

The Militarisation of the Eastern Mediterranean: Israel's Stake in the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan pipeline

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Update:

The following text on the militarisation of the Eastern Mediterranean was completed less than months before the Israeli attacks on Lebanon. The pipeline project linking Turkey to Israel originally proposed by Israel at the time was an underwater pipeline from the Turkish terminal of Ceyhan to the port of Haifa. Following the bombing of Lebanon, it is highly unlikely that such a costly project would be undertaken. What is at stake in the war on Lebanon is the strategic control of a land corridor, which extends along the Eastern Mediterranean coast, from the Israeli-Lebanese border, across Lebanon and Syria to Turkey, where it would link up with the port of Ceyhan.

The Anglo-US Military alliance seeks to establish control over Central Asian oil and gas reserves as well as strategic pipeline routes. The most important strategic corridor is the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan oil and gas pipelines dominated by British Petroleum (BP). This corridor not only integrates the Caspian Sea to the Eastern Mediterranean, it is also slated to channel Central Asian oil and gas to a strategic pipeline corridor controlled by Israel.

Israel has become a potential partner in the Baku-Ceyhan oil pipeline, which is protected by GUAM, a US-NATO sponsored military alliance between Georgia, Azerbaijan, Ukraine, Uzbekistan and Moldova. What is envisaged is to link the BTC pipeline to the [Trans-Israel Eilat-Ashkelon pipeline](#), also known as Israel's Tipline, through a system of underwater pipelines, from Ceyhan to the Israeli port of Ashkelon.

While the BTC pipeline is invariably described as a means of bypassing Russia and channelling Central Asian oil and gas to Western markets, part of this oil and gas is intended for re-export to the Asian market through the Red Sea port of Eilat. By linking the BTC to Israel's pipeline system, Israel is slated to become a major player in the global energy market, in alliance with the Anglo-American oil giants.

Diverting Central Asian oil and gas to the Eastern Mediterranean (under Israeli military protection), for re-export to Asia, serves to undermine the inter-Asian energy market, which is based on the development of direct pipeline corridors linking Central Asia and Russia to South Asia, China and the Far East.



For details on the Campaign against the pipeline see http://www.bakuceyhan.org.uk/more_info/bp_pipeline.htm

(Cont).

In April, Israel and Turkey announced plans for four underwater pipelines. Also involved in this project is a pipeline to bring water to Israel. 'Turkey and Israel are negotiating the construction of a multi-million-dollar energy and water project that will transport water, electricity, natural gas and oil by pipelines to Israel, with the oil to be sent onward from Israel to the Far East, Antalya Mayor Menderes Turel':.

"We are talking about a global energy project, which would be a very important engine of peace in the region," Turel said in an interview with The Jerusalem Post.

Turel, who was here to take part in an International Conference of Mayors held in Jerusalem, said that the grandiose project had received tentative approval from both Turkey and Israel and would greatly enhance an abrogated landmark 2004 proposal to export water to Israel using large tankers, which proved to be prohibitively expensive.

The new Turkish-Israeli proposal under discussion would see the transfer of water, electricity, natural gas and oil to Israel via four underwater pipelines.

"The whole premise is based on the assumption that Turkey is becoming a major hub for energy in the region," said Gabby Levy, the Director of International Relations at the National Infrastructure Ministry.

<http://www.jpost.com/servlet/Satellite?cid=1145961328841&pagename=JPost%2FJPArticle%2FShowFull>

According to Israeli Knesset member Joseph Shagal, the Baku-Ceyhan pipeline would eventually link up with Israeli ports and pipeline routes. In May 2006, Joseph Shagal confirmed that Israel was envisaging a new 400 km under water pipeline, which would join up with the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan (BTC) main pipeline, "Baku oil can be transported to Ashkelon via this new pipeline and to India and the Far East.[via the Red sea]"

"Ceyhan and the Mediterranean port of Ashkelon are situated only 400 km apart. Oil can be transported to the city in tankers or via specially constructed under-water pipeline. From Ashkelon the oil can be pumped through already existing pipeline to port of Eilat at the Red Sea; and from there it can be

transported to India and other Asian countries in tankers. As Shagal informed, Natig Aliyev had invited Israeli Infrastructure Minister to visit traditional Caspian oil exhibition-conference to be held early in June in Baku. The member of Knesset expressed his assurance the invitation would be accepted and realization of the above-mentioned idea would be discussed in detail. [REGNUM](#))

Concluding remarks

The Israeli-Turkish project, which links up with the BTC consists in exporting Caspian oil and gas using Israel as a transshipment route through the Red Sea back to India and the Far East.

From a geopolitical standpoint, the Ceyhan-Ashkelon-Eilat corridor would be protected by the Israeli military. It would channel oil back to the Asian markets via the Red Sea. This dramatic rerouting of Central Asian oil and gas via the Eastern Mediterranean inevitably undermines the "direct corridor trading routes" between the producing countries in Central Asia and their South and East Asian trading partners, including India and China. Ultimately, this design is intended to weaken Russia's role in Central Asia and cut off China from Central Asian oil resources. In this context, the Western military alliance which now includes Israel protects the strategic energy pipeline corridors of the Anglo-American oil companies.

The withdrawal of Syrian troops from Lebanon bears a direct relationship to the consolidation of both land and sea corridors under Israeli military protection. The strategic land corridor extends from the Red Sea port of Eilat, across Israel and through Lebanon and the Syrian Mediterranean coastline to the Eastern coastline of Turkey.

Eastern Mediterranean

The Eastern Mediterranean is also rich in gas reserves. According to a recent report:

"On the basis of preliminary drilling and seismographic results, Palestinian and Israeli waters in the Mediterranean appear to contain at least 100bn cu metres of gas reserves, divided about 60:40 in the Palestinians' favour. Almost all of this gas is expected to go to the Israeli market which, by 2015, will probably be consuming at least 12bn cu metres/yr. A small portion (about 0.5bn cu metres/yr) might also be reserved for a new power plant in the Gaza Strip."

(See <http://www.researchandmarkets.com/reports/19835/19835.htm>)

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