



5TH MARINE AND MARITIME SECURITY FORUM FINAL DECLARATION

5th Marine and Maritime Security Forum whose main theme is “Marine Geoeconomics of the 21st Century, and Türkiye” was held by TASAM National Defence and Security Institute, together with the 9th Istanbul Security Conference on the date of **23rd of November, 2023**, in **Istanbul Kent University Kağıthane Campus**, simultaneously as a co-event.

A wide range participation was provided by state officials, bureaucrats, soldiers, academicians, private sector representatives, defense industry officials at the Forum which was held 5th time this year to examine the regional, continental and global developments in all areas related maritime, and to make academic suggestions that will guide the international relations, defense, security, economy, law and socio-cultural policies.

The following issues of vital importance in present and future of Türkiye and the region were discussed at the Forum; “Sea Blindness and Maritime Studies in Turkish International Relations Literature”, “Current Concepts and Issues in Maritime Capacities for Construction”, “Development of Turkish Navalism”, “New Opportunities in Maritime Geoeconomics and Türkiye”, “The Age of Digitalization and Emerging Threats in Global Shipping”, “Humanitarian Aid and Disaster Relief Operations at Sea”, “Maritime Geoculture”, “Ocean Policies”, “Environmental Security in Maritime Studies”, “Current Concepts and Issues on Maritime Capacity Building”, “Current Trends in the Use of Turkish Naval Diplomacy”, “Current Threats and Blue Crimes in Turkish Maritime Security” and “New Perspectives and Regional Studies in Maritime Geopolitics; Mediterranean, Aegean Sea, Black Sea, Oceans and Poles”.

As a result of the Forum, the following objectives and recommendations were made, and it was decided to bring them to the attention of all relevant authorities and the public in order to contribute to the construction of today and the future:

1. Considering the fact that 90% of global trade is conducted through seas, the current situation of Turkish maritime has been evaluated. According to numerical data, Türkiye ranks 32nd in maritime trade and holds the 3rd position in Mediterranean trade. The suggested recommendation for improving these figures emphasizes the necessity of developing sustainable and proactive policies. Maritime trade factors can be examined under two headings: objective maritime trade, which considers the country's trade, military power, and navy; and subjective maritime trade, which relates to society's and decision-makers' inclination towards maritime activities, historical heritage, and the position of maritime in society. It is estimated that the maritime sector in Türkiye will receive an investment of \$21.6 billion by the year 2053, which is a modest target considering the potential.
2. One of the adverse consequences of climate change is the rising sea levels and oceans. In this context, many places are under the threat of disappearance. It is believed that Tudavor and Krivadi islands will be submerged by the year 2030. Despite the efforts of the island's authorities to negotiate agreements with New Zealand and Austria, they have not been successful.





3. Developments in climate conditions are not recognized as grounds for asylum in international law, creating uncertainty for the future of the residents in areas expected to be submerged. Therefore, communities in these regions are exploring alternative solutions to protect their people. While possible solutions are detailed, it is emphasized that no method can provide a complete resolution, and as a result, steps need to be taken for more effective and fundamental change to address the challenges posed by climate change.
4. It has been demonstrated through graphs that the economy and maritime trade are parallel, indicating that if maritime trade is strong and well-developed, the economy will follow a similar trajectory. In this context, the need for Türkiye to develop skilled and competent individuals in the fields of ships and maritime is emphasized, given the country's demand for new employment opportunities. The necessity and importance of training experts in the maritime sector in Türkiye have been highlighted.
5. The strategic and geopolitical significance of the Eastern Mediterranean has been emphasized by highlighting the role of energy in the region. The extraction of oil and gas from the Eastern Mediterranean holds great importance for Türkiye. Numerous external factors influence and, in some aspects, determine maritime trade. Accordingly, certain international organizations and institutions play a key role. Among these organizations are the World Trade Organization (WTO), the World Health Organization (WHO), the International Labour Organization (ILO), the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), and the International Maritime Organization (IMO)
6. The conflict between Russia and Ukraine has had numerous adverse effects on maritime trade in many aspects. The regions around the Black Sea and, on a global scale, trade have been significantly impacted. As a result, disruptions have occurred in the supply chain, prevailing prices in the markets have been distorted, and there have been damages to ports and infrastructure. One of the reasons triggering price fluctuations is the failure to deliver food supplies. This is because discussing exports becomes challenging when products are not transported through maritime trade.
7. With the pluralistic evolution of international relations theories, the significance of "civilization studies" has increased, leading to the emergence of the term "Mediterranean Civilization" in the literature. Additionally, the development of maritime strategies has been influenced by the neorealist movement. In this context, the discussion has revolved around the ideological grounds on which Turkish maritime studies have been neglected, aiming to fill the gap in the literature of the theory of Mediterranean Civilization.
8. The importance of Türkiye, with its prominent figures such as Piri Reis and Barbaros Hayrettin, and its rich maritime history, taking a leading role again in the maritime sector, has been emphasized. The seas surrounding Türkiye have gained increasing significance in recent years due to growing needs, intensified energy diplomacy, and efforts to control potential hydrocarbon fields. Particularly within the framework of international agreements, the dynamics of dominance relationships, as well as the





possession of energy resources, have led stakeholders to exhibit a more complex and aggressive stance. During this process, Türkiye has been striving to strengthen its position as a key player in the region, not only through agreements with Northern Cyprus Turkish Republic and Libya but also through intensified diplomatic efforts with its maritime neighbors. This has contributed to Türkiye's efforts to become the most significant actor in the region.

9. One indispensable condition for hydrocarbon production is the reservoir field, which refers to the structural shell units where hydrocarbons can be accumulated. The identification of such units allows for accurate pre-drilling studies and focuses on narrowed areas. According to this data, formations within the exclusive economic zone boundaries of Türkiye, particularly in the Mediterranean, Black Sea, and Marmara Sea, stand out as the main geomorphological structures where hydrocarbons are found.
10. In the year 2023, two major earthquakes with magnitudes of 7.7 and 7.6 occurred in Türkiye. As a result of these earthquakes, İskenderun Port collapsed and remained unusable for an extended period. Serious damage occurred on highways and airports, leading to significant disruptions in transportation. The earthquake risk probabilities were 10% in Istanbul, 15% in İzmir, and 15% in İskenderun. In light of this data, it is crucial not to construct ports in areas prone to earthquake risk and disaster zones to prevent potential damages. This precaution is essential for mitigating possible harm caused by earthquakes.
11. The sea is the most crucial factor in the formation of climates and water cycles. Changes in climate lead to the warming of seas, melting of glaciers, a decrease in biodiversity, and alterations in the current system. The loss of all 19 fish species, the disappearance of around 130 coral areas due to the mucilage event in 2021, and the risk of one in every four marine species facing extinction have been observed. The change in the current system results in migration issues for living organisms, posing a threat to the continuity of species. Emphasis has been placed on the protection of organisms like Pina, highlighting the need for a change in marine policies from this perspective.
12. With the end of the Cold War and the withdrawal of the Soviet fleet from the Mediterranean, the naval presence of other global powers relatively decreased in the first decade. Regional actors, whose Cold War-era missions had concluded, turned to more active naval and gunboat diplomacy in the Eastern Mediterranean for their political activities and goals. While the importance of maritime transportation continued in the region, the discovery of hydrocarbon reserves in the Caspian Sea and Leviathan brought new dynamics to power balances. As a result of such developments, inter-country collaborations and diplomatic relations improved, and nations made significant strides to strengthen their naval and air forces. It is predicted, based on the modernization programs of regional actors, that similar events will occur in the near future. The naval structuring of actors has the potential to influence the moves and policies of parties in the energy struggle.
13. The importance of maritime power in economic, cultural, and military aspects has been emphasized, highlighting the necessity of planning Türkiye's navy to be both effective and deterrent. It is





underscored that showcasing Türkiye's naval strength should be a priority, especially to target countries and all relevant parties. Additionally, it is noted that protecting Türkiye from the destructive impacts of war and developing a comprehensive defense mechanism require the utilization of hard power elements within gunboat diplomacy. Establishing a more advanced navy that aligns with this strategy should be among the priorities of decision-makers.

14. The Arctic region, marked by melting glaciers due to climate change, resulting in more accessible trade routes and rich underground resources, holds a significant place in the global agenda, including that of Türkiye. Contrary to common belief, this interest is not a recent development. In 1912, our parliamentarian Celal Nuri İleri became the first Turkish representative to visit the Arctic region. Furthermore, during the 2nd International Polar Year held between 1932 and 1933, Türkiye played an active role, with significant contributions from Ahmet Rasim Barkınay, a member of the Turkish Navy, making him the first Turkish naval officer to attend. Barkınay, a prominent figure in cartography, is known for his work in 1934, which includes observations of the Arctic Ocean. The fact that maritime activities initiated under the Turkish Navy during the Atatürk era date back to such early periods reflects the visionary nature of the leading figures of that time.
15. Climate change presents itself not only as a consequence of phenomena such as melting glaciers, warming seas, and changing weather patterns but also as a security issue. Such developments bring about economic warfare as well. One of the regions where climate change is expected to have the most adverse effects is the Mediterranean basin. Studies indicate that climate change has led to changes in maritime activities in the Eastern Mediterranean region. Political conflicts in the Middle East and North Africa have become part of the literature on climate change, and energy conflicts in the Eastern Mediterranean have intensified. In addition to regional research, there is an observed acceleration of studies in the Asia-Pacific region.
16. The United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), adopted in 1982, holds the distinction of being the first text that comprehensively addresses the determination of maritime zones and the utilization of their resources. Although Türkiye is not a party to this Convention, it has codified many customary rules into written form. In this regard, Türkiye needs a standalone law regulating its maritime jurisdiction areas in accordance with international law. Despite the preparation of the Turkish Maritime Law in 2006, it has not been adopted. The most recent attempt to draft a law was made in 2023, but no conclusive results have been achieved yet. The adoption of such a law is believed to contribute significantly to the protection of our rights and interests at sea and to economic development.
17. Türkiye, surrounded by seas on three sides, faces various significant aspects of maritime security. In addition to traditional threats such as piracy, armed robbery, illegal trafficking of goods and humans through maritime routes, terrorism, illegal, unreported, and unregulated fishing, intentional harm to the marine environment, and disputes over maritime jurisdiction areas between countries, the increasing threat of cybercrimes with advancing technology has also become a concern for maritime



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security. Wars and crises are among the foremost situations posing these threats. Following the Russia-Ukraine war, it became evident that there is a crucial link between maritime security in the Black Sea and food and energy security. Similarly, the crises such as the 1996 Kardak Crisis with Greece, which brought attention to the security of the Aegean and Eastern Mediterranean, and the 2020 crisis emphasize the importance of maritime security. All these situations are attempted to be explained with the term 'blue crimes,' a recently introduced term in the literature, which refers to organized crimes involving two or more states at sea.

18. "Blue Homeland" is a concept that emerged after 2006, aiming for Türkiye to have a maritime culture with its institutions and people. This goal emphasizes the political and economic importance of the seas. Therefore, not only the statements of politicians but also the intellectual structure of society and how they perceive these concepts are equally important.
19. Arctic region issues addressed within frameworks like FONOP (Freedom of Navigation Operations), SLOC (Sea Lines of Communication), and UNCLOS (United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea) encompass various factors that significantly impact maritime and maritime security. These include blockchain technology, precious metals, smuggling, accidents, piracy, pollution, cyber threats, and international conflicts.
20. Seas are utilized not only in transportation, fishing, or military domains but also serve as a source for technological and scientific advancements. An example of these developments is given in the form of marine genetic resources. Marine genetic resources are believed to have applications in the treatment of cancer, energy production, environmental cleanup initiatives, and the generation of new food sources. However, for the sustainable exploitation of these resources without causing harm to nature, a legal foundation is necessary. The United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) has not been able to introduce any regulations regarding this matter due to the lack of knowledge about these resources at the time when the convention was established.
21. The "Agreement on the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Marine Biodiversity of Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction" under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) – commonly known as the Ocean Treaty, was negotiated to regulate the protection of seas beyond national jurisdiction and the sustainable use of marine genetic resources. Türkiye's participation in the negotiations of this agreement is considered crucial for the consolidation of the "blue homeland" doctrine, the attainment of a participatory position for Türkiye, and the realization of maritime ideals.
22. Throughout history, it has been observed that nations that ventured into the oceans and were influential in maritime trade tended to rise to a more prominent position in foreign policy compared to other actors. Particularly in the West, it is known that the capital accumulation that fueled the Industrial Revolution was obtained through transcontinental maritime trade, contributing significantly to Great Britain's economic prosperity. Therefore, concepts such as capitalism, modernity, and imperialism, which can be associated with maritime trade, play a crucial role among the factors influencing world history.





23. Türkiye is located in a region prone to frequent earthquakes. Due to its geopolitical position, it also faces the potential for human-made disasters. According to a report by the Global Risk Management Index, as of 2019, Türkiye is categorized as a "high-risk" country in terms of humanitarian crises and natural disasters, with an index score of 5.0, ranking 45th out of 191 countries. According to the subcomponent scores for danger and exposure in the index, Türkiye is among the top 10 most risky countries.
24. Considering the increasing trend in sea surface temperatures due to climate change, efforts to prevent ecological events such as marine mucilage are becoming inevitable. In this context, it is observed that changes in human interactions with the sea are unavoidable, taking into account the original oceanographic structure of the Sea of Marmara.
25. It is observed that, beyond the well-known alliance structures of the Cold War era, numerous alliance blocs have emerged. In addition to alliances like AUKUS and QUAD, the United States is seen forming bilateral and trilateral alliances with Pacific countries. These alliances are particularly manifested through the participating countries' naval forces, turning navies into both crucial instruments in countries' foreign policies and the most significant field of application for maritime geopolitics in the 21st century. It has been suggested that in the Eastern Mediterranean, the opinion is expressed that any energy transit, security, and/or energy supply is not possible without the inclusion of Türkiye. In the 21st century, the discovered energy in the Eastern Mediterranean is emphasized as a crucial geo-economic, geostrategic, and geopolitical power that will determine the future not only for regional countries but also for European states. Especially after the Russia-Ukraine war, the competition in the field of energy security has become a significant priority, with the advancement through energy transmission lines.

23 November 2023, Istanbul

