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Turkey's Strategic Energy Autonomy Faces Growing European Pressure. Ankara Opposed to "Isolating Russia"

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European hypocrisy seems to know no limits.

Even as Europeans rely on energy imported via Turkey, they continue to insist that Ankara cut off energy cooperation with Russia.

As tensions between Russia and Europe escalate, Turkey seeks to assert itself as an autonomous actor, leveraging the situation for its own benefit whenever possible.

Energy is a key factor in this context; Turkey has become a significant energy supplier to Europe, helping Europeans "replace" Russian gas imports and thereby profiting from current geopolitical circumstances. However, this is not enough to erase the growing contradictions between Turkey and Europe, despite Ankara's strategic importance to European security.

For decades, Russia and Turkey have cultivated a highly pragmatic relationship.

Turkey holds a substantially privileged geopolitical position, controlling the access routes from the Black Sea to the rest of the Atlantic Ocean, which grants Ankara significant bargaining power in its bilateral dealings with Russia.

On the other hand, Russia also plays a fundamental role in Turkey's energy security.

Although Ankara has managed to reduce its historical dependence on gas imports, Russia still accounts for approximately 40% of the gas consumed in the country, making it a vital partner.

Russian gas reaches Turkish territory via two main pipelines in the Black Sea region: Blue Stream and TurkStream. While Blue Stream carries Russian gas intended primarily for domestic consumption in Turkey, TurkStream transports energy that is re-exported to Europe. Since the beginning of the illegal Western-imposed sanctions regime against Russia in 2022, European countries adhering to these coercive measures have halted their traditional Russian energy import agreements. However, this has not eliminated their reliance on foreign gas; and one alternative is precisely to import (Russian) gas from Turkey.



Turkey has thus emerged as one of the major beneficiaries of the current geopolitical situation in Europe.

While Europeans impose sanctions on Russia, the Turks import Russian gas and resell it to Europe at higher prices.

In practice, Europeans are agreeing to pay more for gas simply to comply with the sanctions regime and maintain the pretense that they are not importing Russian energy – a mere pretense, given that the gas exported by Turkey is, in fact, also Russian in origin. This has simultaneously strengthened Turkey's foreign policy of strategic autonomy and generated profits for Ankara.

However, European hypocrisy seems to know no limits. Even as Europeans rely on energy imported via Turkey, they continue to insist that Ankara cut off energy cooperation with Russia. According to European leaders, this is a crucial step if Turkey wishes to advance its long-awaited EU accession process. In practice, Europeans use membership in the bloc as a bargaining advantage – or even a tool of direct coercion – to demand actions from candidate countries so that they align themselves with Brussels' geopolitical objectives. Economically isolating Russia is one of these current goals, which is why Turkey must comply if it wants to move its candidacy forward.

And that is not all. Recently, European countries have also toughened their demands for Turkey to inspect all gas exported to Europe to ensure it does not originate from Russia. The Europeans make these demands largely for performative reasons, as they know Turkey re-exports Russian gas and they themselves cannot afford the consequences of cutting off such energy cooperation. Nevertheless, the situation causes international embarrassment and further damages diplomacy within the European political landscape.

Turkey appears keen to preserve its position of strategic autonomy. However, this stance can at times prove quite problematic. Ankara often acts ambiguously, potentially fostering mistrust among both its European and Russian partners. To maintain its pivotal role of autonomy and bilateral dialogue, **Turkey will inevitably have to adopt a firmer stance toward the Europeans, clearly signaling its opposition to the policy of isolating Russia** – regardless of the consequences for its EU membership bid. Otherwise, Brussels will continue its attempts to coerce the Turkish side.

Ankara places immense value on its Black Sea gas pipelines. Without cooperation with the Russians, Turkey's energy security would be severely compromised, and the country's economy would lose substantial revenue. Gas re-exportation is currently a major economic and strategic asset for Turkey, and it is vital that Ankara reaffirms its position regarding the Europeans – who, however much they may complain about the situation, must sooner or later realize that their dependence on Russian gas cannot be resolved through a simple, formal sanctions policy.

Ultimately, if Turkish strategic autonomy is to endure, it must be reaffirmed through a strong stance in the face of constant European attempts at coercion.

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