

GEOPOLITICAL AND GEOSTRATEGIC PROJECTIONS IN THE EXTENDED BLACK SEA REGION

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***Abstract:** Providing the necessary energy for this more and more „globalized” world became a major theme for states, social-economic systems and for the military. Furthermore, the current forms of energy – mostly hydrocarbs based – are limited to a period of maximum 100-200 years. Globalization, emergent economies’ ascension, economic race strengthening, they all emphasize the energetic problem, especially the oil component.*

***Keywords:** geostrategy, globalization, energetic resources, area of influence, security.*

The dynamics of cooperation around the Black Sea has been significantly shaped by the changes that recently occurred in Europe, the Middle East and Asia. Central and West European people vigorously step up to unity. It is a major solution that they foresee for achieving the necessary interdependency in active solidarity, in reducing the economic gaps, the statement and functions of democratic states, increasing living standards, solving environmental issues and eliminating the terrorist threat or the threat of any other kind to the “old continent”.

The Orient inhabitants are confronted with fratricide conflicts, the lack of democratic institutions, poverty and terrorism. Asian people face the lack of unity, discrepancy in accessing energetic materials and some historic issues, left unsolved, that fuel the strategies of acquiring weapons of mass destruction. However, Asian people are also looking for way of cooperation and building trust. The most common strategies and policies used in managing events and processes in the Asian area are partnership, bilateral

agreements and those specific to local organizations and forums like: APEC, ANSEA, NE ASIA Forum etc.

In Europe the opportunities offered by the EU institutions for a durable national, regional and global development, based on a new functional model, based on a high degree of participation and involvement in the community and social life, seeks to offer a suitable answer to the stringent issues of the beginning of the millennium, offering an extra chance to the reunification of the continent.

A thorough examination of the European institutional system underlines the decisive role of functionality and authority, played by the responsible community structures and functions in consolidating democracy and progress at economic, social, political, scientific, cultural etc. level, in exercising the entrusted attributions and mandates. The community institutional contribution to the „Wider Europe” project has major importance in extending security and stability, accelerating the creation and consolidation of the European common identity and the prosperity of the geographical zones and regions that have been left behind.

Despite all these aspects, at present, the EU „assimilation capability” is being questioned, the members of the European parliament stating that after the adherence of Romania and Bulgaria on the 1st of January 2007, any other extent EU engagement is impossible without a reform of the „Treaty of Nice” which is still in effect, until the European Constitution is adopted.

The involvement of new state and non-state actors requires that the current dimensional configuration of continental institutional cooperation be improved, elaborating new cooperation projects and reinforcing security becoming imperious necessities. Europe is thus engaged in a „mega-constitutional political” phase, in which a substantial part of the political debate is oriented to institutional issues.

Starting with the European institutions transformation principles - opening, transparency and participation - the states situated in the extended Black Sea area are looking for ways to enhance trust and mutual cooperation with the purpose of achieving a security system suitable to the current needs. This system comes to fill in and reinforce the general-European construction.

The new institutional structures and mechanisms in the extended Black Sea area project and put into practical decisions that stimulate the

development of certain common interest domains like: agriculture, transportation, security, fighting terrorism, organized crime, weapon, drugs and human being trafficking, money laundering. The successes obtained reflect the significance attributed to amplifying cooperation and collaboration on multiple plans, on NATO, EU and other regional, continental and global actors structured dialogue; on modern institutional concept and structures; on decision and recommendation evolving and implementing mechanisms. In the years to come, any cooperation action in Black Sea area must take account of the complementary roles and missions of all the structures that work together in order not to waste forces and to ensure the synergy of common actions.

The CSI space, especially the Caucasian and central-Asian areas, the Siberian and north European regions found on the Russian Federation territory, have important amounts of energetic reserves (oil, gas, coal, hydrographic pools with energetic potential). The existence of rich reserves of oil and natural gas together with the increased consumption and the extension and diversification of energy markets, have determined an increased evolution of the energy transport network in that area.

As a result of those factors the Black Sea – Caucasus – Central Asia area and lately Algeria also, became a subject of interest and dispute between the world great economic and military powers. Thus, a real confrontation could be noticed, more or less dissimulated, to obtain control over the hydrocarbs rich countries and those hosting their transport structures.

Probably, during the following period the involvement of the occidental states in the area will increase with respect to the economic phenomena, with the energetic resources as main objective, as well as regarding the political and security plans, the last two as important factors favoring the implementation of economic projects.

The existence of gas and petroleum pipelines, as well as the production and transportation of the electric energy constitute instruments of promotion and preservation of the interests of Russian Federation in relation to the Western world, to some regional factors of power (China, India) and the states within its sphere of influence.

The current energetic network in the Caspian Sea area, practically under the control of the Russian Federation, as well as the projects for the future transport networks is directed in a multi-vectorial way, including, practically, all adjacent areas and the areas of interest for Russia. The efforts

of Moscow authorities are pointed towards maintaining Russia's energetic monopoly, monopoly that sometimes can become a means of economic pressure, as well as one of projection or, from case to case, of imposition of own interests in the area of influence.

Russia is interested in the takeover, by participating to the privatization process, of as many firms and companies from the energetic, petroleum and chemical domains as possible.

In the future, blocking the export of gas and petroleum to the Occident, as a punitive measure initiated by the Russian Federation, is unlikely, due to the new relations with the Occident as well as to the economic drawbacks that Russian Federation can create on itself.

An increase of the interest of some states from the Asian area can be noticed (China, Japan, India, Pakistan) toward the direct access to energetic resources in the area. This fact may lead to the emergence of some new types of competitions among them and the Russian Federation, which aims at maintaining control over the distribution of energetic resources.

At some point in the future, the growth of the economic importance of natural gases and, naturally, of the petroleum pipeline network is likely to happen. In this context, both the Russian Federation and the European Union and United States are interested in developing the current petroleum pipeline network with new projects.

Through forming a new alliance between Gazprom and Sonatrach, European countries will become independent with respect to the two important natural gas retailers that manage natural gas transportation pipelines and highways from east, west and south of the Europe. This is added the construction of the pipeline in the North of the Europe that will link Russia to Germany through the Baltic Sea. As a result, Europe will be surrounded by the natural gases transportation infrastructure pertaining to the two companies, hence the inevitability of a monopole, respectively of an OEP in the natural gases domain that will control and direct the price and production levels following the pattern of the oil producers. Russia could be joined by Iran, and the Central Asia states with important gas resources can be easily convinced of the advantages of a gas retailers' block. The European Union, interested in promoting the Energetic Charter, does not have sufficient means to block the forming of an organization of natural gas producers, national interests prevailing over the communitarian policies in the energy domain.

Energetic resources have reshaped the geopolitical map of Eurasia. The possible control over the oil resources extraction as the possible marking of the transportation pipelines routes will affect the political future of Russia, Turkey and the other states in the extended Black Sea region. They will determine the realignment of the strategic triangle between US, Russia and China; will have strategic consequences through diminishing the dependence on oil in the Persian Gulf.

The fight for the future routes of the oil from the states in the region to the international market has entered a decisive stage. The winner in this fight will receive not only billions of dollars annually as earnings from transit; but the real prize will be constituted by gaining control over the pipelines, which will be the most important factor of geopolitical influence in the Black Sea and Caspian Sea region.

Energetic resources thus prove to have a central position in the economic and social activities of the US and Europe, as well as in the rest of the industrialized world. The security of the supply with the energy, durable economic development, environment protection and so on represent common concerns of the main players in this fight over resources, and not only; thus, commune solutions must be sought to these problems of the contemporary world, based on partnership and cooperation.

Under these circumstances, small and medium states in the region are willing to engage in a series of compromises, justified both through the economic and security advantages obtained in the exchange of the extraction of the hydrocarbs resources and the use of the national territory for the transition and through the possibility of constituting some transportation corridors that facilitate economic connections with the Occident, seen more and more as an important factor of their economic revival.

We can perceive an intensification of efforts for the activation of different regional cooperation organisms with the attributions in the economic cooperation field or related to member states security (Economic Cooperation Organization for Black Sea – ECOBS¹, Collective Security

¹ ECOBS comprises: 11 standing members: Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bulgaria, Greece, Georgia, Moldavia, Romania, Russia, Turkey and Ukraine; 7 members with observer statute: Austria, Israel, Egypt, Poland, Slovakia, Tunis and Italy.

Treaty Organization - CSTO², Shanghai Cooperation Organization - SCO³, GUAM⁴), through which the great powers, assuming the roles of the leaders of these organizations, intend to promote their own interests in the area.

At present, the coordination of the economic and security policies of the European Union and US is clearer than the one of the Shanghai group. The relations between the above poles of economic power have come on the edge of a new “Cold War”, and the military power gap between NATO and Shanghai group is visible. Moreover, the US and EU hold dominant positions in technology, industrial and financial assets and actually lead the way followed by globalization.

These two power groups are in direct contact in Eastern Europe, Black Sea, Central Asia, and indirectly in Iran – Syria area.

On short and medium term, a military conflict between these two groups does not seem possible, even if at first sight time flows to the West. Yet, there is a possibility that Cold War specific confrontation strategy might be used, like the technological, financial, economic and political competition which is quite beneficial for USA and the EU.

The combination of technological, financial and economic offensive with the campaigns for economic and social liberalization, national, cultural and religious rights, has proved its efficiency through USSR and its influence in Eastern Europe collapse. The current assertion of investment funds, the competition for primacy in Ukraine and Iran, the pressures for the liberalization of the Chinese currency, the exaggerated rise in the price of raw materials, could be part of an economic-political competition that has already started, in spite of official denials.

The current economic analyses from Eastern, Central and South-Eastern Europe show some elements which could be specific for East West competition scenario at a lower level of Cold War. So, after 2002, along with the expansion of NATO and EU to Russian Federation borders, Moscow and Russian companies adopted a subtle economic and political strategy along with increasingly firm diplomacy. Energetic cooperation

² CSTO has the following members: Russian Federation, Kirghizstan, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Belarus, and Armenia

³ Member states of the SCO are: Russia, China, Kirghizstan, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan.

⁴ Member states of GUAM are: Georgia, Ukraine, Azerbaijan and Moldova.

agreements were signed between Russian Federation, Germany, Austria, Hungary, Italy and France. Russian companies acquired energy and industrial assets in the Baltic States, Austria, Switzerland, Hungary, Romania, Bulgaria, Macedonia. German, Austrian, Hungarian, French and Italian companies got “controlled” access on Russian market, while energetic trans-national companies lost their privileges from “Eltin Era”.

The Kremlin diplomacy capitalized on the dependency on the oil and gas supply and the transit of natural gas from Central Asia over the Russian Federation’s territory. This is how international energetic blackmail accusations were made against Moscow in 2006-2007.

The energetic pressures exerted by the Russian Federation on the EU also had positive effects. The European Union became more aware of its institutional weaknesses. Efforts for a unitary energetic strategy and policy were stepped up and, the transatlantic relations affected by the events of 2003-2004 were restored. Also, Brussels launched a new Black Sea Neighbourhood Policy, signed agreements with Azerbaijan or Kazakhstan. Even if the EU does not hold important energetic resources, it represents a huge global economic power (GDP of 14,000 billion dollars compared to 1,200 billion of the Russian Federation and 3,200 billion of China) and the expansion of its trade cannot be counteracted either administratively or militarily.

The scenarios presented above are influenced by a series of technological, military, economic and political factors which are acting at regional and global level. For example, the progress of science and technology defies the theories about the depletion of world’s resources. It is obvious that technological and economic powers will not slow down their development. The access to this elite membership is very controlled just as is the access to the “Nuclear Club”. None of the industrial power will be able to get into the post-industrial group of select membership without technological and capital transfers. At the same time, the theme of good governance becomes almost as important as the theme of financial and technological dominance. Good governance practically means the efficient management of **the essential resources of the economy and society** that still remains the person, the human being.

The emergent economies – from China to Brazil – do not excel in a particular way in this regard.

The global security⁵ environment influences directly and indirectly the energetic security and cooperation within EU and Ponto-Caspian space. The tensions between USA and Russian Federation or USA and China, the transatlantic cooperation or dysfunctional aspects can be felt more in Eastern and South-Eastern Europe and Romania. The conflicts and the clashes in the Near and Middle East highly affect the EU's energetic security. Also, Romania and Bulgaria are more affected than Sweden and Norway.

The most integrated regional group, the European Union, implies suzerainty transfers, the free movement of capitals, workforce and merchandise. Now, the states from the EU are still controlling their own resources. The most powerful countries (Germany, France, Italy) hold powerful energy companies sustained by state.

The energy integration in the EU also implies the joint solving of energy security issues and national security issues. Lately, there have been debates regarding NATO's contribution to ensuring international energy security. From this perspective, it can be stated that the topic of energy development in Romania should be addressed as a priority with Euro-Atlantic political and economic relations.



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⁵ Sorin IONIȚĂ (coordinating), Ana Otilia NUȚU, Valentina IVAN, *Energy Diplomacy of the European Union and the potential for developing new infrastructure projects*, Strategy and Policy Studies SPOS 2016, Bucharest, 2017, pp 60-73.