



## Russia and Iran Hamper Turkey's Aspirations to Become Energy Hub

**OE Watch Commentary:** While Turkey occupies a perfect location to become a potential energy corridor, its poorly regulated energy sector with its state owned BOTAS (Petroleum Pipeline Corporation) may prevent it from achieving its potential. Russia and Iran play a significant role in Turkey's energy sector and they are important partners for Turkey's ambitions to become a natural energy hub because of its geographic location. The accompanying excerpted passage written by a Turkish journalist for *Al-Monitor*, a news website with analysts from the Middle East, argues that the strategy that Russia and Iran follow affects Turkey's plans to become an energy hub for "energy routes from the Caspian and the Middle East."

According to the author, while Turkey has deepened its ties with Russia at the expense of its Western allies, it is likely to "suffer a major setback," since the five Caspian littoral states including Russia, Azerbaijan, Iran, Turkmenistan and Kazakhstan are about to end their 27-year dispute. These states are set to sign the "14th article of the Caspian Sea convention" on 12 August that will give "littoral states a say on the pipeline that will traverse their territorial waters." Turkey hopes that as the European Union will look for ways to reduce its energy dependence on Russia, which would cause it to "make Turkey an energy corridor" through the energy pipelines originating in Turkmenistan and Kazakhstan going through Azerbaijan before reaching Turkey.

However, Iran and Russia may have ways to delay the Trans-Caspian Pipeline that "will carry Turkmen gas and Kazakh oil to Europe in the following years" through Turkey. The author states that the Trans Anatolian Natural Gas Pipeline (TANAP) project, the Turkish Stream, and "a possible Israeli natural gas pipeline," will be determinative factors in Turkey's desire to become an energy corridor. The author quotes a former BOTAS official stating "when we look 10 years ahead, we see that our Caspian strategy has lost relevance, Iran doesn't want us to be an energy corridor." When it comes to Russia, the author quotes the same Turkish official suggesting that Turkey and the Western camp should "impede Northern Stream in the Baltic and Black seas" if Russia obstructs Turkmen gas and Kazakh oil flowing to Turkey and Europe. Turkey has remained silent on this issue to avoid endangering its other important projects and the agreement for the Turkish Stream gas pipeline it has with Russia. The five Caspian littoral states ended a long-standing dispute by signing an agreement on 12 August that has the potential for Russia or Iran to inhibit Turkey's aspirations. Ultimately, how this agreement will affect Turkey's aspiration to be an energy corridor will depend on Turkey's relations with Russia and Iran as it moves away from Western alliance. **End OE Watch Commentary (Gunduz)**

**Source:** Fehim Tastekin, "Will Russia, Iran dash Turkey's hopes of becoming energy corridor?" *Al-monitor*, 1 August 2018. <https://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2018/08/turkey-russia-iran-may-obstruct-ankara-energy-projects.html>

*Azerbaijan and Turkmenistan insisted the pipeline should be regulated by countries whose territorial waters are used, but Russia and Iran insisted on approval from all of the five states. Russian and Iran voiced environmental concerns...*

*The accord that was agreed on in the previous 50 meetings appears to be removing barriers on the energy lines that will start [in] Turkmenistan and Kazakhstan and [end in] Europe [as it flows] through Azerbaijan and Turkey.*

*Ankara was hoping the European Union, which has been trying to reduce energy dependence on Russia, would make Turkey an energy corridor. But the Environmental Impact Assessment Protocol that will be signed as an annex of the convention makes all five littoral states equal partners, thus casting doubts on the strategic calculations of the EU and Turkey.*

*...Russia and Iran could delay the Trans-Caspian Project that will carry Turkmen gas and Kazakh oil to Europe in the following years.*

*What is important at this point is how all this will affect Turkey's plans to be an energy corridor. "This strategy that Iran supports is delivering blows to Turkey's plans to become a transit route for energy routes from the Caspian and the Middle East.*

*Turkey's aspiration to be an energy corridor depends on the Trans Anatolian Natural Gas Pipeline (TANAP) project, which will bring gas from Azerbaijan's Shah Deniz gas field to Turkey, the Turkish Stream, which was developed as a Russian move against the EU, a possible Israeli natural gas pipeline... TANAP will [initially] carry 10 billion cubic meters to Europe and later[ increase to] 25 billion cubic meters.*

*"When we look 10 years ahead, we see that our Caspian strategy has lost relevance, Iran doesn't want us to be an energy corridor..." a former BOTAS official said.*

*"We were hoping to be the East-West Energy Corridor, and we are confined only to Azerbaijan. Azerbaijan plays a double game...They can meet only half of the 31 billion cubic meters of the TANAP capacity... At the end, while we were dreaming of being an energy corridor, we became a country with increasing dependence on Russia," he added.*

*Isn't there anything Turkey and the Western camp can do? The official suggests using the US-EU solution plan for the Caspian as a deterrent to give the Russians a message: If you inhibit Turkmen gas and Kazakh oil, we can then impede Northern Stream in the Baltic and Black seas.*

*...It is interesting to note that despite the improvement of its strategic position, Turkey is choosing to keep silent. This silence could be attributed to Ankara's reluctance to endanger the Turkish Stream and other important projects.*

*If the international atmosphere changes with anti-Russia US-EU pressure, Turkey may find it easier to work together with the Western alliance. Ankara may use the Western pressure to bargain with Russia for joint projects.*

*Despite all, Russia has always managed to be several steps ahead in the energy war.*

(continued)



## Continued: Russia and Iran Hamper Turkey's Aspirations to Become Energy Hub

*“If the international atmosphere changes with anti-Russia US-EU pressure, Turkey may find it easier to work together with the Western alliance. Ankara may use Western pressure to bargain with Russia for joint projects.”*



Nabucco Gas Pipeline.

Source: By Nabucco\_Gas\_Pipeline-fr.svg: Sémhur (Nabucco\_Gas\_Pipeline-fr.svg) [FAL or CC BY-SA 4.0 (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/>)], via Wikimedia Commons, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Nabucco\\_Gas\\_Pipeline-en.svg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Nabucco_Gas_Pipeline-en.svg).

