

A Shared Quest toward Energy Independence

This past August, as terrorists in the Gaza Strip fired thousands of rockets at Israeli cities, Hamas claimed to have launched projectiles at an Israeli natural gas installation off the Mediterranean Coast. While the IDF denied this claim, the prospect of any such strike underscores the importance of Israel's emergent energy sector, and securing its natural gas infrastructure, which are helping position the Jewish state on a path toward greater energy independence.

For decades, Israel existed as an energy-less island—a country almost wholly dependent on foreign imports to power its grid, move its vehicles and underwrite its economy. Today, however, Israel is swiftly shaking off its foreign dependencies and charting a new course.

In December 2010, exploratory drilling off Israel's northern coast uncovered a major natural gas field named 'Leviathan,' containing at least 18 trillion cubic feet of natural gas, enough to power Israel for a generation. This find came on the heels of discovering the 'Tamar' field, which is already providing the Jewish state with much-needed energy relief. In addition to holding tremendous market value, these finds also offer the potential for Israel to become a net energy exporter of pro-western gas to a region starved for the resource, where alternate sources include Iran, Iraq, Qatar and Russia.

Israel, in fact, has already signed deals to provide gas to Jordan and the West Bank. Multiple deals are also in the works with Egypt, and Turkey remains a topic of conversation as a potential energy market. Energy can thus be a geopolitical connector as well as an economic asset, and Israel is attempting to maximize its opportunity.

The Israeli government has publicly pledged to roll back its oil dependence by the end of the decade, taking aim squarely at OPEC's strategic lever over the West—gasoline. With the discovery of natural gas and the potential development of kerogen (known also as oil shale), Israel is embarking on a new era of energy security.

The United States shares Israel's mission to enhance energy independence and security. This past July, that partnership was bolstered by the passage of a House appropriations bill that included \$2 million for continued U.S.-Israel energy cooperation.

In addition to helping reduce the West's dependence on gasoline—and thus its reliance on OPEC—the two governments, as well as private business in both countries, plan to collaborate on additional energy solutions. By leveraging current resources and safely pursuing more, the U.S. and Israel can work together to ensure mutual long-term energy security.