandonment for the common boundary zone between Egypt and Greece, and to prevent Turkey’s obstruction of natural resources exploitation projects within the whole basin. In what follows, we clarify the benefits (for both countries) of having this delimitation completed.

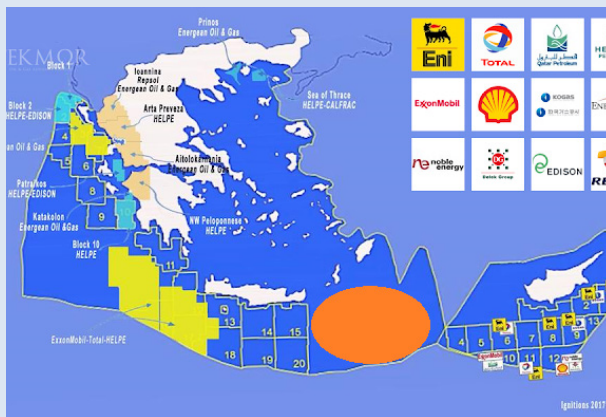
### **Greece:**

We have earlier pointed out that the Turkish Maritime Boundary Delimitation Deal with the Government of National Accord (GNA) mainly deducts from the Greek EEZ. That is to say, Greece’s first benefit from delimitating the maritime boundaries with Egypt is the provision of a legal framework regulating its undefined maritime boundaries in the East Mediterranean region for coming decades, thereby confining the results of the Turkish-Libyan deal by:

- Providing Greece with a legal justification, along with the Law of the Sea, in the form of an international agreement that contradicts with the Turkish-Libyan deal, thus strengthening Greece’s position by preserving its EEZ before international organizations and the international community in general.

- Causing Turkey to miss out on the opportunity of delimitating its maritime boundaries with Egypt which is considered riparian to it. During the last period, this delimitation has been a persistently pursued aim by Turkey by offering a bigger EEZ than that possible outcome of delimitating boundaries with Greece. But, Egypt refused this offer in adherence to the rules of international law in general, and to the Law of the Sea in particular.

The maritime zone in the southeast of Crete Island is economically untapped due to the undefined boundaries with Egypt since decades, in contrary to the zones of Ionian Sea in west Greece which were proposed for exploration during 2019 and 2020. Hence, international companies have already begun surveying and exploration activities there, despite predictions of huge amounts of oil and gas in the East Mediterranean basin. The following map shows the Greek zones where current discovery and exploration operations are taking place.



The map shows vast areas at the Greece EEZ, highlighted in orange, which are free of exploration due to the undefined boundaries with Egypt, despite predictions of huge amounts of gas in these areas.

Delimitating boundaries with Egypt can help Greece transform into a transit country of European energy from the south, right after the completion of the East-Med Pipeline project with both Cyprus and Israel—a project that aims to transfer gas from the basin producing countries to inside Europe across Greek

lands, in addition to gaining related price preferences and transit tariffs that would serve the Greek economy. Greece also receives deliveries of Egyptian liquefied gas from Idku and Damietta through Revithoussa Station, west of Athens, and has electrical interconnection lines with Egypt. But these projects were all threatened by the alleged Turkish EEZ and its consequences, including interruption of geographic connection between Greece and East-Med countries.

### Egypt:

For Egypt, the agreement allows exploitation of discoveries at the western zone of Mediterranean boundaries, as well as the extraction of its natural resources. However, despite that the eastern zone is more privileged due to the boundary delimitation between Cyprus and Israel, it remains far from being exploited because international companies do not work at any zones with undefined or contested boundaries.

The agreement allows Egypt to complete its planned transformation into a regional hub for energy trading by:

- First, liquefying the gas imported from Israel and Cyprus and transferring it to European lands through Greece. Egypt signed a deal with Israel early last year—between the private Egyptian company Dolphinus Holdings on the one hand, and the two companies: Delek Drilling and its U.S. partner Noble Energy on the other hand—to export an estimated \$15 billion of natural gas from the two fields: Tamar and Leviathan. Then, in October 2019, the gas deal was amended to increase the exported amount to Egypt from 32 billion cubic meters as specified in the original deal, to 60 billion cubic meters of gas over 15 years. Egypt also signed a deal with Cyprus on 19 September last year in Nicosia, to build a gas pipeline connecting the two countries to transfer the Cypriot gas to Egyptian gas liquefaction stations. This agreement came into effect right after it was published in Egypt’s Official Newspaper (al-Gareeda al-Rasmia) on 5 July 2019.



- Second, completing its projects of electric power trading that would be of no real value if not interconnected with Europe through Greece. Egypt signed an estimated €2-billion electricity interconnection deal with Cyprus—and from which to Greece—through a cable with a capacity of 3000 megawatts per hour. These capacities are increasing as the number of cables, as well as Egyptian growing capacities in power generation, increases. In addition, Egypt works toward having electric interconnection with Saudi Arabia through a cable, with a capacity of up to 3000 megawatts; while it already started electric interconnection with Sudan at a capacity of 70 megawatts per hour, and with Jordan through an electric cable with a capacity up to 550 megawatts per hour. During 2018, Egypt sold a total of 188 gigawatts to Jordan through this cable.

The agreement also allows Egypt and Greece to cooperate in the field of prospecting and exploration for oil and natural gas, with the presence of large Greek companies such as Energean, along with Egyptian startup companies such as Egas and others.

In addition, both countries possess vast, land and sea sites that have not been discovered yet, and through which the role of these companies can be maximized and pushed forward to achieve economic gains. This will accordingly bring benefit to both economies which currently suffer the heavily-pressing COVID-19 pandemic, especially on one main economic pillar for both countries: the tourism sector.

To sum up, the Egyptian-Greek Maritime Boundary Delimitation Deal comes as a strategic move for strengthening the existing cooperation between both countries. That is by protecting their current economic interests which is threatened by the boundary delimitation deal between Turkey and the Government for National Accord (GNA) in Libya. In addition, the Egyptian-Greek deal stands as a pillar for future cooperation between both countries, particularly in the field of prospecting and exploration for oil and natural gas, and also for the development of their shared economic relations as a whole.

**The Egyptian-Greek Maritime Boundary Delimitation Deal comes as a strategic move for strengthening the existing cooperation between both countries.**

# Egyptian - Greek

## Trade Relations to Prepare for the Next Step

By **Basant Gamal**  
Researcher at the ECSS

On 6 August 2020, Egyptian Minister of Foreign Affairs Sameh Shoukry and his Greek counterpart Nikos Dendias signed a delimitation agreement for the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) between the two countries in the eastern Mediterranean—an area that is believed to hold huge reserves of oil and natural gas. This new agreement is likely to help reach more regional cooperation between Egypt and Greece in the field of energy based on their membership in the East Mediterranean Gas Forum (EMGF). For his part, in a press conference, Greek Minister of Foreign Affairs Nikos Dendias affirmed that the agreements between Egypt and Greece are based on respect for the fundamental principles of international law, while emphasizing the continuous coordination between the two countries at the highest levels. He also referred that the coming period would witness bilateral cooperation across various fields.



This step followed the Government of National Accord's and Turkey's signing of two agreements—one for security cooperation and the other in the maritime field—in November 2019, which sparked widespread criticism from the Egyptian and Greek sides. In several pronouncements, both countries affirmed that they consider these agreements 'null and illegal', in addition to the illegality of the Government of National Accord's signing of memorandums with other countries, contrary to the terms of reference in the Skhirat Agreement which was signed in Morocco in 2015.

From that standpoint, this article addresses the history of bilateral trade relations between Egypt and Greece during the period from 2015 to 2019, along with highlighting future prospects for these relations.

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### **MILESTONES IN THE BILATERAL TRADE RELATIONS**

The Egypt-EU Association Agreement, signed in June 2001, is the main regulator of trade relations between Egypt and Greece. The trade-related part of the agreement was put into operation as of January 2004, then it fully entered into force in June 2004.

The Egyptian-Greek relations are one of the oldest political relations between two countries in the world, with a history dating to around 300 BC. High-level officials stressed the importance of keeping trade relations between both countries as a top priority for each side. In addition, Greece is viewed as a key link between Egypt and EU countries for being one of Egypt's most significant trading partners in the Mediterranean Basin region. That is due to the central Egyptian-Greek role in connecting the markets in Central and Eastern Europe to those in the Arab Gulf and Africa, on the trade level.

Over the past five years, Egyptian-Greek trade relations have been revitalized, with an increase in the official state visits and summits held between both countries to discuss ways to deepen cooperation in trade and economy, and to capitalize on the 'geographic location' potential of the two countries in some sectors such as energy and transport.

In the same context, Egyptian officials declared on many occasions the importance of developing joint strategies to pave the way for private sectors to implement concrete cooperation projects. That is to serve both the Egyptian and Greek economies as part of the endeavors aimed at strengthening bilateral cooperation between both countries, particularly economic and trade relations.



The year 2015, for example, witnessed three successive official visits from the Greek side to Egypt to discuss ways to further develop the bilateral economic relations, particularly in the fields of trade and investment; in addition to discussing developments in the region at both the international and regional levels and their implications on security and stability in the Middle East.

In 2018, President Abdel-Fattah al-Sisi participated in the Tripartite Summit between Egypt, Greece and Cyprus, where several agreements were concluded. The most important was the signing of a memorandum of technical cooperation in the customs field; a memorandum of understanding in the field of small enterprises; as well as a social insurance agreement to regulate the insurance entitlements of Egyptian workers during their service in Greece, thereby ensuring their full rights and entitlements upon returning home. Then finally, there was a cooperation memorandum signed between Egypt, Cyprus and Greece in the field of investment.

Later, in April 2019, the Egyptian and Greek governments agreed to set up a joint working group to enhance economic cooperation between the two countries during the next phase—with the aim of developing a specific plan of action to reach concrete results positively impacting the economic relations between Egypt and Greece. This

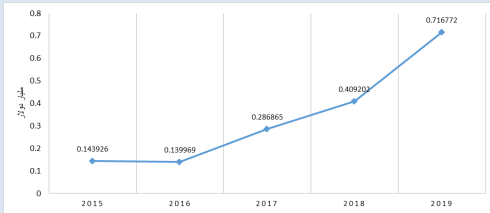
came during the visit of Egyptian Minister of Trade and Industry, Amr Nassar to the Greek Capital, Athens, where the future of economic cooperation between the two countries was discussed, along with a number of economic files on the global agenda during the current stage.

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### ***DEVELOPMENT OF Egyptian-Greek Trade Relations***

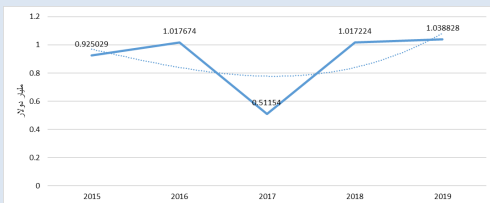
The trade relations between Egypt and Greece have been characterized by their rapid growth. The following line graphs, Graph (1) and Graph (2), show the movement of exports and imports between the two countries during the period from 2015 to 2019.

As shown in Graph (1), Egyptian exports to Greece saw a remarkable increase during the aforementioned period from USD 143.926 million in 2015 to USD 716.772 million in 2019, with a rise of 407%. Egyptian exports to Greece in 2019 still represent limited amount of the total Egyptian exports in that year, estimated at only about 2.3% of the total Egyptian exports in 2019. Yet, given the general ‘trend-line’ representing the development of these exports, we find that this percentage is more likely to increase during the next few years.



Source: Trade Map; Bilateral Trade between Egypt and Greece  
Graph (1): Amount of Egyptian Exports to Greece (2015-2019)  
(in USD billion)

As shown in Graph (2), Egyptian imports from Greece increased between the two years (2015 and 2016) by 10% on an annual basis. But they then decreased by 49.5% to USD 0.5 billion in 2017, with the overall drop in Egypt's total imports from USD 70.64 billion to USD 66.76 billion during that year—following the EGP floatation in 2016 which led to a decline in imports. The rate of imports picked up again by 2018 and until last year (2019) to USD 1.03 billion, recording thereby a rise of about 12% during the period from 2015 to 2019. Thus, we observe that the overall direction of the 'trend-line' is a positive one.



Source: Trade Map; Bilateral Trade between Egypt and Greece  
Graph (2): Amount of Egyptian Imports from Greece (2015-2019) (in USD billion)

## PROSPECTS FOR EGYPTIAN-GREEK RELATIONS

It can be said, accordingly, that the Egyptian-Greek economic relations have seen a remarkable progress over the past years. Most important aspects of this progress were represented in signing the Maritime Boundary Delimitation Agreement which—as described by Egyptian Minister of Foreign Affairs Sameh Shoukry—reflects the privileged relations between Egypt and Greece



and prepares for further economic and trade cooperation between these two leading countries in the Eastern Mediterranean. Thus, all predictions and indications suggest the development of Egyptian-Greek bilateral relations in the near future, positively impacting their economies. This would be supported by having common future visions toward several cross-cutting issues—whether economic, political, or security-related issues. It is a fact that the ongoing and sustained communication between both governments and businessmen is the main pushing factor for the bilateral economic relations between both countries.

In the future, Egyptian-Greek economic relations can develop, supported by the huge opportunities open to both countries in the fields of establishing logistic hubs and free trade zones (FTZs), construction, information technology, agricultural development, food industry and energy.

**All predictions and indications suggest the development of Egyptian-Greek bilateral relations in the near future, positively impacting their economies.**

# Status of Investment and Cooperation Agreements between Egypt and Greece

By **Kanzy Amr Seireg**  
Researcher at the ECSS

The Egyptian-Greek relations are historical ones indeed, dating back to 300 B.C. And yet currently, both countries strive to maintain the strength of these relations by fostering mutual cooperation and seeking agreements that serve the interests of both countries. Among these interests are the obviously-growing investments between the two countries during the last period.

## *Investments between Egypt and Greece*

Investments between Egypt and Greece have been significantly growing since 2004. Among the most important are the acquisitions made by the TITAN Cement as well as Vardinogiannis Group's obtaining of exploration rights, according to the Marefa encyclopedia. The Egyptian Orascom Company also bought the Greek company TIM Hellas Telecommunications for €3.4 billion in 2007.

In March 2020, Ambassador of Greece in Egypt Nikolaos Garilidis, according to al-Ahram Online, said that Egypt is a top destination for Greek investment. The fields of Greek investment in Egypt are mainly



concentrated in cement manufacturing; oil and gas exploration and extraction; construction; food industry; manufacturing of building materials and paints; aluminum production; distribution and logistics; irrigation systems; banking; sea and air transportation; and training services.

Greece, as reported by the GREEK world REPORTER, is the fourth largest European investor in Egypt, with around 208 Greek companies in the Egyptian market. In an interview to Sada el-Balad English published in 2019, Vice President of the Egyptian-Greek Business Council Medhat Stefanos said the volume of Greek investments in the Egyptian market exceeded \$2 billion by the end of 2018.

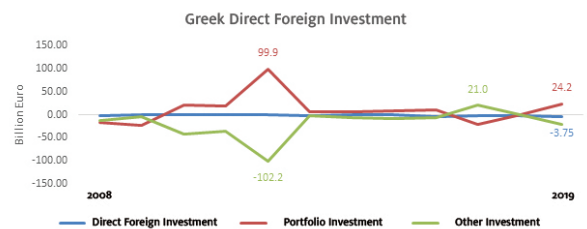
Egypt, Greece and Cyprus, particularly during the last six years, strived to strengthen their interrelations. During the Greek economic crisis that began in 2010, Greece moved toward establishing strong cooperation with several countries, including Egypt. This was through international initiatives and cooperation to strengthen the Greek economy. The same happened in 2014, when a tripartite summit between Egypt, Greece and Cyprus was held in Cairo as an attempt to help Egypt overcome the economic crisis. Egyptian President Abdel-Fattah al-Sisi, Cypriot President Nicos Anastasiades and Greek Prime Minister Antonis Samaras agreed then to encourage foreign investments in the Egyptian economy and infrastructure, and to participate in the Cairo Economic Conference which was held in 2015.

As declared by Egypt's State Information Service, a number of cooperation agreements in the fields of industry, trade and education were signed in October 2018. They included, namely, a cooperation agreement on the technical cooperation in the customs field; a memorandum of understanding in the field of education; a memorandum of understanding to boost cooperation in the field of small enterprises and entrepreneurship; and a cooperation agreement between the General Authority for Investment and

Free Zones (GAFI), Enterprise Greece and Invest Cyprus.

In April 2019, Egyptian Minister of Trade and Industry, Amr Nassar; and Greek Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Economy and Development, Yannis Dragasakis, agreed to set up a joint working group to enhance economic cooperation between both countries and identify the target sectors. In January 2020, the three countries made concerted efforts to enhance their regional cooperation in the field of natural gas in the East Mediterranean region, and to strengthen the linkages between them in the fields of petroleum, gas and attracting companies.

In May 2020, Egypt and Greece discussed ways of cooperation to return tourism between both countries amid the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, while taking preventive measures. They also discussed arranging joint tourism programs to be promoted to the world. In August 2020, Egypt and Greece signed an agreement for the delimitation of the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) between both countries in the east of the Mediterranean Sea—a region that includes big reserves of oil and gas.



Thus, we note that the economic relations and agreements, that brought Egypt and Greece together, have undergone considerable development during the last six years. They proceeded to cover a wide range of activities, and to open up broader prospects for pushing relations toward further development in the future.

# Egypt and Greece:

## An Exemplar of Win-Win Relations

By Sara Nasseh  
Researcher at the ECSS

Since antiquity, Egypt and Greece have been enjoying strong bilateral relations dating back to 300 BC. The official diplomatic and economic relations between them began in 1833. There is a large Greek community living in Egypt, with a strong influence on the Egyptian economy. This has thus helped deepen historical, geographical and cultural ties between both countries. In addition, Egypt and Greece hold convergent views on various regional and international issues, and on the proposed strategies for dealing with developments in the region as well.

### **ECONOMIC COOPERATION BETWEEN BOTH COUNTRIES**

Egypt and Greece are linked by privileged economic relations that live up to a comprehensive strategic partnership. For Egypt, Greece is one of the most important trade partners in the Mediterranean Basin region and its gate to Balkan and East European countries; whereas for Greece, Egypt is the gate to African countries.

By the end of 2018, Greek investments in the Egyptian market reached USD 3 billion, which placed Greece in the fifth position



among the EU investing countries in Egypt. The total number of Greek investment projects in Egypt reached 160 projects valued at USD 155 million.

These projects spread across various production and service sectors, top of which are chemical industries, textile industry, construction materials industry, food industry, trading and consultancy services, as well as transport and public services. Egypt is an important trade partner for Greece due to the established collaboration between Greece's Port of Piraeus and the Suez Canal, aimed at promoting trade across the Mediterranean Basin.

Due to the trading volume between both countries, Egypt and Greece agreed to set up a joint working group in April 2019 to enhance economic cooperation between them during the next phase. This working group would identify the targeted sectors through collaboration between the Egyptian Ministry of Trade and Industry and the Greek Ministry of Economic Development. That is in order to develop a specific plan of action to reach concrete results positively impacting the economic relations between Egypt and Greece.

With regard to defending the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) in the Eastern Mediterranean, Egypt and Greece expressed their deep concern toward the current escalation within the maritime areas at the eastern part of the Mediterranean Sea. They condemned Turkey's continued actions in the EEZ and territorial waters of Cyprus, and called upon the international community to take more compatible procedures with the international law against all terrorist groups, regardless of their structures or ideologies, and to take concrete measures to ensure accountability for regional actors involved in financing terrorist groups.

Similarly, both sides affirmed the coherence among their common interests and positions in the Eastern Mediterranean; while stressing that the East Mediterranean Gas Forum (EMGF) is one of the most important tools within that framework. This shall open up prospects for cooperation among EMGF

member states in the field of oil and natural gas, and turn the underlying resources in the region into promising investment opportunities for the benefit of peoples and generations to come. In addition, the two countries reiterated their determination to continue mutual coordination of their positions and measures aimed to achieve security and stability in the Eastern Mediterranean through fighting terrorism. They also affirmed that priority should be given to regional cooperation and to the comprehensive economic development that all States of the region aspire to. In April 2020, both sides discussed ways to support the bilateral cooperation between them, in addition to attracting Greek companies to invest in exploration and production activities in Egypt in the natural gas fields in the Eastern Mediterranean.

Six summits were held during the period from 2014 to 2018, bringing together President Abdel-Fattah al-Sisi, with the Cypriot President and the Greek Prime Minister. The three leaders, during these summits, reaffirmed their intent to enhance fields of mutual cooperation between their countries—particularly energy field, and gas exploration and transit across the Mediterranean. Egypt and Greece signed a number of joint cooperation agreements across several fields such as trade and industry, which has helped enhance bilateral relations in various fields—in a way that serves both interests and promotes cooperation and exchange of visits at the highest levels. The Egyptian-Greek relations witnessed the signing of several agreements and memorandums of understanding covering various fields. The most important was the signing of a memorandum of understanding in the field of medium and small enterprises between both countries, believing in the significant role of these enterprises in achieving development and economic progress. A social insurance agreement was also signed to regulate the insurance entitlements of Egyptian workers during their service in Greece, thereby ensuring their full rights and entitlements upon returning home.

The last period also witnessed Egyptian-Greek collaboration and coordination

in response to COVID-19. There has been an agreement on strengthening mutual cooperation in this respect through exchanging expertise and coordinating between involved bodies in both countries to achieve mutual benefit from the expertise and practices in both countries. In addition, resuming the exchange of high-level official visits, once international flights return to normality, has been also discussed.

For cooperation in the field of tourism, Egypt and Greece enjoy strong relations, given that the inflow of Greek tourists to Egypt is estimated at an average of 44,000 tourists. Despite the widespread of COVID-19 pandemic, following the gradual opening of airports, they discussed methods of cooperation in regard to the arrangements and precautionary measures taken by both countries to receive tourists. Greece has also announced its preparedness to receive Egyptian tourists as of last July. Both countries discussed how to achieve integration in the field of tourism through a bilateral, strictly-regulated agreement between both countries to preserve the health of tourists as well as workers in the tourism sector, after the return of tourism movement to normality.

### **GREEK COMMUNITY AND THEIR ROLE IN EGYPTIAN ECONOMY**

Greeks are the largest and most diverse foreign community in Egypt, with Greece being Egypt's nearest European neighbor. The Greek community played a prominent role in the economic activities in Egypt and even in the formation of Egyptian identity, and thus became one of the most influential communities in the Egyptian economy. Greeks joined many economic professions and activities in Egypt. Their presence in Alexandria, for example, is still apparent and distinct to this date. They excelled in several sectors such as agriculture, cotton trade, tobacco industry and grain production, in addition to working in the financial sector and in major economic and trade-related activities. Greeks are also who introduced to Egypt the starch and glucose industry in 1942.

### **CONVERGENCE OF VIEWS ON MAJOR REGIONAL ISSUES**

Egypt and Greece expressed their deep concern about the deteriorating situation in Libya. They affirmed that reaching a comprehensive political settlement is the only way to resolve the conflict and restore stability in Libya. Both parties renewed their support for the initiatives adopted by the United Nations (UN), particularly the Action Plan for Libya, and reaffirmed their commitment to the unity, sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Libyan state. They condemned all kinds of foreign intervention in the internal affairs of Libya, as well as practices of transferring arms, military equipment, and foreign fighters to Libya—for being a clear violation of the UN Security Council Resolutions 1970 (2011), 1973 (2011) and 2441 (2018). Both countries also affirmed their refusal of any military intervention in Libya and agreed that the latest escalation by the Turkish side poses threat to security and safety in the region as a whole.

In June 2020, Greece welcomed the Cairo Declaration, a new Egyptian initiative to resolve Libyan crisis; while affirming its intent to contribute to the peace process. Greece called for the withdrawal of all foreign forces and mercenaries in Libya and the return of all Libyan stakeholders to a dialogue process for a comprehensive political solution.

With regard to the Syrian crisis, both sides expressed their commitment to the unity, sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Syrian state, along with their support to the international efforts toward a comprehensive political solution to this conflict as set out in the UN Security Council Resolution 2254 and the Geneva Communiqué. They reaffirmed their support to the UN Special Envoy, and emphasized the need for resuming negotiations between the Syrian parties and convening the constitutional committee without delay. In addition, they strongly condemned any Turkish attempts to either undermine the unity of Syria's territories or intentionally change the demographics in Syria.



### **FUTURE OF EGYPTIAN-GREEK BILATERAL RELATIONS**

More likely, the bilateral cooperation between the two parties would increase during the coming period. This is due to the abundance of huge opportunities for trade cooperation between both countries in the field of establishing logistics hubs and free trade zones (FTZs), contracting, information technology, agricultural development, food industries and energy. There is also a possibility of mutual cooperation with the contracting sector, while benefiting from the Egyptian factors of production in this sector. That is in addition to the opportunity of receiving funding support from the African Bank for Development (ABD) or the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD).

Production and selling of natural gas, as well as executing the ‘electricity interconnection plan’ that links Egypt with Europe through Cyprus and Greece—along with other economic, educational and social fields—are among the highly recommended fields of cooperation to strengthen bilateral relations between the two countries, in the common interest of both sides and the region as a whole,

In conclusion, we can say that there has been a steady and concrete pro-

gress in the Egyptian-Greek strategic partnership, the keystone of security and stability in the Eastern Mediterranean region in the 21st century. This bilateral partnership has become increasingly significant in creating a balance of power influencing the future of the region.

In addition to their military cooperation, the economic cooperation between Egypt and Greece, particularly in the field of oil and natural gas in the Mediterranean Sea, builds a buffer against the growing expansion of Turkish influence across the region—especially as Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan continues his attempts to disrupt any regional production of gas in the Eastern Mediterranean that would devalue the importance of Turkey as a gas transit country to Europe.

**A**t the economic level, it is necessary to activate the role of the Egyptian-Greek Business Council, while encouraging participation in joint exhibitions and exchanges of business delegations. This would contribute in stimulating intra trade, increasing joint investment projects, and strengthening mutual cooperation between both countries, thereby living up to a comprehensive strategic partnership.

***The bilateral cooperation between the two parties would increase during the coming period. This is due to the abundance of huge opportunities for trade cooperation .***



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