# THE IMPACT OF CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPEAN COUNTRIES ON THE CHANGING ENERGY SECURITY CONCEPT OF THE EUROPEAN UNION

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**Abstract**
The paper analyzes the link between the eastern EU enlargement and the formulation of the EU's energy security concept. It starts with a description of the energy challenges in the European Union, and the set of policies which the EU devised to deal with them. Subsequently, it assesses different analytical concepts for the study of energy security, putting an emphasis on the concept of securitization. The next part of the article is devoted to one of the crucial issues in EU energy security – relations with Russia. Finally, the paper focuses on the influence of the eastern enlargement on EU-Russia relations and concludes with a recommendation concerning a common EU energy policy.

## INTRODUCTION

There can be no doubt that energy has become one of the most prominent political and security issues in the course of the previous couple of years. It might even be suggested that the risks stemming from the potential disruption of the production and distribution of the energy resources and energy itself have quietly surpassed, both in practical politics and in expert discourse, the threat of global terrorism which has remained in the focus of the international community ever since the September 2001 attacks on the United States. There are good reasons for this shift of attention: rising demand for energy fuelled by rapid economic growth of large countries in Asia (most notably China and India), problematic aspects of political development of major oil and gas producers (Iran, Russia, Venezuela), disruption caused by failing electric grid in developed countries of the Euro-Atlantic area, and the issue of climate change on which a firm political consensus seems to have been established.

Naturally, the European Union as one of the major economic (if not political) actors on the world stage have confronted the issue of energy security as well. Being overwhelmingly dependent on the import of energy resources, the EU has taken part in debates on the security of supply. This concern has been aggravated by the fact that oil and gas supplies come mostly from either unstable regions (Middle East) or unreliable countries (Algeria), or from players whose intentions come, at least from time to time, under suspicion (Russia looms large in this category). At the same time, the Union still graples with its unfinished business of creating a common energy market, aims at standing at the forefront of the fight against global warming and attempts to spark a new round of technological innovation which would push its energy industry into new direction. Economic, environmental and security concerns mingle and make it difficult both to propose and implement a clear-cut strategy, and to analyze what exactly are the motives and interests behind particular policy initiatives.

Moreover, in the case of the EU the debate on energy security has gained new momentum by the accession of Central and Eastern European Countries (CEECs) in 2004. By this act, the Union has incorporated into its structures states whose energy policy outlook is notably different from that of the 'old' members. This is most evident in relation to the issue of external supply, where the new members have to grapple with an overdependence on one source of oil and especially natural gas. A claim that the reliance of the CEECs on Russian pipelines brought Russia forcefully back into European security debates would not be too farfetched. Given the problematic and in some cases even hostile relations between some of the new members and Russia, the securitization of EU energy policy seems like a natural development.

In our analysis, we come from the presumption that the main influence of the new EU members on the Union's energy security concept is the growth of significance of relations with Russia. The question we try to answer is what exactly this growth means. Nevertheless, before turning to this particular issue, it is necessary to examine what we mean by energy security, and in more general terms energy policy of the European Union. Only then can we assess what role is played in the context of this policy by Russia and how the EU-Russia relations were influenced by the new member states.

Our analysis proceeds in four steps. First, we outline the general energy situation in Europe and the resulting set of policies the Union has devised to counter the challenges stemming from it. Second, we turn our attention to the problem of how an *energy policy* issue turns into an *energy security* problem and what conceptual frameworks we can adopt to understand this process. Third, we analyze in detail the development and current state of EU-Russia energy relations, with a particular focus on problematic aspects thereof. Finally, we present the position of the CEECs in the context of the energy situation in Europe, and how this position has influenced the debates on EU energy security concept.

## EU ENERGY POLICY: IS THERE SUCH A THING?

The basic figures concerning the situation of energy consumption, production and imports are well known. As Gawdat Bahgat notes, "Europe's energy mix is strongly dominated by fossil fuels. In 2005 oil constituted approximately 37 per cent of of the EU's energy consumption, natural gas 24 per cent, solid fuels 18 per cent, nuclear power 15 percent and renewables 6 percent." (BAHGAT 2006: 963) This is by no means an extraordinary situation in the global context where fossil fuels clearly dominate, given the lack of truly efficient renewable replacements, and also concerning ambivalent or outright hostile attitudes of domestic populations towards nuclear energy.

What is more important and relevant for the topic of energy security is how much of these resources EU member states are able to cover by their own production. Here the picture is rather bleak: "About half of the energy consumed in the EU is produced domestically, while the other half is imported (...) The EU members possess only approximately 0.6 per cent of the world's proven oil reserves and 2.0 per cent of proven natural gas reserves, and these limited reserves are largely concentrated in the North Sea. Norway, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom hold the bulk of Europe's proven natural gas resources."[1] (BAHGAT 2006: 963) Moreover, the natural gas reserves in the North Sea went through the peak production phase in the 1990s, and since then their output has fallen. The same holds true for the oil reserves. Logically, the "EU's dependence on foreign supplies is projected to grow from about 50 per cent in 2005 to approximately two thirds in 2030, by which time the EU is expected to import 94 per cent of its oil needs, 84 per cent of natural consumption and 59 per cent of solid fuel use. These projections point to an undeniable fact: that the EU energy security is fundamentally linked to the security of supply from the global fossil fuels market." (BAHGAT 2006: 964)

The challenge posed by this fact is further aggravated by the composition of EU oil and gas suppliers. From this point of view, the situation is slightly more balanced in the case of oil: Despite the fact that there are four big suppliers standing out (Russia with 30 %, Norway with 18 %, Saudi Arabia with 10 %, and Libya with 8 %), there is still 34 % of supplies covered from other sources which makes for at least some degree of healthy diversification. On the other hand, 95 % of the Union's natural gas consumption is covered by merely three suppliers, with Russia contributing overall 50 % to the equation (Algeria 23 %, Norway 22 %). (MONAGHAN, MONTANERO-JANKOVSKI 2006: 9) Considering the fact that the North Sea production has already peaked, the reliance of the EU on Russian and Algerian natural gas is certainly a cause for concern.

It would be too simplistic to identify the problems of EU energy security with its dependence on foreign oil and natural gas alone. As J rgen Henningsen points out, there are in fact several energy sectors in the EU. One is the transport sector which seems to be rather inflexible in its near-total dependence on one source – oil. According to Henningsen, in the other part of the energy industry focused on electricity production, domestic heating and industry, "natural gas, coal, nuclear, hydro and wind power are interchangeable to a great extent." (HENNINGSEN 2006: 8)

From another point of view, one might see another division in which oil and natural gas are largely tied to the system of transport pipelines (more in the case of nat-

1 Norway is not a member of the European Union, but as the member of the European Economic Area it is strongly integrated in the EU internal market.

ural gas, although the potential of the Liquefied Natural Gas – LNG – seems to offer some hope of making this resource partly pipeline-free) and also to the few foreign producers (which highlights the issue of the security of supply), while the rest of the spectrum (electricity from coal or nuclear fission and the renewable resources) is standing rather apart from the energy security debate.

The previous lines sought to demonstrate that discussing energy in the context of the EU is a far too complicated matter to be reduced just to the issue of the external security of supply. Though it might well be acknowledged that the European Union "does not have a common, effective energy strategy and policy" (MONAGHAN, MONTANERO-JANKOVSKI 2006: 7), there can be no doubt that the Union has pursued several initiatives across the whole spectrum of energy policy issues.

The fact that the EU does not have common, coordinated and efficient energy policy does not mean that it does not strive for one. The most recent developments are a case in point: In 2006 the European Commission presented a Green Paper called *A European strategy for sustainable, competitive and secure energy*, followed by a Commission communication from 2007 *An energy policy for Europe*. The document succinctly names three basic principles of such a policy, namely sustainability, security of supply and competitiveness. The principles unmistakably point to the EU's most pressing concerns: environmental effects of energy consumption (namely the threat of climate change), dependence on external sources of energy supplies, and the lack of proper internal market mechanisms in the energy sector. These are also mirrored in six principles which the document brings forward: competitiveness in internal energy market, diversification of energy mix, solidarity, sustainable development, innovation and technology, and external policy.

Consequently, we can identify four sectors where the EU has tried to take a common action: First, it is the internal energy market which importance stems right from the EU's economic cornerstone of free trading. Besides attempts to establish common rules for the market for natural gas and electricity, the EU has also been involved in the sector by its programme of Trans-European Networks (TEN), by creating rules for regulating public procurement and taxation, and by devising the greenhouse gas emissions allowance trading scheme.

Second, the EU has attempted to stimulate research and innovation in order to increased energy efficiency. A Green Paper released in 2005 is supplemented by *Action Plans for energy efficiency for 2000–2006* (and the currently operating plan for 2007–2012). Besides improving the conditions on the EU market, the goals of the strategy in this area are twofold: to reduce the level of import-dependency (import less by consuming less) and to contribute to the fight against climate change.

Third, the EU has strongly signalled its support for the research, development and implementation of renewable resources. The 2007 *Renewable energy road map*

proposes a mandatory target of 20 % energy consumption being covered by renewable resources by 2020.

Finally, with the looming threat of rapidly increasing dependence on external supplies, more and more focus has been devoted to the issue of external energy relations. Even before EU formally stated its external energy security goals in the 2000 Green Paper *Towards a European strategy for the security of energy supply* and the 2003 *European security strategy*, it had tried to promote a normative framework which would safeguard the interests of its members as well as of the producing countries. This effort, pursued already from the beginning of the 1990s, resulted in the signing and entering into legal force (1994 and 1998 respectively) of the *Energy Charter Treaty*. (BAHGAT 2006: 968) It presents a set of international rules for investment and trade in oil and gas sector, including a protocol on energy transit. It is, however, telling that Russia has so far refused to ratify the Treaty. (BARYSCH 2007a: 3) Besides the multilateral framework, the EU has also been active in promoting cooperative relations with resource-rich regions such as the Black See, the Caucasus, or the Persian Gulf (BAHGAT 2006: 968; BELYI 2003: 358).

## FROM ENERGY POLICY TO ENERGY SECURITY

There are numerous definitions of security and the same holds true for energy security. One of the experts of the studies of energy problems, Daniel Yergin, proposes to broaden the usual definition designating energy security as the "availability of sufficient supplies at affordable prices" to incorporate the diversification of supplies, resilience ("security margin"), recognition of the reality of integration, importance of information, and the influence of the globalization of the energy security system. (YERGIN 2006) Similarly, Gawdat Bahgat defines energy security in terms of sustainable and reliable supplies at reasonable prices, elimination of the risk of sudden and severe fluctuations, sufficient level of investment, spare capacity and diversification of supply. (BAHGAT 2006: 965–966) Other aspects can be included: in his 2004 appeal for the EU to establish a truly common energy policy, Nick Butler of the British Petroleum lists among the threats to energy security not only problems of supply, but also risks posed by the industry to the global climate. (BUTLER 2004) Similarly, we can distinguish different sectors of energy security, e.g. geopolitical, economic or normative. (BELYI 2003)

Another important question is how the security aspects of the energy policy relate to its non-security problems. Fran ois Heoisbourg has formulated the problem aptly in relation to the EU: "if energy is a strategic good, should a European Union energy policy be primarily about the liberalisation of the energy market?"

(EGENHOFER et al 2006: 1) In other words, what is and should be the relation between the market forces (whose positive impact on global economic growth is widely acknowledged), and the intervention of the state or organization thereof? Is it not the case that state intervention (particularly by the harshest – e.g. military – means) can rather destabilize the situation than ensure the energy security? Having neither an ambition nor enough space to deal with these questions, we merely point to studies which deal with them in detail (EGENHOFER et al 2004)

Nevertheless, the clash between market-based and state-centered approaches is highly relevant also in the context of external supply. For example, widely diverging views of Russian interests and motives in connection to oil and gas trading largely stem from different viewpoints, one regarding Russia primarily as a participant in mutually advantageous economic relations, the other as a political competitor interested in increasing its power.

Before we turn to the case of EU-Russia relations and the impact of Eastern enlargement on them, one more theoretical question needs to be posed. From the technical point of view there seems to be enough resources for upcoming decades. (EGENHOFER 2006) So how actually does energy policy, or a part of it like external supply of energy resources, turn into a security issue? Is it merely the case of sources, once plentiful, turning into a scarce commodity, thus transforming a non-zero sum economic competition to the zero-sum political struggle? Or shall we take other processes into account when trying to uncover the hype surrounding the energy security debate?

Andrei Belyi is an author of an interesting study in which he tries to analyze the concept of energy security against the theoretical background provided by the concept of securitization, formulated by the Copenhagen School of international relations. (BELYI 2003) He repeats its argument that security is not an objective factor, but rather a social construct resulting from particular discursive actions by relevant political players. Thus, a security threat only appears when it is created as such through the process of so called 'securitization'.

In our opinion, what the authors of the Copenhagen School have on mind is not that we should completely disregard the objective factors in our analysis of the energy security environment. Rather, we should acknowledge that in identical 'objective' conditions different reactions might appear, following the prevailing stream of political discourse. Hence, whether energy is or is not debated as a security issue does not stem from the external conditions only, but also from the willingness of political elites (and their electorates) to treat them as such. The relationship between the EU and Russia are a case in point.

## RUSSIA AND THE SECURITY OF SUPPLY: PARTNER OR THREAT?

By any measurement, Russia is one of the crucial players in the global energy market, and it is significantly more so for the EU. "Its discovered and projected reserves are considered to be among the largest on Earth, with its gas reserves estimated at approximately 47 trillion cubic metres (26 % of the world's total) and oil reserves estimated at in excess of 100 billion barrels. In addition, Western Siberia is the world's richest hydrocarbon area, and there are also potentially enormous reserves in other regions which have yet to be exploited or even fully explored, such as East Siberia, the Komi Republic, Nenets Autonomous Okrug and the Barents region." (MONAGHAN, MONTANERO-JANKOVSKI 2006: 18) In relation to the EU, Russia is especially important as a source of natural gas which it supplies to Europe through the Yamal-Europe and Blue Stream pipelines, with an additional pipeline (North Stream) projected through the Baltic Sea. In total, Russia alone nowadays supplies more than one quarter of European energy needs (BAHGAT 2006: 970)

The European Union is well aware of the clout Russia possesses as a result of its natural wealth, and, indeed "energy is a crucial element of the EU-Russia relationship." (MONAGHAN, MONTANERO-JANKOVSKI 2006: 24) A formal energy dialogue was launched between the EU and Russia in October 2000 on the basis of "increasing recognition of mutual dependency and complementary interests by Russia as a primary supplier to the EU market and the EU as the largest integrated energy market in the world." (FUJIWARA 2003: 2) The dialogue is located inside the normative and institutional structure of the EU-Russia Partnership and Cooperation Agreement, and is regarded as part of the effort to establish a Common European Economic Space. Put in less formal way, "the EU-Russia dialogue is based on a simple bargain – Europe's investment in return for Russia's oil and gas." (BAHGAT 2006: 969) As some authors have pointed out, the dialogue has not been proceeding smoothly, particularly because of Russia's unwillingness to cede even partial control of its energy companies (which it considers strategic assets) to foreign hands. (FUJIWARA 2003: 3)

On the other hand, as Monaghan and Montanero-Jankovski point out, there is an agreement among experts and EU officials alike that "Russia has never suggested curtailing its energy supplies to the Union, in particular to the EU-15." (MONAGHAN, MONTANERO-JANKOVSKI 2006: 10) They also point to the fact that Russian gas industry is effectively maintained by revenues from its exports to Europe. This condition is one of the crucial factors which challenge a producer-versus-customer understanding of EU-Russia relations.

There is a number of sources of problems between the two actors. First, we will mention a growing concern about Russia's actual ability to increase or even maintain the current level of production. As Monaghan and Montanero-Jankovski point out, "a number of experts and officials are predicting that Russian oil reserves will soon be depleted and that the country will not be able to develop its gas reserves." (MONAGHAN, MONTANERO-JANKOVSKI 2006: 18) According to a recent information published by *The Economist*, "the output of Gazprom's three super-giant wells, which account for three-quarters of the production, is declining at a rate of some 6–7 % a year." (*A bear at the throat* 2007) This is not only due to natural limitations but also a result of chronic underinvestment in developing the standing and exploring future fields.

This situation is closely interconnected with Russia's unwillingness to let in foreign investors, and its effort to push out those who have remained. Katinka Barysch mentions that the problematic concept of 'reciprocity' under which European companies will be granted investment opportunities in Russia while Gazprom gets access to distribution and sales businesses in the EU. According to her, "the trouble is that Europeans and Russians mean completely different things when they talk about reciprocity. The EU wants a mutually agreed legal framework to facilitate two-way investment. The Kremlin wants assets swaps. Europe wants openness, Russia wants control. For now, reciprocity is working in Russia's favour. Gazprom already has investment in 16, perhaps 20, of the 27 EU countries." (BARYSCH 2007b)

The logic behind this reasoning is naturally encouraged each time Russia makes a move which can easily be interpreted as politically motivated. Even authors less inclined to regard Russia as a trouble-maker have to acknowledge the huge negative impact of Russia's decision to turn off its supplies to Ukraine or Belarus, that affected a host of EU member states, including Austria, France, Germany, Hungary, Poland and Slovakia. (MONAGHAN, MONTANERO-JANKOVSKI 2006: 16) Even if Russian motives had been purely economic and just (to impose more reasonable prices and prevent thefts from the pipelines in the territory of the transit states), the action reinforced the image of Russia as a country willing to use the 'energy weapon'. Other Russian actions only add to this unfavourable view, e.g. the cut of supplies to the Latvian oil export terminal at Ventspils or similar move in relation to Lithuanian Mazeikiai refinery. (LARRABEE 2006) Russian state-owned companies have also tried to undermine EU plans to build new alternative routes of pipelines from the Caucasus and Central Asia, not to speak about Russian suggestions of forming a OPEC-like cartel which would control the production of natural gas. (*A bear at the throat* 2007)

When we sum up these events, it is easy to see why the notion of Russia as an energy security threat has taken hold in European energy security discourse.

Though not necessarily well understood, Russian behaviour provokes reactions which confirm the image of energy security as a zero-sum game in which Russia and the EU appear to be standing in juxtaposition. As Monaghan and Montanero-Jankovski note, "myth, perception and the political agenda have all played important roles in generating such fears." (MONAGHAN, MONTANERO-JANKOVSKI) It remains to be interpreted what role the new EU member states from Central and Eastern Europe play in this complicated relationship.

## NEW KIDS ON THE BLOC: THE ROLE OF EASTERN EUROPE IN EU ENERGY POLICY TOWARDS RUSSIA

With the accession of new member states from Central and Eastern Europe, the EU has absorbed countries with clearly cut security concerns and interests: All of them have become NATO members before the entry to the Union, and a majority of them expressed much stronger support for the U.S. than is usual among the 'old' member states. In the run up to the war in Iraq in 2003, this divide became clearly visible: "Whereas France and Germany opposed the war, the leaders of the Czech Republic, Hungary, and Poland, together with the leaders of Denmark, Italy, Portugal, Spain and the United Kingdom, openly supported the U.S. position." (LARRABEE 2006) The same holds true for the rest of the Eastern European countries.

But it would be too simplistic to portray the countries of Central and Eastern Europe as a homogenous bloc. According to their foreign policy behaviour, we can roughly divide the countries in two groups: one made up of Poland and the Baltic states, actively promoting the eastern orientation of EU foreign policy and closely adhering to the American position in global crises, the other one comprising the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary and Slovenia and behaving more like an EU mainstream. (KRÁL 2005) The former group also regards NATO in more traditional terms as primarily a security insurance against Russia, while the latter has rather conformed to the Alliance's post-1990 self-image as a regional (and perhaps global) security provider. The divisions are also evident in relation to Russia: "Other than Poland, the Central European countries tend to have relatively trouble-free relations with Moscow. Some, such as Bulgaria, Hungary and Slovakia, have recently been mimicking the bigger EU countries by forging closer bilateral ties with Russia."[2] (BARYSCH 2007c: 3) Larrabee points out a number of

2 It is, however, necessary to emphasize the influence of results of elections, as well as actual events on the foreign policy orientation of these countries, as the current controversy surrounding the U.S. plan to locate parts of its missile defence system in the Czech Republic and Poland demonstrates.

"special relationships" developed by the CEECs: Slovenia's to Hungary and Austria, Poland's to the United States, Lithuania's to Poland, or Estonia's to Finland. (LARRABEE 2006)

Unlike the 'old' EU countries, the new members are almost completely dependent on Russia. Slovakia which imports 97 % of oil and 98 % of natural gas from Russia (and depends on it for supplies of nuclear fuel as well) is an extreme case but the rest of the countries face fairly similar situation. (MONAGHAN, MONTANERO-JANKOVSKI) Eastern European countries are also directly affected by Russian companies' 'pipeline politics'. The Russian-German agreement to build a gas pipeline through the Baltic Sea means the new route will completely bypass Poland and leave this country in a strategically weakened position. It does not come as a surprise that Poland has become one of the most vocal defendants of a common EU energy policy, calling on the solidarity among the member states to counter the 'threat' posed by Russian behaviour. Hungary, on its part, has not decided for counterbalancing but rather bandwagoning when its Prime Minister agreed to the Russian proposal that the Blue Stream pipeline (running across the Black Sea) would be extended to Hungary. The offer was complemented by a promise by Gazprom to build a large gas-storage facility in the country which could become the hub for the whole Central Europe. (*A bear at the throat* 2007) This Hungarian decision means a serious blow to the EU common project which should follow approximately the same transport route.

What to make of these political steps? The states of Central and Eastern Europe have to grapple with a paradox made of historically motivated suspicion of Russian motives, and at the same time their almost complete dependency on Russian oil and gas. It is clear that Eastern Europe is not in a position to become a decisive factor in the debates on EU energy security. Even if the CEECs would present a united front, they would have to compete for their vision with countries which draw their attention to North Africa (France, Italy) or the North Sea (Great Britain, Scandinavian states), or whose relationship with Russia runs on a completely different track (Germany). But united they are not, as the case of Hungarian accord with Gazprom or Slovak and Bulgarian overtures with Moscow clearly indicate. Nevertheless, because Russia and its behaviour is a challenge for the rest of the EU, the CEECs may possess some leverage in influencing the EU energy security concept, for example by putting themselves in a position of 'experts' on the topic, or by using the calls for a common, joint European position from which they would presumably benefit most.

The situation seems to be clear enough: a common and cohesive EU energy policy (including policy towards Russia) would be a win-win situation for all of the participants. It would bring the EU enough political clout to negotiate with Russia

on equal terms, secure Russian access to European markets (including, most likely, opportunity to buy shares of distribution and sales companies) and calm the fears of the new members from Central and Eastern Europe. Once Russia (or, for that matter, Russian energy companies) is not able to play one EU member country against another (such as Poland against Germany in the case of the Baltic pipeline), the dependency on Russian oil and gas will stop to be regarded as a strategic threat.

If a common EU energy policy is not forged, we can expect more attempts of individual bandwagoning or counterbalancing in the (respectively) Hungarian or Polish fashion. The result will be short-term advantages for some EU countries, growing political influence of Russia, and in the long run sharp decline of stability in European energy markets and inevitable decline of EU solidarity.

## CONCLUSION

In assessing the EU security concept, one must realize that the EU energy policy is a complex of issues which encompass many different economic, environmental, technological, as well as political and security aspects. Security of external supply, which is most hotly debated in connection with the EU eastern enlargement, is one of the components in the whole spectrum. Nevertheless, it is an important part of it, and Russia stands out as the most prominent supplier of oil and natural gas for the Union. From this point of view, the connection between the enlargement and the formulation of the EU's energy security concept clearly exists, as the members' dependence on Russian resources is almost complete.

Beyond this factual link, the countries of Central and Eastern Europe have only a marginal influence on the formulation of the EU energy security strategy. They can nevertheless use the existing suspicions against Russian motives to support the framing of a truly common EU energy policy. If successfully established, such a policy would bring long-terms benefits to all parties concerned, including Russia.

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