The Silent Realignment: LNG, Strategy, and the New Geometry of Power in the Eastern Mediterranean

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Introduction: The Energy Chessboard Beneath the Waves

The Eastern Mediterranean has always been a crossroads of empires, trade, and conflict. Today, it is also a crossroads of pipelines, floating terminals, and liquefied natural gas (LNG) carriers. The quiet realignment now underway in the region is not being shaped by military power or rhetoric, but by infrastructure and energy flows.

Egypt, once notable as the Mediterranean's emerging gas center, has, in a dramatic reversal, become the Middle East and North Africa's largest LNG importer. Greece, conversely, has arisen as a regional regasification hub, linking the Balkans to global energy markets.

These developments mark not just a shift in economic fortunes but a reordering of strategic power. Energy security, as I have long argued, is now

indistinguishable from national security. Control of energy corridors (physical and maritime) has become the modern equivalent of territorial defense.

Egypt's Reversal: From Exporter to Importer

The Decline of Zohr and the Fragility of Supply

In 2017, Egypt's discovery and rapid development of the Zohr gas field promised energy self-sufficiency and even export capacity. For several years, Egypt enjoyed the prestige of being a net exporter, shipping LNG to Europe and Asia through its Idku and Damietta terminals.

That narrative has since collapsed. Production at Zohr has declined sharply, from an initial output of nearly 6 billion cubic feet per day in 2021 to around 3.5 billion cubic feet by mid-2025 (Reuters, 2025). The combination of natural reservoir depletion, reduced upstream investment, and operational challenges has eroded Egypt's domestic supply base.

Meanwhile, demand has soared. A population of over 110 million, coupled with industrial expansion and unprecedented heatwaves, has strained Egypt's power grid. The summer of 2024 saw nationwide rolling blackouts, prompting the government to prioritize electricity generation over exports.

The Surge in LNG Imports

As a result, Egypt has become MENA's top LNG importer with 6.46 million tons so far in 2025, surpassing Kuwait's 6.44 million (Bloomberg, 2025). Just two years earlier, the country had imported barely 20,000 tons.

To meet this shortfall, Cairo secured roughly $3 billion worth of LNG import deals with Shell and Total Energies for delivery between July 2025 and June 2026 (Reuters, 2025). Egypt has also leased three Floating Storage Regasification Units (FSRUs) to expand import capacity via Ain Sokhna and Alexandria.

While these measures have prevented economic collapse, they have exposed Egypt to global LNG price volatility. Each shipment drains precious foreign exchange reserves, placing additional stress on an economy already under IMF oversight.

Strategic Consequences

Energy fragility has geopolitical consequences. Egypt's role as a reliable exporter to Europe has been shortened. Its ability to use energy diplomacy, once a powerful tool in regional engagement, has diminished.

Cairo now faces a paradox: its geostrategic location remains irreplaceable, controlling the Suez Canal, one of the world's most vital maritime arteries, yet its internal energy insecurity undermines its external leverage.

This dynamic threatens to limit Egypt's freedom of action in regional politics, including its participation in the East Mediterranean Gas Forum (EMGF) and its energy coordination with Israel and Cyprus.

Greece's Strategic Ascent: Infrastructure as Maritime Power

From Energy Consumer to Regional Hub

While Egypt struggles with shortages, Greece has transformed itself into the energy gateway of Southeast Europe. This transformation did not occur by accident. It was the product of a coherent maritime strategy rooted in infrastructure, alliances, and foresight.

The Revithoussa LNG terminal, located near Athens, has operated since 1999. Recent upgrades have expanded its capacity to supply up to 7 billion cubic meters per year—enough to cover up to 40 percent of domestic demand (Trade.gov, 2024).

However, the real game-changer was the Alexandroupolis Floating Storage Regasification Unit (FSRU), which began commercial operations in late 2024 (Gastrade, 2024). Strategically positioned in the northern Aegean, Alexandroupolis

connects directly to the Greek and Bulgarian gas grids via the Interconnector Greece–Bulgaria (IGB), enabling gas exports to Serbia, North Macedonia, and even Romania.

The Maritime Dimension

This infrastructure has redefined Greece's role in European energy security. For the first time, Southeast Europe can access global LNG markets independent of Russian pipelines or Turkish intermediaries. Greece has become not just a recipient of energy, but a transit power, controlling the maritime routes and regasification gateways that determine regional supply flows.

Many times I have argued that maritime strategy must extend beyond naval assets to include ports, energy terminals, and chokepoints. In this respect, Greece exemplifies the modern maritime state: its LNG terminals are as strategically significant as its frigates and patrol squadrons.

Strategic Synergy with Europe

Greece's success also strengthens the European Union's REPowerEU agenda, which aims to reduce dependence on Russian gas and diversify energy sources (European Commission, 2023). Athens has effectively positioned itself as Brussels' southern anchor for energy resilience.

The planned Volos FSRU and potential pipeline interconnections northward will further integrate Balkan energy markets into the EU system, binding them politically and economically to Western institutions.

Energy, Security, and Maritime Strategy

LNG and Geopolitical Influence

Energy flows shape political alignment. Where LNG travels, diplomacy follows. The intersection of gas infrastructure and maritime geography is producing a

new geometry of power in the Eastern Mediterranean, anchored by Greece, Egypt, Israel, and Cyprus.

These nations form the backbone of the East Mediterranean Gas Forum (EMGF), headquartered in Cairo. Established in 2019, the EMGF institutionalizes cooperation among producer, transit, and consumer states, integrating energy with security consultation (EMGF, 2024).

This alignment serves a dual purpose: it enhances economic stability while counterbalancing Turkey's assertive maritime posturing. Greece and Egypt, in particular, have developed a robust defense partnership encompassing joint naval exercises and maritime boundary agreements, both grounded in energy security considerations.

Maritime Chokepoints and Power Projection

The Eastern Mediterranean's geography confers strategic interdependence. Egypt's control of the Suez Canal links the Red Sea and Mediterranean, facilitating approximately 12 percent of global trade and a significant share of LNG shipments. Greece, meanwhile, commands the maritime approaches to the Aegean and Adriatic.

Together, these nations form a dual maritime axis, one governing passage, the other governing distribution. This partnership, if institutionalized, could anchor a stable energy corridor connecting the Middle East, Africa, and Europe.

The Broader Geopolitical Context

The Ukraine Factor and Europe's Strategic Recalibration

Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2022 reshaped global energy patterns. Europe's scramble to replace Russian gas accelerated the construction of LNG terminals and interconnectors. Greece's infrastructure benefited directly from this

shift, as cargoes once destined for Germany or the Netherlands were redirected to southern Europe.

Egypt's early promise as a complementary supplier—through its LNG terminals and potential Israeli gas re-exports—was undermined by declining domestic output. Nonetheless, Egypt remains essential to Europe's long-term diversification, provided it can restore production and attract new investment.

U.S. and NATO Interests

Both Greece and Egypt are critical to NATO's southern flank. The U.S. Naval Support Activity Souda Bay in Crete and the Egyptian-controlled Suez Canal are indispensable to allied naval logistics. Energy infrastructure protection has thus become a NATO concern.

LNG terminals, pipelines, and undersea cables are potential targets for sabotage or coercion, as illustrated by the Nord Stream incident in 2022. Enhanced maritime domain awareness and coordinated naval presence will be vital for safeguarding these assets.

Policy Challenges and Recommendations

For Egypt

1. **Reinvigorate Upstream Investment**

Egypt must attract new capital into gas exploration and production, particularly offshore in the Mediterranean. Regulatory stability and transparent fiscal terms are essential.

2. **Rationalize Domestic Consumption**

Energy subsidies distort demand and drain fiscal resources. Gradual subsidy reform, paired with targeted support for vulnerable populations, would improve efficiency.

3. **Diversify Energy Sources**

Expanding solar and wind generation can reduce dependence on natural gas for electricity, freeing more gas for export or industrial use.

4. **Enhance Regional Cooperation**

Egypt should leverage its EMGF leadership to coordinate with Greece and Israel on supply management and regional gas pooling mechanisms.

For Greece

1. **Expand Northbound Infrastructure**

New interconnectors to Serbia, North Macedonia, and Albania would enhance regional integration and solidify Greece's role as a European gateway.

2. **Harden Energy Installations**

LNG terminals and FSRUs must be secured through enhanced naval patrols, cyber defense, and joint EU maritime initiatives.

3. **Integrate with Green Transition Goals**

By positioning LNG as a transitional fuel, Greece can align with the EU's climate strategy while maintaining economic competitiveness.

4. **Institutionalize the Hellenic-Egyptian Partnership**

Regular bilateral strategic dialogues on energy and security should be institutionalized, focusing on joint naval exercises, port logistics, and investment in maritime infrastructure.

A New Geometry of Power

The convergence of Egyptian geography and Greek maritime capacity is redrawing the region's strategic map. The emerging energy triangle—with Suez as the

global chokepoint, Alexandroupolis as the Balkan gateway, and Revithoussa as the operational core—creates a new geometry of influence.

This geometry links Europe to Africa through a shared maritime strategy. It aligns with the West's objective of a diversified, resilient energy system capable of withstanding geopolitical shocks.

My motto resonates here: "In maritime regions, power is not only projected by ships—it is anchored by infrastructure." The Eastern Mediterranean's LNG networks embody this truth. They are not merely economic assets; they are instruments of deterrence, cooperation, and influence.

Conclusion: Strategy in Silence

The realignment now underway in the Eastern Mediterranean is silent yet profound. Egypt's pivot from exporter to importer exposes the fragility of national energy security. Greece's rise as a regional hub demonstrates the power of strategic foresight and maritime geography.

Together, they embody contrasting lessons. For Egypt, energy security is a prerequisite for sovereignty. For Greece, infrastructure is strategy—an instrument through which a small state can exercise disproportionate regional influence.

Energy flows, not troop movements, are reshaping the map. The states that understand this—those that integrate their energy systems with their maritime strategies—will command the future of the Eastern Mediterranean.

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