

Turkey is talking about the Trans-Caspian Gas Pipeline

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On March 10, 2024, it became known that Turkey is going to buy large volumes of gas from Turkmenistan. Turkish Minister of Energy and Natural Resources Alparslan Bayraktar said that Ankara was considering three options for importing Turkmen gas. The first is pumping through Iran. The second is a swap exchange through Iran and Azerbaijan. And the third is the gas delivery via pipeline through the Caspian Sea. Bayraktar described this option as the most long-term and sustainable.

The minister also emphasized that Ankara would buy 2 billion cubic meters of Turkmen gas in the near future. This means that the said volume will reach Turkey through the Iranian pipeline or, most likely, transferred to Ankara through a swap scheme – the most convenient and technically easiest to implement.

However, the problem is that Turkey does not need much gas supplies from Turkmenistan now. Purchases of Iranian, Libyan, Russian and Azerbaijani gas fully cover the country's economic and social needs. In addition, Turkey is already developing its own gas deposits in the Black Sea, estimated by experts at 710 billion cubic meters, which, according to experts, will be enough to satisfy all of Turkey's needs for 30 years. And this even without the prospects of pumping Israeli blue fuel to Turkey from the "Leviathan" gas field on the Levantine shelf of the Mediterranean Sea.

Consequently, it can be assumed that Turkmen gas is rather a matter of political sense and necessity than an economic issue for Turkey. Ankara, thereby, is simply looking for ways to bind currently the most politically, and economically independent from Turkey Central Asian Turkic capital Ashgabat to itself. Hydrocarbons are the most important sector of the Turkmen economy, which, in fact, is the basis of the political regime in this country. At the same time, contrary to other Turkic states of Central Asia, Turkmenistan is not very keen on the idea of all-Turkic unity, and therefore Ankara is trying to approach Ashgabat from the gas partnership format, which should develop into something more significant and large-scale in the future.

The process began with talks between Recep Tayyip Erdogan and Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov, which resulted in signing of "*documents on cooperation in the field of natural gas*". Thus, the matter has already moved forward, and now Ankara is seeking to create the prerequisites for laying a gas pipeline along the bottom of the Caspian Sea. This is precisely the political goal of Turkey, which, with the approval and support of its Western allies, is trying to "break through" the project of energy communications from Central Asia to Europe through the Caspian Sea, which, due to well-known reasons, has been opposed by the Russian Federation and Iran for decades. If Turkey manages to get such a strategic energy route, this will not only justify its plans to "draw over" the main energy arteries from Asia to the EU (gas hub) and receive incredible income, but will also create the basis for increasing its political and economic influence in the Middle Asia in the context of the program to realize the hundred-year-old dream – "Great Turan".

It is also impossible not to consider the fact that Turkey is reviving talks about the Trans-Caspian pipeline precisely when a joint program with Azerbaijan to open the so-called "Zangezur Corridor" is "pulsating" on its agenda. And this should hardly be considered just a coincidence. In fact, it's all about the "Caspian-Zangezur" gas route desired by Turkey.