



**NATO Foundation**  
*Defense College*



ENERGY  
STRATEGIES  
2023 

***ENERGY STRATEGIES 2023***  
***The Mediterranean: new resources and integration***

***Background Paper***

**Mauro Primavera**  
Researcher, OASIS International Foundation, Milan

In the last decade, Eastern Mediterranean has become a relevant region, leading to a general reshuffle of geopolitical and geo-economic trends and, at the same time, to the establishment of new partnerships. While the European Union is completely rethinking its political energy after the Russian invasion of Ukraine, the Levantine countries are trying to go beyond a post-Arab Spring scenario by improving their national security and poor economic performance, worsened by the ongoing global crisis and cyclic social unrest. On the other hand, the 2022 NATO Strategic Concept has clearly in mind energy security of supply as a desirable goal.

This complexity is clearly exemplified by the case of Egypt. Since the rise to power of President 'Abd al-Fattah al-Sisi, the country has portrayed itself as a crucial energetic hub that is capable of meeting and matching needs and demands of Europe, connecting it to Africa and the Middle East. This ambitious project takes root in the 2015 discovery of Zohr, a 100 km<sup>2</sup> offshore gas field located 200 km north of Port Said, the entrance of Suez Canal. Since then, Egypt has become a net gas exporter and has signed a remarkable partnership with Eni for the exploration and drilling of the seafloor, that eventually led to the discovery of the Nargis-1 depot well in January 2023.

The emergence of energy sector brought positive outcomes, first of all the partnership between Egypt and Israel. Cairo can count on huge hydrocarbon reserves; however, it needs a broader import-reexport strategy in order to increase its revenues. This scheme comprises firstly Israeli gas supply via Arab Gas Pipeline and secondly the use of strategic terminal facilities (Damietta and Beheira), where the gas is liquefied and finally shipped to Europe. Consequently, the Egyptian-Israeli agreement paved the way to the 2022 Memorandum of Understanding with the European Union, further integrating energy market.

The fact that such agreement affects directly core NATO issues is proven by the successful mediation led by American diplomats in resolving after more than ten years the maritime border dispute between Israel and Lebanon, where mutual economic benefits are expected to overcome long-lasting confrontation. Even Jordan is part of this project, since the Kingdom has doubled its capacity of electrical interconnection with Egypt and in January 2022 it agreed, through a US-brokered deal, to bring electricity in Lebanon in order to contain shortages and ameliorate inhabitants' life conditions.

Despite this encouraging facts, one can notice the growing challenges of the region: e.g., Egypt's economic structure, heavily controlled by the military apparatus, is rapidly deteriorating and the huge

availability of hydrocarbon hardly copes with the increasing domestic demand and huge demographic pressure. As mentioned, Lebanon is struggling with a devastating and enduring socio-economic crisis, while Jordan remains in a precarious standing, though its visible stability.

In this sense, a more structured and target-oriented response of NATO would bolster security framework and replicate new energy agreements and partnership.



## **Mauro Primavera**

*Researcher, OASIS International Foundation, Milan*

Dr Mauro Primavera is researcher at OASIS International Foundation and Teaching Assistant in Geopolitics, History of Islamic Asia, History of Civilization and Political Culture at the Catholic University of Milan. His research areas include Arab and Mediterranean geopolitics, history of the MENA region, Arab secular and religious movements. He holds a Ph.D. in Institutions and Policies



**NATO Foundation**  
*Defense College*