Project: Which decides the future of cross-border energy infrastructure projects; is it geopolitical conflicts or regional & international cooperations? What we must do for making the second option available?

International Dialogue and Diplomacy for Energy

Global Player: Türkiye

Türkiye’s Geopolitic Attitude and Safety Stabilizer Role

Türkiye will play a reconciliation role as a Hub in the region for expected demographic, geographic trends in the Middle East for the very near future and Türkiye will have a huge contribution to stabilize the region’s safety. Many people has been believed that without the US intervention to the region, Iran will be the sovereign power of Persian Gulf. Starting from the 1st World War until the very near past, Türkiye as the heir of a former superpower, protecting herself, disconnected from the World and avoiding mightly costly alliances, even if allied, she restricted her situation using carefully chosen words. However, this never reflects the Türkiye’s traditional attitudes towards her geopolitical position. During the Cold War period, she was captured in her territory and was pursuing the right policy to follow. After the Cold War, now we see that she tried to assume her former attitudes in her former territories; Stabilization of Iran, Iraq, Syria, Central Asia, the Caucasus countries, Ukraine and several Balkan countries..

Introduction:

Since the 2nd World War energy safety has come in the question for the states which is directly effecting their national security & economic policies. Especially after the oil crises in the 1970s... Facts like, the arrival of natural gas besides oil has been started 1970’s and the end of the Cold War brought new geopolitical attitudes inclining towards the Central Asia’s natural gas reserves, has added new dimensions to the state’s energy security concepts because of the dependence of oil decreased with the supply of natural gas to the bipolar international system. Fossil fuel has been created depency as long as you don’ have it. The EU and Turkey have become dependent on Russia. Mutual dependency principle is the balance key between the parties. If one side’s gas is cut off this means also the other side’s payment will cut off. Or you will make another kind of retaliation. During the gas crisis period between Russia and Ukraine, EU has produced the policy to reduce her dependence on Russia. This means, Russia cannot shut down the valves at any time she wishes or she gets angry to Ukraine. Of course it's good to know that Türkiye’s position as a transit country that becomes powerful alternative instead of Ukraine. Türkiye is located where about 70% of the world’s total oil and natural gas reserves found. Moreover, historical and administrative know-how in this region creates the real difference from other actors in the region.

After China, Türkiye has the 2nd country where the energy demand is growing and also we are owning the ideal of being an energy hub in the region. For this reason we need to very well manage both nationally and internationally the geopolitical conflicts and tensions because of arising resource competition.

We are in the century of Globalisation where geopolitic & geoeconomic interests nurtured & these interests are gained through mutual collaborations. For this reason I want to talk about Türkiye as a global actor in means of safe energy hub where future cross border & infrastructure projects will be realised.
In this way, I will talk about both the regional energy actors’ collaborations and their strategies to secure their energy politics and also how all of these will effect their international politics & economics. (Diplomatic Power in terms of Construction of joint ventures, foreign investment and sharing the energy technology)

**Regional Dynamics, Prospects and Recommendations**

Regarding Turkey's role in the Middle East, suggestions about regional dynamics, prospects and recommendations highly depends on how you will generate the foreign policy. Of course, energy safety is closely related to foreign policy. Now, Iran is the 2nd country that we purchase gas, still we are continuing to purchase oil & gas from Iraq, I highly appreciated the Kirkuk-Yumurtalik crude oil pipeline as a main energy base. This pipeline needs to be run at its’ full capacity so this means the end of the current instability in Iraq & solved oil sharing issues in the country herself. But Türkiye has very good relations in terms of energy with Northern Iraq Kurdish Administration like other issues & we must not ignore our significant energy investments in this region.

If we look at the issue in terms of public and private investments, private investment has more share in the region. Also, we have investments in South Iraq. Today's investment in the energy issues will pay off to your economy and foreign policy as safe energy in the future.

When you think of the US efforts to achieve the region’s oil and gas, I want to open a parenthesis; if US can be self-contained about her non-conventional oil & gas and pulled herself off from the energy field of the Middle East, this will serve that EU & Türkiye, together will have both energy and geopolitical gains & of course this will serve that the regional states’ economic development and their opening to the western market.

The main factors that will guarantee the energy security of our country is maximizing to use of our own domestic resources. Türkiye has rich mineral reserves, hydropower and geothermal resouces and we have plenty of sun & wind. Firstly we need to continue to invest in these areas with determination. In recent years, increased exploration and drilling in oil and gas continues to receive positive results in Blacksea Region, Thrace & the South East Region of our country. Furthermore, there is shale gas in our country and we need to start production immediately. EU has some concerns about the environment & if we want to continue being in good relations we cannot ignore this fact. These are all our questions in our energy agenda. If our 2023 energy strategy will be realised, then safe energy can be maintained. I have a suggestion. We don’t have a long term energy strategy in our country. 2023 is a short term strategy roadmap drawn by the Department of Energy.

So, we need a ‘National Energy Strategy’ and in need of a national body that will implement all.

**Improved Mechanisms: Implementing National Energy Strategy, according to a National Energy Diplomacy**

I have a special reason to separate this issue from safe energy, my dialogue and collaboration suggestions. Energy diplomacy should be considered as multi-faceted activities and contacts due to the strength and volume of a country to reach her strategic objectives.
Energy diplomacy, a part of our foreign policy strategy needs to be clear & decisive. In this sense, there is a need to draw an useful plan that has continuity and sustainability. The institutions & people that implements energy strategy also needs continuity in terms of consistency. In this way, a long-term diplomacy will serve foreign policy objectives both in international project cooperations and energy, so there will be no failures.

If Türkiye want to sign, cross-border energy and infrastructure projects in the near future, and be a safe regional energy hub, firstly she must implement a powerful collaboration, diplomacy & energy politics. ( I mean about a strong collaboration both with EU & Eastern states that has rich reserves. ) Prosuading the East is easier than EU. The real difficulty is the states in the EU is implementing their national energy politics & strategies not EU’s decided union’s energy politics & strategies. If there is no dispute implementing about common foreign energy policy between EU states then Türkiye will be successful. Of course there will be countries that unable to accept Türkiye as the main energy hub. However, so called the EU’s Southern Corridor priority will serve the interests of all member states which contributes the development of safe energy supply market and fully integrated energy market. Türkiye is the natural main hub but negotiations are still continuing & Nabucco is waiting. (Türkiye is fully interconnected at the West with Bulagria and Greece at the East with Middle East & Central Asia. )

As I mentioned before, in my previous proposals, first Türkiye should be energy sufficient and then will sell the excess energy. It is very important that, this can start with cross-border electricity trade. This will be a very advantageous trade in terms of the flexibility of markets, safe supply conditions in order to ensure international collaboration.

I also want to mention that the current events which is happening in our region will hamper the realisation of cross border & infrastructure projects. Such as; Civil war in Syria, the Arab Spring, new oil zones discovered in East Mediterranean, Cyprus-Israil collaboration, Russia’s aim to exclude Türkiye from projects like South Stream-North Stream, to supply necessary resources to run pippelines, plus energy giants’ indecisiveness located in EU’s financial crisis zone.

If these barriers are exceeded, Türkiye can be a safe energy hub in Middle East.

Even if all these domestic facts are provided; strong diplomacy, development of the domestic infrastructure, demand management to contribute to our safe energy supply and also be able to export increased capacity, necessary investment will be made for Ceyhan as a hub and succesing to increase the refinery sector’s capacity, still the real question is;

'How can Türkiye be a safer energy Hub?

*High-quality diplomacy is the nation's most powerful weapon. Effective diplomacy can be carried out with the active and decisive steps, this is the importance of art of diplomacy. As Frederick the Great, King of Prussia, said Diplomacy without arms is like music without instruments.*

Thank you,

Rahmi Aydemir