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PROSPECTS FOR ENERGY COOPERATION BETWEEN THE EU AND ISRAEL IN THE LIGHT OF ISRAEL'S AGGRESSIVE FOREIGN POLICY IN THE MIDDLE EAST

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Abstract. This article presents the results of an analysis of energy cooperation between the EU and Israel, which is aimed at reducing the dependence of European states on Russian energy carriers. The need for getting rid of energy dependence on Russian oil, gas and coal among the EU member states arose after the invasion of Russian troops in Ukraine on February 24, 2022. The Russian-Ukrainian war led not only to the deterioration of Russian-Ukrainian relations, but also to the imposition of Western sanctions against Russia, a country that is the main supplier of energy to the European market. The desire to abandon Russian energy carriers forced the European states to look for new suppliers of oil, gas and coal. One of these suppliers decided to become Israel, which, according to Western human rights activists, is pursuing a policy of apartheid. The purpose of this study was to analyze the cooperation between the European Union and Israel in the field of natural gas supplies from the eastern Mediterranean Sea. During the study, the author came to the conclusion that this cooperation:

1) most likely will not help the countries of the European Union to fully compensate for the reduction in natural gas supplies from Russia;

2) carries risks for the reputation of the European Union as a defender of human rights and freedoms in the world (because Israel continues to pursue an aggressive foreign policy in the Middle East, continues to occupy and annex the territories of neighboring states, build illegal Jewish settlements in the occupied territories¹¹ of Palestine and Syria, conduct apartheid, commit politically motivated assassinations of their critics).

Keywords: EU, Energy Cooperation, Israel, Apartheid, war in Ukraine, Palestine

JEL Classification: F51, F53, F68, K33

The Russian invasion of Ukraine on February 24, 2022 forced the European Union to impose unprecedented financial and economic sanctions against the Russian Federation, aimed at exerting maximum economic and political pressure on the Russian leadership in order to force it to abandon its policy towards the Ukrainian state. According to the initiators of the imposition of sanctions, the most tangible for the Russian economy should have been the sanctions imposed against the Russian energy sector, as well as the embargo on imports by EU member states of Russian oil, gas and coal. The sanctions imposed by the Europeans, however, did not stop the war in Ukraine, but led to an increase in energy prices in European countries, as well as to a shortage of coal (in particular in Poland), oil and gas. This deficit could become a major problem for EU member states this winter. Having decided to minimize the negative economic consequences of

11 P. Pokrzywiński, Zjawisko izraelskich nieautoryzowanych osiedli na Zachodnim Brzegu Jordanu, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/350735882_Zjawisko_izraelskich_nieautoryzowanych_osiedli_na_Zachodnim_Brzegu_Jordanu_Wschodnioznawstwo_2020_vol_14 [09.10.2022]

their decision to get rid of energy dependence on Russia, the countries of the European Union began to look for alternative energy suppliers to the European market. Among the potential exporters were considered Algeria (this country has large oil and gas reserves, and is also connected by pipelines to France), Angola (this country has large natural gas reserves), Qatar (this country is one of the world leaders in the export of liquefied natural gas), Azerbaijan (this country has large oil and gas reserves, and also has a pipeline infrastructure that bypasses Russia, such as the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan oil pipeline), Saudi Arabia (this country is a world leader in oil production and export, as well as a leader in the Organization of Nations - oil exporters, OPEC) and others. It was not difficult for European states to find a replacement for Russian oil, but serious difficulties arose with the replacement of Russian gas. For example, Qatar, on whose liquefied gas both Germany and the countries of Central and Eastern Europe counted (having terminals for receiving LNG tankers), refused to supply more gas to the EU. The emirate's authorities motivate their decision by their unwillingness to reduce their presence in the Chinese energy market, which is the main market for Qatari LNG¹². The countries of the Eastern Mediterranean, including Turkey, Cyprus, Egypt and the partially recognized state of Israel, decided to take advantage of the situation in the European energy market. Turkey has intensified geological work to search for gas fields off the coast of Turkish-occupied Northern Cyprus and hopes to start producing gas there, which could be both exported to the EU countries and also sold on the domestic market¹³. This would help Turkey reduce its dependence on Russian gas imports. Egypt and Israel also announced their readiness to increase gas production and sell it to Europe in the form of LNG.

In June 2022, the Eastern Mediterranean Gas Forum was held in Cairo, at which the EU signed an agreement with Egypt and Israel on the supply of liquefied natural gas to Europe. The head of the European Commission, Ursula von der Leyen, called this agreement "historic" and expressed confidence that gas supplies from Egypt and Israel will help EU member states get rid of dependence on Russian gas¹⁴. However, this agreement caused serious discussion in the European scientific community, as well as among politicians, experts and human rights activists. The discussion was driven by the following factors:

1. Israel is a partially recognized state in the Middle East, whose independence is not recognized by most countries in the region;
2. Israel's land and sea borders are disputed (including the sea border with Lebanon. The Lebanese authorities claim that Israel illegally produces gas in Lebanese waters)¹⁵;

12 K. Wójcicka, Gaz z Kataru może nie dotrzeć do Europy, <https://forsal.pl/finanse/notowania/artykuly/8357363.gaz-z-kataru-moze-nie-dotrzec-do-europy-wywiad.html> [09.10.2022]

13 Turcja zacznie poszukiwania ropy i gazu na Morzu Śródziemnym, <https://www.portalmorski.pl/offshore/40905-turcja-zacznie-poszukiwania-ropy-i-gazu-na-morzu-sroziemnym> [09.10.2022]

14 Gaz z Izraela popłynie do Unii przez Egipt, <https://energia.rp.pl/gaz/art36517741-gaz-z-izraela-poplynie-do-unii-przez-egipt> [09.10.2022]

15 K. Wójcicka, Na granicy konfliktu Izraelem z Libanem. Trwa spór o złoża gazu i ropy, <https://www.gazetaprawna.pl/wiadomosci/swiat/artykuly/8523293.bliski-wschod-izrael-liban-gaz-ropa-naftowa.html> [09.10.2022]

3. Israel is pursuing an aggressive policy in the Middle East, which is no different from Russia's policy towards Ukraine and other neighboring countries of the former USSR;
4. Western human rights organizations (such as Amnesty International) have labeled Israel as an "apartheid state" that systematically and at the state level violates human rights¹⁶ and pursues a policy of national and religious segregation (and thereby violates the international Convention on the Suppression and Punishment of the Crime of Apartheid, which states that “apartheid is a crime against humanity and that the inhuman acts resulting from the policies and practices of apartheid and similar policies and practices of racial segregation and discrimination [...] are crimes that violate the principles of international law, in particular the purpose and principles of the Charter of the United Nations, and posing a serious threat to international peace and security”)¹⁷;
5. Israel continues the illegal occupation of part of the territories of neighboring states, namely: the West Bank of the Jordan River, Western Galilee and East Jerusalem (Palestine), the Golan Heights (Syria), Shabaa Farms (Lebanon). Israel also continues the illegal, from the point of view of international law, sea and land blockade of the Gaza Strip. Moreover, Israel has annexed East Jerusalem, Western Galilee, the Golan Heights, and Shebaa Farms, which is considered a flagrant violation of international law that prohibits annexation;
6. Israel continues to violate the sovereignty of neighboring Syria by regularly launching missile and bomb attacks on this country, which is an illegal military aggression, since the use of force in international law is permissible only with the permission of the UN Security Council. Israel also commits politically motivated assassinations in the Middle East (killing, for example, Iranian nuclear physicists). Countries in the region refer to such killings as state terrorism;
7. Israel continues to build illegal Jewish settlements in the occupied and annexed territories of Palestine and Syria, which is also a violation of international law, which prohibits the colonization of occupied territories.

16 Israel’s apartheid against Palestinians: a cruel system of domination and a crime against humanity, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2022/02/israels-apartheid-against-palestinians-a-cruel-system-of-domination-and-a-crime-against-humanity/> [09.10.2022]

17 International Convention on the Suppression and Punishment of the Crime of Apartheid, https://www.un.org/en/genocideprevention/documents/atrocities-crimes/Doc.10_International%20Convention%20on%20the%20Suppression%20and%20Punishment%20of%20the%20Crime%20of%20Apartheid.pdf [09.10.2022]



Figure 1. Israel-Lebanon maritime border dispute.

Source: <https://www.ynetnews.com/article/SJd74wVPw>

These factors are a serious challenge for the European Union, since the rejection of the "bloody Russian gas" is actually in favor of the "bloody Israeli gas". In order to avoid serious reputational problems and loss of confidence on the part of civilized states, the European Union, according to the author, should:

- abandon the agreement with Israel on gas supplies;
- stop cooperation with Israel in the gas field until it resolves all disputes with neighboring states peacefully (primarily related to borders, including maritime ones);
- impose international sanctions against Israel similar to those imposed on the Russian Federation for the annexation of Crimea in 2014 and the start of a full-scale war against Ukraine in 2022;
- demand that Israel eliminate all illegal Jewish settlements in the occupied and annexed territories of Palestine and Syria;

- demand from Israel the observance of human rights and freedoms (including the Muslim and Christian minorities);
- demand that the Israeli regime abandon its policy of apartheid;
- demand from Israel the de-occupation of all illegally occupied and annexed territories, in accordance with UN resolutions and international law.

According to the author, in order to reduce gas dependence on Russia, the European Union should look for reliable partners in the international arena who do not pursue an aggressive foreign policy, but also respect the sovereignty and territorial integrity of neighboring states, do not violate international law and respect human rights. To date, Israel is not such a partner. Therefore, cooperation with Israel will harm the image and reputation of the European Union.

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2. Israel's apartheid against Palestinians: a cruel system of domination and a crime against humanity, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2022/02/israels-apartheid-against-palestinians-a-cruel-system-of-domination-and-a-crime-against-humanity/> [09.10.2022]
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