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7 October 2009

## Ankara courts EU over Nabucco gas supplies

Published: Tuesday 6 October 2009

Turkey wants to help the EU to realise the Nabucco pipeline project by acting as a broker for securing natural gas supplies from Iraq and Qatar as well as Iran at a later stage, the country's foreign minister, Ahmet Davutoglu, told EurActiv.

### Background:

Recently, Russia signed agreements with Italy, Bulgaria, Greece and Serbia to build the 'South Stream' gas pipeline, a rival to the EU-favoured Nabucco project. It also announced that South Stream would more than double its planned capacity from 31 billion cubic metres per year (bcm/y) to 63bcm ([EurActiv 18/05/09](#)).

Until now, Nabucco and South Stream's capacities were considered to be of identical capacity (30 billion cubic metres a year). Both bypass Ukraine and use approximately the same resources (Central Asian and Caspian gas). Nabucco will bring Caspian gas to a hub in Austria via Turkey, Bulgaria, Romania and Hungary.

The recent gas crisis between Russia and Ukraine has convinced decision-makers of the need to speed up the project (see EurActiv LinksDossier on '[Pipeline Politics](#)').

South Stream's planned route runs directly to Italy from the Black Sea's Northern Caucasus shore, while Nabucco runs to Southern Europe via Turkey from the Black Sea's Southern Caucasus borders. Their commissioning terms are nearly identical.

Davutoglu said his country is actively trying to solve tensions around Iran, which stands accused by the international community of developing a secret nuclear weapons programme.

He stressed Ankara was not doing this only for the sake of regional or world security but also for energy security considerations. "We need Iran back to the energy market. This is one of the best ways to counterbalance Russia's monopoly," Davutoglu said on Friday (2 October).

The Turkish minister explained at length the geopolitics of energy flows.

"When I was teaching in the university, I advised my students that in order to understand long-term transformations, long-term projections, it is better not to see the borders, the existing borders. Just try to understand the natural flow, natural geopolitics, natural geo-economics, natural geo-culture. Which country will develop which policy will depend on natural flows," said Davutoglu, who is a university professor and a political scientist.

According to the Turkish foreign minister, there are two main areas for gas consumption in Eurasia – Europe and China – and two main supplier zones – Russia and the Gulf region plus Iran.

"Being both a supplier and a transit country gives a big power to Russia. It means that Russia can control the price, it can control the use of energy in time," Davutoglu said. He described the role of Turkey as a transit country vis-à-vis the EU as similar to that played by Pakistan vis-à-vis China. But Turkey has an advantage, he insisted.

"Which country is the most stable for this natural flow? It is Turkey – stable in the domestic sense and tying to produce stability for the region," the minister said.

Davutoglu said his country has big plans for Nabucco. It may have been a "big surprise" when Ankara called the Nabucco intergovernmental

meeting last July, he said ([EurActiv 14/07/09](#)). But he recalled the commitments made at the meeting by Iraqi Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki, who promised to supply Nabucco with 15 billion cubic meters of gas per year, or half of the pipeline's planned capacity.

Without directly mentioning Russian obstructions to the pipeline, Davutoglu said: "For Nabucco it was always said – there is no gas. Now for the first time there is a new perception that there will be enough gas."

#### **Qatar, a new player**

"Also importantly, a third supplier, Qatar, which until now was exporting LNG, decided to have a gas pipeline from Qatar to Turkey," Davutoglu stressed, adding that it will be connected to Nabucco too.

"So until recently there were questions whether there will be enough gas [to fill the pipeline]. Now he have Iraqi and Qatari planned, and if the nuclear issue is resolved with Iran, Iranian gas will be on board as well. This is what we are working for, and not imposing sanctions on Iran," said the Turkish minister, insisting that in his country's experience, such sanctions have always been counterproductive.

All these connections will be leading to the EU, Davutoglu insisted.

"That's the main channel for energy security of the EU. Either, this gas would go to China," he warned, adding that Iran in fact has such projects in store.

#### **Ankara also supports Russia's South Stream project**

Turkey's premier diplomat also recalled that one month after the Nabucco summit, on 6 August, Turkey signed another agreement with Russia, allowing Gazprom to make feasibility studies in the Turkish economic zone of the Black Sea. The studies are aimed at facilitating the Moscow-sponsored South Stream gas pipeline project ([EurActiv 21/08/09](#)).

"Many people see South Stream as an alternative to Nabucco. Not us," Davutoglu said, adding that in his country's perspective, the Russia-favoured project would in fact strengthen North-South exchanges.

As part of the same strategy, he said Ankara had signed another agreement with Russia on the Samsun-Ceihan oil pipeline, which will bypass the Bosphorus, and which Turkey hopes will carry Kazak oil as well.

## **Links**

#### Press articles

- Pipelines International: [Turkey-Qatar working groups in the pipeline](#)
- Zaman, Turkey: [Analysis: Turkey-EU relations: The return of 'high politics'](#)
- Reuters: [Turkey PM to visit Iran, urges caution on sanctions](#)

#### Blogs

- RGEmonitor, blogs: [Turkey's EU dreams and European energy security: In the pipeline?](#)