

Oil and Pipeline Geopolitics: The US-NATO Race for Syria's Black Gold

Syria's proven oil reserves, amounting to 2.5 billion barrels

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Region: [Middle East & North Africa](#)

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Syria's proven oil reserves, amounting to 2.5 billion barrels, are greater than those of all neighboring countries except Iraq: according to the U.S. Energy Information Administration's estimation of its oil reserves. This makes Syria one of the largest producers and exporters of crude oil in the Middle East.

The country also has large reserves of natural gas, hitherto used for domestic consumption, especially for conversion to gas-fired power plants. But there is a problem, the U.S. agency reported that since 1964 the license for the exploration and exploitation of mineral deposits has been reserved for Syrian government agencies. Until 2010 an annual income of more than \$ 4 billion was procured from the export of oil, particularly to Europe. But things are changing with the war.

The "Free Syrian Army" has taken control of important oil fields in Deir Ezzor. Other fields, in the Rumeilan, are controlled by the Kurdish Democratic Union Party, who are also hostile to the "rebels" with whom they have repeatedly clashed.

The U.S. / NATO strategy focuses on helping rebels to seize the oil fields with a twofold purpose: to deprive the Syrian state of revenue from exports, already strongly decreased as a result of the EU embargo, and to ensure that the largest deposits pass in the future, through the "rebels" under the control of the big Western oil companies.

Fundamental to this end, is the control of the internal pipelines. This has been sabotaged by the "rebels" in several places, especially near Homs where there is one of two refineries in the country, to stop the supply of petroleum products. But there is something strategically more important at stake: Syria's role as a hub of alternative energy corridors, through Turkey and other pathways, controlled by the U.S. and the European Union.

The "war of pipelines" has begun: during its invasion of Iraq in 2003, the United States destroyed the Kirkuk-Banias pipeline carrying Iraqi oil to Syria. It remained in use, however, between Ain Zalah and Suweidiva.

Subsequently, in defiance of the prohibitions of Washington, Damascus and Baghdad have undertaken the project for two pipelines and a gas pipeline through Syria, connecting Iraqi fields to the Mediterranean and then to international markets.

Even more dangerous for Western interests is the agreement signed in May 2011 between

Damascus, Baghdad and Tehran: it involves the construction of a gas pipeline through Iraq, which will transport Iranian natural gas to Syria and from there to foreign markets. These and other already funded projects, have been blocked by what the U.S. agency defines as “the uncertain security situation in Syria»

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