

THE IMPORTANCE OF BECOMING PART OF PIPELINES NETWORK

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ABSTRACT

It is an imperative for Albania to develop strategies for energy security. The affordable and uninterrupted supply through energy sources constitutes a crucial issue for achieving sustainable economic development. Such issue is associated most importantly with security of energy supply, which is closely related to national security and there are only few countries able to afford the energy needs. Therefore, policymakers should establish the right policies to guarantee the required supply for economic development. To avoid dependence on Russian gas, the EU is seeking alternative supply sources. Some transit countries, like Albania, positioned between largest producing countries and consuming market of the EU, can make substantial contribution to energy security in Europe. Gas pipelines coming from Turkey shall pass through the Balkans, one of them, TAP – Trans-Adriatic Pipeline, is scheduled to go through Albania. This paper aims to provide an approach to national energy security in the context of regional and European context.

Keywords: Energy security, Trans-Adriatic Pipeline, sustainable development, regional collaboration.

INTRODUCTION

Geopolitics is defined as the relationship between the politics and the territory in local, regional or international level. However, in today's context, in a new world order, this relationship may vary considerably as geopolitical considerations compete with each other to form a "new geopolitics" (Tuathail, 1998:2). For some, the end of the Cold War has allowed the emergence of a new geopolitical order dominated by geoeconomic issues, a world where the globalization of economic activity and global flows of trade, investment, commodities and images are remaking states, sovereignty and the geographical structure of the planet. For others, the "new geopolitics" describes a world dominated no longer by territorial struggles between competing blocs but by emerging transnational problems like terrorism, nuclear proliferation and clash of civilizations. For others, the relationship of politics to the earth is more important than ever as states and peoples struggle to deal with environmental degradation, resource depletion, transnational pollution and global warming (Tuathail, 1998:7).

Traditionally, geopolitics is associated with realpolitik, raison d'état and machiavellianism, i.e. the notion that the sovereign states should maximize the interests in a certain geographic and military context. Today, the energetic geopolitics, for instance, includes more than a mere physical control of the sources to develop the state interests. In fact, it refers to the capability of the states to influence on the fuel and technology prices and using this influence to achieve political objectives. Therefore, the energetic geopolitics implies the intervention to the policies

related to energy of a state dependent on the energy (Luft and Korin, 2009:74). To emphasize such issue, in 1970, Henry Kissinger stated: "Control fuel and you will control the world".

Energy security is associated with the national security and the availability of the natural resources for the energy consumption. This term is defined by International Energy Agency as an ongoing physical availability with an affordable price, respecting the environment (2009) OSCE states that the concept in question goes beyond the supply, including the security of demand, transit and efficiency of energy (2006). NATO says that the new strategic concept of energy security is related not only to supply security, but also to the protection of the infrastructure and preventing threats (2010). European Union bases its strategy on three main elements: diversification of resources, of supply and of supply companies. Not long ago there were three EU project bringing about such diversification are Nabucco, TAP and Interconnector TGI. Now TAP is more likely to succeed.

METHODOLOGY

Purpose and objectives of this paper

This paper focuses on explaining the energy diversification in Western Europe. This is intended by explaining how new actors, such as Albania, should play on the bigger state. Therefore this study has a special importance because it identifies and analyzes the mechanisms explaining how Europe will be in a better position if this sort of diversifications and how Albanian policymakers should adopt respective strategies.

In this regard, there is a special focus on the perception of actors, their discourses and strategic documents. In view of achieving the goal, the objectives in this paper are: analysis of key concepts that explain the bigger game in the European context, analysis of the Turkish role in this game and the inclusion of a small country like Albania in this network.

Research questions and hypothesis

Basic research questions are: How is the Europe responding to its need for gas? How is Europe trying to avoid dependence on Russian gas? What is the role of Turkey in this game? What does Albania stand in this mosaic?

The basic hypothesis is: The new European context regarding energy diversification shall have a great impact in preparation of the Albanian energy strategy.

Given that the main purpose of this paper discusses the current situation in Europe concerning energy diversification and the inclusion of Albanian in the energy network, the methodology used is based on qualitative approach - analysis of discourse - focused on the operationalization of key concepts. Due to holistic nature of the problem, the methodology used is based on secondary approach. Regarding secondary sources, the author has used some theoretical perspectives of well-known authors in the field of security energy, geopolitics and economy. Regarding the theories used, there is a combination between two perspectives of international relations: realism and liberalism. It is also used the geopolitical orientation, which means that

researchers in this area build certain ideas of the country, and these ideas have political influence and reinforce behavior; these are ideas that influence how we, the people, process our notions of countries and politics (Bryman, 2004, fq. 24).

A NEW EUROPE FOCUSED ON ENERGY

A new era is unfolding for energy in Europe. The current legislative and regulatory agenda for energy is arguably broader and more complex than it has ever been, with proposals now being debated on renewable energy, fuel quality, the internal market, emissions trading, and a host of related issues. The emphasis on finding new ways of being supplied that has characterized EU energy policies in recent years has raised some other concerns, such as the safety, reliability, and overall security of energy supplies. One example is the special role of natural gas as the 'cleanest' fossil fuel in combination with the open markets of the EU, which has led to increasing dependence on imported natural gas.

Europe is currently being supplied by Russia, Norway and North Africa. There is a need for diversification since Russians are dictating prices and there is no competitiveness (Jankowski, 2012). The answer to this question is Turkey. Turkey is different from other countries that are trying to seek EU accession. It is a country with a large area, with an economy rapidly developing and with favorable strategic position. Turkish politicians never cease pointing out the country's accession into the EU will "enrich" Europe in several directions: labor force and dynamic economy will give a boost to the EU market. Turkey will help EU establish stability in the Middle East, the Caspian and Caucasus area, and will contribute to energy security by being a bridge between the energy sources and Europe's need for energy (Davidovic, 2012:134).

Setting this new energy hub looks like a natural development considering Turkey's location between countries that have 70% of world oil and gas reserves - North and South of the country - and one of the largest energy markets - in West. It seems that Turkey is in the midst of a European game: on the one hand, Europeans tend to build pipelines - through Turkey - not to import Russian gas, and on the other hand, the Russians are trying to keep to themselves the monopoly of gas transport in the continent.

Turkey and EU will benefit greatly if they collaborate in this area (Fuller, 2007:122). The EU will have an alternative supply, while Turkey would benefit from transit fees and will prove to be a reliable and necessary partner, and therefore a worthy member of the European Union. Although an EU candidate, Turkey is trying to behave as an independent entity, creating obstacles to cooperation. In a pro-European perspective, Turkey should coordinate actions with Europe, because only then it can become the fourth artery in Europe (after Russia, Norway and North Africa). Otherwise, this artery or node may be wasted.

But EU split over Turkish membership and relations between the two camps remain tense. Turkish policymakers prefer to see Turkey as part of Europe. On the other hand, a good part of EU policymakers insist that Turkey is not "part of Europe". Here Turkish game starts rolling - conditioning European policy on energy. Neither Turkey, nor the EU does not seem prepared to solve to the process of accession. Turkey's Prime Minister Erdogan has said that the European Union should openly say that it did not want Turkey if the situation was so and called on the EU

not to keep Turkey waiting at the union's door. "They (EU member states) are making up some formulas to show that they are not keeping as waiting". Now many Europeans believe that Turkey will not be part of EU or the accession will last a long time.

In any case, Turkey is vital to the European Union because of its geographical proximity. Therefore, Turkey, as noted above, has a favorable position, among other things, to establish trade routes, transport and energy connecting Europe with the Middle East, the Caucasus and Central Asia (Ebert, 2007). But the bigger role that Turkey has recently undertaken is that of an energy transporter and guarantor of the energy security in Europe.

ALBANIA IS LIKELY TO BECOME SOON PART OF THE NETWORK

Europeans have examined various options to enable access to Central Asian and Caspian energy, without the need to have the support of Russia. Inter-connector Turkey - Greece is just the first step, albeit small. However, Nabucco project that could bring the biggest change to Europe's energy security and in this respect Turkey plays a huge role as a Eurasian energy hub. But this project is abandoned. The Nabucco gas pipeline was one of the central infrastructure projects for the *diversification* of Europe's natural gas supplies that would decrease EU dependence on Russian gas imports (Jankowski, 2008:76). This show that the big game has not been played at the required level and Europe has lost ground when it comes to diversification natural gas supplies.

On the other hand, Nabucco would not have been a positive innovation only for European consumers. This project was an important component of Turkey's plans to extend its role as a regional distribution center intercontinental. Also, as mentioned above, this was a valuable opportunity for the EU and Turkey to prove that cooperation and integration bring out the best for both parties. However, the project has always been prone to obstacles and delays.

Recently, "Gasification of Albania" and "Albania an energy regional superpower" are randomly heard in the Albanian media. And, according to such sources, Trans-Adriatic Pipeline (TAP) will enable these achievements. It is a pipeline of the southern corridor, coming from Azerbaijan to Western and Eastern Europe. From Korça, it will get connected to the existing grid in Greece and through Albanian territory and Adriatic Sea the gas will end up in Southern Italy. TAP is going to develop the energetic infrastructure by bringing about economic growth (2011).

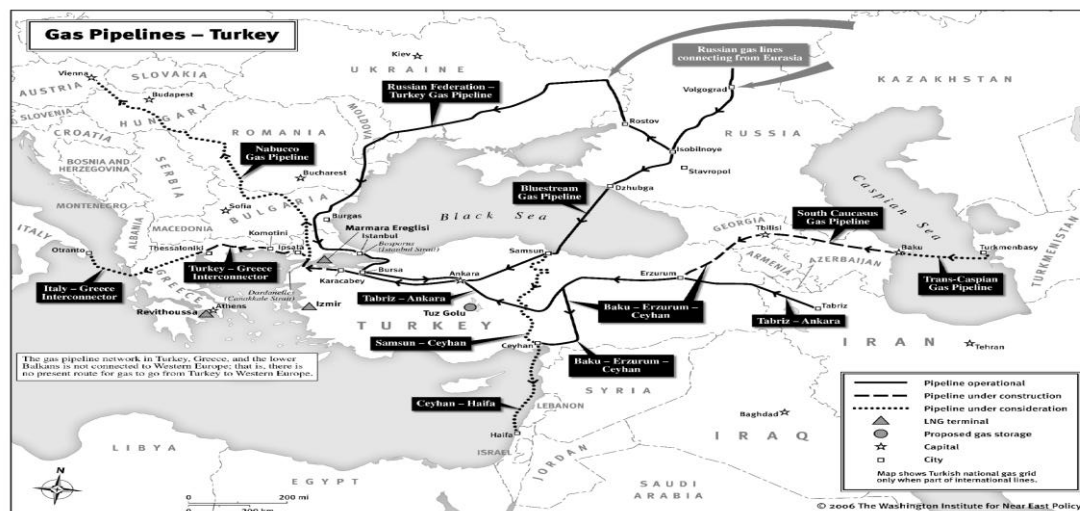


Figure 1 Pipelines coming from Turkey – a key country for the diversification

TAP provides a direct route to a high paying European market. It follows a carefully selected onshore route designed to minimize project risks and can easily double capacity when new gas becomes available. The main goal of such entrepreneurship is to improve the Europe's security of gas supply by opening up the Southern Gas Corridor. Having such a scheme in the country, private investments will increase.



Figure 2 TAP and Western Balkans ring

Each trans-Balkan pipeline relates to the energy security dimension of the power projections of, respectively, Russia, the US and the EU in Central Eurasia and the Caspian region (Ebert, 2010). The Balkans gradual increase in importance for Russia's geopolitical planning came about because of the region's geo-strategic significance as a transit point to Western Europe for Russian and CIS (Commonwealth of Independent States) countries' gas and oil. This network of pipelines carry Russian gas and oil stretches from the Caucasus to Central Europe via the Balkans. As a consequence of Russian oil and gas strategies, the Balkan Peninsula is in the process of being transformed to the energy hub of Europe.

On the other hand, The US and the EU consider the Caspian region's hydrocarbon resources and export routes as strategically significant with a view to diversifying supply means and routes, as they strive for diminishing their dependence on the Middle East. These interests are in opposition to Russia's objective to achieve near-monopoly power over the region's export capacity and routes.

In this lions' arena, Albania has to maneuver as a player who should know what the next move is. Albania has to collaborate with the neighbors in the framework of the pipelines geopolitics. The country is supplied by electrical energy produced by HEC-s. But the European need for gas coming from this route creates a new époque for Albania. After '90, such projects were not possible, thus the collaboration was limited.

In 2005 the Energy Secretariat was established. The treaty enables an institutional framework of the member countries. Therefore, improving the balance between energy supply and demand in the Western Balkans is critical to boost and sustain economic development. Primary sources of energy in the countries of the region are quite limited. There are substantial investment needs in the region to modernize the energy sector, to ensure access to external energy supplies, as well as to benefit economically from the transit of energy across the region. The current fragmentation of energy supply can be overcome by cooperation and major steps have already been taken in the last few years towards achieving these objectives in the electricity and gas sectors. In addition to focusing on energy infrastructure networks, the countries of the region have already started to collaborate in the creation of a regional electricity market (Energy Community, 2012:5). The World Bank states that if there is a common trade for Southeastern Europe, then three trillion euro would be saved (World Bank Outlook, 2010).

However, Albania needs to approach its legislation to the *acquis*. As the report states, there is no progress in this respect: "Progress has been very limited in the energy sector. The Power Sector Law is not in line with the *acquis*. Market reform in the electricity sector has not yet been effectively achieved and further efforts are required in order to ensure its economic viability ... Overall, preparations in the area of energy are advancing slowly" (EU Progress report for Albania, 2011).

Risks and threats

Threats for the energy security:

1. Political instability for producing countries and transit countries (Albania);
2. Manipulation of energy supply (in the context of the region and of a state);
3. The game against resource competition (price manipulation);
4. Growing elements of terrorism in the area;
5. Infrastructure protection issues (NATO, state forces, private companies)

Actually, a new NATO role is being defined (Ribaj, 2012:25). Such institution was established to maintain peace in Europe and the protection of the energy infrastructure is nowadays one of the main aspects of peace in EU and the whole region of Western Balkans.

CONCLUSION

There is a saying: “It is easy to think strategically, but it is difficult to act strategically”. It looks like the motto to be followed by Albanian policymakers who should leave aside the political rhetoric. It is necessary to recognize the European and global energy geopolitics. By having such approach, our policymakers would be able to know the regional context. This is not an easy enterprise. Getting to know the risks is crucial to success. Problems with legislation and protection of the pipelines should be solved. A detailed analysis of the energy geopolitics should really reflect the impact on the national geopolitics.

Therefore while preparing official documents the policymakers should have in mind the energy security. Inclusion of these concepts in the strategic documents of the Albanian state would make the country ready for such challenges and make it competitive with other actors. This is much related with good governance. However, modest players like Albania should be able to understand the “chess game of big players”.

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