

An Opinion Piece on  
**Palestinian Conflict;  
The Natural Gas Twist**

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The International media today is extremely busy in trying to depict the assault on Ghaza as a war that is justified and rightful. With over 500 unarmed civilian casualties incurred in just a few days, and that too, of mostly women and children; this is not a war, it's not a conflict; its systematic genocide of the Palestinian people by the racist Zionist land grabbers.



The current assault; Operation Protective Edge, to carry out ethnic cleansing, was launched under the pretext of terrorist activities being carried out by Hamas in Israel. At the face of it, the triggering event for this

assault was the kidnapping and shooting of three Israeli hitchhikers near Hebron. Hamas was immediately blamed, Palestinians were held responsible since they are 'harboring' Hamas 'terrorists'.

To seek vengeance, the Jewish Israelis started carrying out violent physical attacks against the Palestinians living in Israel; two such acts that made the headlines were the abduction and immolation of a 16-year old child by outraged Israeli locals and the brutal battering of a 15 year old Palestinian American boy in Jerusalem by Israeli police. Thus finding a justification and further capitalizing on the outrage and hatred of its local population, Benjamin Netanyahu, Israeli Prime Minister, issued the orders for deadly airstrikes followed by ground assault to "root out Hamas 'terrorists'" with prejudice.



It's apparent that Israel has quickly learned from the debacle of 2006 invasion of Lebanon, where it faced not only military but political and diplomatic disaster as well, if subsequent result of operations (Operation Cast Lead-Dec 2008, and Operation Pillar of Defense - Nov 2012 and Operation Protective Edge - July 2014) against Ghaza, are taken into consideration. Straight after 2006 war with Lebanon, a new "National Information Directorate" was established within the Prime Minister's Office, charged with synchronization of content and tone of Israel's message across many organizations that carry it to the world, whether official or unofficial. The result; as soon as the Operations commenced, a tide of diplomats, lobby groups, bloggers and other supporters were unleashed to hammer home a handful of carefully crafted core messages intended to ensure that Israel is seen as the victim. The success of this directorate is clearly evident from the stance which major news conglomerates of the West; CNN, Fox News, BBC, CNBC etc, haven taken.

On the diplomatic front; it's an open secret that Israel and America are bed fellows, whose union has not only given birth to but meticulously parented and positioned the UN into their interest protecting one eyed organization. Protection of Israel's interests is at the heart of every policy churned out by Washington. Washington's unconditional support to Israel, its battleship/air craft carrier in the Mediterranean, army bases in the Middle East and its covert assets deployed are sufficient to render all the regions Muslim states harmless, who are trying to cover their inaction by giving an excellent lip service.

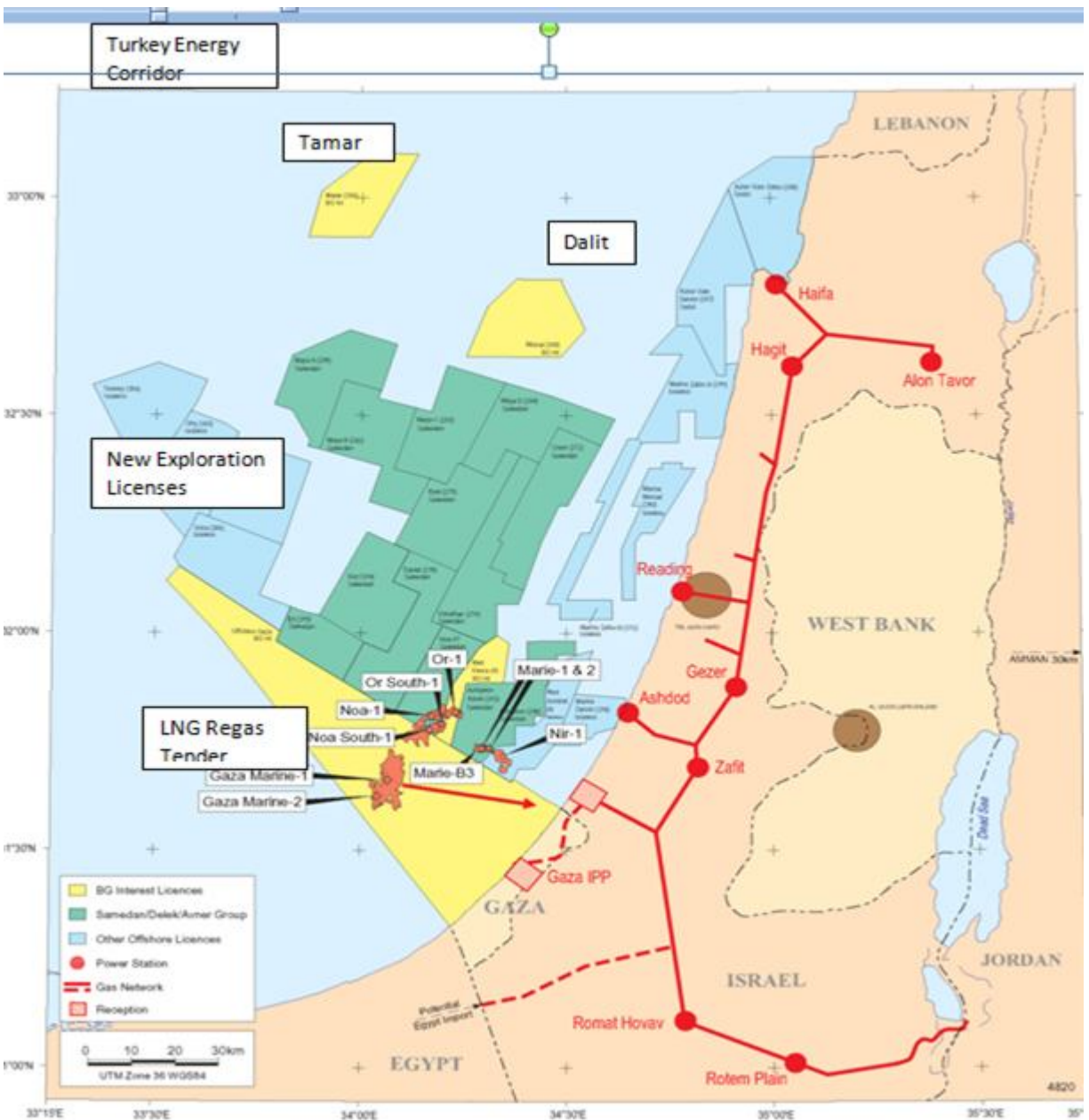
Therefore, any 'wild' speculations across the 'Arab street', a handy metaphor to describe popular opinion in the Arab Muslim world, that the triggering event was actually an Israeli False flag, and that analysts believe the evidences found for the attack and murder of the three Israelis actually point to the 10,000 strong Qawasmeh tribe in the Hebron region, which is known historically and openly antagonize Hamas and Israeli settlers, is going to fall on deaf ears.



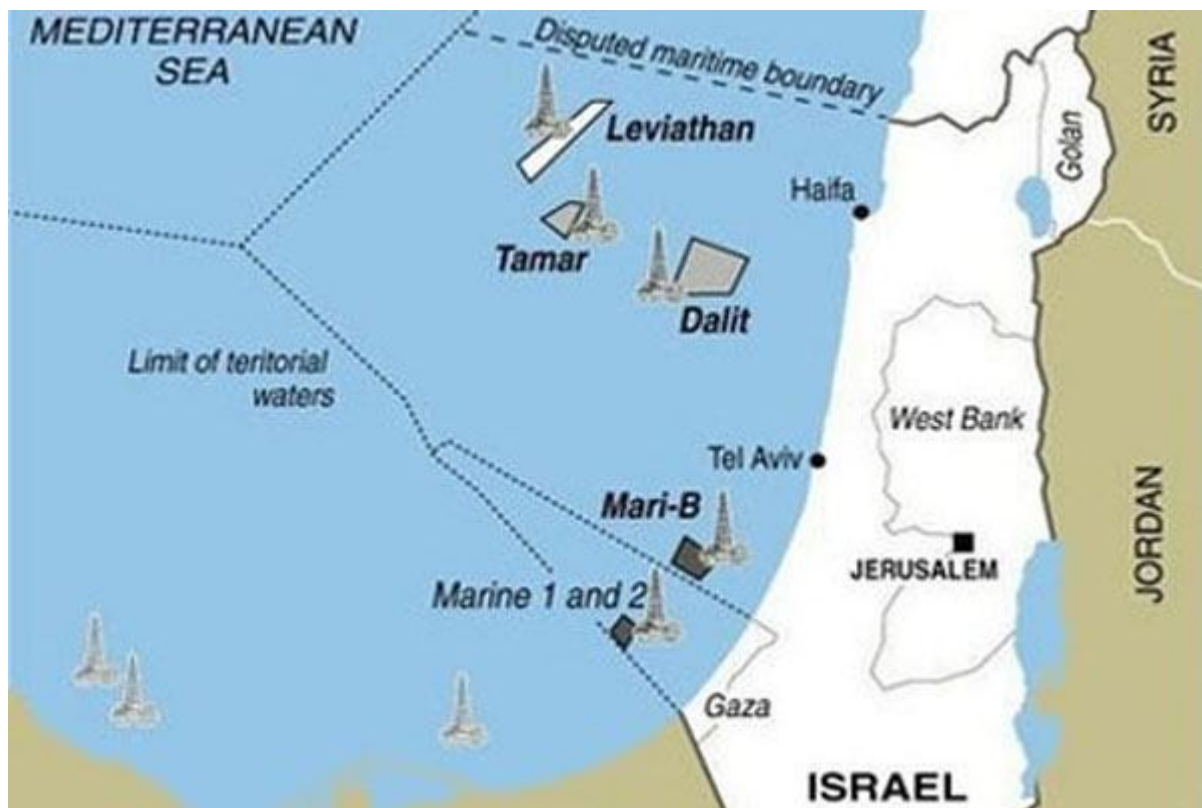
A little history check; The concept of a “Greater Israel” according to the founding father of Zionism, Theodore Herzl, is a Jewish state stretching, “From the Brook of Egypt to the Euphrates”, translation; from river Nile in Egypt to River Euphrates in Iraq. Rabbi Fischmann, of the Jewish Agency for Palestine, stated to the UN special committee on 9th July 1947; “The Promised Land extends from the River of Egypt up to the Euphrates; it includes parts of Syria and Lebanon’. The Map illustrates the lands that come under the Jewish Promised land within the red line.

The wheels of making the ideology of “Greater Israel” have been in motion since long, and we are already seeing it achieving

significant milestones in the Middle East, but apart from this; Israel has a more pressing concern; Energy. As Dr. Gary Luft – an advisor to the US Energy Security Council – wrote in the “Journal of Energy Security, “with the depletion of Israel’s domestic gas supplies accelerating, and without an imminent rise in Egyptian gas imports, Israel could face a power crisis in the next few years. If Israel is to continue to pursue its natural gas plans it must diversify its supply sources”. Israel currently relies on gas from Egypt; and is seeking aggressively to reduce this dependence on Egyptian gas since it’s vulnerable to interruptions. In addition, with an estimate that Israel’s gas reserves are likely to last even less than 40 years, has had the alarm bells ringing with the Zionist states’ decision makers.



In the year 2000, 1.4 trillion cubic feet of natural gas was discovered off Gaza coast; Gaza Marine Gas; valued at \$4 billion, in addition, it is expected to generate substantial revenues of around \$2.4 billion in royalties and taxes, and save \$560 million annually by eliminating the need to import electricity from Israel. Furthermore, diesels imports from Israel would be replaced by locally generated natural gas. The Gaza Marine Gas project, therefore, would have delivered the Palestinians economically and financially.



On the other hand, Israel has made successive major discoveries in recent years – such as the Leviathan field estimated at 18 trillion cubic feet of natural gas – which have the potential to transform the country from an energy importer into an aspiring energy exporter with objectives to supply Europe, Jordan and Egypt. The hurdle; much of the 122 trillion cubic feet of gas and 1.6 billion barrels of oil in the Levant Basin Province lie in the territorial waters that are hotly contested between Israel, Syria, Lebanon, Cyprus and Gaza. This makes the Leviathan field a long term project and a very expensive one to develop which won't be able to begin production till 2020.

The development of Gaza Marine Gas project has been hurdled at every step. Despite US and UK trying to supplement talks between Israel and Palestinian Authority (PA), it has mainly been fruitless and has resulted in a quagmire between Israel, the Palestinian Authority and Hamas. Hamas has been the main opposition to the deal negotiations between Israel and PA, since Hamas is the government of Gaza; not much has materialized. Hamas has strongly contested deals brokered by international powers between Israel and PA that it believed to be unfair to the Palestinian people. This led the Palestinian Authority to look elsewhere for the development of the project. In January, the Palestinian President, Mahmoud Abbas, met with Russian President Vladimir Putin, and an official investment agreement was concluded to develop Gaza's offshore gas field in the Mediterranean Sea. This logically raised more than just an eyebrow with not only Israel but the western Powers as well.

According to Anais Antreasyan in the University of California's Journal of Palestine Studies, Israel's long term goal, apart from not only making Palestinian access to Gaza Marine field impossible, is also averting the Palestinians from exploiting their own resources, is to integrate the gas fields off Gaza into adjacent Israeli offshore installations; which is part of a wider strategy of "... Separating Palestinians from their land and natural resources in order to exploit them and as a consequence, block Palestinian economic development. Despite all formal agreements to the contrary, Israel continues to manage all the natural

resources nominally under the jurisdiction of the PA, from land and water to maritime and hydrocarbon resources.” This explains that during “Operation Cast Lead”, Palestinian gas fields were de facto confiscated by Israel in derogation of International Law.

Despite whatever hue and cry from the Palestinian sympathizers and supporters around the world, be they from any religion, cast or creed, this assault will not stop until Israel has achieved its objectives or is thwarted comprehensively. It may stop temporarily under international pressure; but as is evident from the past, every ceasefire between Israel and the Palestinians is short lived; the assault will start again with a different strategy, and under a different pretext, but with brute force.

Israel’s long and short term goals are no secret to the world. Its perusal to the ideology of Greater Israel, regional/global supremacy, control of the world wealth and resources spells disaster for the Muslim Ummah. The Prophet (PBUH) rightly foretold of the Great War between the Muslims and the Jews; it’s an inevitable occurrence. Therefore, as I have been advocating in all my previous articles; the unity of Muslim Ummah is absolutely essential for its survival. As a Muslim Ummah, leaving all our differences, personal grudges behind, we must work towards a united front against the present and imminent threats, a major one being the nefarious designs of Zionists. The Palestinian people are calling out to us, they need our help, and if we continue to bicker among ourselves, our turn will soon come. Martin Luther put it best, ‘In the end, we will remember not the words of our enemies, but the silence of our friends’. The age of continuous conflict is upon us; and Muslims are on the menu.