



# Turkey- Russia Military Drill in Eastern Mediterranean

## Why in News

Turkey has announced that Russia will hold **live-fire naval exercises** in the eastern Mediterranean. This will happen during [escalating tensions between Turkey and its coastal neighbors Greece and Cyprus](#) over the rights to search for energy resources in the region.

## Key Points

- **Complex Geo-politics:** Turkey is a [North Atlantic Treaty Organization \(NATO\)](#) member, and it is strange to expect NATO-member Turkey to engage such drills on Russia's behalf.
  - It can be noted that the two countries have in recent years significantly strengthened their military, political and economic ties.
- **Russia-Turkey Link:**
  - Apart from the announced drill, they are coordinating closely on their military presence in Syria.
  - Turkey has purchased [Russia's advanced S-400 missiles](#) and has agreed to go with a Russian-built nuclear power plant on its southern coast.
- **Reasons:**
  - Recently, the U.S. lifted a decades-old arms embargo (1987) on Cyprus which created the fresh strains between Turkey and Greece.
  - Turkey condemned the move and urged the USA to reverse course to safeguard Turkish-speaking Cypriots.
    - **The Embargo:** To prevent an arms race that would hinder UN-facilitated reunification efforts for Cyprus.
      - It was directed against the southern, Greek Cypriot part of the island, where Cyprus' internationally recognised government is seated.
- **Impact of Russia-Turkey Military Drill:**
  - Turkey's announcement comes at a time when Turkish survey vessels and drillships continue to prospect for hydrocarbons in waters where Greece and Cyprus claim exclusive economic rights.
  - **Russia** maintains a **sizeable naval presence** in the eastern Mediterranean and regularly conducts naval manoeuvres.
  - It's also at odds with the [European Union](#) over its territorial disputes with bloc members Greece and Cyprus.
  - **France** recently increased its military presence in the area to support Greece and Cyprus.
  - **Impact on India:**
    - **Energy:** Mediterranean oil accounted for about 4.5% of India's overall imports in the year 2019-20. Stability of this region is important for India's energy security.
    - **Diaspora:** Any turmoil in the region will have an impact on [India's diaspora](#) in the

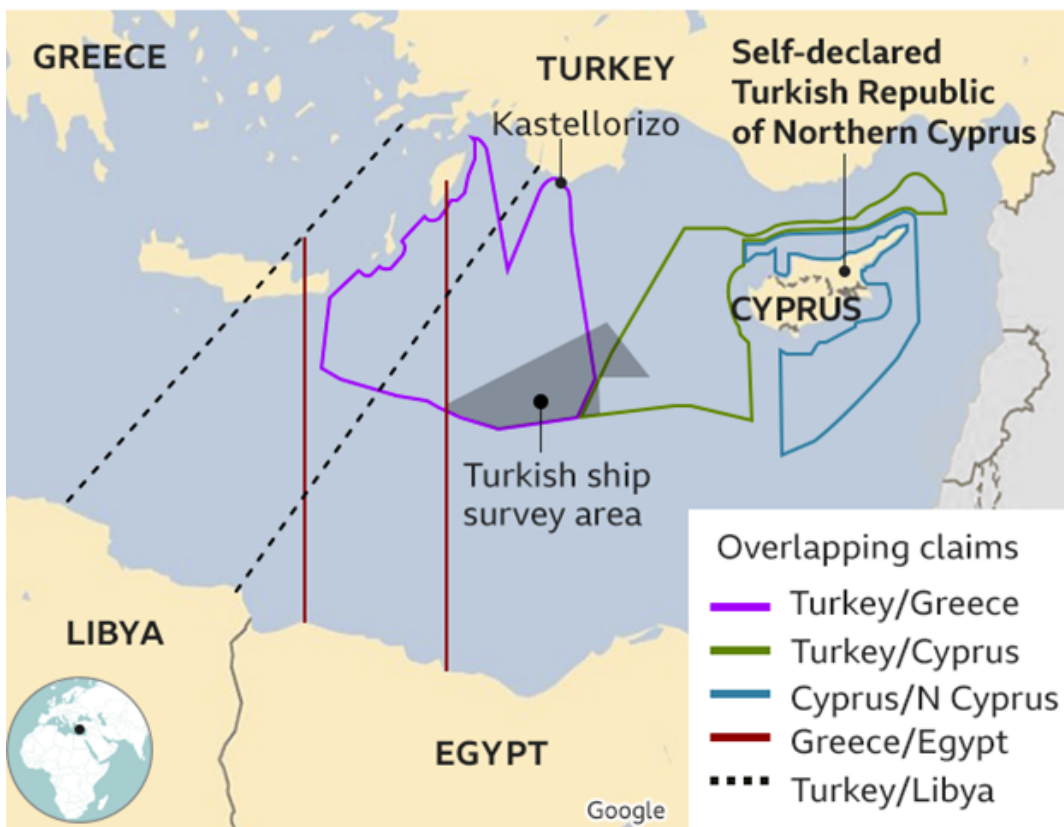
region.

- India is not only a party, but also founded the **Non Aligned Movement** whereas Turkey and Russia lean to different polar ideologies.
  - It is a real test of Indian diplomatic skills to create a balance between different ideologies.
- The diplomatic exchanges between Turkey and India have intensified in recent past following **India's decision to end the special status of Kashmir**.
  - India's voice over this remains important being a protagonist of **democracy, right to self-determination and sovereign responsibility**.

## Background of Conflict

- Energy is one of the key factors in the contemporary geopolitics of the Mediterranean region.
- Turkish **energy exploration** in the eastern Mediterranean has stoked tensions that is rooted in:
  - **Conflicting interpretations of maritime boundaries.**
  - The **feud between Turkey and Cyprus over gas reserves** around the island, whose northern third is controlled by Turkish forces.
    - Turkish forces captured the northern third of Cyprus in 1974, following a coup attempt in which a military junta in Athens sought to unite Cyprus with Greece.
    - The Republic of Cyprus officially has sovereignty over the entire island, though it in effect remains divided.
    - It builds upon a much longer history of enmity between the Greeks and the Turks going back to before the modern Turkish state was founded.

## // Greece and Turkey have overlapping claims in the Eastern Mediterranean



## Way Forward

- Conflicting claims over resources because of unresolved border disputes can potentially create a new tension-hotbed in the Mediterranean region. Multiple challenges like pandemic, slow economy have already posed a significant challenge for global leaders and therefore it is very important to address the concerns of stakeholders involved in the region to ensure collective peace and prosperity for all.

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