

The paper studies the theoretical and practical application of public relations to the geopolitical nature of international energy projects in order to expand our understanding of the energy sector's domination of the current political and social environments. More specifically, the paper analyses how energy companies that exhibit close links to the state are able to create and cultivate beliefs in the legitimacy of their exploitation of society's resources in pursuit of their country's national political interests. The focus of the paper is a critical discourse analysis (CDA) of the competition for legitimacy between Nabucco Gas Pipeline International GmbH and Gazprom's South Stream Pipeline. The paper analyzes the discursive competition between the two pipelines over existence in, and legitimate domination of, the European discursive space. It then compares constructed narratives to quantitative factors that shape the European energy market and technical and financial specifications of each pipeline on the basis of its ability to adequately meet European energy demands and enhance European energy security. The purpose of the paper is to demonstrate how Nabucco and South Stream have been able to overcome discursively their technical and financial shortcomings to become perceived as geopolitical tools in a zero-sum game competition and how only this meaning enables the projects to exist.