



ARTÍCULOS

UTOPIA Y PRAXIS LATINOAMERICANA. AÑO: 25, n° EXTRA 10, 2020, pp. 522-532
REVISTA INTERNACIONAL DE FILOSOFÍA Y TEORÍA SOCIAL
CESA-FCES-UNIVERSIDAD DEL ZULIA. MARACAIBO-VENEZUELA
ISSN 1316-5216 / ISSN-e: 2477-9555

Revival of Geopolitics: Russian Involvement in Eastern Mediterranean (2009-2019)

Resurgimiento de la geopolítica: participación rusa en el Mediterráneo oriental (2009-2019)

MUHITTIN TOLGA ÖZSAĞLAM

<https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6028-3338>

European University of Lefke, Turkey

Este trabajo está depositado en Zenodo:
DOI: <http://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.4155807>

ABSTRACT

This study focuses on Russian involvement in the eastern Mediterranean by referring to recent developments in the region. Certainly, the theoretical basis of the study provides geopolitical perspectives within the discipline of international relations. On the other hand, in order to consider the economic and energy problems of the region, Russia tries to establish close relations with Israel and Cyprus. Thus, Russia has pursued a proactive foreign policy in the region in the last decade and tries to maximize its participation in the region strategically to secure its national interests in both the Rimland and the Heartland.

Keywords: Cyprus, maritime doctrine, Russia, Syria, Turkey.

RESUMEN

Este estudio se centra en la participación rusa en el Mediterráneo oriental al referirse a los desarrollos recientes en la región. Ciertamente, la base teórica del estudio proporciona perspectivas geopolíticas dentro de la disciplina de las relaciones internacionales. Por otra parte, a fin de considerar los problemas económicos y energéticos de la región, Rusia intenta establecer relaciones estrechas con Israel y Chipre. De este modo, Rusia lleva a cabo una política exterior proactiva en la región en la última década y trata de maximizar estratégicamente su participación en la región para asegurar sus intereses nacionales tanto en el Rimland como en el Heartland.

Palabras clave: Chipre, doctrina marítima, Rusia, Siria, Turquía.

Recibido: 28-08-2020 Aceptado: 29-10-2020



INTRODUCTION

This study focuses on the Russian involvement in the Eastern Mediterranean and attempts to prove that its involvement in the region has enhanced. In this study, deductive and qualitative methodologies are predominantly used. Hence, the study begins by examining the geopolitical perspectives of Halford John Mackinder and Nicholas Spykman, who can be identified as the founders of geopolitical theories. Following that, the characteristics of Russian foreign policy are reviewed as part of the deductive methodology.

To understand the current presence as well as the foreign policy goals and orientations of Russia in the Eastern Mediterranean, the basic characteristics of Russian foreign policy should be clearly explained and analysed.

In the third part of this study, the Russian involvement in the region is analysed on the basis of bilateral relations due to the different conditions that prevail in countries in the region as well as their relations with Russia. Therefore, Russia's relations with regional countries are predominantly analysed on the basis of qualitative methodology, while figures from the smaller quantitative part of this study provide an indication of the economic presence of Russia in the region. Maps are also used to indicate the geographic and strategic importance of the region.

METHODS

Geopolitical Perspectives of Mackinder and Spykman

After the Cold War era, many scholars believed that international relations system would be dominated by liberal policies. For instance, Francis Fukuyama argued that governments would ultimately become liberal democracies and liberal perceptions would also dominate international affairs in 1992. However, Fukuyama later stated that he was mistaken and underlined the additional importance of geopolitics in the current system of international relations. Fukuyama also indicated the socialism would become the future system of humanity (Eaton: 2018). Therefore, it is clear that rivalry is prevalent around the world and particularly in the Eurasian Basin. In this context, the Mediterranean is considered to be part of the Eurasian Basin Heartland and it also may be perceived as the frontline of its Rimland.



Figure 1. Geopolitical Perspectives of Mackinder and Spykman (Mackinder: 1942)

Halford John Mackinder and Nicholas Spykman are perceived as the pioneers of geopolitical perspectives in the field of international relations. Mackinder focused on the impact of the Heartland on world affairs. He argued that "Who rules East Europe commands the Heartland: Who rules the Heartland commands the World-Island: Who rules the World-Island commands the World." (Mackinder: 1942). Mackinder also underlined the importance of the Euro-Asia region as the heartland and dominated by Russia as a land-power whose communication and transportation facilitated by the Trans-Siberian railway, whose potentialities includes its

population, wheat, cotton, fuel and other metals and its inaccessibility to ships, while the British Empire was the sea power (Mackinder: 1904). Mackinder also defined the borders of the Heartland and indicated that it touches the Mediterranean region while the Taurus mountains and Bosphorus represent the boundary of the Heartland; on the other hand, it is the entrance point of sea power from the Mediterranean to the Black Sea.

Mackinder emphasized the power of the Heartland over the Rimland; however, he did not neglect the future impact of the Northern Atlantic and Muson regions.

Nicholas Spykman criticized Mackinder's argument by indicating the importance of the Rimland. In fact, Spykman did not neglect the land and topography or the transportation routes (Spykman: 1938a), but he focused more on the importance of the Rimland in controlling the world. According to him, the Rimland is a region between the Heartland and Marginal Sea Powers that would experience greater security problems due to its location and rich resources. On the other hand, Mackinder did not consider that the Rimland would be a crucial location for the containment of the Heartland; instead, he just believed that the borderland and insular crescent were the important factors for containing the Heartland. Nevertheless, Spykman argued that the Rimland is a crucial factor that will contain the Heartland.

Spykman highlighted the impacts of geographic factors on determining the power of states. According to Spykman, natural resources are factors that are influential on the population density and economic structure of a country, and he also underlined the importance of the size and location of states as factors that strengthen their foreign policies within the international relations system (Spykman: 1938b). For Spykman, although size is a potential source of strength, having sea power and controlling the Rimland are also important. Therefore, he tried to prove his argument by indicating that the Russian Empire had expanded towards the southern part of Europe to have access to ice-free ports, (Spykman: 1938a), which would enable the Russian Empire to enhance its sea power.

Spykman argued that the littoral states in the Heartland, which is called as Rimland and he thought that states in there can control the centre (Spykman: 1944). In fact, he did not reject the arguments of Mackinder, but he rather focused more on the Rimland stated that "Who controls the Rimland rules Eurasia: Who rules Eurasia controls the destinies of the world" (Spykman: 1944). Spykman also stressed that the most important waterways for achieving global power are the North Sea, the Mediterranean, the Persian Gulf in the Middle East and the South East China Seas as well (Spykman: 1944). Spykman's arguments are also crucial for understanding the current affairs in the Mediterranean Basin. Spykman drew attention to the fact the Mediterranean was one of the important centres of civilisation and eastern Mediterranean coasts of Syria and Palestine are the junctions (Spykman: 1938). Certainly, Spykman did not neglect the importance of the Suez Channel, which unites the Mediterranean with the Indian Ocean (Spykman: 1938). Spykman gave attention to the control of the Rimland, which covers Eurasia; however, he did not focus on controlling the Heartland of inner Eurasia.



Figure 2. Geostrategic Model (Source: <https://geography.name/heartland/>)

In current world affairs, Russia is still the dominant power in the Heartland of the world and is also expanding its influence towards the Mediterranean, which is a crucial part of the Rimland. Therefore, it can be said that Russia is now giving attention to both the Heartland and the Rimland.

Basic Characteristics of Russian Foreign Policy

After the dissolution of the Soviet Union, Russia has assumed the political heritage of the Soviet Union in international institutions. For instance, it has assumed legal and political status as a permanent member of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC). This affords veto power to a member state in substantive international matters. However, Russia chose not to use this veto power to block the UNSC in the early 1990s due to the policy of rapprochement adopted by Andrei Kozyrev, Former Foreign Minister of Russia, with Western countries and institutions. In fact, this represented a continuation of in the policies implemented by Mikhael Gorbachev in the period that marked the end of the Soviet Union. Andrei Kozyrev followed a liberal foreign policy rather than a geopolitical one, which did not place emphasis on the post-Soviet Sphere-Near Abroad. However, Russian opposition figures criticized the foreign policy orientation of Kozyrev, who neglected the conflicts in the post-Soviet Sphere, including the Tajikistan Civil War, Chechenia issue, and Abkhaz-Georgian war etc. Boris Yeltsin, President of Russia, could no longer resist the reactions of the opposition and firstly declared the first Russian Military Doctrine by focusing on the *Near Abroad*.

Subsequently, he appointed Yevgeni Primkov as the Minister of Foreign Affairs in 1996, which indicated that Russia had clearly entered a new period. Consequently, Russia increasingly focused on the Near Abroad and tried to increase its influence in global politics as well. Primakov pursued his policy in Prime Ministry Office more intensively and also began to concentrate more on the Middle East. Although Yeltsin was the President, Primakov dominated Russian domestic and foreign policy, policies that were also pursued by Putin when he came to power as the Prime Minister and President, who subsequently declared the Second Military doctrine in 2000 and Third Military Doctrine in 2010. These military doctrines represent turning points in terms of the shaping of Russian foreign policy, which securitized the Western institutions including NATO's expansion and indicated the new geopolitical stance in the Eurasia Basin. Additional to this, Russian Energy Strategies of 2003 and 2009, obviously indicated that Russia would like to maximise its economic prosperity and consolidate its power in the world politics through the energy sources.

Putin has clearly underlined that Russia will always be influential in global politics and particularly as the most powerful country in Eurasia as well as the pioneer of the multipolar world system. The Eurasia Zone has been described by Russian Alexander Dugin, geopolitical thinker and considered part of the Russian intelligentsia, who indicated the scope of the map on his foundation's web site. According to his map, some parts of the Eastern Mediterranean are within the Eurasian Zone.

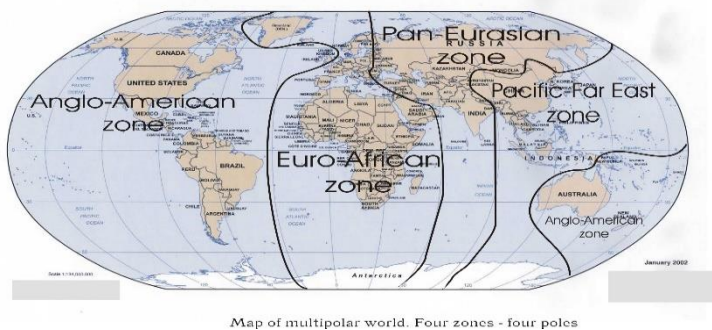


Figure 3. Map of multipolar world (Source: <http://images.evrazia.org/images/map-1.jpg>)

Military and Geopolitical Priorities of Russia

Since the Soviet period, the Eastern Mediterranean has become the significant junction in terms of the security perception of Russia. That junction is a significant part of the Rimland and the security points of Russia while protecting its influential power in the Heartland-Eurasia. The Eastern Mediterranean is also an area that acts as a junction for the Indian Ocean through the Suez Channel and also a corridor towards the Black Sea that provides access to the North Atlantic Ocean for some Middle Eastern and Asian countries. The region is significant for the geopolitical and strategic aims of the global and regional powers including Russia for several reasons.

Russia assumed the political heritage of the Soviet Union and has therefore also tried to protect its influential position at both regional and global levels. However, it is mostly involved on the regional level. Russia has placed more emphasis on its geopolitical priorities since the aforementioned period of Primakov. Therefore, it has emphasized its military power more recently in order to protect its involvement in the Eastern Mediterranean. The Russian Maritime Doctrine is evidence of this policy, which was published in 2015 and provided a clear indication of Russian aims in the Atlantic Ocean, the Baltic, Black, Azov and Mediterranean Seas as well and also demonstrated the vulnerability of Russia due to the presence of NATO in specific areas (Morskoya Doktrina Rossiskoi Federatsi: 2015). The doctrine also covers the importance of the energy routes, ecological protection etc. and specifically defines the expectations and aims of Russia in the Mediterranean: to provide military and political stability in the region, to ensure the permanent naval presence of Russia in the region, and to expand the sea transportation route from the Crimea and Krasnodar regions to the regional countries in the Mediterranean Basin (Morskoya Doktrina Rossiskoi Federatsi: 2015). Ultimately, the Russian Maritime Doctrine can also be perceived as a new version of the geopolitical arguments proposed by Spykman and Mackinder.

Russia has established its relations with regional countries on the basis of bilateralism, and has not pursued the creation of a platform with regional countries except for Turkey and Iran on the Syria Issue. Therefore, it is better to analyse the Russian involvement in the region by focusing on its bilateral relations to produce relevant results.

RESULTS

Russian Adventure in the Eastern Mediterranean

Syria: Permanent Deployment of Russia in the Eastern Mediterranean!

Syria can be defined as the first geopolitical priority of Russia, as it has maintained naval bases in the country since 1971, the capability of which were developed in 2009 to prepare for aircraft carriers and cruisers equipped with cruise missiles. Russia has played a crucial role in the Syrian Civil War by supporting the Bashar al-Assad regime and defending the territorial integrity of Syria against separatist and fundamentalist groups. Therefore, it increased its military deployment by signing a treaty with the Assad regime in 2015 that led to the establishment of a permanent air base in Syria. Therefore, Russia formed its permanent military mission at the Khmeimim air base and Sergey Shoygu, Minister of Defence, Russia, also underlined the importance of the air and naval forces in combating terrorism in Syria in December 2017. The Russian Ministry of Defence also announced that it will expand the capacity of the Khmeimim air base by constructing a second landing strip.

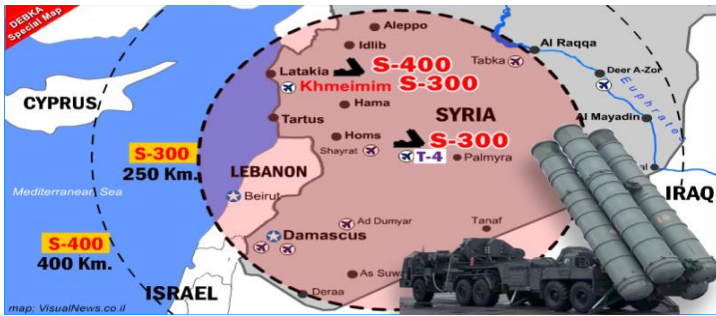


Figure 4. Russian military deployment in Syria (Debkafle: 2019)

Russian military deployment in Syria clearly indicates that Russia dominates a crucial part of the Eastern Mediterranean region through the presence of its navy, air bases and missile defence systems along the coastline of Syria which is close to the eastern part of Cyprus. Additionally, Russian military troops have also started to dominate the north-eastern territories of Syria. Hence, Syrian territory is part of the Rimland on the route of the Heartland that Russia uses to monitor and control the Eastern corridor of the region (Defence Talk: 2006).

Indispensable Island: Cyprus

Russia has certainly not limited its military involvement and impact to the Syrian territories, as it has also been establishing close relations with the Republic of Cyprus (RoC, governed by Greek Cypriot leadership). Even though the RoC is a member of the European Union, Russia has always placed emphasis on its relations with the RoC due to its geopolitical location and in the extensive presence of Russian citizens in Cyprus. After the dissolution of the Soviet Union, relations between Russia and RoC had significantly improved; however, difficulties began to emerge after the accession of Cyprus to the EU. Additionally, rapprochement among RoC and Turkey can be evaluated as an obstacle to the improvement of relations between the RoC and Russia. In spite of these negative impacts, Russia and Cyprus renewed their military cooperation agreement that dealt with the provision and maintenance of spare parts for military equipment. On the other hand, Russian military ships and planes have used the port of Limassol and Paphos Airport for humanitarian aims, Russia reciprocated by supporting the arguments of RoC against Turkey with regard to the disputes over the Continental Shelf and Exclusive Economic Zone disputes since the mid-2010s (Sukier et al.: 2020; Ametbek: 2019).

On the other hand, the close and intensive relations maintained between the RoC and Russia disturbed the USA, which led the USA to implement a bill opposing the close relations between the RoC and Russia, which ultimately led to Russia issuing a statement that protested the actions of the United States and described it as an attempt to disrupt the relations between Russia and the RoC. However, the RoC decided to pursue a multilateral foreign policy, which led to the establishment of a close relationship with the USA on energy issues as well as discussions regarding the possibility of military cooperation. At this time, Russia reacted to the conversations and the possibility of US military deployment in the RoC. Maria Zapharova issued a serious warning to the RoC not to allow any military deployment by the USA in the RoC. Such statements, criticisms and retaliation attempts made by the global powers clearly demonstrate the crucial geopolitical location of Cyprus in the middle of the Eastern Mediterranean and within the Rimland.

Russian and Cyprus relations are not only limited to military relations, but also cover economic and social relations as well. Currently, a sizeable Russian speaking population lives in the RoC and the de facto republic Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC). Therefore, the Russian population plays a crucial role in shaping

the economic structure of both sides of Cyprus. Ultimately, a Russian presence will be inevitable on the island. Hence, Cyprus is considered an indispensable island for Russia.

Regional Strategic Cooperation with a NATO Member: Turkey

In spite of Turkey's membership of NATO, Russia and Turkey have maintained intensive relations since the 2000s. The economic interdependency has enforced both sides to seek rapprochement on geopolitical issues and military issues. Russia and Turkey have experienced tensions in their relations due to their different perspectives on the Syria Civil War and the shooting down of a Russian jet by Turkish Air Forces. However, both parties had intentions to repair the relations and Tayyip Erdoğan, the President of Turkey, sent a letter to apologize for this incident in June 2016 (Ozsaglam: 2018). Consequently, both parties agreed to stop the "blame game". However, Erdoğan was then faced with an attempted Coup d'état attempt, subsequent to which he welcomed the support of Putin and visited Moscow to seek reconciliation over the relations between Russia and Turkey. Therefore, the relations were observed to enter a new period in which the two parties began to cooperate on the Syria Civil War by organizing multilateral conferences and collaborative efforts aimed at combating terrorism and deploying their troops north east of Syria. Additionally, they re-focused on the construction of the Akkuyu Nuclear Plant by Russia, which will be located on the Southern coastline of Turkey and will provide an additional geopolitical advantage in the northern part of the Eastern Mediterranean.

Even though it is a NATO member, Turkey could not attract sufficient support from the USA and NATO to deploy defence missile systems and therefore signed an agreement with Russia to purchase the S-400 missile system in September 2017 (BBC News: 2017). The first parts of the S-400 missile system were brought to Turkey in July 2019.

As a result, Turkey has become part of Russian's geopolitical security sphere in recent years, not only in economic terms but also militarily. Although Turkey's membership of NATO limits the relations, Russia and Turkey have still managed to improve their strategic cooperation.

Lebanon: Significant Coastline for Russia

Lebanon is another important country for Russia, which is geographically located between Syria and Israel and offers a crucial strategic coastline in the Eastern Mediterranean; however, the Soviet Union was not influential politically or institutionally in Lebanon during the Cold War era. It has only given scholarships to Lebanese students and partially supported left-wing movements (The Century Foundation: 2019). After the dissolution of the Soviet Union, Russia and Lebanon established a closer institutional relationship in line with Russia's enhanced role in the region. In fact, Russia had not been involved in the lands of Lebanon since the era of Catherine the Great, who defeated the Ottoman troops in the 1770s, until it deployed its troops there during the 2006 war in Lebanon. That deployment acted as a catalyst for rapprochement among both countries, and the most tangible evidence for the development of the relations was Saad Hariri's announcement that Lebanon would establish relations with Abkhazia and South Ossetia following the Russia-Georgia war. Additionally Russia announced that it would gift 10 MIG-29 planes to Lebanon in 2008 (World in War: 2018). Putin enhanced Russia's commitments to strengthen the Lebanese Armed Forces by supplying various weapons, military vehicles at no cost as well as the provision of military instructors for the Lebanese army (World in War: 2018). However, although Russia offered to fund the Lebanese army on several occasions, Lebanese officials could not accept due to the oppression of the USA (Opinion: 2019). On the other hand, Russia succeeded in obtaining the rights to drilling licenses for the exploration of Lebanese offshore regions, which led to the companies Rosneft, Gazprom, LUKOIL and Novatek being granted permission to conduct exploration activities in 2014, which are perceived as the instruments of Russian foreign policy and project its power in the Mediterranean region according to the analysis of Borschchevskaya and Ghaddar from the Washington Institute (Borschchevskaya & Ghaddar: 2018). Their analyses are supported by statements given by Lebanese officials. For instance, Lebanese Defence Minister Bou Saab emphasised the explorations of Russian Novatek company in Lebanon's offshore Block 4 with Italian Eni and French Total, and he also

mentioned the possibility of Russian mediation to demarcate the maritime border between Lebanon and Syria (Mardasov: 2019). As a result, such statements indicate the enhancement of the Russian involvement-presence in the region including Lebanon. Lebanon offers excellent opportunities to Russia as a result of its coastline within the Rimland.

Combination of the Difficulties and Mutual Benefits: Relations with Israel

Russia has focused on improving its relations with the allies of the USA in recent years, one of which is Israel. Since the intervention of Russia in the Syrian Civil War in 2015, Russia and Israel are almost neighbour countries. Israel not only plays a crucial role at the regional level, but also globally. Additionally, it is a unique country for Russia in the Middle East as there are approximately 1.5 million Russian-speaking Israelis who define themselves as arbitrators of the political life of the Israeli state (Delanoe: 2019). After the annexation of Crimea to Russia, Russia was sanctioned by the EU and USA, so it began to import goods from Israel.

Despite the development of trade relations between Russia and Israel after the annexation of Crimea to Russia, their military cooperation remains weak, Russia was only motivated to import Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAV) from Israel (Krasna: 2018).

Both sides have placed emphasis on strategic and pragmatic cooperation rather than a normative base. Russia has become a key player with its deployment and is playing a crucial role in Syria and this is also recognised by Israel. Furthermore, both sides have different perspectives related to the regional countries. Russia attempts to maintain a multilateral foreign policy orientation in the region, which is beneficial for its policy of pursuing involvement in the region. Therefore, while Russia has transferred technological goods from Israel under the sanctions, it has persuaded Iran to withdraw its troops from the Syria-Israel border and Putin has stated that foreign troops should withdraw from Syrian territories. However, some Israeli officials oppose the policy of Russia in the region, particularly with regard to the presence of Iran in the southern part of Syria. Hence, they claim that the Russian policy makers do not understand Israel's fear of the Iranians, and they believe that Russia only accepts Israeli when it is in Russia's best interests. As a result, the Israeli state believes that the southern part of Syria is witnessing a process of "Shiasation".

In spite of the improvements that have been witnessed in Russia-Israel relations and the fact that Netanyahu has visited Moscow more frequently than Washington, the relations and presence of Russia are not as intensive as a global player as it expected. However, Russia has a greater impact on Israel by using its leverage with Syria and Iran in regional politics and has tried to include itself in Israel's drilling activities in the Levant. This is because Russia does not want to lose access to the European energy market by missing out on the potential energy resources in the Levant.

As a result, Russian and Israel relations are expected to improve in the future, even though the relations are still complicated.

Southern Gate of the Rimland: Egypt

Egypt is located in the southern part of the Eastern Mediterranean and the eastern part of the Suez Canal is located inside the Rimland, while the western part is also significantly influential for the Eastern Mediterranean Basin. Egypt has experienced an interesting political adventure since achieving its independence by the pioneering non-alignment movement and subsequent participation in Arab-Israeli wars. Additionally, Egypt tried to follow a multilateral foreign policy towards the super powers during the Cold War era and continues to follow a similar policy in its attempts to enhance its involvement and presence in regional politics, particularly in terms of energy policies.

The "Arab Spring" affected Egypt deeply. Due to the massive protest demonstrations, Hosni Mubarak resigned from the government. After a period of transition, Mohamed Morsi came to power; however he faced a coup d'état in 2013 led by Abdel Fattah el-Sisi, Commander in Chief of the Armed Forces. Therefore, a new era began for Egypt. Sisi has been accepted by the USA, but has been condemned by some European

countries. Sisi has established good relations with the USA as well as with some European countries. However, he did not neglect to establish close relations with Russia too and Russia also followed a pragmatic policy with Egypt that focused on close relations with Sisi's government in order to secure its power in the Middle East, as it is on important trade routes and has strategic significance. Russia had already established close relations with Mubarek in the past and Russia was not concerned with who held power in Egypt, provided they were compatible with Russian interests.

Russia focused on improving bilateral trade relations with Egypt, while on the other hand Egypt aimed to ensure that Russian tourists continued to visit Egypt in order not to lose economic revenues. Both sides placed emphasis on strategic relations as well and agreed on the construction of a nuclear power plant in El Debaa as well as the creation of a Russian industrial zone close to the Suez Canal. The development of this industrial zone would mean that Russia would have influence on the gateway to the Rimland connecting the Mediterranean and the Indian Ocean.

On the other hand, Russia has attempted to increase its presence in drilling exploration activities in the Economic Exclusive Zone of Egypt as well, which may protect Russian economic interests similar to other parts of the Eastern Mediterranean. Therefore, Russia and Egypt held joint naval exercises in 2015 in addition to other joint military exercises (Zlberman & Shaker: 2018).

In spite of the improvements in bilateral relations between Russia and Egypt, question marks still remain regarding the future, due to the possibility of political instability in Egypt as well as Egypt's ties with the Trump government.

DISCUSSION

Mackinder and Spykman mostly published their articles and books in the early to mid-20th century. They underlined the importance of geography and defined it as geopolitics. Mackinder placed emphasis on control of the Heartland, while Spykman primarily focused on the Rimland. In current affairs, geographical locations protect their strategic and geopolitical status. Although technological advancements have certainly changed economic and military affairs, these locations still maintain their important geopolitical status and their roles have even enhanced due to the discovery of natural gas and other important natural resources.

According to the findings of this study, Russia is currently attempting to increase its influence at the global level. In the 2000s, Russia played a crucial role in its near abroad, which is essentially in the Heartland. Subsequently, Russia has focused on the Middle East in order to enhance its role as a global actor in the international relations system. The Eastern Mediterranean Basin is a strategic location within the Middle East region as well as the Rimland. Russia is trying to use its military power, nuclear technology and its large energy companies to increase its presence in the Eastern Mediterranean, which is a crucial part of the Rimland.

CONCLUSION

Russia is increasing its presence in the northern part of the Eastern Mediterranean by deploying permanent military power in Syria and the construction of a nuclear power plant in Turkey, in addition to intensive energy and trade relations with Turkey. Located in the middle of the Eastern Mediterranean, Cyprus is an indispensable island. Russia has focused on military issues and has tried to prevent the RoC from collaborating with the USA as well as NATO.

The eastern part of the Eastern Mediterranean is a new area for Russia, which is attempting to improve its strategic and economic relations with Lebanon and Israel. Certainly, it has also not neglected the importance of the energy factor in this region

The southern gate of the Rimland is controlled by Egypt, so Russia has turned its gaze to this area. Resultantly, it has begun to make investments in the industrial sectors by proposing to construct an industrial zone close to the Suez Canal as well as a nuclear power plant in Egypt to increase its presence economically and militarily in the gateway of the Rimland. Energy is therefore also an important factor in Russia–Egypt relations.

Russia has begun to play a crucial role in the Eastern Mediterranean Basin since the 2010s, which is the part of the Rimland, and it is trying to enhance its military involvement to control the trade routes of the Rimland as well as to protect the border or transition routes of the Heartland. On the other hand, it is also increasing its economic involvement to protect its energy leadership in the European market by controlling energy supplies in a significant part of the Rimland, which is also related to the size concept suggested by Spykman.

Eventually, the Eastern Mediterranean basin witnesses the revival of the geopolitics and also competition of the several actors in where Russia is one of the significant actors.

Russian Trade	Cyprus	Egypt	Israel	Lebanon	Syria	Turkey
Export	786.52	\$7.06B	\$1.95B	460.77M	\$400.15M	\$21.31B
Import	\$12	\$527M	\$765M	\$11.5M	\$4.24M	\$4.23B
Volume of Trade	\$798M	\$7.533B	\$2.760 B	\$471.82M	\$424.15M	\$25.54B

Table 1. Russian Exports and Imports Values with Eastern Mediterranean Countries (2018)

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- AMETBEK, D (2019). "Rusya'nın Doğu Akdeniz'deki Tutumu, Ankasam", [Online], <https://ankasam.org/rusyanin-dogu-akdenizdeki-tutumu/>, (19.9.2019).
- BBC NEWS (2017). "Turkey signs deal to get Russian S-400 air defence missiles". [Online], <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-41237812> (8.10.2019)
- BORSCHCHEVSKAYA, A & GHADDAR, H (2018). "How to Read Lebanon's Acceptance of Russian Military Aid, Policy Analysis, The Washington Institute". [Online]. <https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/how-to-read-lebanons-acceptance-of-russian-military-aid>, (17.09.2019).
- DEBKAFILE (2019). <https://www.debka.com/russia-uses-t-4-airbase-to-link-syrias-air-defenses-with-moscows-nuclear-c3-system/>.
- DEFENCE TALK (2006). "Russian Troops Make First Mideast Foray in Lebanon For Centuries". <https://www.defencetalk.com/russian-troops-make-first-mideast-foray-in-lebanon-for-centuries-8084/> [Online].
- DELANOE, I (2019). "Russia-Israel: Syria, a new structural challenge of Israeli-Russian relations", Observatoire du monde arabo-musulman et du Sahel, Fondation pour la Recherche Strategique.
- EATON, G (2018), "Francis Fukuyama interview: Socialism ought to come back", New Statesman America, <https://www.newstatesman.com/culture/observations/2018/10/francis-fukuyama-interview-socialism-ought-come-back>, (18.10.2019).
- EURONEWS (2019). "S-400'lerin 2.kısımı Türkiye'ye ulaştı;bundansonraki teslimat süreci nasıl işleyecek?", <https://tr.euronews.com/2019/07/13/s-400ler-ilk-kismi-turkiyeye-ulasti-bundan-sonraki-teslimat-sureci-nasil-isleyecek>, [Online].

- FOUAD, K (2018). "Egypt, Russia: Rapprochement or Alliance?", Egyptian Institute for Studies, <https://en.eipss-eg.org/egypt-russia-rapprochement-alliance>, [Online]. (19.9.2019).
- KRASNA, J (2018). "Moscow on the Mediterranean: Russia and Isarel's Relationship", Russian Foreign Policy Papers, Foreign Policy Research Institute, Philadelphia.
- MACKINDER, H (1904). "The Geographical Pivot of History". The Geographical Journal, 4(23), April.
- MACKINDER, H (1942). "Democratic Ideals and Reality, National Defense University Press, Washington, DC".
- MARDASOV, A (2019). "Russia offers to mediate in Syria-Lebanon maritime border dispute, Al-Monitor". <https://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2019/06/russia-lebanon-syria-maritime-dispute.html>, [Online] (15.10.2019).
- MORSKOYA DOKTRINA ROSSISKOI FEDERATSI (2015). (Maritime Doctrine of Russian Federation).
- OPINION (2019). "Lebanon's slow shift into Russia's orbit", <https://gulffnews.com/opinion/op-eds/lebanons-slow-shift-into-russias-orbit-1.62837572>, [Online].
- OZSAGLAM, MT (2018). "Russia-Turkey Relations: Conflict and Limited Cooperation in the Post-Soviet Era, 55th ic-PSIRS 2018", International Conference on Political Science, International Relations and Sociology, Future Academy.
- SPYKMAN, NJ (1938A). "Geography and Foreign Policy, I", American Political Science Review, 1(32), February.
- SPYKMAN, NJ (1938B). "Geography and Foreign Policy, II", American Political Science Review, 2(32), April.
- SPYKMAN, NJ (1944). "The Geography of Peace, Harcourt, Brace & Company", New York.
- SUKIER, H; RAMÍREZ MOLINA, R; Parra, M; MARTÍNEZ, K; FERNÁNDEZ, G & LAY, N (2020). "Strategic Management of Human Talent from a Sustainable Approach". Opción. Revista de Ciencias Humanas y Sociales, 36(91), pp. 929-953.
- THE CENTURY FOUNDATION (2018). "Is Lebanon Embracing Larger Russian Role in Its Country?". Commentary World, <https://tcf.org/content/commentary/lebanon-embracing-larger-russian-role-country/>, [Online].
- WORLD IN WAR (2018). "Lebanon and Russia Relations", <http://www.worldinwar.eu/lebanon-russia-relations/>, (10.10.2019).
- ZLBERMAN, B & SHAKER, R (2018). "Russia and Egypt are Growing Closer", The American Interest, June. <https://www.the-american-interest.com/2018/06/06/russia-and-egypt-are-growing-closer/> (19.9.2019).

BIODATA

M.T OZSAGLAM: He was born in Nicosia, Cyprus in April, 1974. He studied at the Department of International Relations-Eastern Mediterranean University and graduated in 1997. Muhittin Tolga Ozsaglam has continued his academic life and got M.A degree from the Department of International Relations, Hacettepe University-Ankara. Afterward, Özsağlam continued his academic studies at the department of political science and international relations, Marmara University- İstanbul and got PhD. Ozsaglam continues his academic studies at the Department of International Relations, European University of Lefke. He knows Turkish, English and Russian languages. He also speaks Greek at the basic level.