

Israel's evolving foreign and security policy regarding East-Med developments

By Orna Mizrahi On Aug 2, 2023

Over the past decade Israel has turned its gaze westwards and paid increasing attention to developments in the eastern Mediterranean. A central factor has undoubtedly been the discovery of gas fields along the coast (the first was found in 1999, and the largest fields were discovered since 2009). As a result, Israel has become more deeply aware of the importance of positioning itself in the eastern Mediterranean and promoting its relations with other countries in this theater.

The process stimulated by the gas discoveries was reinforced by other developments, principally the deterioration of Israel's relations with Turkey under President Erdogan's rule, and particularly following the violent clash between the Israeli military (IDF) and Turkish activists on board the Mavi Marmara as it sailed toward the Gaza coast (2010); Israel's inability to promote collaboration along the Mediterranean coast with its Arab neighbors who do not recognize its existence – Lebanon and Syria – and Hamas, which controls Gaza; and the upheavals in Arab countries (misleadingly dubbed “the Arab Spring”), which helped undermine stability in the overall region on the one hand, but also limited threats to Israel in its immediate environment on the other hand, and enabled it to direct its attention toward the eastern Mediterranean.

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