
| RESEARCH ARTICLE

The Effect of Natural Gas on International Relations

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| ABSTRACT

Natural gas has become one of the most important energy elements at the present time through the increase in global demand for it after it became a new source of energy, which prompted the consuming and producing countries of this commodity to strive to develop the possibilities of obtaining it by various means, so this commodity has an impact in shaping International relations, especially in its conflict pattern, as new conflicts emerged in the past two decades, gas was one of the most important reasons that led to its outbreak, which prompted some to name these conflicts as new gas conflicts.

| KEYWORDS

Natural Gas, International Relations, New Conflicts.

| ARTICLE INFORMATION

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1. Introduction

In the last two decades, the international arena has witnessed radical changes and transformations of a structural nature that would reorient the prevailing pattern in international relations, which cast a shadow over international interactions in both its aspects, whether cooperative or even conflictual.

The causes of international conflicts are no longer limited to ideological or intellectual differences, nor are the other theoretical reasons put forward by traditional theories in the science of international relations. Such as the disparity in relative capabilities or material capabilities, especially military and economic ones, or the element of contentment with the position in the international system that Organ sky put forward in his theory of power transformation, and even exceeded this stage, to reach energy sources as one of the central determinants in the context of explaining the causes of international conflicts.

Energy, especially fossil fuels, is a major factor in shaping international relations. Fossil fuels will be the lifeblood of modern economies for some time to come. Many observers predict that fossil fuels and their transportation will remain the single dominant factor in international politics in the years to come.

Natural gas is the fuel of choice today. It is flexible to use and environmentally friendly compared to other fossil fuels. It is relatively plentiful, with supplies that are seen as relatively safe and reliable. It is, therefore, used in a wide variety of sectors and applications and is being tested as a fuel for electricity generation.

Gas has a good opportunity to become the fuel of choice for many countries and economies, despite the geopolitical dimensions of the gas trade, and given that gas exports depend more on tightly interconnected infrastructure and long-term production arrangements that generate less revenue than those obtained from oil, the arrangements of the gas sector The gas carries a strategic and long-term nature.

The geography of liquefied natural gas trade divides the market into two main regions: the Atlantic basin and the Pacific basin and the United States of America and the European Union are the largest consumers in the Atlantic basin, and this gas is provided through liquefaction projects in the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, West and North Africa, and the East region Middle East,

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supply restrictions in the Atlantic basin have increased competition between the United States and European countries, and Japan and South Korea are the largest buyers of liquefied natural gas in the Pacific basin and it is supplied from projects in the Republic of Indonesia, Malaysia, Australia, Brunei Darussalam and the Middle East region, due to its geographical location, the Middle East countries are the only ones capable of supplying all three major markets (Asia, Europe and North America).

The strategic importance of gas supplies has led many countries to raise concerns increasingly, and these concerns are reflected in gas-exporting countries, especially those that depend heavily on transit countries or on a small number of markets.

Natural gas is the alternative and heir to oil, and the transition to a new energy era has become almost inevitable after the development that took place in the gas industries and the use of advanced technologies, which can convert gas into a liquid, which in turn will replace intermediate distillates, as Gas is a clean energy source, and it is twice as pure as oil when burned. Official statistics confirm an increase in the demand for natural gas by 50% during the period in the next 25 years.

The global demand for oil and gas is in a state of continuous increase for many reasons, the most important of which are the increase in the population, the developing countries that are trying to improve their living standards, and thirdly, emerging countries such as China and India, which will double what they import at the present time. And according to what the studies indicate, in the near and medium future, there will be no changes in the map of competition and regional conflicts in the areas of energy concentration in the Middle East in general, and the Arab Gulf in particular. Reports indicate that the Middle East region is the last region of depletion of oil and gas in the world, and this explains the direct presence of the United States of America with its military forces in this region. The global demand for oil and gas is in a state of continuous increase for many reasons, the most important of which are the population first, secondly, the developing countries that are trying to improve their living standards, and thirdly, the emerging countries: such as China and India, which will double what they import at the present time, and through what studies indicate, in the near and medium future, there will be no changes in the map of regional competition and conflicts. For energy concentration areas in the Middle East in general, and the Arabian Gulf in particular. Reports indicate that the Middle East is the last region of oil and gas depletion in the world, and this explains the direct presence of the United States of America with its military forces in this region.

2. The Importance of the Research

The importance of the research lies in the fact that natural gas has become one of the most important energy elements at the present time through the increase in global demand for it after it became a new source of energy, which prompted the consuming and producing countries of this commodity to strive to develop the possibilities of obtaining it by various means, so it has become. This commodity has an impact on the formation of international relations, especially in its conflict pattern, in the last two decades of the current century, so this study came to show this effect.

2.1 The Problem of the Research

The research problem is manifested in the following hypothesis: that the concentration of natural gas fields in specific regions of the world, with the increase in demand for gas, will lead to the outbreak of major conflicts in these regions and the countries consuming gas and dependent on it may wrestle among themselves over the areas of gas fields. The conflict is between gas-consuming countries and gas-producing countries, so gas will be a new cause of conflict in the current century.

3. The Methodology of the Research

In order for the study to achieve its objectives, the analytical approach and the inductive approach were relied upon to analyze international reports and positions issued by major countries and international organizations specialized in the field of energy and to reach the results that the study aims for.

3.1 The Plan of the Research

The study was divided into two requirements: the first requirement is related to the political geography of natural gas, and the second requirement was devoted to examining the impact of natural gas on new international conflicts. This study concluded with a conclusion that included the most important results and some recommendations.

4. The Political Geography of Natural Gas.

Natural gas is one of the depleted sources of energy, i.e. one of the sources of a temporary nature; that is, what is available from stocks is limited-term, and it is not possible to compensate for the depleted and consumed quantities of it, as is the case with oil, coal, and nuclear energy, i.e. uranium, and that gas. Natural gas is considered one of the hydrocarbon materials deposited in the ground or in the depths of the sea, and today natural gas constitutes one of the main energy sources in the world despite its modernity, as it is in nature either accompanying oil or independent of it in its own reservoirs (Barjas, 2000: 22). Until recently, free gas was used only in its production areas and in a limited manner due to the difficulty of transporting and storing it. As for associated gas, it was often burned to reduce the cost of extracted oil and due to the lack of consumer markets for it. Now, after

the development of the petrochemical industries, natural gas has become one of The most important sources of clean energy because it is free of environmental pollutants such as lead and sulfur, and this is what made the world care about developing its production and increasing its extraction rate day after day, especially after the technical methods have advanced in terms of its storage, liquefaction and transportation, and this is what prompted the Secretary-General of the Organization of Arab Petroleum Exporting Countries to say, "The gas The natural energy will be qualified to occupy the transitional stage between the oil age and the unconventional energy era in the future" (Barjas, 2000: 34).

We see the importance of researching the geographical distribution of natural gas in terms of production and consumption and the existing reserves in the world and identifying transboundary gas transport networks, so we will divide this requirement into two branches.

4.1 Gas Production Areas.

In order to know the areas of gas production, we must know the amount of reserves discovered so far, the geographical distribution of the areas of gas reserves, its production and consumption, and future expectations of global demand for natural gas.

4.1.1 The World Reserves of Natural Gas.

Natural gas reserves are concentrated in a few regions of the world, as natural gas reserves in the Middle East region amount to 40% of global natural gas reserves, and the Russian Federation has 26% of global natural gas reserves and is the largest source of gas in the world, as the released data show From the Russian Ministry of Industry and Energy that gas production in the Russian Federation amounted to 640.6 billion cubic meters in 2005, and that (Gaz Abram) is the largest gas producing company in the Russian Federation, and that it owns all the main gas pipelines in Russia, and markets a large part of Natural gas produced in the Caspian Sea (Emerging Global Energy Security Risk, 2007: 32,41,42).

4.2 The Quantities of Production and Consumption

The Russian Federation is the largest producer of natural gas in the world, in addition to being the largest exporter of it. Therefore, the Russian Federation plays a major role in global energy security (Emerging Global Energy Security Risk, 2007: 33).

The current scene of the gas market and its reserves, an introduction indicating that three countries are still at the forefront of gas producers, and they are still the owners of the largest reserves, and these countries are, in order, Russia first at the global level, then Iran, then Qatar, and by examining the names of the three countries, we notice that gas In practice, it has become a fundamental topic and the focus of international and regional politics. Indeed, the language of energy in the twenty-first century begins with the alphabet of the discovered gas and how to control the methods and paths of gas transportation (Emerging Global Energy Security Risk, 2007: 59).

Europe is the largest importer of gas, and the countries of the European Union are among the largest importers of gas, as these countries import about 60% of the gas they consume (Keppler, 2007: 8), especially natural gas, as Russian gas covers 26% of gas consumption in Europe and about 40% of imports And half of the gas consumed in the European Union is obtained from only three countries: the Russian Federation, the Kingdom of Norway, and the Republic of Algeria, and Russian natural gas exports provide most of the needs of Eastern European countries, the former Soviet republics and Finland as well, and that Russian natural gas is in A much better situation in Europe than oil, for several reasons, including Russia's proximity to the main European markets and the lack of competing sources of supplies. For example, Greece, Turkey and Austria get more than half of their supplies of natural gas from Russia, and Germany relies 43% on Russian natural gas. Italy accounts for about 30% of the important markets for Russian natural gas (Goldthau, 2013: 6-10.).

It is worth noting that one of the statistics indicated that the world consumed natural gas in 2013 by about 3310 billion cubic meters, and the United States of America came first with 20%, followed by Russia with 15% of global consumption. It is expected that global consumption will increase, according to the International Energy Agency, in the year 2040 to reach 5240 billion cubic meters, and this means that consumption will increase by about 58%, and there is no other source of energy that will increase its consumption by this percentage, and this is what will make the demand for natural gas unique (Nabil et al., 2016: 605), and this is what will make it influential in international relations in both its conflict and cooperative forms. Whether at the regional or international level, Russia will have an influential role in shaping the new world order because it is the first producer and exporter of natural gas in the world, and it will be the country that influences global energy security.

4.3 Future Forecasts for Global Demand for Natural Gas.

Natural gas will remain the fastest growing energy source, with its market share increasing from 21% in 2004 to 23% by 2030, and this growth will continue to be largely driven by the demand for power generation. According to the International Energy Agency, natural gas production is expected to grow in the Middle East and Africa at an average annual rate of about 4.5%, respectively, for the period 2004-2030, compared to 0.4% for North America and 0.5% for the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) (Website Reference).

The countries that will play the most important role as exporters are Qatar, Iran, Algeria, and Saudi Arabia. Some gas exports will be through petrochemicals and plastics. The Middle East will turn its trade towards the West with new gas production to fill the gap in Europe caused by the depletion of regional supplies in the North Sea. Europe will become the main market for North African gas, especially with the construction of new export pipelines to Italy and Spain, and as a strategic vision, importing countries will face greater needs for energy consumption, according to the International Energy Agency, the European Union will import 80% of its gas by 2030, and North America, which has traditionally been Self-sufficient in terms of natural gas, it will import 14% of its gas needs in 2030 (Emerging Global Energy Security Risk:59).

According to the forecasts of the International Energy Agency, the global need for energy is expected to increase by 30% in 2040 and natural gas is expected to be one of the leading sources in meeting this demand for energy, and as a tangible indication of these expectations, natural gas consumption increased in 2018 by 4.6 percent. %, which, on the one hand, represents nearly half of the increase in global demand for energy (Website Reference). It is expected that developments related to the Corona epidemic and its negative effects on the energy sector will increase the impact of natural gas and energy competition on international security and conflict.

5. The Factors Affecting the Increase in Global Gas Demand.

All future expectations indicate that the demand for gas will increase significantly, and we can attribute this increase in demand for gas to several factors, including:

First: Electricity generation: Natural gas is the primary energy source in generating electric power in various countries of the world, as it was used by 30% of electricity generation in 2006, and this percentage is expected to reach 43% in 2030, with the expectation of a continued rise in oil prices. , Natural gas will replace other sources of liquid energy in the industrial sector, and therefore, it is expected that industrial use will not increase by 2% annually during the period from 2006 to 2030 compared to an increase in the use of oil in the industry in general by 1% during the same period. On the other hand, given the relative efficiency of gas compared to other sources and its being a clean energy source compared to oil and coal, it has made it particularly attractive in the field of energy (Nabil et al., 2016: 607).

Second: The commitment of the European Union countries to international agreements that stipulate the need to reduce the percentage of pollution; otherwise, the world will face a real environmental catastrophe as a result of the widening hole in the ozone layer, the main cause of global warming. From pollution that constitutes 10% of what is emitted by oil, Europe's commitment to these decisions made it the largest emerging market for natural gas, and this means an increase in the demand for Russian gas because Russia is the first producer of gas in the world, and the largest supplier of gas to Europe (Nabil et al., 2016: 607).

Third: the growth of natural gas consumption by China and India. The demand for energy in China has witnessed a very large growth in recent years, exceeding 10% annually, in some cases, due to the requirements of its growing economy. According to the relevant sources, China's consumption of natural gas will increase from 85 billion cubic meters in 2008 to 634 billion cubic meters in 2035. , an annual increase of about 8%, and India's consumption will increase by 6.5% annually for the same period to reach 234 billion cubic meters.

Fourth: Limited new energy. Renewable energy sources in Europe still represent only 5% of the energy mix, despite the great support provided to them by the European Union with the aim of reducing carbon dioxide emissions, which leaves natural gas the best option to close the gap in the transition to a lower economy carbon dioxide emissions.

Fifth: The decline in the role of nuclear energy as a source of energy generation due to its high cost and the dangers resulting from it, especially after the Japanese disaster in 2011, which led to an increase in Japanese and global demand for liquefied natural gas in the wake of this disaster.

5.1 The Impact of Gas on The New International Conflicts (New Gas Conflicts)

The causes of international conflicts are no longer confined to ideological or intellectual differences nor to other theoretical reasons put forward by the traditional theory in the science of international relations, such as the disparity in relative capabilities or material capabilities, especially military and economic capabilities, or the element of contentment with status in the international system. Energy sources are one of the central determinants in the context of explaining the emergence of international conflicts (Al-Basousi, 2018: 10).

The literature related to the relationship between international conflict and natural energy resources has focused on the role of oil in fueling conflict, whether at the local or international level, how states struggle to obtain oil reserves by force, and how oil facilitates local repression by authoritarian leaders, and also helps Oil revenues fund armed groups in wars, and this literature did not show the relationship between intervention in conflict and seeking to control natural gas resources and secure access to supply routes. It is expected that developments related to the Corona epidemic and its negative effects on the energy sector will increase

the impact of natural gas and its competition Energy in international security and conflict (San-Akca, Sever, and Yilmaz, 2020: 2-3).

It is noted that energy resources in the world are distributed among more than one region or region and that the presence of resources in addition to the geographical location is one of the factors that affect the formation of the global map of energy conflicts, as the geographical location of some regions plays a major role in controlling and controlling the transfer of energy supplies from Production areas to consumption areas, and among the most important regions rich in energy resources are the Middle East and Eurasia, as these regions contain the largest oil reserves in the world, as the Arabian Gulf region is one of the richest regions in the world in oil reserves, as the capacity of the company ((Aperture) is about 48, 1% of the total global reserves, in addition to the huge gas discoveries in the eastern Mediterranean, and this explains the intensity of the ongoing conflict in the Middle East region between many international and regional powers (Ali, 2018: 27).

We believe that among the most important new conflicts, in which natural gas is the cause of its emergence, is the conflict in the eastern Mediterranean region and the conflict between Russia and Ukraine, so we will deal with these conflicts in two separate branches.

The first section: the conflict in the eastern Mediterranean region:

- The Mediterranean includes three regions: First. The Western Basin, which includes France, Italy, Spain and the Arab Maghreb countries, and the most important interactions in it revolve around maximizing the rates of trade exchange and economic cooperation away from the problems of the Arab East. The second basin is the central basin, which includes Italy, France, and Greece from the middle of southern Europe and Libya in North Africa. The third basin is the eastern basin, which includes the countries bordering the Mediterranean Sea east of the 20-degree longitude, meaning that it includes Turkey, Greece, Egypt, northeastern Libya, Syria, Lebanon, Israel, Palestine, and Cyprus, and the most important interactions that distinguish it are those related to energy, especially the relatively recent gas discoveries, which made the region viewed and studied as a sub-regional pattern, which some divide into sub-basins, including the Levantine Basin, which includes Cyprus, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, and Palestine. Reports issued by the US Energy Information Administration describe this basin. The sub-basin (the Levant Basin) is the basin of the eastern Mediterranean because the beginnings of energy discovery took place in this region. There are other sub-basins, such as the Nile Delta basin in Egypt, as well as the Aegean Sea basin, which is located between the western coast of Turkey and the eastern coast of Greece and is connected to the Black Sea and the Sea of Marmara through the Bosphorus and Dardanelles straits (Al-Ghannam, 2022: 571-572).

The conflict in this region is one of the new conflicts on the international scene, as the discoveries of natural gas fields in this region opened the door to a new chapter in the conflict between the countries of this region, which are already suffering from a state of political and demographic congestion due to historical reasons, including the Arab-Israeli conflict, and the divisions Racial and ethnic, making these discoveries a new source of conflict (Al-Basousi, 2018: 10). With the advent of the twenty-first century, and the innovation of modern technologies for exploration and extraction of natural gas and oil from deep depths under the sea, the eastern Mediterranean region have come to light because it contains gas reservoirs containing huge reserves estimated at hundreds of billions of dollars, some even likening it to the Gulf region. Arab in the beginning of the seventies, and the proven reserves of natural gas in this region are estimated at about two trillion cubic meters, and the overlapping of the borders between the six countries of the region, which includes Turkey, Egypt, Greece, Cyprus, Israel and Lebanon, has caused a hidden struggle between them and a race to win this treasure What is new, which threatens to plunge the region into a geostrategic conflict, especially with the discovery of large quantities of oil and gas in it and with the presence of major powers with greed for these resources, such as the United States, the European Union, and Russia. The gas conflict in this region can be classified into two levels, namely (Ali, 2018: 29):

5.2 The Conflict at The Level of The Major Powers

There are three major powers affected by energy discoveries in the eastern Mediterranean region, as these discoveries affect the interests of Russia, the United States, and the European Union, which threatens to fuel conflict in the region, and this can be explained as follows:

Russia has strong relations with both Israel and Cyprus, as Russia is the largest supporter of Israel from crude oil, as estimated the assets of Russian companies and individuals in Cyprus in 2013, in addition to the signing of the Russian Gazprom company in 2013 on a 20-year agreement To purchase liquefied natural gas from the Israeli "Tamar and Dalit" fields, and the Russian company "Soyuz Neftgaz" concluded a joint development agreement with Syria to discover sources and establish oil development projects in the exclusive Syrian economic zones for a period of 25 years, at a value of about \$90 million. Russia has established the presence

of a permanent navy in the eastern Mediterranean, as it has 16 ships, three naval helicopters and an aircraft carrier, which means its readiness to face potential threats to its interests in this region (Mabrouk, 2015).

With regard to the United States of America, the American oil companies, especially the Noble Energy Company, have contributed to the discovery and production of hydrocarbon resources in the eastern Mediterranean, which helped achieve the American interest in achieving energy security in this region, and the security of the countries with which it has a close relationship, which are all From (Israel, Jordan, Egypt), especially in light of the transition of the conflict in Syria and the influx of refugees and the activities of terrorist groups, and among the most important goals that the United States of America seeks to achieve in this region are (Ali, 2018: 29):

1- Establishing a new regional alliance that includes Egypt, Israel, Turkey and Greece to export gas through the construction of a pipeline to European Union countries as part of attempts to gradually break Europe's dependence on Russian gas exports.

2- Linking the interests of the United States of America's allies from countries with divergent interests and visions to each other, and within the framework of this comes the Israeli gas agreements through which Washington seeks to create common economic interests between Israel and the Arab countries, as Jordan signed in September of 2014 an agreement with Israel to buy gas from Leviathan field over 15 years, worth 18 billion dollars. Jordan currently relies on Israel for 40% of its energy imports.

As for the European Union, it is linked to the eastern Mediterranean region for several reasons, including the participation of Cyprus and Greece in its membership, the fact that Turkey is a member to join it, and the security threats in this region affect the European Union, as the Turkish raids on the exclusive areas of Cyprus hindered the Turkish talks on joining the European Union, and accordingly, the direct interest of the European Union in this region lies in its stability, as it is considered from its immediate geographical neighborhood (Ali, 2018: 29).

5.3 The Conflict at The Level of Regional Powers

The discovery of natural gas in the eastern Mediterranean region led to the outbreak of conflicts between the countries of the region, as it led to the outbreak of conflict between Lebanon and Israel over the demarcation of the maritime borders, and this discovery also led to the conflict between Turkey on one side and Cyprus and Greece on the other side, in addition to To the modern conflict that emerged between the two major powers, Turkey and Egypt (Hanish, 2022).

1- The Israeli-Lebanese conflict.

The new discoveries of gas fields in the eastern Mediterranean region have caused an increase in tensions between Israel and Lebanon, and the conflict between them is multidimensional, as the two countries did not demarcate their water borders, in addition to that Israel did not sign the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea of 1982, and therefore it cannot be obligated According to the criteria for defining the borders stipulated in this agreement, and that the nature of the conflict revolves around Block "No. 19", as the Lebanese believe that the block falls within the Lebanese territorial waters, while Israel claims that it falls within its maritime borders, and what increased the intensity of this conflict is the discovery of gas in the Levant field And in the western region of the Lebanese waters represented by the fields of Tamar and Leviathan, and that these discoveries have caused disputes between them about the maritime borders, as there is an overlap in the maritime borders of the two countries, which led to competition between them in order to reach the areas in which natural gas is concentrated (Farraj, and Dibeish, 2021 : 128-129), that this The competition between the two countries over these fields could lead to the use of armed force to protect these fields, especially after the great demand that the world witnessed for gas consumption.

2- The Turkish-Cypriot conflict.

The island of Cyprus gained its independence from Britain in 1960, and this is what provoked the Turkish state and pushed it in 1974 to invade Northern Cyprus and impose its control. In 1983, Northern Cyprus was declared an independent state under the name of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus, but it was not recognized by any country In the world except Turkey since the Turkish invasion of the island began the conflict between the two countries, as this invasion divided the island into two parts, so that the Republic of Cyprus owns 56% of the island and is a recognized country and has been a member of the European Union since 2004, and the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus 37% of The island, which is British military bases, and 4% of the area is a segregated area subject to the supervision of the United Nations and is called the Green Line (Al-Ghannam, 2022: 582).

The border dispute between the two countries takes two dimensions, the first of which is between Greek and Turkish Cyprus, as Greek Cyprus demarcated its maritime borders with Lebanon in 2007, Egypt in 2004 and 2019, and with the Zionist entity in 2010, which allowed it to conduct exploration and exploration operations, which Turkish Cyprus rejects on the pretext that the wealth of The seabed benefits the entire island, and as a reaction, it hastened to demarcate its borders with Turkey and divide the continental shelf, which led to an overlap in the maritime areas between them. The second dimension is the conflict between Turkey and Greek Cyprus, as Turkey completely rejects the border demarcation agreements with other countries and considers that These borders

overlap with the continental shelf and the Turkish exclusive economic zone, so any activity, including gas exploration, is illegal (Nour El-Eman, 2018: 118).

3- The Turkish-Egyptian conflict.

Turkish-Egyptian relations in the current decade have been characterized by tension due to several reasons, the most important of which are the political differences between the Turkish government and the Egyptian regime since 2014 and Turkey's support for the Muslim Brotherhood, as well as the conflicting positions of Egypt and Turkey on regional issues, especially the Libyan file, through which Turkey seeks obstructing joint energy projects between Egypt, Cyprus, Greece and Israel, as on 11/27/2019 Turkey signed two memorandums with the Libyan Government of National Accord. The first memorandum aims to delineate the maritime borders between Turkey and Libya and to define the continental shelf for both countries in disregard for the Greek islands located between the two countries. The second memorandum is a memorandum for security and military cooperation between them, as this memorandum allows Turkish planes and ships to enter Libyan waters and airspace without the need to notify the Libyan authorities or ask for permission, which was considered by the rest of the countries of the eastern Mediterranean region as a serious threat to their interests, so the first memorandum was met regarding defining the maritime borders between Turkey and Libya with a strong rejection from the Greek and Egyptian side. Less than 48 hours after the disclosure of the two memorandums of understanding, the foreign ministers of Egypt and Greece met in Cairo, and the two countries issued sharp statements condemning them and confirming their illegality and that they constituted an unacceptable encroachment on the Greek territorial waters, which prompted them to accelerate the committees' discussions. The technical motives behind the signing of these two memorandums lie in the disruption of gas transportation projects that they exclude in the eastern Mediterranean because defining the Turkish border with Libya will have to pass the Israeli-Cypriot-Greek gas pipeline. The maritime areas that Turkey considers within its continental shelf are in accordance with the agreement with the Libyan government, and this agreement clearly reflects Turkey's application of the principle of the blue homeland (Al-Ghannam, 2022: 2013-2015).

Based on the foregoing, we believe that the most important regional parties in the eastern Mediterranean region are Egypt, Turkey and Israel. Egyptian interests have two goals that reflect those interests. The first is to achieve self-sufficiency in the consumption of natural gas, and the second is to become a regional center for gas in the region. Turkey's goals in the eastern Mediterranean are that it desires to benefit from gas wealth in domestic consumption and to play a role in exporting gas to Europe. As for Israel's goals, it concentrated on trying to find regional allies in light of the decline of the American presence in the region and securing the energy infrastructure in Israel, despite the presence of threats from regional parties led by the Lebanese Hezbollah. It turns out that there is a conflict between the interests of the three most powerful parties in the eastern Mediterranean region, as Turkey and Egypt each seek to become a center for eastern Mediterranean gas, and Israel needs to unite with a regional party to support its position in the face of Hezbollah, in addition to its regional ambitions that struggle with the ambitions of Egypt and Turkey (Al-Ghannam, 2022: 582).

6. The Russian-Ukrainian Conflict.

We can examine the impact of natural and shale gas discoveries in fueling the Russian-Ukrainian conflict in two parts:

6.1 The conflict in the Crimea

- The Crimea: The Crimean peninsula is located in the north of the Black Sea, and it is connected to the continental mainland only through a narrow strip from the north. On its eastern side, a strip of land extends almost to the Russian lands. It extends between it and the Sea of Azov, which borders it from the east. It overlooks the Kerchinsky Bay, which connects the Sea of Azov and the Black Sea and connects it to land with a narrow isthmus in its north through which transportation lines pass, and it is surrounded by the waters of the Black Sea from the south and west. According to Ukrainian statistics for the year 2001, the population of Crimea is 2,033,700 people. The demographics consist of several ethnic groups: Russians 58.32%, Ukrainians 24.32%, Crimean Tatars 12.1%, Belarusians 1.44%, Tatars 0.54%, Armenians 0.43%, Jews 0.22%, Greeks 0.15%, and Muslims constitute the largest percentage within the regions of Ukraine and there are other minorities such as the Black Sea Germans, Crimean Italians, Gypsies, Bulgarians, Poles, Azerbaijanis, Koreans, and according to these statistics, 77% of the population of Crimea The Russian language is their mother tongue, 11.4% are the Tatar language, and 10.1% are the Ukrainian language. The Russian language is used in government institutions to learn more about the geographical and demographic facts of Crimea (Amin, 2014:330-333).

Russia's annexation of Crimea in 2014 greatly illustrates the interactions between energy and conflict, but the energy dimension was not the main element that pushed Russia to control Crimea and increase conflict in it, but it was the cause of exacerbating conflict in the region, and Russia is according to its strategy It gives top priority to securing supply routes in Ukraine to ensure safe and reliable access to its gas to European countries, and the rich reserves of offshore natural gas enjoyed by Crimea, especially the maritime region, reinforced its geopolitical importance, in addition to the passage of one of the main paths of gas pipelines The crossing linking Russia with the European Union via Ukraine, and Russia believes that the heavy reliance on transit routes through Ukraine constitutes a serious weakness, and the Russian-Ukrainian relations are very tense, especially after the current president

of Ukraine Zelensky came to power, these are the reasons, which constitute the dimension of energy in it Especially natural gas, the main reason for Russia's annexation of Crimea (San-Akca, Sever, and Yilmaz, 2020 : 9).

The offshore gas resources of the Crimean peninsula in the Black SOea are estimated at between 4 and 13 trillion cubic meters of natural gas. Therefore, Russia's control of this region, in addition to territorial gains, has controlled a marine area with rich resources that may constitute three times the land mass. For the Crimean peninsula, and after Russia annexed the Crimean peninsula, Russia no longer needed the Turkish exclusive economic zone, and without entering into long negotiations with Turkey, this annexation facilitated its access to the critical areas in the Black Sea, which are vital for alternative pipeline routes and control over them (Onis and Suhnaz, 2016, 84-85). Therefore, Russia's annexation of Crimea achieved a double purpose for Russian energy interests: on the one hand, it gave Russia control over the offshore energy resources of Crimea, of which natural gas is the most important, and on the other hand, this annexation led to diversifying future transit routes for Russia, bypassing Ukraine and avoiding dependence on Russia. Access to Turkey's exclusive economic zone, and through the foregoing, energy, represented by natural gas, has emerged as one of the decisive motives for the Russian strategy for the conflict in Crimea.

6.2 The Conflict in Eastern Ukraine.

The huge reserves of shale gas in the Ukrainian regions controlled by the separatists in the Donetsk and Luhansk regions are an important element that should not be ignored when analyzing the causes of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict. Studies indicate that Ukraine has the third largest gas reserves in Europe, as this reserve amounts to 1.2 trillion cubic meters. It is noticeable in this conflict that the Donetsk region constitutes the most violent area of conflict between the Ukrainian government and the pro-Russian separatists, and the intensity of this conflict in this region is due to the presence of huge deposits of shale gas, as it is believed that the Yuzhevsk region alone contains up to four trillion meters A cube of shale gas, which prompted the Ukrainian government to take advantage of this enormous wealth, and signed an agreement with the energy giant Shell in January 2013, to invest in the field of gas at a value of 10 billion dollars, as it was planned that the Yuzhevsk company alone would produce up to 20 One billion cubic meters of gas annually by 2030, which is equivalent to Ukraine's total gas production in 2011. This agreement raised the Russian government's fears of Ukraine's independence in the field of energy; in addition, Ukraine decided to export its gas to Europe, which Russia is the main source of gas for the European Union, and this is what befalls the Gaz Abrum Company, huge losses, so in front of these developments that occurred in Ukraine, does the Russian government remain idly by, or is it thinking of a way to impede the implementation of the agreement between Ukraine and Shell, and raises the concerns of the profit-seeking Shell company by destabilizing the region and provoking There is an armed conflict, and this is what actually happened through the Russian government's support for the separatists in eastern Ukraine and the stifling of shale gas production in Ukraine. Russia succeeded in forcing Shell to freeze exploration and withdraw from shale gas projects in the region (Batkov, 2015).

It is clear that Russia's policy in Ukraine is based on supporting separatists and rebels in eastern Ukraine because this strengthens its control over supply routes and eliminates potential Ukrainian competition in the field of energy, which increased Europe's dependence on Russian natural gas. Russia has given priority to maintaining control over Natural gas supplies to Europe, and Russia's support for the rebels in eastern Ukraine provides long-term influence for Russia in its relations with Ukraine (San-Akca, Sever, and Yilmaz, 2020:10).

We see that gas was the main reason for the outbreak of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict in 2006, which eventually led to the Russian invasion of eastern Ukraine in 2022, and the outbreak of the Russian-Ukrainian war that is still ongoing, which caused great repercussions on the global energy market, which in turn changed the pattern of international relations, at the regional and international level.

7. Conclusion

In this study, we dealt with the impact of gas on international relations, and the study reached a set of conclusions and came out with some recommendations.

7.1 Conclusions

1. Today, natural gas is one of the main sources of energy in the world, despite its modernity. According to the expectations of the International Energy Agency, the global need for energy is expected to increase by 30% in 2040. Natural gas is expected to be one of the leading sources in meeting this demand for energy. As a tangible indication of these expectations, natural gas consumption increased in 2018 by 4.6%, which, on the one hand, accounts for nearly half of the increase in global energy demand.

2. Natural gas is the fastest growing energy source, with its market share increasing from 21% in 2004 to 23% by 2030, and this growth will continue to be largely driven by the demand for power generation, according to the International Energy Agency, gas production is expected to grow Natural resources come from the Middle East and Africa at an average annual rate of about 4.5%,

respectively, for the period 2004-2030, compared to 0.4% for North America and 0.5% for the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development.

3. Natural gas reserves are concentrated in a few regions of the world, as natural gas reserves in the Middle East region amount to 40% of global natural gas reserves, and the Russian Federation owns 26% of global natural gas reserves.

4. The Russian Federation is the largest producer of natural gas in the world, in addition to being the largest exporter of natural gas. Therefore, the Russian Federation plays a major role in global energy security in the current century, and Russia will emerge as an influential international player from the gate of controlling gas.

5. Three countries are still at the forefront of gas producers, and they still have the largest reserves. These countries, in order, are Russia first at the global level, then Iran, then Qatar. By examining the names of the three countries, we notice that gas has practically become a fundamental subject and the focus of international and regional politics. Rather, the language of energy in the twenty-first century starts from the alphabet of the discovered gas and how to control the gas transportation methods and paths.

6. Gas is one of the important reasons that led to the outbreak of some conflicts in the current century, which was called the "Gas Century," and whose conflicts were called the new gas conflicts and among the most important conflicts that gas was the cause of its emergence were the conflict in the eastern Mediterranean region and the Russian-Ukrainian conflict.

7.2 Recommendations

1. The gas-producing countries should take the initiative in determining the price of gas through their cooperation in creating an international market for gas similar to the oil market in order to be able to control this energy source that the whole world is heading to rely on.

2. The Arab countries located in the eastern Mediterranean region should unite their efforts, through international agreements among themselves, to confront foreign ambitions, whether from the regional environment represented by the Turkish ambitions and the Zionist entity's ambitions or at the international level represented by the Russian-American conflict over the gas of this region, especially since the region It is one of the richest regions in the world with natural gas.

3. The Iraqi government should expedite opening the door to investment in exploration and increase production of free or associated natural gas, and contract with reputable international companies in the field of exploration and production, especially since international statistics indicate that Iraq has large reserves of free gas in addition to gas associated with oil. Also, the Iraqi government should be aware of Iraq's distinctive geographical location in the map of the gas pipeline network that connects the east and west, the gas-producing east and the consuming west. This location will enable Iraq to be an important international player at the regional and global levels.

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