

Maritime geography and regional tensions: an analysis of the maritime conflict between Israel and Lebanon

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Abstract:

Countries can no longer promote their economies and develop away from energy of all kinds, so that energy of various names and sources of alternative, vital and renewable sources is considered a source of permanent and continuous development of countries, where the race towards it has become a feature of cold conflicts in modern times, and this is reflected in the manifestations of competition between countries at the regional and international levels, through manifestations of interference in the internal affairs of countries, either through cooperation agreements through which they can achieve actual presence within the geographical borders of the state Such as exploration operations, or supporting conflicting parties at the expense of other parties to keep the situation as it is for the benefit of the supporting external parties according to what serves their interest.

Keywords: the Israeli-Lebanese conflict; the maritime orders; east Mediterranean; energy reserves.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The energy potential of the Middle East is the prominent ammunition that enjoys many internal interests of countries and even Regional, where countries find themselves in constant competition and cold conflict to attract as many energy sources as possible, either to cover the deficit or to increase the strength of the state and its international status, whether in terms of capacity or strength, and the desire of international powers to expand and expand made every source of power targeted by them, and this paved the way for the race to contain those weak countries, especially those related to the third world countries, and the search for ways to penetrate into their regional and even geographical surroundings to achieve the desired end, and and to keep that state in permanent dependence and a constant need for those who managed To cover the deficit and the shortage within it .

The Middle East region is witnessing multiple conflicts and tensions, and among these conflicts stands out the conflict between the Zionist entity and Lebanon over the maritime borders, this conflict has its roots in the marine area rich in natural resources in the eastern Mediterranean.

The maritime conflict between the Zionist entity and Lebanon is related to the dispute over the rights to exploit marine resources in the disputed maritime area between the two countries and revolves around the right to extract gas and oil from the territorial waters of the two countries, especially in the Mediterranean Sea. The main disagreement between the Zionist entity and Lebanon concerns the area known as "Zone 9" Special Economic Zone; an area located on the maritime border between the two countries, and is considered an area rich in natural resources, including gas and oil.

This conflict strengthens tensions between the Zionist entity and Lebanon and poses a challenge to security and stability in the region. The conflict is sometimes exacerbated by military operations or illegal movements in disputed maritime waters.

From the above, we pose the following problem: How does the Israeli-Lebanese conflict over maritime borders affect regional stability and maritime security developments in the eastern Mediterranean

Through the above, the topic can bestudied according to a set of the following axes:

2. The energy reserves in Israel and Lebanon

The Eastern Mediterranean region is full of potential reserves of petroleum liquids extending in the form of a crescent that starts from the north of the eastern side of the Eastern Mediterranean region and ends at the southeastern side of the sea itself

2.1 Theoretical interpretation of the importance of the East Mediterranean Bank:

We find in the book Mediterranean geopolitics by the author Bev Lacoste in his division of the Mediterranean region into the western and eastern Mediterranean, and that the Eastern Mediterranean region includes the countries located in the northeastern Mediterranean, namely (Turkey, the Balkans, Cyprus, Yugoslav countries, Albania, Bulgaria, Greece), and the countries located in the southeastern Mediterranean (Libya, Egypt).

the geopolitical significance of the Mediterranean Sea region is the result of three factors: its location at the junction of Europe, Asia and Africa; its significant international sea routes and straits — Gibraltar, Bosphorus , Dardanelles, Suez Canal — and its potential as a source of oil and natural gas. Recent gas discoveries in the Eastern Mediterranean have only reaffirmed this potential. They have resulted in a set of significant geoeconomic decisions concerning the development of flows and exchanges in the form of traded gas. (.Andrea & Ruszel., 2017, p. 145)

The theories of the heart of the world of Mackinder and the naval power of Hamann of the most prominent theories that interpreted the Eastern Mediterranean region as belonging to the Mediterranean region, for Mackender has divided the world geopolitics into the heart of the earth, including Eastern Europe, European and Asian Russia, as the global island represents three continents Europe, Asia and Africa brought together by the Mediterranean Sea, either the outer crescent includes Britain and the United

States of America, South America, Canada, Australia, and added the crescent. The internal includes Germany, Austria and Turkey, India and China, and according to this division Mackinder put his famous equation of governing eastern Europe controls the heart of the earth, and who rules the heart of the earth controls the global island, and who rules the global island controls the world, and based on this perception, the location of the Eastern Mediterranean in particular and the Mediterranean basin in general is very important, as it mediates the global island.

- As for Mahan, he emphasizes the importance of controlling the sea and sea lanes of strategic importance, as the maritime factor is the most important factor affecting the strength of the state, as the size or area of the state it occupies does not affect its power as much as the length of its coasts.

In the aftermath of World War II, the United States and the Soviet Union replaced the traditional colonial powers, and the Mediterranean became the southern flank of NATO, and its eastern region is the only way to enter the oceans and warm waters for the Soviet fleet deposited in the Black Sea, through the Bosphorus and Dardanelles straits, which indicates the geopolitical importance of the Eastern Mediterranean region within the American and Soviet strategies.

- While the Eastern Mediterranean region abounds in potential reserves of petroleum liquids extending in the form of a crescent that starts from the north of the eastern side of the Eastern Mediterranean region, such as Greece and Greek Cyprus, and ends at the southeastern side of the same sea represented by Egypt and Libya, the US Geological Survey estimated the region's natural gas reserves at about 3450 billion cubic meters, and about 1.7 billion barrels of oil, distributed over most countries of the region, most notably Israel with gas reserves estimated at 872 billion cubic meters, Gaza about 30 billion cubic meters, Egypt and Cyprus between 48-254 billion cubic meters, Lebanon about 707 billion cubic meters, and Egypt with reserves estimated at 850 billion cubic meters.

The steady increase in natural gas discoveries in the Eastern Mediterranean basin since the beginning of the millennium has prompted

more light on them, and it includes geographically Egypt, Palestine, Israel, Lebanon, Syria, Turkey and Cyprus, given the importance of Greece resulting not only from its geographical proximity, but also as a major actor in Cypriot-Turkish relations, knowing that Syria is enslaved as a result of the state of war it is witnessing, which makes any results of its own inaccurate at the current stage.

2.2 Palestinian energy reserves and their exploitation by the Zionist entity:

Palestine suffers from the scarcity of natural resources, but the few available resources can represent an important support for the Palestinian economy in the future, but the policies of the Zionist entity and its constant keenness to control all natural resources in Palestine, In 1999, natural gas was discovered in the Gaza field in Palestinian waters at a depth of 600 meters from the surface of the water, 30 km from the shores of Gaza, and the discovery led to the achievement of a consortium of "British Gas" 60 percent, the Consolidated Contractors Company 30 percent and the Palestine Investment Fund 10 percent, and the British Gas Company estimated in "Khina" the amount of Reserves of about 1.4 trillion cubic feet of natural gas, Israel has opposed the development of the Gaza Marine field and imposed a maritime blockade on Gaza since 2007.

The Zionist entity's exploration for gas in the fields of Leviathan, Tamar, Dalit, Tanin, and Karish revealed that gas reserves exceeded 850 billion cubic meters, and it is estimated that the Aphrodite, Calypso and Gloucos fields of Cyprus contain more than 400 billion cubic meters, compared to the discovery of 850 billion cubic meters of gas in the Egyptian marine area in 2019, these new wealth and profitable prospects fueled the debate on production rights, trade routes, pipelines, and strategic alliances that Strengthened by energy partnerships and trade and financial competition between geo-economic powers.

With regard to oil, Israel has been extracting commercial quantities since 2010 from the well "Majd" adjacent to the Green Line, specifically near the village of "Rantis" northwest of Ramallah, as the field is estimated

at 800 barrels per day, and the major interest of gas and oil in Palestine is a turning point in the renaissance and development of this sector and in the event of extraction, the authority will provide about \$ 560 million annually, the price of energy imported from the Zionist entity.

Despite their relatively small size, the development conducted by the "Reach Gas" group concluded that the Palestinian fields are technically and economically feasible, and sufficient to meet the Palestinian needs for about twenty years. Once developed, the gas fields can feed three power plants, the first is the current power plant in Gaza, which was established to work on natural gas with a capacity of 140 megawatts, and expand its capacity in the future to 280 megawatts, but at this time it is operated with expensive fuel that works with a capacity of Limited, and produces only 60 megawatts, because Israel partially destroyed it during its aggression on Gaza in 2014, it is worth noting that the initiatives to extract Palestinian gas and use it to supply power plants will not be complete without the existence of a national high-voltage electricity transmission network, which requires connecting multiple Palestinian cities and all other systems and constructions necessary to run the operations of the electricity sector, which will require investment efforts on the part of the government, which is difficult to achieve. In the presence of the occupation, which expands its settlement and cuts off the West Bank from the state of internal Palestinian division.

engaged in the field of energy exploration for gas and oil in historic Palestine since 1948, and has initially faced obstacles during the process of discovering commercial oil fields, as a result of its failure to attract important international companies due to the Arab boycott and its total dependence instead on its local companies with little experience, but during the period 1999-2010 it moved from a poor country to a country seeking to export gas to world markets after a series of important discoveries off the coast. The northern and southern of Palestine, and participates in the exploration company "Noble Energy" American, shared by a group of small Israeli oil companies, and the number of fields discovered in the northern waters about seven fields, the most important field "Leviathan", which is

located near Cypriot waters, and the field "Tamar" and the latest discovery of the field "Karish", which is about 4.5 km from Lebanese waters only.

The volume of proven and discovered gas reserves in the northern waters of Israel is about 1000 billion cubic meters, a figure that can change in light of the ongoing exploration operations, the company "Top Energy" and its partners from Israeli companies, have discovered so far seven fields in the deep northern waters in the sea, most of which are small in size and with relatively small reserves, except for the two huge fields "Tamar" and "Levitan", which will make the process of developing them expensive, and the "Tamar" field has begun to be in production in In late March 2013, four years after its discovery, and the initial production met part of the local demand, as the reserve of the field is estimated at about 9 trillion cubic feet, as for the field "Leviatan", the most important gas discovery in Israel, it is expected that production will begin in 2018, and the reserve of the field is estimated at about 20 trillion cubic feet, and Noble Energy owns the largest share of it, and it is also responsible for managing it with Israeli companies, and Israel is trying to export It has signed an agreement with Egypt under which the Israeli company "Delek Drilling", the owner of the gas fields "Liftan" and "Tamar", to provide natural gas to Egypt for a period of 10 years' worth \$ 15 billion, and under the agreement Israel will provide Egypt with 64 billion cubic meters of gas, and the same company since 2017, exports natural gas to Jordan from the "Tamar" field in the Mediterranean Sea based on an agreement between the two sides, as Israel will supply Jordan Under this two billion cubic meters of natural gas over 15 years, the Jordanian government has kept the issue confidential due to popular protests rejecting the import of gas from the occupation state

Israeli gas field discoveries have continued in recent years, for example, then the discovery of the Dalit gas field and between 2009 and 2010, the Gaztmar and Leviathan fields and the Tamar field were discovered, with reserves of about 318 billion cubic meters, located off the coast of the Mediterranean Sea.

It began to be exploited in 2013, while the Leviathan gas field is Israel's largest.

It is expected to produce about 605 billion cubic meters of natural gas, and it was discovered in 2010 and production began during 2016 and the field is about 130 kilometers off the port of Haifa.

The Dalit field, which was discovered in April 2009, has reserves of about half a trillion cubic feet of gas, but is in production.

In mid-December 2014, Israel announced the discovery of the "Roy" gas field 93 nautical miles from the Israeli coast, and in April 2019, the "Energian Al-Yanani" energy company revealed the discovery of the "Karesh" gas field, which is 100 kilometers from the northwestern Israeli coast and includes about 51 billion cubic meters of gas.

These huge Israeli gas discoveries have pushed Israel to seek to become a source of natural gas for neighboring countries.

Thus, for Israel, gas has become the Israeli trend, whether to engage in conflicts with neighboring countries for control of energy sources, especially with Lebanon and Palestine, or even to engage in cooperative interactions with other countries such as Cyprus, Greece and Egypt.

As for Israeli cooperation with the countries of the Eastern Mediterranean, we find that the Israeli company «Delek» has signed agreements with Jordan and Egypt to supply it with natural gas.

In addition to Egypt and Jordan, Israel has opened a gas market in Europe, where Europe remains a vital market for Israeli gas, and the gas pipeline projects currently being laid through Cyprus and Crete are of great importance to both Europe and Israel.

Israel lays an optimistic foundation for additional positive changes in the region which on the one hand may burden the Iran-Syria-Hezbollah axis with further constraints, whose effect amplifies in an era where the economic reality in Lebanon is brittle and fragile in such a way that above axis members cannot alleviate and on the other hand the continued Israeli trend to form regional strategic alliances grounded on economic agreement

even in the Middle East the White House originated adage per which “every crisis is an opportunity” is correct. Israel can and should use conflict regions to cement regional and global arrays as a central tool to deepen the

regulation of the region and as an optimal manifestation of the required combination between “hard” and “soft” might) (Kalo, .2022, p. 8)

2.3 Lebanese Energy Potential:

Neighboring countries are collectively ahead of Lebanon by years in the exploration and extraction of their petroleum resources, during the past years have conducted seismic geological surveys of most of the Lebanese marine waters, and the results were encouraging and positive, the former Lebanese Minister of Energy and Water Gebran Bassil announced on May 2, 2013 the opening of the first licensing round for the discovery and production of petroleum resources in Lebanese offshore waters and a timetable was set. Special for the session and submission of the first bidding offers and the approval of the Council of Ministers was not obtained regarding the issuance of the decree "Division of marine waters under the jurisdiction of the Lebanese state in the form of patches" and the decree "The term sheet for licensing rounds in offshore waters and the model of exploration and production agreements, in addition to the inability to issue the law of tax provisions related to petroleum activities", which led to the postponement of The first licensing round for an indefinite period and then non-compliance with the timetable announced by the minister, as the management of the petroleum sector announced the rules and regulations related to petroleum activities required in order to launch the first licensing round, including that the Commission first, a preliminary liquidation process for petroleum companies interested in participating in the licensing round, has witnessed the energy file in Lebanon development as a result of negotiating technical offers with a group of energy companies "Total" French and "Where" Italian and "Novatek", which started work in Lebanese territorial waters to explore for oil, and work began in 2019.

New discoveries were announced in 2014 and the Petroleum Administration estimated this new reservoir in three blocks: the far northeast 14.9 trillion cubic feet of gas, the middle 13 trillion cubic feet, and the south 15.2 trillion cubic feet in addition to quantities of oil.

For Lebanon, these discovered and permitted quantities conducted in the exclusive economic zone revealed the presence of 7,000 million cubic

meters of natural gas, a very promising wealth capable of providing energy needs, which the Lebanese Petroleum Administration estimated that only 6.5 million cubic meters will provide energy for 20 years, and Lebanon's energy revenues are likely to reach \$ 300 billion, capable of eliminating the Lebanese sovereign debt, which amounts to \$ 90 billion. It is an obstacle to development, and the Lebanese government has embarked on a wide process to legalize exploration, exploration and foreign investment in this sector, but it has collided with the problem of demarcating maritime borders with its neighbors, whether Cyprus or Israel, as Lebanon claims that it has a share in the fields (Tamara and Leviathan) as they are located on the border between the exclusive economic zone of both countries and a complaint has been filed against Israel with the United Nations about its illegal exploitation

3.Regional Energy Conflicts in the Eastern Mediterranean

Eastern Mediterranean countries suffer from the problems of demarcation of borders among themselves, especially with the growing increase in energy consumption and investment, as each country seeks to obtain the largest possible number of energy sources where the borders of the neighboring country are not taken into account, and this led to the outbreak of many conflicts, including the Lebanese-Israeli conflict.

3.1The Lebanese-Israeli conflict in the demarcation of maritime borders:

Although border disputes between Lebanon and Israel have been experienced since the establishment of Israel, the uncertainty along the southern borders of Lebanon dates back to a period long before the year 1948. Therefore, it should be noted that the mandate administrations that had

controlled the region at that time have a significant amount of responsibility for the creation of this border uncertainty/dispute¹.The most important development that led to the deepening of the border problems between Lebanon and Israel was the Israeli occupation of southern Lebanon

in 1978 during the Lebanese Civil War. Although Israeli forces began to gradually withdraw from the country in 1985. (HAşıl, 2022, p. 2)

Tensions between Israel and Lebanon are escalating due to the vast gas and oil reserves near the shores of the two countries, and the conflict between Lebanon and Israel is multidimensional, as the two countries have not demarcated their water borders with each other, and Israel has not signed the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea and therefore should not be required to abide by the maritime delimitation criteria included in it. The gas crisis between the two countries escalated following the failure of all efforts to reach an agreement to demarcate the maritime border between the two countries, due to the lack of agreement on the criteria for partition.

The nature of the dispute lies in the fact that it revolves around a dispute over Block No. 19, where the Lebanese side believes that the block is located within Lebanese territorial waters, while Israel claims that it is located within its maritime borders.

Israel rejected the maritime border demarcation agreement between Israel and Cyprus, and this dispute is due to a loophole committed by Lebanon in 2007 while signing an agreement with Cyprus on the delimitation of the borders of the exclusive economic zone between the two countries, where the border was demarcated with a middle line consisting of 6 points, and here the error occurred, as the maps show an ill-considered retreat from the Lebanese side from point 23 south of Naqoura.

The discovery of gas in the Levant basin is the main reason for the conflict over the maritime borders and the exclusive economic zone between Lebanon and Israel, especially after Israel discovered gas fields in the western region of Lebanese waters represented by the fields of "Tamar and Lepviathan", and although these discoveries are great for the two countries, they caused a dispute over the maritime borders, because there is an overlap in the maritime borders of the two countries, which led to competition between them for access to areas where natural gas is concentrated.

In 2018, the Lebanese government approved granting two licenses for oil exploration in Blocks 4 and 9 of its stake in the Mediterranean, but Lebanon's public tender to international companies to invest in Block 9 raised many Israeli reservations, as Israel believes that Block 9 belongs to it.

The border between Lebanon and Israel is governed by a ceasefire agreement under UN Security Council Resolution 1701, which was issued following the Israeli aggression on Lebanon in 2006, but there is no final agreement on the demarcation of land or sea borders, so there is a multidimensional conflict between Lebanon and Israel, the two countries have not demarcated their water borders with each other. In addition, Israel is not a signatory to the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea. It considers that there is a territory belonging to it. Within the exclusive economic zone drawn by Lebanon, the size of the area in which Israel claims to have rights is 850 square kilometers.

3.2 International and regional mediation to settle the Israeli-Lebanese conflict:

Some major countries have been interested in seeking to calm the atmosphere between the Israeli and Lebanese parties in an attempt to settle the crisis and end the state of conflict raging over the delimitation of maritime borders to prevent its escalation and reach the stage of hostilities, which in turn will affect the state of stability in the entire region.

A- American mediation between Israel and Lebanon:

Due to the lack of diplomatic relations between Lebanon and Israel, third-party mediation was the apparent option for dispute settlement. While initially Lebanon preferred UN mediation, Israel not being a party to the 1982 UNCLOS posed a legal complication. Israel's historical distrust with UN mediation was an additional factor. Therefore, the United States, under the Barack Obama administration, emerged as the logical mediator in 2011. p5. Abhay Kumar Singh and Samuel C. Rajiv. Israel-Lebanon maritime boundary agreement: an assessment. 2022 India. Manohar Parrikar Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses

the israel-lebanon maritime boundary agreement is not a direct agreement between the two countries, but rather two separate agreements with the united states. (p3.geneva centre for security policy, march 2023 .recipe for success: israeli and lebanese analytical perspectives on the maritime delimitation negotiations eastern mediterranean initiative.

both israel and lebanon considered the united states to be a sympathetic third party genuinely interested in helping them achieve a practical and honorable accommodation, one resulting in a line of maritime separation with which each could live. given that the two sides lacked diplomatic relations and interacted directly only in security-related meetings at the united nations interim force in lebanon (unifil) headquarters in southern lebanon, third party assistance was required. it took the form of multiple meetings over nearly a year with each side separately, in beirut and jerusalem. (sami & david, 2014, p. 73)

From the very beginning of the conflict, the international powers, especially the United States of America, began to take the initiative to settle the dispute by putting forward a package of initiatives and measures that can pave the way for a satisfactory settlement for all parties, where the United States of America appointed the diplomat "Frederick Hoff" as an envoy to settle the dispute, the United States revealed for the first time that it played the role of mediator between the Lebanese and Israeli sides on November 29, 2011 during a press conference held at the Aspen Institute in Washington when he announced. Amos Hochstein, Assistant Secretary of State for Energy Affairs, said, "The United States acted as a mediator and proposed the demarcation of water boundaries based on international law and international agreements," explaining that the United States is interested in reaching an agreement between Lebanon, Israel and Cyprus on the demarcation of the borders of "the economic waters of each country, and therefore the United States, through Hochstein and Hoff, has submitted a map for both sides that is not intended to shield. «The representatives of the United States stressed that this proposal represents a satisfactory solution for both sides because it will enable the two countries to overcome the stage of differences and thus prepare the atmosphere in the Mediterranean region for more search and exploration for natural gas. In March 2012, the US

special envoy, Frederick Hoff, visited the Lebanese capital, Beirut, where he met with the Prime Minister. In the presence of a number of senior officers in the army, the Lebanese demands revolved around the need for the US administration to exert pressure on Israel to prevent it from controlling Lebanon's economic waters and the resources in them.

However, this process – led by Frederic Hof – failed to produce an accord. For its part, Israel refrained from issuing tenders in the disputed area out of the belief that the parties would inevitably return to the negotiating table and a desire to reduce potential tensions. Lebanon decided to proceed unilaterally, continuing with identifying its offshore blocks, which were divided into ten parts; resuming its preparation of the legal and technical documents necessary to launch the first round of bidding; and establishing the Lebanese Petroleum Administration as the regulator of the sector. Israel filed official complaints to the UN about these activities. (Analysis, 2023, p. 5)

By December 2016, Hof submitted a proposal known as the "Hof Plan", in which the area was divided into 530 km, in which Lebanon would enjoy full sovereignty as part of its own economic waters, while Israel would get the rest of the remaining 330 km, but both sides, especially from the Israeli side, rejected this proposal. In an attempt to find out the most important observations about the conflict, Frederick Hof made five main observations on the Israeli-Lebanese conflict over the demarcation of maritime borders between them, which he reached during his tenure. The mediation file is as follows:

- The parties were highly competent and professional in presenting their evidence consistent with international legal practice, as each important party used an acceptable methodology to reach different results in determining the location of the line separating their maritime borders, and to the absence of direct diplomatic relations between the parties to settle disputes or what arose from the beginning.

- It is not possible to ignore the troubled relationship between the two countries since 1967, which greatly made mediation difficult, but the American mediation attempt was able to gain the acceptance of both parties

as a result of trying to convince them that it worked to achieve their interests, in other words, the United States was able to become a reliable third party from both sides.

- the parties did not deal with the conflict at any stage in a manner (take it or leave it), as the two sides were fully aware that relying on the rule of equality of dimension in delimiting the water area to it can be interpreted in more than one way, which can lead to drawing a huge number of lines, but each party sought to obtain the expansion of the area to the maximum extent possible.

If both Israel and Lebanon wish to reassure investors that the atmosphere of conflict heritage between them will not affect the peaceful exploitation and exploration of natural oil resources in that area, then they should take serious steps towards settling or neutralizing this conflict at the very least.

- Although there is a tendency among many Lebanese elites and political sectors on the need to deal with the issue of maritime borders as a sacred issue that should not be touched, a logic that can be understood in the context of the turbulent historical context between the two countries, but the reality confirms that any dividing line declared by one party cannot establish permanent legal maritime borders, which requires the signing of a direct bilateral agreement between them, in addition to the absence of borders. Land agreed upon by both parties made it more difficult to determine which point the maritime boundary would be extended

B- French mediation between Israel and Lebanon:

It cannot be said that there is little role for France in the mediation process between Lebanon and Israel so far, but it seems that some role can appear in the independent, especially after the Speaker of the Lebanese Parliament, "Nabih Berri", asked French President "François Hollande" during their meeting on April 10, 2016, that France play a role for Lebanon in the process of delimiting the maritime border with Israel, where "Berri" implicitly waved that it will be for French companies working in exploration for exploration Oil and gas, like Total, plays an important investment role in that area in the event of a settlement of the crisis, and the

return of the disputed area to Lebanon, especially with the presence of many geological surveys that confirm that it contains a huge amount of hydrocarbons.

C- Cyprus mediation between Israel and Lebanon:

Cyprus also sought itself as a mediator between Israel and Lebanon through what was expressed by the Director of the Cyprus Energy Department, "Solon Kasnes", pointing out that his country will provide the maximum possible to settle the differences between Israel and Lebanon, and in the same context, the Speaker of the Cypriot Parliament, "Yanaks Omeru", met with the Speaker of the Lebanese Parliament, "Nabih Berri" on December 3, 2012, stressing the importance of his country's role as a mediator between the two parties: Israeli and Lebanese, but it seems that the Israeli and Lebanese sides did not provide a clear response to Cyprus, whether by accepting or rejecting its role as a mediator, which implies the rejection of both sides. In 2013, Cyprus renewed its desire to mediate between the Lebanese and Israeli parties to resolve and settle the maritime border issue, without receiving acceptance or rejection by both sides.

The Cypriot goals lie in the role of mediator between Lebanon and Israel came from a vacuum, but it seems that there are reasons that prompted Cyprus to highlight its goodwill through mediation between the two parties between the two parties, so that it can be limited to two main objectives:

- Convincing the Lebanese side to cooperate with regard to gas in the region, by sending Lebanese gas to the gas liquefaction facilities to be established in Cyprus, which will turn Cyprus into a major hub not only in the Mediterranean East, but also as a point of communication with the Nordic countries, which will be reflected in the increase in the strategic importance of Cyprus in the next stage, which supports its position on many political issues in the region.

- Ensure the neutralization and preparation of the blocks and areas of Cyprus located near their maritime borders with the Lebanese side in the

event that they submit their offer for license and exploration. However, despite Cypriot attempts to play the role of mediator, they were largely ineffective as several factors interacted as follows:

- Cyprus' lack of experience to act as a mediator, compared to other countries such as the United States, which have played this role many times on a huge number of issues.

- Cyprus itself is a party to the crisis, especially since the agreement it signed with Israel on the delimitation of maritime borders between them in 2010 came with the Israeli proposal, not the Lebanese proposal.

- The absence of real motivation or direct interest to end the conflict, especially since it does not have interests in the region, such as owning exploration and exploration companies or otherwise, unlike other countries.

d. The United Nations as a mediator between Israel and Lebanon.

Since the first spark of the Lebanese-Israeli dispute over the delimitation of maritime borders, Lebanon has sought to push the United Nations to mediate between them through the United Nations Interim Force Mission "UNIFIL" in a letter in 2011, but the position of the United Nations came largely negative and unexpected, as the United Nations announced the lack of competence of UNIFIL to determine the maritime border, as its mission is limited to solving the problem of land borders only between the two sides in accordance with UN Security Council Resolution 1701 and it is in Intervention or mediation must be accompanied by the consent of the parties to the conflict, but despite this refusal, the organization has declared its desire to help Lebanon in the process of demarcating the maritime border with Israel in order to preserve its gas reserves.

In response to that letter, the Secretary-General of the United Nations addressed a letter to the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the caretaker government on 7 February 2011 in which he indicated that similar disputes should be resolved by an agreement concluded on the basis of international law, but that the United Nations does not express its opinion on delimitation or issues related to the right to natural resources unless mandated to do so by a competent body affiliated to it or requested to do so by all disputing parties.

With the widening gap between Israel and Lebanon, the United Nations, through the so-called United Nations Interim Mission in Lebanon (UNIFIL), sought to offer itself to play the role of mediator between the two parties in the process of demarcating maritime borders, and establishing a secure maritime border, by doing all things, not only technical and technical, but also taking care of all material appropriations for that, but only waiting for the two sides to reach a unified agreement, perhaps this is what was confirmed by the Supreme Commander of the United Nations, General Petro Asrat" in its tripartite meeting held with the Israeli and Lebanese sides. Despite the negative position of the United Nations, the Lebanese side has shown determination to involve the organization in the mediation process between them and Israel, and this was evident after the meeting held by Nabih Berri - Speaker of the House of Representatives - with Tammam Salam - Prime Minister on March 19, 2016, in which they agreed to urge the United Nations to play the role of demarcating the maritime border with Israel, which resulted in the establishment of peace on March 24, 2016 at the request of the Secretary. The General Assembly of the United Nations – Ban Ki-moon – to exert his efforts to demarcate the disputed maritime border area and the exclusive economic zone based on the Charter of the United Nations and UN Security Council Resolution 1701 of 2006, in particular the tenth paragraph thereof, which stipulates that the United Nations, through contact with the main international actors and interested parties, shall make proposals to delineate the international borders of Lebanon, especially the disputed or uncertain border areas.

3.3 Possible scenarios from the Lebanese-Zionist conflict:

There is a set of possibilities that may end the Lebanese-Israeli conflict, which according to many experts that military confrontation is the closest possibility to explain the nature of the relationship between them, which will be discussed in this part

1- Military confrontation scenario:

The nature of the relationship between the Zionist entity and Lebanon is traditionally turbulent and is not necessarily a permanent obstacle that

prevents the progress of regional cooperation, however, it could turn into a more serious problem in the future, especially with regard to the exploration, exploitation and export of natural gas, in light of the ongoing conflict in the exclusive economic zone. In addition, the activities and operations of the Lebanese Hezbollah party in Syria, alongside the government of Bashar al-Assad, led to increased tensions with the Zionist entity

The presence of hydrocarbon wealth near the maritime conflict zone has led the governments of Lebanon and Israel to use their armed forces to protect these resources.

It may be likely that the matter will develop into an armed conflict, as happened in the 2006 Lebanon war, especially in light of the absence of agreements to demarcate borders and the lack of licenses for research and exploration in this area, especially since Israel is the most prominent and most involved player in conflicts and disputes with neighboring countries in the Mediterranean basin over gas, it has entered into conflicts with Palestine, Lebanon and Turkey indirectly, for several main reasons related mainly to its awareness of the importance of energy sources, Especially after the wealth of the so-called Arab Spring and the cessation of Egyptian gas supplies, which was an important resource for energy sources in Israel.

American journalist Christopher Dickie also revealed in an article on the "Daily Beast" website that Israel has established the most technologically advanced naval fleet in the eastern Mediterranean and that "Hezbollah" has naval missiles that it used in the past when it hit an Israeli naval tanker in the 2006 war, and Lebanese Foreign Minister Gebran Bassil said that Lebanese gas is already threatened after Israel discovered the Karish field, which is only about 4 kilometers from Lebanon's territorial waters.

Ambassador Hussein Haridi, former director of the Israel Department at the Egyptian Foreign Ministry, said that disputes will arise in the Middle East over the exploitation of offshore gas resources, especially between Israel and Lebanon, and are expected to enter into them, if the parties do not enter into negotiations to agree on the demarcation of the borders of this region in the Middle East.

The factors of conflicts in the region due to the huge gas discoveries, some of which are located in disputed areas between Cyprus and Israel on the one hand, and between Cyprus and Murr on the other, and between Israel and Lebanon on the third hand, the failure to demarcate the maritime borders between Israel and Lebanon poses a problem and a pretext for another Israeli attack on Lebanon, Israel can start drilling in the border waters that are not drawn between the two countries, and Israel is not a signatory to the Treaty on the Law of the Sea, and has been entrusted with America has one of its diplomats, Friedrich Hoff, the complex task of reaching an agreement between the two countries on this matter.

Israel's maritime dispute with Lebanon, which in the summer of 2022 came to the verge of a military crisis with Hezbollah—to the point that Israel's security establishment and intelligence community were unanimous in the assessment that failure to reach an agreement would result in 'battle days"—was more than a decade in the making. In 2010 and 2011, Lebanon and Israel, which remain in a state of war, unilaterally delineated their maritime border. (Sobelman, 2023, p. 79)

2- The scenario of retreat and surrender:

This is because Lebanon suffers from a structural defect in state institutions, as it is weak due to internal sectarian conflicts and balances, and does not control security on all national territory, and it does not have the military capacity or experience in order to secure its oil facilities that will be built in the future to produce gas, provided that Lebanon unites its internal front, and enhances its administrative capabilities to organize the energy sector and exploit potential gas wealth efficiently and transparently, and this seems difficult to achieve in the current situation.

From the energy perspective, the off-shore hydrocarbon potential resources seem far from generate profits in the short term as the process of exploitation is far ahead and still need to rely on effective amount of resources, still unknown as long as gas wells have not been drilled. The gas resources seem to have been used for now as another stumbling block among

enemies as statements of both Hizbullah and Israel illustrated it. Moreover, the perspective of significant resources could start to work as an excuse not to act in the file of other energy issue, like the building of an electricity plant and finding solution to improve citizens 'everyday life. (Meier, 2013, p. 11)

4. CONCLUSION

conclusion: In the latter, it can be said that all peaceful mediation efforts to resolve the dispute between Lebanon and the Zionist entity regarding the borders and the sharing of marine resources through holding many rounds of talks and meetings between the two sides, but so far, no final agreement has been reached. All of them have failed for several reasons, the most important of which is the ability of both parties to expand at the waterfront level in light of the lack of legal control of the maritime borders, and the signing of the border demarcation agreement may lead to mixing many hidden goals sought by the conflicting countries. The maritime conflict between Israel and Lebanon remains a sensitive issue that needs a peaceful solution that considers both parties' interests and maintains regional stability. However, peaceful solutions to the settlement with the Zionist entity and sitting at the negotiating table are considered a tacit recognition of its legitimacy first. Then it can be explained by normalization because the dispute with the Palestinian state could have been settled more securely and peacefully without using military force. Also, the continuation of the situation as it stands serves the interests of foreign countries, which we always find supportive of the Zionist position, even if this was not clearly or openly, within the framework of the permanent hostility to everything related to Islam and Muslims, considering that the existence of the Zionist entity at the level of the Arab region always and never poses a threat to Arab unity. It also facilitated the process of penetrating it in the framework of its polarization of all that is foreign Western. The aspect of foreign intervention in the eastern Mediterranean countries cannot be overlooked through companies that carry out exploration operations that enter into operation under a set of conditions that require huge costs, through which they may obtain a set of concessions

and privileges at the expense of the state itself. The conflict's future depends on the parties concerned's willingness to negotiate and reach a peaceful settlement. Conflict resolution requires consensus on legal and political issues related to maritime borders and Natural Resources. Dialogue and understanding between the two sides must be strengthened through international mediation to facilitate the negotiation process, taking into account the settlement of the Just interests of both Lebanon and the Zionist entity and to enhance regional stability. The achievement of maritime peace will have a positive impact on the parties and the region as a whole, which will allow open ways to enhance cooperation and development.

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