# A real game changer at the Black Sea: Istanbul Kanal

In a time when peace in Europe is terribly shaken and the international community's security is under concrete threat because of the developments and escalations of the Russian invasion of Ukraine, Turkey is preparing to blow out the candles on the opposite shore of the Black Sea. The year 2023 will be just the first page of a new chapter for the Turkish Republic, and now on the eve of its centenary celebration it is ready to show the entire world the gift it has prepared for itself. The Istanbul Canal will be undoubtedly the most important infrastructure project of the 21st century. The interest in this pharaonic idea should be embraced by the world as it will leave its mark on the international environment in many ways and forever.

One very important area on which we will focus our analysis of the operationalization of the Istanbul Canal is the military side. A geostrategic change with great implications is emerging, as the implementation of this artificial route will cause the *”de facto”* legal regime of the Turkish Straits to disappear. The Montreux Convention (1936) has until now been the guarantee of Turkish sovereignty over the Bosporus and the Dardanelles, and for Russia, it has meant the guarantee of calm waters in the Black Sea. The operationalization of the Istanbul Canal could leave the door open for the consolidation of a permanent NATO fleet in the Black Sea, or at least a better defense of its eastern flank.

We will also look at the economic importance of this mega-project. Turkey has an impressive history, but what is truly remarkable today is its geographical position at the crossroads of Europe, Africa, and Asia. This man-made waterway is part of a wider plan to bring the republic out of economic collapse and make it the most important energy hub between the Caspian Sea/Persian Gulf and the European market.

Lately, imperial mythologies have been resonating in many parts of the globe. The analysis of the Istanbul Canal includes an analysis of the domestic and foreign political trajectory Erdogan's Turkey is heading and how it is moving away from the democratic ideals and values set by the *”Father Turk”* 100 years ago.