

Maritime Disputes in the Eastern Mediterranean

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Abstract

Throughout history, the Eastern Mediterranean has always been a very important region due to its strategic geography that connects the east and the west. It is a very complex geography in the context of the international system. As long as there are serious disagreements between the Middle Eastern countries such as Israel - Palestine, Israel - Lebanon, Turkey - Greece and the Turkish Republic of North Cyprus (TRNC) - Greek Cypriot Administration of Southern Cyprus (GCASC) in the region, the conflicting interests and the distrust of the states to each other will continue. These conflict-oriented issues regarding the regional states make the problem of delimitation of Turkey's maritime jurisdiction with its neighbours in the Eastern Mediterranean a crucial issue.

The main dispute in the Eastern Mediterranean is a maritime delimitation problem, where all littoral states are located within the framework of law of the sea rules and must be resolved by an agreement between states. However, the GASC unilaterally declares its exclusive economic zones (EEZ) in order to negotiate the energy needs in the region without considering the rights of third states, and signs bilateral agreements with other littoral states except Turkey and the TRNC. In addition, the GASC invites international oil companies to be operational in the region to their declared EEZ's and tries to draw the boundaries of the region unilaterally, all of which constitute the main problem regarding the disputes. Both the GASC and Greece mostly base their thesis on the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) to which Turkey is not a party. However, Turkey criticizes this position and claims that there are jurisdictional decisions supporting its thesis and that there are mistakes in the interpretation of the UNCLOS by the GASC and Greece (and also EU).

In this study, delimitation agreements of the EEZ made in the Eastern Mediterranean will be analysed within the framework of international law of the sea. As it is known, the EEZ is a region that should be delimited through international conventions and jurisdictional decisions based on equitable principles. The conceptual framework of the EEZ, which is an important concept in terms of sovereignty of states in law of the sea, its historical development process, the rights and liabilities of the states in this region, and the legal principles that will be applied based on the disputes arising from the delimitation practices in the region are important. In this context, the study will analyse in detail the maritime disputes in the Eastern Mediterranean.

Keywords: International law of the sea, UNCLOS, delimitation of maritime areas, equitable principles, Eastern Mediterranean.

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