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# Russia wins control of Turkmen gas

By Jerry Mazza,  
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In the race for Caspian gas, Russia has won and the United States has lost, according to an article in Wednesday's Asia Times.

In his article, Russia takes control of Turkmen (world?) gas, M K Bhadrakumar, a former career diplomat in the Indian Foreign Service, wrote, "From the details coming out of Ashgabat in Turkmenistan and Moscow over the weekend, it is apparent that the great game over Caspian energy has taken a dramatic turn. In the geopolitics of energy security, nothing like this has happened before. The United States has suffered a huge defeat in the race for Caspian gas. The question now is how much longer Washington could afford to keep Iran out of the energy market."

And I ask has the War on Terror that supported the appropriation by force of Caspian energy and its proposed pipelines been lost as well?

After all, it was years before 9/11 that the US had designs on conquering Afghanistan to lay those pipelines and acquire that gas and oil, one way or the other. September 11 coincidentally (?) proved to be the reason for a preemptive war with Afghanistan, purportedly to search for Osama bin Laden, the alleged ringleader of the purported Muslim hijacker-cabal, who commanded this mega disaster from a cave with his laptop and kidney dialysis machine. This is the administration's myth, swallowed by many, but not the few awake at the switch.

Gazprom, it turns out, Russia's Exxon and then some, penned two major deals in Ashgabat last Friday, sketching a plan for purchase of Turkmen gas. The first one deals with pricing for Russian purchases for the next 20 years. The second deal makes Gazprom the sponsor for local Turkmen energy projects. The two deals slam-dunk control over Turkmen gas exports, and without killing a soul or destroying a square foot of property.

Gazprom, which was headed by present Russian President Dmitry Medvedev for eight years, 2000 to May 2008, has taken a bold step that must have had the approval of the top guns in the Kremlin. Medvedev also took a side trip to Ashgabat on July 4-5 (what an irony) on his way to the G-8 summit get together with Turkmenistan officials in Hokkaido, Japan.

Interestingly, the Friday agreements are not designed for Gazprom to profit from reselling Turkmen gas and may lead to similar conditions with Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, the two other major gas-rich countries in Central Asia. So old-fashioned profiteering was not the reason for Gazprom's actions. You could say, the Kremlin had a "grand strategy."

Coincidentally, Russian Deputy Prime Minister Igor Sechin visited Beijing over the weekend to begin with his Chinese counterpart, Vice Premier Wang Oishan, an "energy initiative," or "energy negotiation mechanism." It would seem Central Asia and China as well as Russia have gotten hip to Zbigniew Brzezinski's Grand Chessboard dreams of conquering the Middle East and Central Asian gas and oil resources in the march to world hegemony and simply bested Zbig and his former neocon friends. In fact, the first round of talks about this deal happened in Beijing on Saturday. Initially, there was a media blackout of the meeting, then Beijing broke the news via the government-owned China Daily on Monday.

China Daily didn't elaborate but mentioned the "good talks" as "a good

beginning." and commented, "It seems that shift of Russia' energy export policy is under way. Russia might turns its eyes from the Western countries to the Asia-Pacific region . . . The cooperation in the energy sector is an issue of great significance for Sino-Russian relations . . . the political and geographic closeness of the two countries would put their energy cooperation under a safe umbrella and make it a win-win deal. China-Russia are at their best times . . . The two sides settled their lingering border disputes, held joint military exercises, and enjoyed rapidly increasing bilateral trade." Well, good for them. Peace at last somewhere.

As Bhadrakumar points out, the blowback of this deal is "serious for the US and EU campaign to get their Nabucco gas pipeline project going." With no Turkmen gas, that pipeline is a pipedream. And the US strategy of cutting Europe' s need on Russian energy makes no sense. So now, Washington's bad dream, that Europe's needs may depend on Iranian gas supplies, has come true. Turkey has even offered to mediate the Iran-US conflict.

Ouch, Mr. Cheney and Mr. Bush. You've been check mated on the Grand Chessboard. But then, as the reporter points out, "The geopolitics of energy makes strange bedfellows."

Russia's got the gas, and Tehran sees its way to integrate with Europe; though Russia's Turkmen gas control can't be a total plus for Iran. Tehran had pushed for its own deal with Ashgabat to distribute their gas via Iranian pipelines.

Since Russia will have a hand in pricing, the era of cheap gas for Europe may be ending. Russia has put itself at the head of the pack in the world gas market, with a gas cartel in the offing. So, while we were shooting people, shocking and awing entire countries, Russia, exercising diplomacy and common sense shrewdness, was making deals that people felt comfortable with, and walked away a winner.

On top of that, Russian oil and gas companies are now moving into Latin America, where the US has not made itself particularly loved, though it is our backyard. During Chavez's visit to Moscow on July 25, Russia's big three energy companies, Gazprom, LUKoil and TNL-BP, penned agreements with the Venezuelan state-owned petroleum company PDVSA. They will "replace" America oil biggies, ExxonMobil and ConocoPhillips in Venezuela. Ouch, ouch!

As the deal was signed, Medvedev said, "We have not only approved these agreements but have also decided to supervise their implementation." Chavez answered, "I look forward to seeing all of you in Venezuela." Of course, George and Dick may look forward to seeing them all in hell, but I don't think it's quite going to turn out that way. I'm inclined to say the world has had enough of US shock and awe, bullying, lies, preemptive strikes, and the likes.

Hopefully, Americans have had enough of trillions of dollars of their taxes spent on two wars; enough of the lost of 9/11, the tragedy engineered by the government to start the War on Terror; enough of the more than 4,000 American soldiers' deaths, and the million-plus Iraqis and Afghans lost. In fact, this may provide some kind of wake-up call for Washington, or even realization that this Russian pact (not war) is the final nail in the administration's coffin. So it goes, hopefully.

gvmaz@verizon.net

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