

**TÜRKIYE`S ENERGETIC DEVELOPMENT AND THE ENERGY HUB STRATEGY
TOWARDS VULNERABLE STATES**

Abstract:	<i>Over the last three decades, the energetic context of the entire world has changed dramatically. Year by year, the interest in well-managed access to natural resources has been growing, replacing the political background of negotiations and intergovernmental alliances. States are more self-oriented and try to benefit from their geographical position, as well as contouring the new political and economic context according to their interests. Therefore, non-exporting countries can take advantage of exports too. The resource-exporting countries` role in the international arena has grown and reached unbelievable levels since energetic crises emerged, affecting not only the vulnerable states but also the global economic background. Today`s economy is much more interconnected than thirty, or fifty years ago, but states have implemented approximately the same policies regarding economic redress and improvement policies.</i>
Keywords:	Energetic crisis; energetic security; hub strategy; exporting states; vulnerable states; natural resources pipelines; Türkiye
Contact details of the authors:	E-mail: emilia.tomescu@ulbsibiu.ro (1) E-mail: silvia.state@ulbsibiu.ro (2)
Institutional affiliation of the authors:	Lucian Blaga University of Sibiu, Department of International Relations, Political Science and Security Studies
Institutions address:	34 Calea Dumbrăvii, 0269422169, fax, site, web, http://www.ulbsibiu.ro/en/ , Sibiu, 550024, Romania

Introduction

The energetic problem carries great relevance both for the stability of the entire international system and the existence of resource-dependent states, as any economic or energetic shortcoming can cause a political crisis. The emergent geopolitical changes from the Middle East (Israel), Ukraine, and Africa, have a big impact on the international context and make energetic security a relevant topic for negotiation⁷⁸⁴. Over the last three years, humanity has passed through major events, causing a big redress of the old economic system, and finding alternatives for well-known natural gas and oil exporters. The term “energy security” holds a strong link with regional and global economic and political stability. As a result, the resource-exporting countries have always contoured global affairs for their benefit and interests, building a concrete strategy searching for vulnerable markets, and gaining allies. However, any poor decision concerning world security can make an exporting state internationally isolated, therefore decreasing its dominant position on a global level.

The Background of the Energetic Crisis

Although many experts claim that the key event for today`s energetic crisis has been the full-scale Russian invasion in Ukraine, since February 22, 2022. The entire Europe, along with the whole world was

⁷⁸⁴ Irina Kashuro, Aleksandr Martushev, Aleksandr Rozanov, *The Role of Energy Resources in the World Today*, “Vestnik Moskovskogo Universiteta“, Part 27, “Globalistika I Geopolitika”, Moscow National University, Vol. 26, No. ½, 2015, p.78, <http://www.vestnik27-msu.ru/> (17.11.2023)

shocked after the Russian Federation decided to invade the sovereign and independent state of Ukraine⁷⁸⁵. Fighting with the Russian occupation in the East since 2014, when Russia annexed the Crimea peninsula and financed the armed separatists in Donbas, Ukraine has been trying to fight with the “special military operation” and the hybrid techniques used by Russia⁷⁸⁶.

The actual crisis did emerge during pandemic times. After 2 years of sanctions, the global economy needed a quick redressing, to face the new policies and come up with updated reforms. The short recovery time after 2021 has caused a partial price rise in some regions, because of the decisions of some states to reduce supplying certain markets with energetic resources. For instance, Russia has decided to reduce supplying the European market since 2021 and reorient its policies to Asia, making it the biggest economic partner⁷⁸⁷. However, some European countries can still benefit from Russian gas. At its final step towards Europe, Russian gas reaches Serbia and Hungary through the Turk Stream⁷⁸⁸. Bringing a specific part of gas to the Turkish market, the interconnection between Türkiye and Bulgaria is extremely relevant for Europe. As mentioned above, a big part of the Russian gas is used by Türkiye to distribute it according to its local demands⁷⁸⁹, however, the export link of Turk Stream is used at its maximum capacity, with flows fluctuating between 20 - 40mmcm/d between June 2022 and June 2023, implying a maximum utilization rate of 74 percent⁷⁹⁰. By using Turk Stream in the newly emerged reality, Russia is demonstrating its strong energetic communication links with Southeast and East European countries. Moreover, the Russian LNG exports have grown by 40% in 2023⁷⁹¹. According to Global Witness, Spain and Belgium are the biggest buyers of Russian LNG. The tax paid for LNG in 2023 reached 5,3 billion euros⁷⁹².

The European market has been drastically affected by this decision, therefore it had to search for alternative candidates to import from, so as not to put under risk the energetic demanding industries and vulnerable population⁷⁹³. Forced to find a new candidate to replace Russia, the EU was forced for a short period and limited gas and oil storage, as well as nuclear energy. As the biggest partner and importer of Russian gas, Europe was forced to reduce it to a minimum. In addition to events that occurred in 2021, the full-scale invasion of the Russian Federation in Ukraine came out with economic sanctions for the Kremlin regarding exports of Gazprom⁷⁹⁴. After the sanction, the West was supposed to search for new candidates that would replace Russia, however, the process of finding alternatives came out to be long, slow, and expensive. In this context, the role of Norway and Azerbaijan, as gas suppliers for Europe, was increased. Even though Norway is Europe`s biggest gas supplier, its deliveries increased since 2022⁷⁹⁵, although these alternative

⁷⁸⁵ Klaus Dodds, Zack Taylor, Azadeh Akbari, Vanesa Castan Broto, Klaus Detterbeck, Carlo Inveradi-Ferri, Kwan Ok Lee, Virginie Mamadough, Maano Ramutsindela, Chih Yuan Woon, *The Russian Invasion of Ukraine: Implications for Politics, Territory and Governance*, “Regional Studies Association”, Vol. 11, No. 8, 2023, p. 1519

⁷⁸⁶ Onur Kemal Tosun, Arman Eshraghi, *Corporate Decisions in Times of War: Evidence from the Russia-Ukraine Conflict*, in “Finance Research Letters”, Vol. 48, 2022, <https://www.sciencedirect.com/journal/finance-research-letters> (20.11.2023)

⁷⁸⁷ International Energy Agency, *Global Energy Crisis*, <https://www.iea.org/topics/global-energy-crisis> (06.11.2023)

⁷⁸⁸ The Oxford Institute for Energy Studies, *Do Future Russian Gas Pipeline Exports to Europe Matter Anymore?*, July, 2023, p.7, <https://www.oxfordenergy.org/wpcms/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/Insight-131-Do-future-Russian-gas-pipeline-exports-to-Europe-matter-anymore.pdf> (20.11.2023)

⁷⁸⁹ *Idem*

⁷⁹⁰ *Idem*

⁷⁹¹ Sabina Sancu, *Țările europene au cumpărat jumătate din gazul natural lichefiat vândut de Rusia în 2023*, “Europa Libera Romania”, August, 2023, <https://romania.europalibera.org/a/import-gaz-natural-lichefiat-ngl-rusia-ue/32572242.html> (20.11.2023)

⁷⁹² *Idem*

⁷⁹³ International Energy Agency, *Global Energy Crisis*, <https://www.iea.org/topics/global-energy-crisis> (06.11.2023).

⁷⁹⁴ Catherine Clifford, *Why Europe is so Dependent on Russia for Natural Gas*, in „CNBC”, February 2022, <https://www.cnbc.com/2022/02/24/why-europe-depends-on-russia-for-natural-gas.html> (06.11.2023)

⁷⁹⁵ Gwladys Fouche, *Norway Will Deliver Gas to Europe for as long as Needed*, for Reuters, September, 2023, <https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/norway-will-deliver-gas-europe-long-needed-climate-minister-says-2023-09-15/> (20.11.2023)

producers claimed a price way higher than the Russian one, contouring the risk of continuous inflation after 2023⁷⁹⁶.

Alternatives to Recover from The Energetic Crisis

After the declarations of Norway and Azerbaijan as important gas suppliers for the European Market, Türkiye has exposed its strategy regarding the new circumstances. As a country with the fastest growing energy demand among the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, Türkiye has exposed its main elements of the energetic plan for after-crisis recovery and adaptation to the new energy reality⁷⁹⁷. Supporting the idea of replacing dominant actors on the European market, Ankara claims that the Turkish territory could be eventually transformed into a pipeline hub, transiting natural resources from the Middle East and the Caucasus to Europe and further. Located at the border of Europe and Asia, Türkiye can certainly benefit from its advantageous geographical position and improve not only the domestic economic situation but the regional financial market, too. Being part of the international resource-import system, Ankara claims that energy is a volatile aspect, and the international community should come stronger into the topic⁷⁹⁸. Interested in strengthening its energy security, Türkiye has declared its fundamental purposes towards it. Ensuring the diversification of routes and contributing to regional and global security are the main elements of Turkish energetic policy. By implementing the energy hub strategy, Türkiye looks forward to becoming the main trade center in the region and integrating the small countries into big markets⁷⁹⁹. The main role of the Turkish government in the upcoming situation is to be ready to fulfill its mandate of a transit state between Middle Eastern and Caucasus exporting countries and European importers, as well as to implement its interests, by improving the necessary industry and attracting foreign capital to be invested in concrete fields of economy and social security. One more event that made Türkiye more involved in the energy status of the Caucasus region was the second Karabakh War⁸⁰⁰. As a well-known fact, Ankara has always maintained its control on its periphery regions, therefore the Caucasus` recent developments redefined Türkiye`s role and its decision-making policies. Despite its productive cooperation with Russia, Ankara took the Azeri side in the conflict, improving its bilateral links with Baku⁸⁰¹. Azerbaijan benefited from the Turkish support. Nevertheless, Azerbaijan`s victory over Armenia plays as a guarantee for the Turkish hegemony in the region⁸⁰². The first step for Türkiye to get to the main regional center is to correctly implement the energy hub policies and allow small countries to be a part of the energy industry in the region and further⁸⁰³.

Türkiye is at the middle stage of its industrialization process. The process, conducted by improving the energy demands of dependent industries and consumer incomes, provides a certain consumption growth. The main difficulty of Turkish energy is represented by the limited domestic supplies of fossil fuels and the slow development of alternative sources, so Türkiye is mainly dependent on imports, which fulfill 74% of local demands⁸⁰⁴. The current Development Plan provided by the Turkish Parliament⁸⁰⁵ claims a desiring policy to

⁷⁹⁶ Jeromin Zettelmeyer, Simone Tagliapietra, Georg Zachmann, Conall Heussaff, *Beating the European Energy Crisis*, International Monetary Fund, December 2022, p. 31 <https://www.imf.org/ru/Publications/fandd/issues/2022/12/beating-the-european-energy-crisis-Zettelmeyer> (06.11.2023)

⁷⁹⁷ Ministry of Foreign Affairs Republic of Türkiye, *Türkiye's International Energy Strategy*, <https://www.mfa.gov.tr/turkeys-energy-strategy.en.mfa> (20.11.2023)

⁷⁹⁸ *Idem*

⁷⁹⁹ Ministry of Foreign Affairs Republic of Türkiye, *Türkiye's International Energy Strategy*, <https://www.mfa.gov.tr/turkeys-energy-strategy.en.mfa> (06.11.2023)

⁸⁰⁰ Siri Neset, Mustafa Aydın, Ayça Ergun, Richard Giragosian, Kornely Kakachia, Arne Strand, *Changing Geopolitics of the South Caucasus after the Second Karabakh War. Prospect for Regional Cooperation and/or Rivalry*, in CHR Michelsen Institute Report, No 4, September, 2023, p.45-46, <https://www.cmi.no/publications/file/8911-changing-geopolitics-of-the-south-caucasus-after-the-second-karabakh-war.pdf> (17.11.2023)

⁸⁰¹ *Idem*

⁸⁰² *Ibidem*, pp. 46-47

⁸⁰³ William Hale, *Turkey's Energy Dilemmas: Changes and Challenges*, "Middle Eastern Studies", Vol. 58, No. 3, April, 2022, p. 452

⁸⁰⁴ Ministry of Foreign Affairs Republic of Türkiye, *Türkiye's International Energy Strategy*, <https://www.mfa.gov.tr/turkeys-energy-strategy.en.mfa> (06.11.2023)

⁸⁰⁵ The Turkish Parliament, *On Birinci Kalkınma Planı, The Development Plan for the First Centenary*, 2019, p.119, https://www.sbb.gov.tr/wp-content/uploads/2022/07/On_Birinci_Kalkinma_Plani-2019-2023.pdf

reduce the dependence on imports. However, it does not speak about concrete measures in this direction. Thus, the recent discovery made by Türkiye and the significant improvement of its industry is declared to be the main target of reducing imports. A field called Sakarya, located at the maritime border of Romania, Bulgaria, and Türkiye in the Black Sea, was discovered after Fatih, the deep-water diving probe reached a depth of 4775 meters⁸⁰⁶. According to the recent statements of the Turkish National Oil Company TPAO, the probe has made 2 more discoveries, Amasra and Turkalı⁸⁰⁷. Even though the Karasu-1 has been functioning since February 2022 and has given small results, Ankara hasn't doubted the decision to share the news about the Turkish discovery with the international community. According to Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, "the recent discoveries could eventually cover at least 30% of local demands. In the first phase, Sakarya is expected to produce 10 million cubic meters"⁸⁰⁸. The Turkish Petroleum Corporation speaks about transporting gas from the Sakarya field in the exclusive economic zone of Türkiye, off the West side of the Black Sea region⁸⁰⁹. The project managed exclusively by TPAO contains 3 main units, the subsea production facility of the Sakarya Gas field, the onshore processing facility located in the Filyos Industrial Zone in Çaycuma district in Zonguldak, also the 2 offshore pipelines for gas transportation from the field to OPF and Mono-ethylene glycol transportation from OPF to the field, all including shore crossings⁸¹⁰. In the first phase, the gas revealed from the subsea production will be transported onshore through a 16-inch diameter, 165 km carbon steel pipeline. The processed gas will be offloaded to the natural grid via a 36 km 48" onshore pipeline, designed, constructed, and operated by Petroleum Pipeline Corporation (BOTAS)⁸¹¹.

According to Vitaly Yermakov, after the discoveries made in the Sakarya field, Türkiye, led by the great success, is searching for new sources and is planning to double its efforts in drilling the deep-sea shelf both in its economic zone located in the Western Black Sea region and the East side of the Mediterranean Sea, where a Turkish Vessel made its research since 2020 near the West of Cyprus caused a deep-rooted conflict between Greece and Türkiye, which also led to some disputes with France since then⁸¹². The Sakarya gas field can significantly improve Ankara's position in the region.

Unfortunately, the information about the field is still limited. In the press conferences made by TPAO, there are some understandings that there are gas reserves around 320 cubic meters in August 2021 and 405 in October⁸¹³. We must notice that big international oil and gas companies supervise the major projects in the Mediterranean. TPAO has not mentioned yet its desire to link efforts in this direction. However, TPAO should be careful regarding challenging projects, as in the lack of management experience, the deadlines could suffer significant modifications.

As the foreign Turkish Energy Minister Fatih Dönmez has claimed at the beginning stage of exploiting of Sakarya gas field in 2020, the Turkish gas would be vividly cheaper than the recently imported foreign gas, this way the final consumers would benefit from domestically produced resources. Also, the pro-governmental newspaper Yeni Şafak mentioned some facilities for special categories of population, for instance, reduced payments for families or retired people⁸¹⁴. Moreover, Türkiye Petrolleri does not hide its ambitions about exporting a certain part of exploited gas to the international market, including Europe. At the same time, Melih

⁸⁰⁶ Wayne C. Ackerman, *Turkey: a New Emergent Gas Player with Resources and Infrastructure*, in "Middle East Institute", June, 2022, <https://www.mei.edu/publications/turkey-new-emerging-gas-player-resources-and-infrastructure>, (10.11.2023)

⁸⁰⁷ *Idem*

⁸⁰⁸ Offshore Technology, *Turkey's TPAO Begins Gas Production from Sakarya Field in the Black Sea*, <https://www.offshore-technology.com/news/tpao-production-sakarya/?cf-view> (06.11.2023)

⁸⁰⁹ Export Finance Norway, *Sakarya Gas Field Development Project*, <https://www.eksfin.no/en/cases/oecd-projects/sakarya-gas-field-development-project-turkey/> (06.11.2023)

⁸¹⁰ *Idem*

⁸¹¹ *Idem*

⁸¹² Vitaly Yermakov, *Sakarya Gas Discovery Gives Turkey a Winning Combination of Cards*, Anadolu Agency, <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/energy/analysis/sakarya-gas-discovery-gives-turkey-a-winning-combination-of-cards/32962>, (06.11.2023)

⁸¹³ Daily Sabah and Anadolu Agency, *Türkiye Boosts Daily Natural Gas Production in Sakarya Field*, September, 2023, <https://www.dailysabah.com/business/energy/turkiye-boosts-daily-natural-gas-production-in-sakarya-field> (20.11.2023)

⁸¹⁴ Afaceri.News, *Erdogan porneste producția la cel mai mare zăcământ din Marea Neagră și da gaze gratis pentru popor*, <https://www.afaceri.news/erdogan-porneste-productia-la-cel-mai-mare-zacamant-din-mareaneagra-si-da-gaze-gratis-la-popor/> (08.11.2023)

Han Bilgin, the president of the company, has declared that Türkiye would need a large amount of capital to improve the infrastructure and achieve a good quality product for the external trade centers. Also, the company would have to accept that implementing simultaneously the 2 main aims established in early 2021 will have to harmonize with Erdoğan's promises regarding domestic policies about the Sakarya field. Nevertheless, Sakarya would reduce the country's dependence on exports and the costs for the population, but the reserve is not far enough developed to satisfy the export markets yet⁸¹⁵. Thus, thanks to the involvement in the research in the Mediterranean Sea, Türkiye successfully discovered its deposits in the Black Sea. According to recent research, the gas from the Sakarya field could supply 30% of domestic demand, which means 10 million cubic meters per day⁸¹⁶.

The New Energy Hub Strategy and Its Recent Achievements

The new term “energy problem” is highly related to the recent events from 2022. It is a well-known fact that the European Union was on the edge of getting into a possible resource crisis, capable of provoking a blackout for the entire population and putting under danger the energy-demanding industries. The Russian full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022 has put Europe under the pressure of searching for new providers. Europe was not ready for the emerging unpredicted situation. However, neither the European Union nor the entire continent was ready to continue the previous Russian strategy to dominate its biggest vulnerable region and support its geopolitical visions⁸¹⁷. The turning point in Russia-Europe relations was provided by the several underwater blasts that ruptured three out of four pipelines comprising Nord Stream 1 and Nord Stream 2, spewing vast amounts of gas into the Baltic Sea near Bornholm, Denmark, according to Al-Jazeera⁸¹⁸. The project Nord Stream 2 including the twin pipelines was never put into functioning after Berlin decided to plug up the project, since Russia invaded Ukraine in 2022. Therefore, searching for new energy exporters was a forced decision rather than a step-by-step strategy, managed through years of analysis. After the explosions in the Baltic Sea, both Europe and Russia came with opposite accusations, blaming each other for targeting the critical infrastructure⁸¹⁹. The incident came as a critical point for the Russian Federation, too. As a result, sanctions were enforced on Moscow which had to find alternative routes and bypass European territorial waters. As Vladimir Putin declared at the regional meeting in Kazakhstan on October 13, 2022, “If Türkiye and our possible buyers in other countries are interested, we could consider building another gas pipeline system, creating a gas hub in Türkiye for sales to third countries, especially, of course, the European ones, if they are interested in this, of course”⁸²⁰.

The idea of transforming Türkiye into a gas hub came after the Turkish president proposed its candidature as a mediator for the Russian-Ukrainian conflict⁸²¹. Ankara gave a positive response to the Russian proposal. As some Russian gas supplements have already reached the Russian territory through the BlueStream and TurkStream pipelines put in function since 2005, Ankara looks to implement its new targets by transforming the country into the biggest regional trade center. According to the Ministry of Energy of Türkiye, “After the Nord Stream becomes dysfunctional, Russia needs to reroute its gas supplies to Europe and to do that, Türkiye may be the easiest option for Moscow”⁸²². In short words, Türkiye is ready to become a gas

⁸¹⁵ *Idem*

⁸¹⁶ Felipe Sánchez Tapia, *Geopolitical Impact of Natural Gas Discoveries in the Black Sea*, “Instituto Espanol De Estudios Estrategicos”, No. 37, 2020, p. 6, https://www.ieee.es/Galerias/fichero/docs_analisis/2020/DIEEEA37_2020FELSAN_gasmarNegro-ENG.pdf (20.11.2023)

⁸¹⁷ Kari Roberts, *Understanding Putin: The Politics of Identity and Geopolitics in Russian Foreign Policy Discourse*, “International Journal”, Vol. 72, No. 1, March, 2017, SAGE, p.33 <https://theic.org/research-publications/ij/> (17.11.2023)

⁸¹⁸ Al-Jazeera, *Nord Stream Sabotage One Year on: What to Know about the Attack*, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/9/23/what-we-know-about-the-nord-stream-sabotage-one-year-on> (08.11.2023)

⁸¹⁹ Al-Jazeera, *Nord Stream Sabotage One Year on: What to Know about the Attack*, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/9/23/what-we-know-about-the-nord-stream-sabotage-one-year-on> (08.11.2023)

⁸²⁰ Murat Sofuoglu, *Why Russia Wants Türkiye to be a Gas Hub for Europe*, <https://www.trtworld.com/magazine/why-russia-wants-t%C3%BCrkiye-to-be-a-gas-hub-for-europe-62131> (08.11.2023)

⁸²¹ Ahmet Cemal Ertürk, *Chapter 9, Understanding the “Balancing Act” of Turkey in the Russia-Ukraine War*, “The Russia-Ukraine War and its consequences on the Geopolitics of the World”, edited by Nika Chitadze, Hershey, 2023, p. 139-154,

⁸²² Murat Sofuoglu, Matthew Bryza, <https://www.trtworld.com/magazine/why-russia-wants-t%C3%BCrkiye-to-be-a-gas-hub-for-europe-62131>, (08.11.2023)

hub even though it imports around 74% of its local demands not only from Russia but also from its Caspian and Middle Eastern partners, such as Azerbaijan, Iran, Kuwait, and the United Arab Emirates⁸²³. Moreover, there are some declarations that “the proposal is beneficial to both Türkiye and Russia in both geopolitical and geo-economic terms. But also, the sanctions issue becomes less problematic when Türkiye is the intermediary. Türkiye would gain a new source of income and jobs, and further possible leverage in the relations with the EU”⁸²⁴. In addition, some experts believe that “Türkiye is one of the biggest markets in Europe; it may also have been done to build leverage in other negotiations”. The country could become a gas hub thanks to many factors. Its favorable geographical position and the power it holds in the Mediterranean, the influence of its periphery, including the Caucasus and Central Asia through partnerships and alliances, its control over the straits, its vigorous market and desire for political and economic growth make Türkiye ripe for playing the role of a transit bridge between Middle Eastern and Caspian exporters and European importers⁸²⁵. However, the US has a critical point regarding the alliance between Russia and Türkiye. Matthew Bryza, Former US ambassador to Azerbaijan, declares that “Russia considers this as not a hub, just Putin uses the word hub. He is just simply talking about greater natural gas transit of Russian gas into and through Türkiye”. In addition to that, Türkiye should implement its aims by becoming a real energy hub and showing its national ambitions, not only allowing Russia to create a bridge to NATO through it⁸²⁶. Even though the gas hub initiative came from Russia, Russian gas could not be the key element in the pipeline industry, as Türkiye took the commitment to become the main regional player and allow small countries to step out and integrate into bigger markets. Moreover, implementing a gas hub, based on Russian gas particularly, Ankara would risk worsening its diplomatic relations and partnerships with the European Union. Ankara still stands out that the country’s advantageous location at the intersection of multiple regional roads is the main reason for transforming Türkiye into the provider of hydrocarbons for Europe. As referring to the arguments exposed before, we should not ignore the fact that a gas hub strategy that includes Central Asian and Caucasus countries, as exporters would reduce Russia’s dominant position in Europe.

Within this strategy, Ankara has carried out certain projects in the Trans-Caspian Corridor. The first steps were the two pipelines held together by Russia and Türkiye: the Turk Stream and the Blue Stream. Blue Stream was the first direct gas pipeline between the two countries under the Black Sea that was built to meet Türkiye’s gas needs. The Turk Stream, which started its operations in 2020, carries Russian gas to Southern Europe through the Black Sea and Türkiye, allowing Moscow to bypass Ukraine as a transit route to Europe. It has an annual capacity of 31.5 billion cubic meters and consists of two 930 km offshore lines and two separate onshore lines that are 142, and 70 km. The first line is designated to supply Turkish domestic customers, and the second line, which extends through Türkiye, carries gas to several European countries, including Serbia and Hungary. Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan mentioned that “Russian and Turkish authorities will work together to contour the best location for the gas distribution center” after the accident from Nord Stream 2. After some recent research, authorities mention that the Turkish Thrace region, bordering Greece and Bulgaria seems to be the best spot. The project will highlight Türkiye’s key role in Europe’s energy needs and allow the country to regulate gas prices. Maintaining close diplomatic relations with both Russia and Ukraine, Türkiye could help Europe benefit from a well-managed energy strategy, because “Türkiye is not suffering from energy providers’ problem” as Recep Tayyip Erdoğan said⁸²⁷.

As it was stated before, Türkiye is taking some clear steps toward the implementation of the energy hub project. Ankara implements the strategy of transforming the country into the main energetic trade in Europe, by implementing the transport of gas and oil through pipelines transiting the biggest Turkish cities.

⁸²³ Yevgenia Gaber, *Turkey Can Become an Energy Hub- but not by going all-in on Russian Gas*, in “Atlantic Council, December 7, 2022” <https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/turkeysource/turkey-can-become-an-energy-hub-but-not-by-going-all-in-on-russian-gas/>, (08.11.2023)

⁸²⁴ Murat Sofuoglu, Gregory Simons, *Why Russia Wants Türkiye to be a Gas Hub for Europe*, <https://www.trtworld.com/magazine/why-russia-wants-t%C3%BCrkiye-to-be-a-gas-hub-for-europe-62131> (08.11.2023)

⁸²⁵ William Hale, *Turkey’s Energy Dilemmas: Changes and Challenges*, “Middle Eastern Studies”, Vol. 58, No. 3, April, 2022, p. 452

⁸²⁶ Murat Sofuoglu, Matthew Bryza, <https://www.trtworld.com/magazine/why-russia-wants-t%C3%BCrkiye-to-be-a-gas-hub-for-europe-62131>, (08.11.2023)

⁸²⁷ TRT World, *How Türkiye is Turning into a Natural Gas Hub for Europe*, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fw_xJiMuhb4 (08.11. 2023)

According to this aim, Türkiye has undertaken and carried out several important natural gas and oil pipeline projects in the region⁸²⁸. The most significant energy projects of Türkiye are represented by:

1. Iran- Türkiye Natural Gas Pipeline (connects the city of Doğubayazıt to Ankara via Erzurum, Konya, Sivas and Kayseri)

2. Baku- Tbilisi-Erzurum Natural Gas Pipeline (BTE) was achieved because of the cooperation of the governments of Türkiye and Azerbaijan since 2001. It is used by Baku to export to Türkiye around 6.6 billion m³ of gas annually (in parallel with the transportation of crude oil through the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan pipeline), representing a project that since 2015 been part of the South Caucasus natural gas pipeline.

3. Türkiye- Greece Natural Gas Interconnector (ITG)

4. Trans- Anatolian Natural Gas Pipeline Project (TANAP)⁸²⁹

However, the most successful and significant project for Türkiye is the Trans-Anatolian Natural Gas Pipeline-TANAP (Trans-Anadolu Doğalgaz Boru Hattı). It stands as an outcome of Turkish-Azeri cooperation. TANAP, starting from the Ardahan region, Türkiye on the Türkiye-Georgian border, was built to transport the natural gas extracted in Azerbaijan`'s Shah Deniz region first to Türkiye, then to Europe, and passes through 20 cities, 67 districts and 600 villages, and ends in the Ipsala district of Edirne of Türkiye on the Türkiye-Greece border. At this point, it joins the TAP Natural Gas Pipeline that transports natural gas to European countries⁸³⁰. Eskişehir and Thrace have two exit points to connect to Türkiye`'s domestic natural gas transmission network. With a total length of 1,830.4 km, TANAP is the longest natural gas pipeline in Türkiye. The TANAP project was built on Phase-0 and Phase-1. The Phase-0 section of the pipeline from the Georgian-Türkiye border to Eskişehir is 56 inches in diameter and 1,339 km long. Phase 1 is 48 inches in diameter and 454 km long. In addition, TANAP`'s two 36-inch double lines with a total length of 37.4 km pass through the Chanagalla through the bottom of the Marmara Sea⁸³¹.

TANAP- First Steps

The foundation of TANAP was laid on the 17th of March 2015 in the Turkish province of Kars with the participation of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev, President of the Republic of Türkiye Recep Tayyip Erdogan, and the President of the Republic of Georgia Giorgi Margvelashvili⁸³². On the 12th of June 2018, a solemn ceremony was held in Eskişehir, Türkiye, in connection with the commissioning of TANAP. Speaking at the ceremony, President Ilham Aliyev called TANAP another manifestation of the Türkiye-Azerbaijani brotherhood. As the Azeri president Ilham Aliyev mentioned at the opening procedure, "TANAP is another victory for Türkiye and Azerbaijan. TANAP is a historic project. Today we are writing the energy history of the 21st century together. (...) Our energy projects bring stability to our region. All countries, all companies participating in these projects benefit, nations benefit. The implementation of such a huge project as TANAP was made possible by the strong political will of the leaders of Türkiye and Azerbaijan"⁸³³.

According to the Directorate of Communication of the Office of the President of the Republic of Türkiye, "along with its contributions to energy supply security, TANAP also symbolizes the contributions of energy to regional peace - which has become a serious global issue today, due to increasing populations and growing economies. Today, the world`'s energy map is in transition; new actors and new cooperation models are emerging. In the last two centuries, great wars have been fought for control over energy resources. They have had major impacts, particularly on the geography where Türkiye and Georgia are located. Despite not being rich in hydrocarbon resources, both countries have felt these impacts. From this point of view, TANAP is the best response given in peace and cooperation to the environment of conflict provoked by some actors over energy resources. Türkiye and Georgia have used their geographical location - that is the junction point of energy-producing and consuming countries - to promote an environment of peace and cooperation rather than encourage conflicts. Both countries have set an example for the entire world by making the necessary efforts to

⁸²⁸ Ministry of Foreign Affairs Republic of Türkiye, *Türkiye`'s International Energy Strategy*, <https://www.mfa.gov.tr/turkeys-energy-strategy.en.mfa> (08.11.2023)

⁸²⁹ *Idem*

⁸³⁰ State Oil Company of Azerbaijan Republic, *TANAP*, <https://www.socar.az/en/page/tanap2> (08.11.2023)

⁸³¹ *Idem*

⁸³² Office of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan, *Groundbreaking of the Trans-Anatolian Natural Gas Pipeline was Held in Kars*, March 2015, <https://president.az/en/articles/view/14566> (20.11.2023)

⁸³³ State Oil Company of Azerbaijan Republic, *TANAP*, <https://www.socar.az/en/page/tanap2> (08.11.2023)

put energy resources at the disposal of humanity at a time when regional tensions and instability are growing every day. TANAP is the 'silk road' of energy." From these arguments, there is a recognizable role of Georgia as a Caucasus country and as a significant part of the Trans-Caspian Corridor. One more aspect that must be mentioned is that TANAP is a significant part of the Southern Gas Corridor. This project aims to increase and diversify the European energy supply by bringing gas resources from the Caspian Sea towards Europe⁸³⁴.

Conclusions

To summarize, Ankara is following its political and economic plan of continuing its energy strategy as a transit state for Eastern exporters and Western importers by maintaining diplomatic affairs both with Russia and the European Union⁸³⁵. Also, the meeting of Vladimir Putin and Recep Tayyip Erdoğan in Sochi on September 4, 2023, demonstrated Ankara's plan for the development of the Turkish gas hub project. According to the parties, the project will ensure the supply of natural gas and will deal with the formation of its price⁸³⁶. Inspired by the financial centers of London or Hamburg, Erdoğan suggests a new model of a financial center "outside Thrace"⁸³⁷. Like the Istanbul Trade Center, the Turkish government looks forward to implementing a natural gas center which will eventually deal with the formation of the gas price.

In addition, Ankara has given a positive perspective regarding the trade center in Ataşehir⁸³⁸. By now, the gas hub strategy is the best option to replace Russia's dominant position in the European market⁸³⁹. According to Turkish⁸⁴⁰ and Azeri Gas Companies websites⁸⁴¹, both Ankara and Baku are endowed with necessary modern equipment to satisfy the local demands of the population and energy-hungry industries and to come out with export plans and updated policies. Nowadays, Türkiye continues to import a large amount of gas from Iran, Azerbaijan, and Russia⁸⁴². In addition, a stable economic environment in the Black and Mediterranean Sea areas influences the energetic security in Europe⁸⁴³. As for the time being, the energy stability depends mostly on the Turkish state.

Bibliography

Articles

1. Ackerman, Wayne C., *Turkey: A New Emergent Gas Player with Resources and Infrastructure*, "Middle East Institute", 2022
2. Chivvis, Cristopher S.; Coşkun, Alper; Geaghan-Breiner, Beatrix, *Türkiye in the Emerging World Order*, "Carnegie Endowment for International Peace", 2023
3. Clifford, Catherine, *Why Europe is so Dependent on Russia for Natural Gas*, "NBC", New Jersey, 2022
4. Dodds, Klaus; Taylor, Zack; Akbari, Azadeh; Castan, Broto; Vanesa, Detterbeck; Klaus, Inveradi-Ferri; Carlo, Lee; Kwan Ok; Mamadough, Virginie; Ramutsindela, Maano; Woon, Chih Yuan; *The Russian Invasion of Ukraine: Implications for Politics, Territory and Governance*, "Regional Studies Association", 2023

⁸³⁴ TANAP, *The Southern Gas Corridor*, <https://www.tanap.com/en/southern-gas-corridor>, (20.11.2023)

⁸³⁵ Cristopher S. Chivvis, Alper Coşkun, Beatrix Geaghan-Breiner, *Türkiye in the Emerging World Order*, in "Carnegie Endowment for International Peace", October 31, 2023, <https://carnegieendowment.org/2023/10/31/t-rkiye-in-emerging-world-order-pub-90868> (16.11.2023)

⁸³⁶ Energy Analytical Studies, *Turkey Gas Hub 2.0*, September 2023, <https://energystudies.ro/turkey-gas-hub-2-0/>, (20.11.2023)

⁸³⁷ Noi.md, *In Turcia ar putea fi creat un centru de gaze similar celor din Londra si Hamburg*, September, 2023, <https://noi.md/md/diverse/in-turcia-ar-putea-fi-creat-un-centru-de-gaze-similar-celeor-din-londra-si-hamburg> (20.11.2023)

⁸³⁸ Idem

⁸³⁹ Jeromin Zettelmeyer, Simone Tagliapietra, Georg Zachmann, Conall Heussaff, *Beating the European Energy Crisis*, International Monetary Fund, December 2022, <https://www.imf.org/ru/Publications/fandd/issues/2022/12/ beating-the-european-energy-crisis-Zettelmeyer>

⁸⁴⁰ Petroleum Pipeline Corporation, *BOTAŞ Completed Important Projects*, <https://www.botas.gov.tr/pages/completed-important-projects/507> (16.11.2023)

⁸⁴¹ State Oil Company of Azerbaijan Republic, *TANAP*, <https://www.socar.az/en/page/tanap2>, (16.11.2023)

⁸⁴² International Energy Agency, *Global Energy Crisis*, <https://www.iea.org/topics/global-energy-crisis> (16.11.2023)

⁸⁴³ Mamuka Tsereteli, *Economic and Energy Security: Connecting Europe and the Black Sea-Caspian Region*, in "Central Asia- Caucasus Institute & Silk Road Studies Program", Singapore, March 2008, p.36

5. Gaber, Yevgenia, *Turkey Can Become an Energy Hub- but not by going all-in on Russian Gas*, “Atlantic Council”, 2022
6. Hale, William, *Turkey’s Energy Dilemmas: Changes and Challenges*, “Middle Eastern Studies”, Vol. 58, 2022
7. Kashuro, Irina Anatolyevna; Martushev, Aleksandr; Mikhaylovich, Rozanov; Sergeevich, Aleksandr, *The Role of Energy Resources in the World Today*, “Globalistika I Geopolitika”, Vol. 26, No. ½, 2015
8. Neset, Siri, Aydin; Mustafa, Ergun; Ayça, Giragosian; Richard, Kakachia; Kornely, Strand, Arne, *Changing Geopolitics of the South Caucasus after the Second Karabakh War. Prospect for Regional Cooperation and/or Rivalry*, “CHR Michelsen Institute Report”, No. 4, 2023
9. Roberts, Kari, *Understanding Putin: The Politics of Identity and Geopolitics in Russian Foreign Policy Discourse*, “International Journal”, Vol. 72, No. 1, 2017
10. Tapia, Felipe, Sánchez, *Geopolitical Impact of Natural Gas Discoveries in the Black Sea*, “Instituto Espanol De Estudios Estrategicos”, No. 37, 2020
11. Tosun, Onur, Kemal; Eshraghi, Arman, *Corporate Decisions in Times of War: Evidence from the Russia-Ukraine Conflict*, “Finance Research Letters”, 2022, <https://www.sciencedirect.com/journal/finance-research-letters>
12. Tsereteli, Mamuka, *Economic and Energy Security: Connecting Europe and the Black Sea-Caspian Region*, “Central Asia- Caucasus Institute & Silk Road Studies Program”, Singapore, 2008

Documents:

1. The Turkish Parliament, *On Birinci Kalkinma Planı, The Development Plan for the First Centenary*, 2019, https://www.sbb.gov.tr/wp-content/uploads/2022/07/On_Birinci_Kalkinma_Planı-2019-2023.pdf
2. Zettelmeyer, Jeromin; Tagliapietra, Simone; Zachmann, Georg; Heussaff, Conall; *Beating the European Energy Crisis*, “International Monetary Fund, 2022

Websites

1. <https://energystudies.ro>
2. <https://noi.md>
3. <https://president.az/en>
4. <https://romania.europalibera.org>
5. <https://www.oxfordenergy.org>
6. www.aa.com.tr
7. www.afaceri.news
8. www.aljazeera.com
9. www.atlanticcouncil.org
10. www.botas.gov.tr
11. www.carnegieendowment.org
12. www.cmi.no
13. www.cnbc.com
14. www.eksfin.no
15. www.iea.org
16. www.imf.org
17. www.mei.edu
18. www.mfa.gov.tr
19. www.offshore-technology.com
20. www.sbb.gov.tr
21. <https://www.sciencedirect.com>
22. www.socar.az
23. www.thecic.org
24. www.trtworld.com
25. www.vestnik27-msu.ru