

PAPER DETAILS

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EDITOR'S VIEW

by Necdet Karakurt



“It is clear that political incitation require long term and contingency planning. Hence, the world meets “The Energy Game” that comes out as the successful future planning.”

“Syria’s importance comes from being the last circle of pipeline chains from Egypt, Qatar and Iran: A democratic Syria would guarantee safety of the pipelines and so Turkey’s being an “Energy Hub” deal.”

Humanity largely depends on energy usage as technology advances. More energy definitely equals more power in today’s world. However, the nature unjustly distributed energy resources around the earth that obligates some countries to acquire privileges in energy industry using capital and political influence. Europe and US succeeded politic advancement in areas with large oil reserves by colonization. Their influence in such areas spread through and sustained by autocracy ruled by hypocrites over a few decades. Autocratic hypocrites served well for the west until they became useless as the folks asked for revolution. The scenario is as simple as the west intervening to overthrow the dictators and ending the turbulence. In the past, there was always a new servant hypocrite coming to power once the old one was toppled, however, nowadays; the incumbents have to pass through a few critical international tests since there is a notable increase in the number of influencers.

It is clear that political incitation require long term and contingency planning. Developed countries are aware of the benefits of future planning and always prefer staying ahead comparing to those who are on the developing stage or yet to develop. Hence, the world meets “The Energy Game” that comes out as the successful future planning. Every country has a share from this game no matter how large of reserves they have. The biggest players in the game can be named as EU (as the consumer), US (consumer & seller), and Russia (seller). China might be added but their worldwide reputation and presence seems to be a follower more than a political influencer. OPEC can be considered as the producer but its political efficiency seems to be unnoticeable.

Europe along with its own natural resources has been a royal customer to Russia with large gas reserves. However, Russia’s unpredictable political affairs (especially what it did in Ukraine) disturb EU’s dependency on Russian gas. An alternative (perhaps alternatives) to Russian gas is inevitable for Europe and its copartner US. American intervention in Iraq started the long and painful journey in the Middle East. The Arab Spring rising from Tunisia would eventually hit Syria. Modern democratic governments to provide good deeds for EU and US would replace the autocratic ones in the region. Arab Spring theory worked well until rebellious acts took place in Syria. Being economically imbalanced and only having partial success in Iraq (in general, limited to Kurdish Region in Northern Iraq) restrained US from practicing a similar military engagement in Syria. To overthrow Assad, they furnished the opposition groups instead. However, Iran and Russia with some help from China interrupted the idea of dismantling Syria and kept the Assad’s regime alive.

It may not be wise to classify Turkish politics as successful throughout the Arab Spring but Turkey has been actively involved in current politics and strategies in the Middle East. Turkey already had Azeri and Russian gas flowing along the current pipelines and there have been talks and agreements for building additional pipelines. At this point, Turkey could be a port that connected Middle East and Caucasian gas, and become a safe house for Europe’s gas market. The thought of being an energy hub triggered aggressive politics during the Syrian opposition movement. Syria’s importance comes from being the last circle of pipeline chains from Egypt, Qatar and Iran: Qatari gas through Saudi



Arabia and Jordan, Egyptian gas through Israel and Lebanon, and Iranian gas through Iraq all had to pass Syrian land. A democratic Syria would guarantee safety of the pipelines and so Turkey's being an "Energy Hub" deal. From the day one of Syrian oppositional movement, Turkey supported the opposition groups. On the other hand, Iran by having the control over Iraqi government (under Shiites dominance) helped Assad to stay in the office. At one point, opposition groups fought each other instead that reminds how seriously the west and Turkey should handle Iranian intelligence. Applying sanctions upon Iran happened to be semi-efficient. However, Russia chose to defend Assad against Coalition by proposing that it considered all the opposition groups as terrorist. Today, Assad is still the governor of Syria and Russia bombs Turkmen territories. EU, US and Turkey hit Daesh targets. However, chaos in Syria is still at high levels as millions of Syrians left the country and hundreds of thousands are dead.

The energy game is never as simple as one might think. Many innocent people suffer from the political decisions pressurized by illegitimate leadership. Some leaders create a chaos for their energy needs and some others try to calm the chaos. Setting international balance requires strong nerves but energy supplies and demands always tend to push the limits in areas with large oil reserves, causing irreparable mistakes. Now, that the tension increased rapidly in Turkey-Syria-Iraq borders, every country involved must measure and act wisely for each political step that they are ready to take. Let us not forget the fact that there are several desperate countries able to actuate their great military powers in the area. However, wiser decisions on the next and following steps is always the key to change the balance or to have the upper hand in any chaotic environment. Under current circumstances, it is better to analyze Iran's hand. What does Iran have? What are they planning and how are they going to do?

Perspicaciously connecting puzzle pieces together can directly answer many of the questions regarding the energy game, and how the game changes. The Energy Policy Turkey, in its first and unique issue, tries to place the correct pieces together and focus on certain aspects of the "Energy Game" that has been occurring in and around Turkey. A few of the articles articulate the famous subject Turkey to be an energy hub as the current pipelines (BTC, SCP, etc.), ongoing projects (TANAP, TAP, etc.) and possible future pipeline routes and projects (Turkish Stream, South Stream, Northern Iraq Pipeline, etc.) are examined deeply. You might take a glimpse of the article about possibilities of Turkmen gas transport and catch a clue on the new perspectives to the current strategies. Azerbaijan's export potential up to 2050 is enunciated in a unique study within the concept of Southern Gas Corridor. Another article explains if unconventional reserves can be a hope for Turkey's future energy needs or if Turkey can experience the shale gas revolution as well. More articles have been specific to the evaluation of Eastern Mediterranean resources and energy policies. Analysis of Iran and Iraq from the view of energy reserves and both countries' role in the game grasps great attention. The effects of the Arab Spring in the Middle East give a brief outlook of the major actors, their political advancement, and power shifts in the energy game. It also gives interesting ideas to what are happening differently in the Arabic Peninsula.

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