



[Turkey and Greece Agree to Resume Discussions Regarding Their Dispute in the Eastern Mediterranean](#)

In one of the latest developments with the ongoing tensions in the Eastern Mediterranean, Turkey and Greece have agreed to restart talks regarding their dispute over access to natural resources in the region. While the countries have a history of discord on a variety of issues, this most recent flare-up emerged during the summer when a research vessel was dispatched to disputed waters. Many of the present-day issues are rooted in contested claims to territorial waters and conflicting interpretations of maritime boundaries, which have escalated further over the past decade due to a rise in oil and gas exploration and extraction. Observers hope that negotiations between the two sides can help bring about a diplomatic solution to the problem, or at the very least, prevent the conflict from spiraling out of control.

To understand how disputes over maritime boundaries and drilling rights persist in the region, it is important to note the role that the conflicting Turkish and Greek interpretations of Cyprus play in this. Greece and the European Union consider the north of Cyprus to be part of the Republic of Cyprus and therefore contend that E.U. nations have the exclusive right to carry out economic activities in its surrounding waters. However, Turkey recognizes the independence of Northern Cyprus as an entity with its own exclusive economic zone (EEZ), which in turn would allow for Turkish access to natural resources there. This extended and contested EEZ in the waters surrounding Cyprus has been a source of much of the disagreement regarding who has the right to explore these areas.

Greece's overall position is that each of its islands is entitled to its own continental shelf, while Turkey argues that type of an interpretation unfairly encroaches on its own EEZ because of the abundance of Greek islands in its archipelago which minimize Turkey's claim to the waters surrounding its coastline. Furthermore, some in Turkey believe that the terms of past maritime treaties were unfair, leaving them in effect trapped as a landlocked country despite the fact that they have about 5,000 miles of coastline. As a result, Turkey often defends its actions in the Eastern Mediterranean as justifiable by highlighting this right to access the natural resources in waters within their perceived jurisdiction. Turkey also points out that it has the largest coastline of all nations in the region but yet a disproportionately small share of sea access, but Greece emphasizes that its claims are based off of international law and past agreements which Turkey itself agreed to abide by.

Ultimately, the agreement between Turkey and Greece to resume dialogue aimed at mediating tensions is a positive development, and officials from both sides stated that these would be held soon in Istanbul. However, a clear and decisive resolution to the continued territorial disputes will be difficult, since both Turkey and Greece interpret their maritime boundaries differently. As long as the two countries have overlapping claims to the same resource-rich areas in the Eastern Mediterranean, the prospect of conflict will remain an ever-present possibility.