Introduction

The year 2020 began with high tensions at world level, which brought to the fore the central importance of the Mediterranean region in terms of energy and security of energy supplies. There were tensions between the USA and Iran, the war in Syria, and the recent epilogue of the war in Libya, which saw as protagonists on the one hand Russia, and on the other Erdoğan's Turkey, which decided to send its soldiers to sustain Fayez al-Sarraj against General Khalifa Haftar, a decision not shared by Egypt and other countries, who sought the intervention of the international community. These were events that remind us once again of the strategic importance of the Mediterranean and the need to implement Euro–Mediterranean cooperation. Behind these wars and tensions there are geopolitical interests and issues of primary importance. A major role is played by the desire to acquire control of territories considered strategic because they are both rich in oil and gas and are a place of transit for oil and gas pipelines or ships that transport energy from producing to consumer countries. The Mediterranean region plays a strategic role for energy due to the presence of Libya and Algeria that have large reserves of oil and gas, and because of the discovery of new offshore gas fields in Egypt, Israel and Cyprus. The Mediterranean region is also an important energy transit due to the presence of strategic chokepoints for maritime traffic of oil tankers, such as the Suez Canal and Turkish straits. The role of the Mediterranean region as an energy corridor is reinforced by the presence of pipelines that transport oil and gas from the Middle East, Russia, Azerbaijan and other former Soviet Union States to consumer countries. Moreover, the strategic role of the Mediterranean region is due not only to what already exists, but also to potential future development, which is why the conflicts in Syria and Libya have seen the participation of the superpowers, namely Russia and the USA.

The present book analyses energy consumption, energy production, energy intensity, CO_2 emissions and security of energy supply in Mediterranean countries. While previous works focus mainly on European countries, the present book also considers North African and Middle Eastern countries. Our study, conducted in a comparative perspective, shows that diversity and inequality are the main features of the Mediterranean area, which comprises 25 countries that vary greatly in economic terms, development levels and energy consumption. Hence the Mediterranean is rarely considered an economic whole because its various countries are part of three different continents, that

is, Europe, Africa and Asia. In contrast to the prevailing literature, we consider the Mediterranean area a single economic system, but at the same time we highlight the differences between disparate areas. The book is completed by an Appendix reporting statistics on energy consumption, energy production, CO_2 emissions and other energy indicators calculated considering the Mediterranean area as a whole, including not only European countries, but also North African countries, namely Libya, Algeria, Egypt, Tunisia and Morocco, and Middle Eastern countries, namely Israel, Jordan, Lebanon and Syria.

The red line of the book is the concept of energy transitions: from renewable to non-renewable energy sources; from coal to oil and later natural gas (nuclear for some countries). Analysis of long-term trends of CO_2 emissions helps evaluate the effort made by individual countries to reduce the impact of energy consumption on the environment, but at the same time highlights the numerous policy contradictions in support of renewable energies, because fossil fuel consumption continues to grow, especially in emerging economies.

Strictly linked is the analysis of the problem of energy dependency and energy security. As will be shown, the latter is strictly connected to the energy transitions before, during and after World War II. Turmoil and wars in the Middle East and North African countries in more recent years have been triggered by several factors, although the role assumed by energy has been fundamental. However, the current dynamics cannot be understood without examining the problem of energy security from a historical perspective. This book therefore reconstructs not only the most famous oil crises of the 1970s, but also the situation since World War II, when energy security was already a major concern and the exploitation of oil from the Middle East played an important role in the Cold War and the European Recovery Programme. Thus we examine the first oil crisis (1951–1952), strictly linked to the nationalization by the Iranian government of the Anglo–Iranian Oil Company, the Suez Crisis (1956–1957), triggered by the nationalization of the Suez Canal, which is fundamental for the transport of oil from the Middle East to importing countries, the role of Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), Libya and the third post-war oil crisis, until the Persian Gulf crises and current energy crises that affect the Mediterranean region. What can be learnt from analysis of the above energy crises is that there are remarkable similarities of current crises with past experience. Recognizing similarities, or simply remembering forgotten history, can help policymakers to better manage present and future crises.

Major similarities can be found in the energy transitions of emerging economies of Middle East and North African countries with past energy transitions of currently more advanced European countries. As will be shown, the study of past energy transitions can be a useful tool for better forecasting the evolution of energy consumption in emerging economies. In more recent

years, total and per capita energy consumption have rapidly increased in North Africa and Middle Eastern countries, as have energy intensity, fossil fuel consumption and CO_2 emissions. By contrast, energy intensity and CO_2 emissions have fallen in the most advanced economies of the countries that are part of the European Union (EU). Analysis of the composition of the energy balance of the various countries further reveals different policies in terms of renewable energy sources. Also through the Gini index, the long-term pattern of inequality in terms of energy consumption and CO_2 emissions is estimated. The role of Euro–Mediterranean cooperation for energy and climate change is another major aspect that will be addressed in the book, since the issue of climate change is of key importance for the Mediterranean region, following rapid population growth and urbanization of North African and Middle Eastern countries. The Mediterranean region has great potential for renewable sources, but despite important initiatives such as the 1995 Barcelona Conference and the creation of the Union for the Mediterranean in 2008, the spread of turmoil in the Middle East and North Africa highlights the numerous weaknesses of the Euro–Mediterranean integration process.

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