



Oil and Politics in the Eastern Mediterranean: the Lebanese/Israel fault line

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ABSTRACT:

Several maritime issues appeared the last ten years in the Eastern Mediterranean basin due to the delimitations of Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZ). This shaping of new maritime borders meant to delineate sovereignty rights on maritime off shores resources, mainly oil and gas. Between Lebanon and Israel, the maritime dispute came to light in 2011 when Israel officially adopted its Exclusive Economic Zone. It was related to a general context: the spreading of the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) as a common reference around the globe; the exploration and offshore surveys that started in the 2000's in the region of the Levant basin and the US geological survey confirming the huge potential in gas resources there. The presentation will intend to reach three main goals:

- Understanding the origins and the context of the contested maritime zone in the southern section of Lebanon's EEZ and the legitimacy of Lebanon's claim.
- Evaluating the reasons of this maritime issue in the context of gas exploitation, regarding the Law of the Sea and regional States' behaviour.
- Assessing the evolution of the situation in the aftermath of the formation of the new government by the end of 2016 and understanding where we are heading now.

The presentation will provide a political sociology of the power struggle related to maritime boundary dispute and will bring legal and historical components of the case in order to highlight how a border issue related to hydrocarbon resources can be shape into a political issue which may trigger a confrontation along the Lebanese Southern border between Israel and Hizbullah.

Readings:

Abbas, William S. (2008). 'A stable structure on shifting sands: assessing the Hizbullah-Iran-Syria relationship', *Middle East Journal*, 62 (1): 32–54.

Beydoun, Ahmad. (1992). 'La zone frontalière du Sud-Liban', *Revue d'Etudes Palestiniennes*, 44: 65–84.

Brunet-Jailly, Emmanuel. (2011). 'Special section: borders, borderlands and theory: an introduction', *Geopolitics*, 16 (1): 1–6.

Bundy, Rodman R. (1994). 'Maritime delimitation in the Gulf', in Richard N. Schofield (ed.), *Territorial Foundations of the Gulf States*, New York: St Martin's Press, 176–86.

Daher, Aurélie. (2014). *Hezbollah. Mobilisation et pouvoir*, Paris: PUF.

Donnan, Hastings and Thomas M. Wilson. (1999). *Borders. Frontiers of Identity, Nation and State*, Oxford: Berg.

Eissler, Eric R. and Gözde Arasil. (2014). 'Maritime boundary delimitation in the Eastern Mediterranean', *The RUSI Journal*, 159 (2): 74–80.

Kaufman, Asher. (2014). *Contested Frontiers in the Syria-Lebanon-Israel Region. Cartography, Sovereignty, and Conflict*. Washington D.C.: Woodrow Wilson Center Press.

Makdisi, Karim, Timur Göksel, Hans Bastian Hauck and Stuart Reigeluth. (2009). *UNIFIL II: Emerging and Evolving European Engagement in Lebanon and the Middle East*, EUROMESCO Paper 76.

Meier Daniel (2013a). 'The South border: drawing the line in shifting (political) sands', *Mediterranean Politics*, 18 (3): 358–75.

Morehouse, Barbara. (2004). 'Theoretical approaches to border spaces and identities', in Vera Pavlakovich-Kochi, Barbara Morehouse and Doris Wastl-Walter (eds), *Challenged Borderlands*, Farnham: Ashgate, 19-39.

Rizk Sybille. (2011). Les dessous du nouveau litige frontalier entre Israël et le Liban, *Le Commerce du Levant*, 07/09/2011.

Wahlisch, Martin. (2011). 'Israel-Lebanon offshore oil & gas dispute – rules of international maritime law', *Insights*, 15 (31).

Unpublished papers / UN documents online:

Association Suisse pour le Dialogue Euro-Arabo-Méditerranéen (ASDEAM). (2012). *The Legal Framework of Lebanon's Maritime Boundaries: The Exclusive Economic Zone and Offshore Hydrocarbon Resources*, Geneva.

Decree No. 6433 dated 1 October 2011 on the delineation of the boundaries of the exclusive economic zone of Lebanon. Submitted to the United Nations on 16 November 2011:

<http://www.un.org/Depts/los/LEGISLATIONANDTREATIES/STATEFILES/LBN.htm>

Geographical coordinates for the delimitation of the northern limit of the territorial sea and exclusive economic zone of the state of Israel and Lebanon:

<http://www.un.org/Depts/los/LEGISLATIONANDTREATIES/STATEFILES/ISR.htm>

<http://www.un.org/Depts/los/LEGISLATIONANDTREATIES/STATEFILES/LBN.htm>

Iskandar, Marwan. (2012). *The Arab Autumn in 2020*, BCN–Banque de Crédit National, Beirut, September 2012.

Rambaud, Patrick. (2012). 'Le différend maritime entre le Liban et Israël', paper presented at the Conference « La Délimitation maritime et l'exploitation des fonds marins », 11 May 2012, St-Joseph University, Beirut.

United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) full text is available at:

http://www.un.org/depts/los/convention_agreements/texts/unclos/unclos_e.pdf