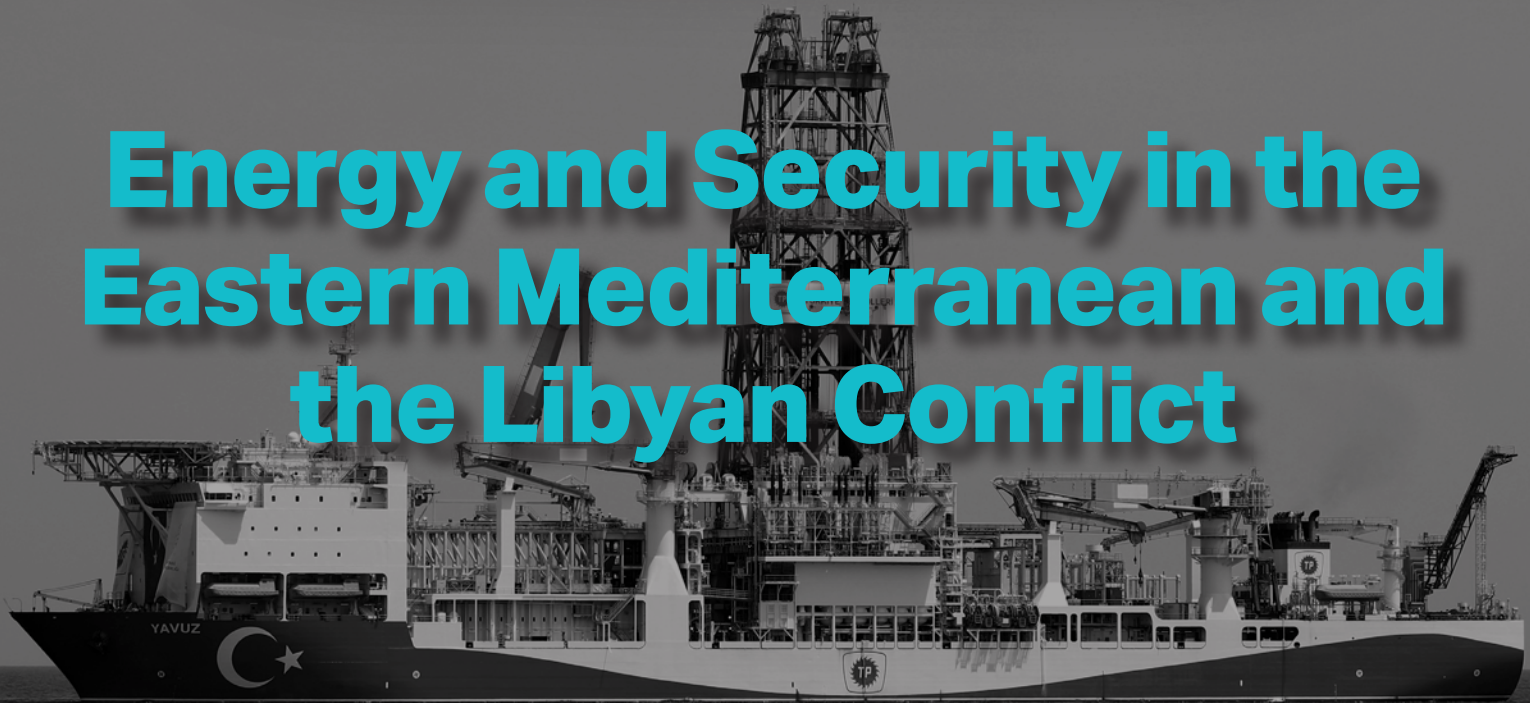




Shifting Dynamics: The International Order in a Post-Pandemic World

— 1st - 2nd of December | 2020 —

Energy and Security in the Eastern Mediterranean and the Libyan Conflict



EXPERT ROUNDTABLES

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2020



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PUBLISHER

TRT WORLD FORUM

2021

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Energy and Security in the Eastern Mediterranean and the Libyan Conflict



- Tension in the Eastern Mediterranean will persist as long as the European Union does not pursue a de-escalatory approach, recognising that all-NATO member states would be strategically better off with a strong Turkey - Greece relationship that guarantees a fair system for sharing Eastern Mediterranean energy resources. Otherwise, the conflict could disrupt energy investment, undermine transatlantic security and damage ties between Turkey and the EU.
- Turkey and the EU can act successfully to contribute to the security, stability and prosperity of the region.
- The EU should encourage Greece to accept Turkey's proposal for talks and to take a constructive step towards dialog. The EU should aim to facilitate the dialog as a fair and objective broker.
- A number of countries played a negative role in Libya by providing political and military support to Khalifa Haftar, protracting conflict in the country. Major weapons sales and the use of mercenaries also became major issues during the conflict.
- For Libya's national reconciliation, it is important that political, security and economic reforms are undertaken simultaneously. It is also imperative to reflect the voice of young Libyans in any national settlement.

Summary of the Session

The panel “Energy and Security in the Eastern Mediterranean and the Libyan Conflict” discussed the roots of current tensions in the Eastern Mediterranean. The panel also analysed the Libyan conflict and discussed the possibility of a political solution in the country.

Over the next half-century, the vast subsea hydrocarbon reserves of the East Mediterranean could turn the region into one of the most valuable sources of natural gas in the world. These vast deposits of natural gas have the potential in seeing billions of dollars deposited into the treasuries of regional states. As a result, tensions are rising in the Eastern Mediterranean and the potential for conflict has increased as new alliances and partnerships are forged.

Nikolaus Meyer Landrut emphasised that the European Union has been calling for de-escalation in the eastern Mediterranean in order to create an environment that would be conducive to a political solution to the conflict. He stated that this is still the main priority, as it is essential to have bilateral talks on delimitation issues between Turkey and

Greece, to resume the UN process in Cyprus, and to create a forum in which both past and future problems can be resolved.

Drawing attention to the situation in Libya, Dr Mustafa A.G. Abushagur stated that unfortunately, Libya, has been a site of continuous political and military conflict for around the last six years. This conflict has been supported by a number of countries who have intervened in Libya by supporting conflicting factions, especially Khalifa Haftar. Major weapons sales and the use of mercenaries has also been a major issue.

Peter Millet stressed the importance of Libya’s national reconciliation, which will require inclusion of the voice of young people as well as undertaking of simultaneous economic, security and political reforms. However, that progress is very fragile. Finally, Egemen Bağış stated that Turkey and the EU can act successfully to contribute to the security, stability and prosperity of the region. He stated that Turkey is ready to meet its Greek counterparts and to re-engage in order to de-escalate.

Egemen Bağış's Highlights



Turkish Ambassador to Prague, Former Minister of EU Affairs and Chief Negotiator Minister of State, 2009-2011 and Member of the Parliament representing Istanbul, 2002-2015

Egemen Bağış was born in Bingöl, Turkey in 1970. His family originates from the neighbouring province of Siirt where he started his elementary school education. He continued his primary and secondary school education in Ankara and graduated Newtown High School in New York, USA. He went on to study at the Bernard M. Baruch College of City University of New York, where he received a Bachelor of Business Administration degree in Human Resources Management (1993) and a Master of Public Administration degree (1996).

” Turkey is in Libya upon the invitation of the legitimate government of Libya, recognised by the UN. It is a dilemma that a member of the UN Security Council supports groups against the legitimate government.”

” The main pillar of [the relationship between] Libya and Turkey is the common heritage and history of solidarity. The Turkish people will never forget Libyan support to Turkey during the Cyprus war, and we will support Libya when its people need our help.”

” Turkey is ready to re-engage and de-escalate with the EU with an accession-based perspective. We are ready to engage with Greece. This is an opportunity that should not be lost.”

” I have always argued that Turkey's determination to become a member of the EU should have its own rightful place in the Guinness Book of Records because no country has waited this long to join any other international organisation with this much commitment, this much determination. We have been trying to become a member of this organisation since 1957.”

” Turkey and the EU can act successfully to contribute to the security, stability and prosperity of the region. Turkey is ready to meet its Greek counterparts. We are ready to re-engage to de-escalate. Turkey aspires to maintain its relations with the EU with a constructive spirit, with an accession-based perspective.”

” Our EU friends should encourage Greece to accept Turkey's proposal for talks and to take a constructive step towards a dialog. Bilateral problems should not be an issue of the EU but should be resolved through bilateral talks. The EU can facilitate dialog and engage this act to become a fair and objective broker.”

” Nowadays, we see that some countries are abusing Turkey's determination, and they are trying to use the EU to gain bilateral advantages. The problems we encounter currently are mostly due to the abuse of membership solidarity and veto rights of some of the member countries. We have witnessed a Greek-commanded EU naval mission conduct an hours-long and illegal search on a Turkish cargo ship despite objections from Turkey. The ship was carrying humanitarian supplies in the Eastern Mediterranean Sea to war-torn Libya. This incident happened immediately ahead of the EU summit. Blind membership solidarity has been put above international law and the greater interests of the EU. This is harming the EU's reputation as well as its capacity to act as a global player.”

” The problem that we had seen in Cyprus is now becoming another issue between Turkey and Greece. The reason the Annan plan was refused by the Greek Cypriots is because they had nothing more to gain; they had already ensured membership in the EU. However, Turkish Cypriots had nothing more to lose because they have already lost global recognition of their sovereignty.”

” The day [that] Turkey joins [the] EU it will become a global project because Turkey's reach [of influence] will make the EU a major global player. Therefore, demonizing Turkey will not solve [the EU's] problems related to Libya, Syria, Cyprus, migration, energy, or other issues that are now taking our mutual interests hostage. The EU has the tools and capacity to break this vicious cycle and create a conducive environment for dialog and a positive agenda.”

Mustafa Abushagur's Highlights



Former Deputy Prime Minister of Libya

Dr Mustafa A.G. Abushagur has been a member of the Libyan House of Representatives since 2014. He served as the First Deputy Prime Minister of Libya from November 2011 to November 2012. He is the founder and Chairman of the Libyan Policy Institute, a think tank based in Tripoli, Libya. Over the last thirty years, Dr Abushagur has held academic positions ranging from Professor to President of RIT Dubai University. Dr Abushagur holds a B.Sc. degree from the University of Tripoli and M.Sc. and Ph.D. degrees from California Institute of Technology in the field of electrical engineering. He has published more than one hundred papers and holds several patents.

- ” “Unfortunately, Libya, over the last six, seven years has been a [site of] continuous conflict and unfortunately, most of the time it is not [only] political, but also a military conflict. This conflict has been supported by a number of regional countries who have intervened in Libya by supporting some of the conflicting factions, and especially supporting Khalifa Haftar through weapons [sales], mercenaries, and so on.”
- ” “The assault on Tripoli, which lasted almost a year [since April 2019] resulted in the killing of thousands of Libyans, the destruction of infrastructure, hospitals, and left more than one hundred thousand people displaced.”
- ” “Turkish support ended Haftar’s assault on the internationally recognised government of Libya. Libya has to become peaceful. This will not happen if countries keep on interfering. Let the Libyans discuss their issues and the control of their country.”
- ” “The United Nations and some countries are interested to see stability in Libya. They have tried to overcome this conflict by supporting the political process. Recently, there [have been] some healthy [developments] by the Libyan Political Dialogue Forum. [However], Libya still is not out of the woods, [it is] still in a position where war can erupt at any moment, unfortunately.”
- ” “The US played a major role during the revolution in 2011, and Washington continued to play a major role by having a special envoy to Libya throughout the Obama administration. However, when Mr. Trump came to the presidency, Libya disappeared completely from the American agenda. Also, because of the relationship between Mr. Trump and Putin, [this] really opened a lot of room for the Russians to be able to get heavily involved [in Libya]. As a result, Russia has gained a presence [both] in the eastern Mediterranean [and in Libya]. Right now, their forces are both entrenched in Europe and in the south of Libya, which is a very dangerous position for those [forces] to be in. We are hoping now as Biden comes back — and of course, he was the vice president during Obama’s time [in office] — we expect that Libya will have a [more prominent] place in his agenda [...] We expect from the Biden administration that they will be engaged in Libya to help the people of Libya bring peace to their country.”
- ” “Many countries [have] played a very negative role in Libya. Haftar was supported by Moscow [Russia], France and the UAE. These countries advised him to refuse the Berlin process, wage war and bring back a military rule, which the Libyan people do not want.”
- ” “Libya is the largest producer of oil in the Eastern Mediterranean but oil production in Libya is in chaos. Libyan oil is being sold on the black market by countries who supported Haftar. So, they are benefiting from it, but it should end by the spoilers [of the peace process] to be [removed] from the Libyan scene. Let Libyans decide to do that.”

Peter Millett's Highlights



Former High Commissioner of UK to Cyprus and Ambassador to Libya and Jordan

Peter Millett is a retired British diplomat who served as British Ambassador to Libya from June of 2015 to January of 2018. During that time, he played a key role in supporting the UN's efforts to negotiate and implement the Libya Political Agreement. Mr Millett built relationships with key political, security, and economic players in both Libya and throughout the international community. He also managed the return of the British Embassy from Tunis to Tripoli. Before Libya, Mr Millett was British Ambassador to Jordan from 2011 to 2015 and High Commissioner to Cyprus from 2015 to 2010. He has also served diplomatic postings in Venezuela, Qatar, Brussels, and Athens.

” “With regard to Libya, there have been some very positive steps in the last few months, the ceasefire, the political talks, the increase in oil production. However, I think that progress is very fragile. The cease fire, for example, has not yet been implemented. The troops have not gone to barracks, none of the foreign fighters have left so far. The political talks have been bogged down on the whole question of names: who the leaders of the new presidency council will be, new prime minister and so forth. I think there are a lot of spoilers around General Haftar, the militias in Tripoli, the so-called status quo party, those who do not want to see change because they are benefiting from the current stalemate. So, I think it needs all the countries who are involved to withdraw to implement the cease fire.”

” “All countries who are involved should participate in the implementation of the ceasefire and all [of the] international community need to give their full backing to the United Nations.”

” “I think Libyan national reconciliation is absolutely crucial. There is a lot of movement now by young people in Libya to try and gather a voice, which I think has to be encouraged. But the point about security in the political process, they have to be linked. You cannot have a political process without a proper cease fire.”

” “The problem with the Libyan Political Agreement [that was] signed on December 17, 2015 at a conference in Shkirat, Morocco, was [that it was] only political. It has not included a security track and economic track, so the solution has to be an integrated solution, which should bring a political process, a security process, security sector reform and economic reform.”

” “I think avoiding uncoordinated initiatives, which we have seen in the past, and giving all the backing to the United Nations is important for all members of the international community. And what I would like to see coming out of the political dialog [is] not only a date for elections — which they have set for December 24, next year [2021] — but a clear timeline of what needs to happen and a clear message from the UN Security Council that anyone who obstructs that timeline will be subject to international sanctions.”

” “Cyprus: a divided island since 1974. It is a bit of a forgotten conflict. Cyprus is a forgotten conflict for a range of reasons. Part of the reason is that the international community has gotten a little fed up with trying and failing. The international community has moved on to other things.”

” “It [Cyprus] is a necessary step to resolve the high degree of tension within the Eastern Mediterranean. I think the energy resources in the Eastern Mediterranean gives an incentive for trying to resolve the Cyprus problem. It is an opportunity which needs to be taken by the Cypriots because they, as two communities, can benefit hugely from the settlement of their conflict and the unification of the island. So, I hope that we will see the momentum starting behind that. But the only way forward, both in terms of the Cyprus problem and in terms of the division of the energy spoils in the Eastern Mediterranean, is through negotiation led by the United Nations, led by the European Union, to try and resolve these problems in the Eastern Mediterranean in order to avoid the high risk of miscalculation.”

Nikolaus Meyer-Landrut's Highlights



Delegation of the European Union to Turkey

Nikolaus Meyer-Landrut (Germany, 1960) is the EU Ambassador and Head of the European Union Delegation to Turkey. From 2015 to 2020, Ambassador Meyer-Landrut served as the German Ambassador to France and Monaco. Previously, he was Director General for European Affairs at the Federal Chancellery, Head of the EU Policy Division at the Foreign Office of the Federal Republic of Germany and Spokesperson of the President of the European Convention. Ambassador Meyer-Landrut studied History and German philology and joined the German foreign office in 1987.

- ” “The European Union very much has been calling for de-escalation in the Eastern Mediterranean to create an environment which should be conducive to finding a political solution. This is still our main priority.”
- ” “It is important to get bilateral talks on delimitation issues between Turkey and Greece. It is also important for the UN process to resume on Cyprus and be a forum in which solutions can be looked for.”
- ” “So, we need a longer lasting window [of peace negotiations] in which a trust can be rebuilt. I think the word ‘trust’ [that we] heard before is really very important, and we need to build it again [in regard to] Libya very quickly. I think we support every effort for a political solution and ceasefires and the implementation of what already has been discussed in Berlin at the beginning of the year, which means withdrawal of foreign mercenaries and troops from Libya so that the Libyans can find their solutions among themselves.”
- ” “Honestly, I do not see the EU [as being] hostage of individual member states. And there is also an important point, which is perhaps not always perceived from the outside: there is serious and very high-level internal EU diplomacy also going on. This should not be minimised; if you minimise the efforts of those who try to have a balanced approach within the Union, they might lose interest in because they do not get any credit for the effort. And I am talking about individual leaders of member states.”
- ” “The EU cannot be an impartial broker [in Libya] because the EU [due to] the setup of membership, will always have solidarity [with other members]. But we have never subscribed to any map and have always called for bilateral discussions and solutions to maritime boundary issues. Do not ask the EU to be something it cannot be because of its membership structure.”
- ” “The European Union has always called for bilateral discussions and a solution on maritime border issues, the continental shelf, or exclusive economic zones. We have always said for the Cyprus issue, we support the UN approach, and we want NATO to play its role and we have been trying actively to promote the idea of a multilateral conference for the region.”
- ” “So, I hope we can all together come to the conclusion that the most important thing is to work in different forums to achieve solutions [to the tensions in the Eastern Mediterranean], which then also creates space for EU-Turkey relations to improve.”



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