From Hormuz to Damascus, Ankara: New routes for regional oil, gas being explored

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The prolonged closure of the Strait of Hormuz, combined with threats to the Bab-el-Mandeb Strait, could elevate Syria and Turkey to the status of a new energy transit hub, making them a key part of the solution to oil and gas transportation challenges from producers to consumers in the future.

On Monday, Ahmed al-Sharaa, Syria's transitional president, announced from Germany: "Syria is a safe harbor for the energy supply chain and offers a major opportunity for investment in energy and oil infrastructure." Syria's UN representative had earlier stated that Syria is ready to become a new energy transit corridor.

Last week, Tom Barrack, US Ambassador to Turkey and US envoy to Syria, said at the Syria–US Energy Symposium at the Atlantic Council: "Turkey and Syria have the potential to become an important global energy distribution hub," linking this to the Four Seas connectivity project — the Gulf, Caspian, Mediterranean, and Black Sea.

The US–Israel–Iran war has entered its second month, and its impact on the global economy is growing day by day. Iraq has cut its production by 75 percent — from 4.4 million to 1.3 million barrels per day. Qatar has also lost 17 percent of its gas production for five years due to the war, amounting to approximately 12.8 million tons of LNG annually, worth around $20 billion.

Globally, 104 million barrels of oil are consumed daily, with around 80 million barrels transported by sea through eight straits. If the Bab-el-Mandeb closure compounds that of Hormuz, the world faces a new energy crisis not seen since the 1990 Gulf War.

Turkey and Syria have no significant oil or gas production capacity and play no current role in the global energy transit map — but if they were to transit Iraqi oil and Qatari gas, they would not merely reshape energy transit maps; they would become major global hubs for distributing oil and gas to Asia and Europe.

Renewing the ITP agreement: Turkey's conditions, Iraq's needs

Since August 27, 1973, Turkey has sought to become a bridge for Iraqi oil transit. The Iraq–Turkey Pipeline agreement — known as the ITP — was signed that year and later amended in 1985 and 2010.

On July 1, 2025, Turkey's president suspended the agreement. Negotiations resumed in November 2025, with both sides referencing a final draft — but no final agreement has been reached, even as the July 27, 2026 deadline approaches.

Iraq has never fully utilized the pipeline's capacity, which reaches approximately 1.6 million barrels per day. In return, Turkey is demanding increased oil export volumes, expansion of the agreement to cover future natural gas transit, inclusion of Basra oil at current and historical levels reaching the port of Ceyhan, future use of Rmeilan oil from Syria, and transit of Turkey's own domestic oil.

If Iraq develops its internal infrastructure and renews its agreement with Turkey, it could route half of its produced oil to

the world via Turkey — satisfying Turkey's ambition to become a new energy hub.

Currently, Iraq has been forced to rely on the Kurdistan Region pipeline to export oil to Ceyhan and reduce losses from its only export outlet due to the Hormuz closure. Iraq's State Oil Marketing Organization (SOMO) is now exporting approximately 250,000 barrels per day.

Syria: An old route for Iraqi oil exports

Syria has an extensive infrastructure connecting domestic oilfields and has, through the ports of Baniyas and Tartus, transported Saudi Arabia oil for four decades and Iraqi oil for half a century.

The Kirkuk–Baniyas pipeline was completed in 1952 — it is 800 kilometers long with a daily capacity of 300,000 barrels. However, it has been out of use for five decades due to various political events: suspension during the 1956–1957 Suez Crisis, Syria's support for Iran from 1982–2000, and the US invasion of Iraq in 2003.

In mid-January 2025, Syria's deputy minister of energy said: "There is progress on Baghdad and Damascus plans to lay two pipelines with a capacity of 1.5 million barrels of oil, install new pumping stations, and reroute oil through Deir ez-Zor." The rehabilitation cost of the old pipeline is $4.5 billion and would take 36 months.

Discussions are currently underway at Iraq's Ministry of Oil and SOMO to begin oil exports via Syria by tanker truck — through the al-Qaim–Deir ez-Zor route to the port of Baniyas. This represents an opportunity to increase volumes and rehabilitate the shared pipeline in the coming days.

Will Qatari gas reach Europe via Syria, Turkey?

The idea of transiting Qatari natural gas to Europe dates back 17 years. In 2009, Qatar and Turkey reached a preliminary agreement to transport gas from the North Field — the world's largest gas field — to Turkey and onward to Europe.

At that time, Bashar al-Assad refused to join such an agreement, preferring — in Russia's interest — to block an alternative gas supply to Europe. The agreement then required $10 billion and stretched between 1,500 and 1,900 kilometers, but was halted until Assad's fall at the end of 2024.

After Assad's fall, Turkey has once again raised the issue. Turkey's minister of energy and natural resources says: "Discussions are ongoing regarding the transit of Qatari gas through Syria and Turkey to Europe — this plan is still in its early stages and requires technical and financial assessment."

If this pipeline is built, it could deliver 30 to 40 billion cubic meters of Qatari gas annually to European markets — roughly 33 percent of Qatar's total global exports.

Ultimately, short-term alternatives to the Strait of Hormuz are the straits themselves. But the long-term alternative — transiting oil and gas via Syria and Turkey — could warm discussions between energy-producing and consuming nations in the months ahead. Because this is the last option for delivering energy to the world — particularly Europe — outside the

threatened straits.