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Governance, Security, and Regional Exclusion: A Multidimensional Analysis of Lebanon's Offshore Energy

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A Multidimensional Analysis of Lebanon's Offshore Energy
Insecurity**

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February/2026



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Chapter 1: Introduction

Lebanon's offshore energy sector has long been viewed as a potential opportunity to address the country's chronic energy shortages, reduce reliance on imported fuels, and generate fiscal revenues to support economic stabilization. Located within the Levant Basin, Lebanon's Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) is widely considered to hold significant hydrocarbon reserves. These resources, if effectively managed, could provide a pathway to energy security, fiscal stability, and regional integration. Despite this potential, Lebanon remains energy insecure and has been unable to translate offshore resources into tangible economic or energy outcomes. This persistent failure cannot be explained by technical or geological constraints alone. Instead, it reflects deeper challenges related to governance, security, and Lebanon's regional position. This dissertation examines how these factors interact to sustain Lebanon's offshore energy insecurity.

Lebanon's offshore energy sector exists within a fragile political and economic environment shaped by the legacy of the Lebanese Civil War (1975–1990) and the sectarian power-sharing system established by the Taif Agreement of 1989. While this arrangement restored stability, it also institutionalized fragmented governance and entrenched patronage networks, creating persistent political deadlock that has limited the state's ability to manage critical sectors effectively (Baumann 2012; Leenders 2012). These governance challenges have been further exacerbated by the economic collapse that began in 2019, which the World Bank has described as one of the most severe global economic crises in modern history (World Bank 2023). This institutional fragility is central to understanding why Lebanon's offshore energy governance has struggled to overcome regulatory delays, fragmented authority, and the inability to provide credible security and enforcement. These domestic challenges, combined with Lebanon's exclusion from regional energy cooperation frameworks, have perpetuated operational risks and deterred investment, ensuring that Lebanon's hydrocarbon potential remains unrealized.

In this fragile political and economic environment, Lebanon's offshore energy sector offers a critical opportunity to address the country's energy and economic challenges. The country's Exclusive Economic Zone lies within the Levant Basin, which the United States Geological Survey estimates contains approximately 122 trillion cubic feet of recoverable natural gas and 1.7 billion barrels of recoverable oil (U.S. Geological Survey 2010). Seismic surveys conducted by national