

RUSSIAN ENERGY SOURCES AND THE EU SECURITY POLICY

Abstract: *It is impossible to plan EU security policy without ensuring energy security. Stable access to energy sources is the basis for creating economic policy. Considering the importance of the EU for the whole of Europe, it is impossible to ensure continental security without the EU energy security. The thesis that it is necessary to reduce imports and rely on one's own resources has been present in the EU projections for years. However, little has been done in this regard. Europe's security still depends on Russian energy, regardless of announcements of the EU officials that a different scenario is possible by 2027 or 2030.*

Keywords: *EU, Russia, NATO, USA, energy security.*

INTRODUCTION

Energy relations between Russia and European countries have a long tradition. At the end of the 1960s, the export of Soviet oil began, and in 1967 the Dolyna-Uzhhorod-Western border of the USSR gas pipeline was completed, which created the prerequisites for distribution to consumers in Central and then Western Europe. We should take into account the fact that part of today's EU members were either in the Soviet Union (Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania) or in the Eastern Bloc (Czech Republic, Slovakia, Poland, Hungary, Romania, Bulgaria, including East Germany) and therefore, they were practically integrated into a single huge system, within which they could first buy oil at lower prices (it was the way the USSR helped its allies), and then also implement the project of mass gasification of the economy and households. Hence the great dependence of all the mentioned countries on Russian energy sources. The connection with the oil wells in the east was planned with oil and gas pipelines that passed through the territories of Ukraine and Belarus. The collapse of the USSR accelerated the strengthening of energy ties between Russian producers and Western European consumers. On the one hand, in the long period of transition (during the 1990s) and then in the phase of *re-sovereignation* during the first two presidential terms of Vladimir Putin (2000-2008), the Russian economy relied on the energy sector, first for "filling the

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budget”, and then for the formation of an investment mass that will be used to start infrastructure projects and the economy. Excluding a few other economic branches, which were again connected with the exploitation of natural resources (such as, for example, coal mining in the Kuznetsk basin in the southeastern Siberia on an area of about 26,000 km²; production of nickel and copper, which predominantly refers to the city of Norilsk on Taimyr in the Arctic Circle; steel production in Magnitogorsk in the Chelyabinsk region, etc.), there were no other solutions for post-Soviet Russia. On the other hand, for Western European countries, Germany and Austria in the first place, as well as Italy to a large extent, and to some extent France, it was important to have a stable distributor in their immediate neighborhood, who would deliver cheap crude oil and natural gas, in the agreed quantities and respecting the delivery dates. In the post-Cold War world, European countries, and Germany in the first place, as the “economic engine” of the Old Continent, saw two benefits from this cooperation. First, as far as the import of crude oil is concerned, they became less dependent on American acquisitions and their distributors (either those from the Middle East, or those from the USA and Canada). In perspective, this meant greater independence in projecting economic dynamics, and thus also in the process of making political decisions. Second, the binding of European industry to cheap and ecologically clean natural gas as a key energy source increased the competitiveness of the European economy on a global scale.



Map no. 1: Gas pipelines connecting Russia and the EU via Ukraine and Belarus

1. ENERGY SECURITY OF EUROPE AND RUSSIA

Mutual interest eventually led to the need of building a new main pipeline, which manifested in the development of ideas about the North Stream, and then the South Stream (Smith 2011). In addition, natural gas is distributed through the Progress and Soyuz pipelines, which include as many as 22 regional gas pipelines with 72 compressor stations, horizontally east-west (border with Russia-border with Slovakia and Hungary) and through the Yamal gas pipeline (Yamal is stretching through the territory of Belarus, from Russia to Poland, but is connected with the northwestern branch of the Ukrainian gas pipelines), while crude oil is transported by the Druzhba pipeline (Pirani 2007, 17-18).

Thus, Russia became the EU's main supplier of crude oil and natural gas, as well as of solid fossil fuels used for the production of electricity in thermal power plants (located in the Kuzbass). Not even the continuous deterioration of political relations, which occurred after the escalation of the Ukrainian crisis in 2014, could have disrupted this. "In 2020, almost three-quarters of crude oil imports outside the EU came from Russia (29%), the USA (9%), Norway (8%), Saudi Arabia (7%) and Great Britain (7%), as well as Kazakhstan (6%) and Nigeria (6%). A similar analysis shows that more than three-quarters of natural gas imports into the EU came from Russia (43%), Norway (21%), Algeria (8%) and Qatar (5%), while most of the coal imports came from Russia (54%), followed by the USA (16%) and Australia (14%)" (Eurostat April 2020). Otherwise, in the structure of energy imports into the EU, about two thirds are oil and oil derivatives, 27% natural gas and 5% solid fossil fuels.

Despite the widespread promotion of the *Green Agenda* and political aspirations to "free Europe from fossil fuels", not much has changed in the first two decades of the 21st century. "The dependence rate shows the extent to which the economy relies on imports to meet its energy needs. It is measured by the share of net imports (imports-exports) in gross internal energy consumption (which means the sum of produced energy and net imports). In the EU in 2020, the dependency rate was equal to 58%, which means that more than half of the EU's energy needs were met by net imports. This rate is lower compared to 2019 (60%),

which is partly related to the economic crisis of *Covid-19*, but is still slightly higher compared to 2000 (56%). In the member states, the rate of dependence on imports ranges from over 90% in Malta, Cyprus and Luxembourg to 10% in Estonia. In 2020, the EU was mainly dependent on Russia for the import of crude oil, natural gas and solid fossil fuels, followed by Norway for crude oil and natural gas” (Eurostat April 2020).

Looking at the crude oil market alone, “European dependence increased from 76% in 2000 to over 88% in 2014. The EU spends around 215 billion euros on oil imports, over 5 times more than on gas imports (40 billion euros). Russia is the largest supplier: dependence on Russia increased from 22% in 2001 to 30% in 2015” (Buffet 2016). Among the ten largest individual companies that export oil and oil derivatives to the EU, there are as many as three Russian companies, among them the first two places are occupied by Rosneft (20%) and Lukoil (12.5%), while Gazpromneft is in the ninth place (close to 5%). When it comes to importing natural gas, Finland imports from Russia as much as 94% of its total needs, Bulgaria 77%, Slovakia 70%, but what is a particularly sensitive issue is that the three largest “continental economies” import significant contingents - Germany 49%, Italy 46% and France 24% (it should also be added that Poland, as the fifth most populous member of the EU and a country important for regional security, imports about 40%). (Buchholz 2022).

The topic of Europe's energy security is inextricably linked to the issue of energy distribution from Russia. Since February 2022 and the beginning of the war in Ukraine (in Western countries this event is labeled as “aggression” or “invasion” of Russia on Ukraine, and in Russia as a “special military operation”), attempts to reduce the dependence of European consumers on Russian producers have been noticeable. In this context, the EU adopted as many as seven packages of sanctions against Russia, of which the fifth package is specifically oriented towards the energy sector (it refers to the complete stop of purchase of solid fossil fuels from Russia, as well as crude oil, excluding the contingent distributed by oil pipelines). With that, they want to ensure the energy and overall security of the EU (as well as the whole of Europe) without relying on Russia. To what extent is it possible to project the security of Europe without Russian energy sources?

2. EU SECURITY POLICY

All seven packages of sanctions (agreed on until August 2022, when this article was written; it does not rule out that there will be more in the following period) against Russia were formulated within the Common Foreign and Security Policy of the EU. “The European Commission uses the Common Foreign and Security Policy budget to respond in a rapid and flexible manner to external conflicts and crises, to build the capacity of partner countries and to protect the EU and its citizens” (European Commission 2022).

Looking from the point of view of the declared principles, the EU therefore wanted to use sanctions to force Russia to take a different position in the Ukrainian crisis (stopping armed actions, disrupting the economic situation in Russia, which would put pressure on the leadership in Moscow, causing social and political protests in Russia, etc.), thus achieving a certain political advantage and improving its political and negotiating position. How realistic such assessments were and what their consequences are is a completely different matter. For this research, it is important to ask the question: where did the idea come from within the EU to undertake something like this in the energy sector? Because, as stated in the introductory part, not only in previous years, but in previous decades, absolutely nothing indicated that such a sudden turn could occur. The energy security of the member states (therefore also the economic security), and it should be repeated that we are firstly thinking of Germany, and to a certain extent Italy and France, is designed on cooperation with Russia and the accessibility of cheap natural gas. It became the basis for increasing the competitiveness of the EU economy in the global economy, ensured continuous economic growth, low unemployment, high wages and political stability. Almost nothing was done to change that, on the contrary – the connection with Russia was strengthened and deepened, a classic example being the construction of two lines of the Nord Stream gas pipeline (See more in: Turksen 2020).

In truth, the EU has declared greater energy independence as a political goal through a series of documents. The focus is on the *Green Agenda* and renewable energy. However, little has been done in this regard (the question is how much could be learned in a short period of time), and dependence on imports remained high. The insistence on constantly repeating the thesis of energy independence in the European Common Foreign and Security Policy came from the other side. It is impossible to see the security policy of the EU without NATO. And when it comes to NATO, there is a completely different view on Russian energy sources within this organization. The fact that Russian energy resources in Europe are a problem for NATO becomes obvious in the *NATO 2020 Strategic Concept*, whose design began in 2009 (it was adopted a year later) (NATO 2010).

The new solutions defined in the *NATO 2020 Strategic Concept* (the expert team for writing the document was led by Madeleine Albright) partly state the fact that the previous Washington Strategy did not bring the expected result, since instead of promoting human rights and democratic values, the dominant themes became firstly energy security, and then the reliability and protection of information systems, environmental problems and curbing demographic growth. Changes in the field of finance and economic activity represented special problems as well. The West is still the most economically important part of the world, but nowhere near the dominant position it had mid-1990s.

The *NATO 2020 Strategic Concept* also raised the issue of NATO-EU relations. Within the EU, instead of the previous category of Common Security and Defense Policy, the Lisbon Treaty of 2007 clearly foresees the “possibility of creating a common European defense” (European Commission 2007), and what exactly this may mean in the future remains open. The authors of the proposal for the new NATO strategic concept therefore warned that no room for double interpretations should be left and that “the Lisbon Agreement must serve the purpose of further strengthening NATO” (NATO 2010). In order to ensure tighter integration and prevent the creation of new problems, a number of internal structural changes are proposed. Acceptance of the mentioned measures would mean that NATO member states would give up another portion of their own

competences in favor of common (super)organs of the alliance and strengthening the influence of the US, which has undisputed dominance in common bodies. (NATO 2010)

That is why, on the one hand, the *NATO 2020 strategy* directly binds Article 4 and Article 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty. Article 4 talks about cooperation and coordination, and Article 5 about the principle of “all for one-one for all”, whereby all members of the Alliance are obliged to defend an attacked ally (NATO 1949, Art. 4, 5). By placing these two articles in direct dependence, the USA warned the other members that if they want protection, they must cooperate more. Cooperation implies that they would not look favorably if there would be a repetition of the situations from 2003 during the attack on Iraq or the Russian-Georgian war in 2008 when NATO couldn't take a unified position. Hence, in spite of the moderate opposition of some members and the fierce criticism of the opposition in Germany and France, the unquestionable following of the USA regarding its stance towards Russia since the escalation of the Ukrainian crisis remained until today. The European members of NATO have agreed to this kind of relationship, they have committed themselves to simply go beyond certain goals established by the Lisbon Treaty and act against Russia even when it causes direct damage to the EU (for example, the introduction of sanctions that caused a dramatic drop in exports of agricultural products from the EU to Russia) in order to protect their own security and their relations with the USA (See more in: Smith 2010)

The reasons for such an aggressive performance should not be sought only in the consolidation of Russia's position since 2008, but also in the long-term projected initiatives on the energy connection of Russia and the EU. The *NATO 2020 Strategic Concept* opens the issue of energy security of European members and sets it as one of the priorities.

At that moment (the observed period is 2006-2009), 180 billion cubic meters of gas were delivered from Russia to other European countries through the already existing gas pipelines, plus another 9 billion cubic meters that Russia delivered to Finland through the joint Russian-Finnish gas pipeline. It is planned that another 16 billion cubic meters should be delivered from Russia to Turkey via the Blue

Stream gas pipeline, with a planned growth of up to 32 billion by 2030, as well as around 30 billion cubic meters per year through Germany to Western Europe via the North Stream gas pipeline, with growth up to 55 billion until 2030; moreover, up to 30 billion cubic meters of gas are delivered annually to Southern and Central Europe via the two branches of the South Stream, which would bifurcate in Bulgaria (Bariš 2009, 13-14, 93-95).

Placing the issue of energy security of European members high on the list of priorities is motivated by attempts to prevent the strategic linking of Russia and the EU.

3. ATTEMPT OF “ENERGY SEPARATION” OF THE EU FROM RUSSIA – ALTERNATIVES AND PERSPECTIVES

The proposals of the USA to make NATO the guarantor of European security in a new way and the obligation of European members to participate in it are linked to the assessment that, with less dependence on the American energy distributors, the key countries of continental Europe (Germany, France, Italy) were becoming more independent in the process of adopting political decisions. NATO still existed as a defense alliance, but the EU increasingly acted economically and politically as it suited it. The diplomatic conflict with the US over the intervention in Iraq in 2003 caused concerns in Washington, because it was the first signal that Western Europe would not follow the US always and everywhere in the way it did before (FR Yugoslavia, Afghanistan).

One of the ways of the new subjugation of Europe was to make it dependent on energy imports from American distributors or their allies, as it was done during the Cold War period. While, on the one hand, the “Russian energy products” were declared the enemy’s “geopolitical weapon”, on the other hand, alternative ways of supplying the European market with crude oil and natural gas were devised. It is, in fact, a response to the *Russian Energy Strategy until 2020*, which was adopted in 2003 (Bushuev & Troitskii 2007, 1-7). Even then, the USA recognized what they half a decade later called the “malignant Russian influence”, which being

spread through Europe through strategic pipelines. Next to the USA, Russia is by far the largest producer of gas, the country with the largest confirmed gas reserves, the largest producer of crude oil along with Saudi Arabia, and with all that, the largest military nuclear power in the world. It was a challenge to US national security, and it was classified as such in a large number of official documents adopted since 2005.

President Donald Trump declared the following in June 2017: “Our goal is energy dominance”. It goes without saying, on a global scale. But what was completely openly and unequivocally announced by President Trump, was actually prepared for a long time within American institutions (Proroković 2019, 114-134).

The change in the American approach was visible immediately after the election of George W. Bush as president in 2000. In parallel with the initiation of the Second Gulf War and the intervention against Iraq, the US tried to influence the global energy market by controlling the “sources” and initiating the construction of strategic pipelines. It primarily concerned connecting European consumers and Middle Eastern producers. The transition from oil as the most sought-after energy source to the natural gas as “cleaner” and more available in the future, was already underway.



Map. no. 2: Planned route of the Nabucco gas pipeline²⁹⁾

²⁹⁾ Taken from the following internet page: <http://www.nabucco-pipeline.com>.

Estimates are that oil consumption at the global level will increase, while reserves will decrease (Đukić 2009). West European countries, which import about 70% of this energy source, are particularly interested in gas as end-users. Depending on which energy source is observed – crude oil or natural gas, the approach to defining energy security goals also differs. The largest crude oil reserves are located in the Middle East (Venezuela and Saudi Arabia have the largest confirmed reserves individually), but there are also significant sources in the wider Caspian Lake region and in Russia, while the largest natural gas reserves are located in Russia (confirmed reserves of 47 trillion cubic meters) and Iran (28.5 trillion cubic meters). For this reason, the US is increasingly beginning to view Russia and Iran as “challengers” in the world politics.

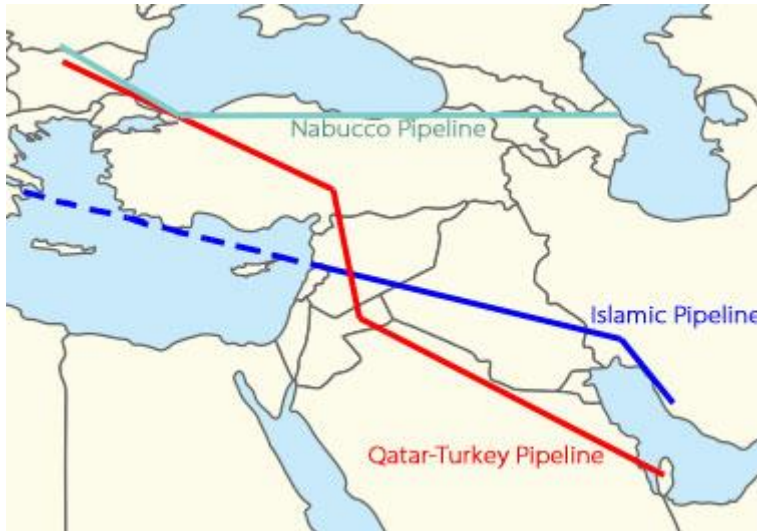
Hence the launch of the ‘Nabucco megaproject’ (NABUCCO pipeline). This strategic pipeline would, as planned, “start in Azerbaijan and deliver gas to the rest of Europe via Georgia, Turkey, Bulgaria and Romania. The length of the gas pipeline should be 3,893 kilometers, and the capacity should be 31 billion cubic meters. Although it was noisily announced, the realization of ‘Nabucco’ did not begin at all. In July 2013, it was announced that the main planned supplier - Azerbaijan, was withdrawing, and before that, German investors also withdrew from the project. So, instead of ‘Nabucco’, a talk started about the ‘Trans-Adriatic Pipeline’, which would transport gas from the Shah-Deniz field in Azerbaijan to southern Europe. The ‘Trans-Adriatic gas pipeline’ would stretch 870 kilometers from the Greek-Turkish border in the northeast, through northern Greece and southern Albania, then along the bottom of the Adriatic Sea to southern Italy. It would be connected to the ‘Trans-Anatolian Pipeline’ on the Greek-Turkish border, which should be completed by 2018, and initially it will bring about 16 billion cubic meters of gas per year to the ‘Trans-Adriatic Gas Pipeline’. However, in the case of the ‘Trans Adriatic Pipeline’ the same question arises as in the case of ‘Nabucco’, because there is a constant concern whether the gas from Azerbaijan

is an adequate alternative to the main reserves from Russia (which is part of the EU's efforts towards a larger energy transition) that is - whether the volumes from Azerbaijan are sufficient on their own” (Proroković & Perović 2013, 124-125).

Without relying on sources in Iran or Qatar, the ‘Nabucco’ gas pipeline could not have been realized, and therefore the *Bush Doctrine* was paralyzed. However, there were two other plans considered for Iran and Qatar: 1) Gas pipeline Turkey - Qatar; 2) Islamic gas pipeline. (Map no. 3). Due to political instability and security challenges, neither of these two plans was further developed.

The originally considered route through Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and Iraq was difficult to imagine because of the problems in Iraq, i.e., the position of the (Iraqi) Kurdistan, while the second one, through Saudi Arabia, Jordan and Syria, remained only in the plans because the Syrian authorities resolutely refused to participate in that project (with the support of Russia and Iran) (Carlisle 2009). One of the reasons for the start of the civil war in Syria should be found in this.

Although the USA insisted at the NATO Summit in Bucharest in 2008 that in the final document the issue of energy security of European countries should be one of the priorities, and “displacing Russian energy influence” one of the most important tasks, by paralyzing the *Bush doctrine*, little could have been done at that moment (NATO 2008). Contrary to the insistence of the USA, Russia has already extensively planned the construction of two natural gas corridors – North Stream and South Stream, so Europe’s dependence on Russian gas would become even greater. In any case, partly because of the failure of the *Bush doctrine*, and certainly because of the American intervention in the Middle East, the price of oil and gas started to skyrocket. By 2003, the price of a barrel of crude oil hovered around \$30, then by 2005 it had risen to \$50, before exploding to an all-time high in August 2008 of \$147.30. From 2008-2014, the price of oil ranged from 70-120 USD. For the US, it was, and it is problematic for two reasons.



Map. no. 3: Planned routes of the Qatar – Turkey Pipeline and Islamic Pipeline

First, in numerous analyses, the increase in energy prices is directly linked to the global recession (Kliesen 2001). Since the USA accounts for about 22-23% of the world GDP, such disruptions are a primary threat for them. That's why the USA had to increase production, become less dependent or completely independent from the OPEC countries and Russia. The USA wants to be dominant in creating prices on the world market, and it will be able to do so not only by increasing or reducing demand, but also by increasing the supply. Secondly, among the oil and gas producers, there are also countries with which the US does not have good relations or which it anticipates as global or regional challengers to its interests. This primarily refers to Russia, Iran, Venezuela, Algeria, Syria, Sudan, but also China, which is the largest importer, but at the same time the sixth largest producer of oil in the world, and Brazil, which is in tenth place. The higher price of oil and gas stabilized the political and economic conditions in these countries, but also enabled them, due to the budget surpluses that occurred, to increase their military power, investing in the military-industrial complex or buying new weapons and equipment.

All the attempts of the US to achieve “energy dominance” failed until 2014, even produced counter-effects as the rise in energy prices on the global market caused the Great Economic Crisis (began in 2008-2009, but its consequences began to become more visible in the second decade of the 21st century), which harmed the “collective West” the most, and contributed to the consolidation of budget revenues of challengers in the international arena, among which Russia profited the most. Since the desired reorientation of European consumers from Russia to producers in the Middle East (Iraq, Qatar, Azerbaijan, Saudi Arabia) did not occur, it was not possible to organize an alternative sustainable supply chain. NATO’s strategic conception defined one thing, but in practice, something else took place.

The new project of “separating Europe from Russia” was therefore initiated during the second term of Barack Obama, and later continued by Donald Trump, this time by devising the concept of liquid petroleum gas supply. In order to reduce dependence on Russian gas, a new strategic project was presented at the summit in Warsaw back in 2016 – connecting the terminal for liquefied petroleum gas on Krk, which has yet to be built, with the existing terminal in Swinoujście, Poland. Vertically north-south, from the Baltic Sea to the Adriatic Sea, Central-Eastern Europe would be networked in a new way (Proroković 2018, 57-58). This project is still being insisted on, and it experienced a kind of renaissance after February 2022. Since then, the policy of reducing energy dependence on Russia has been concretized, manifested in a completely different way than before. The EU accepted everything that was considered and adopted within NATO, and thus liquefied petroleum gas was declared a valid alternative.

Ursula von der Leyen, the president of the European Commission, is in favor of ending the purchase of Russian energy products in the next five years, and announced a plan (which will be harmonized with the measures that will be adopted in the meantime, including the sixth package of sanctions) according to

which crude oil and natural gas from Russia were to be phased out by 2027. The proposal of the European Commission is less optimistic and foresees the fulfillment of this goal by 2030.

However, three open questions arise regarding this. The first and most logical is – where will the EU buy energy sources (due to the relatively smaller share of coal in the EU’s energy balance, as well as for the fact that the members still have reserves that they have not used, this resource can still be replaced)? This question is raised both in the short and medium term (it is necessary to ensure the import of crude oil and natural gas until 2027 or 2030, but an issue should be raised as well regarding how can this matter be solved after that time-frame). Energy sources are bought with long-term contracts, and growing Asian economies (China and India in the first place) have already reserved significant quantities for the next period with the producers in the Middle East and Africa. Similar thoughts have been existent in the EU for the last two decades, and were especially intensified after 2014 and the deterioration of political relations with Russia, but the figures shown show that an alternative to imports from Russia has simply not been found. In political speeches and journalistic analyses, the import (and production) of liquefied petroleum gas (from the USA and Qatar) is mentioned as an alternative solution, but these announcements are not accompanied by elaborations on the feasibility of the necessary quantities and possible prices (therefore the profitability of the project).

One cannot talk about implementation of the *Green Agenda* with a drastic increase in the production of liquefied petroleum gas in the USA (and potentially - European countries), bearing in mind the methods of production that devastate the environment (fracking technology).

Another issue is the price of the energy that will be procured in this way. The new calculation implies abandoning the distribution of resources by pipelines and

the use of tankers and new installations that will be built (large investments are necessary, and such a method of distribution always costs more). At the same time, if the purchase of Russian energy products is abandoned by a political decision, the participation of the largest suppliers in the market until now is also prevented, thus raising the price to a completely new level (for example, China will now “compete” for oil from the Middle East in the market competition with India, the USA, EU and other smaller countries, which will make the resource more expensive, because higher demand means higher prices). Again, unlike China and India, as well as a whole series of other actors from the non-Western part of the world who will buy Russian energy products and thus will not give up the market mechanism for lowering the price, the EU will no longer have that exclusivity, which can have a very negative impact on the competitiveness of the European economy.

The third question is related to Russia's reactions and countermeasures. Just as the US and the EU are waging a hybrid war against Russia, Russia is also waging a hybrid war against the US and the EU. One of the unconventional means used in this conflict are the energy sources. On the one hand, with the outbreak of the armed conflict in Ukraine, and the deterioration of relations between the West and Russia, the prices of energy products began to rise (natural gas rose in price many times, reaching historical highs). In addition, political messages from Moscow are constantly being manipulated, indicating that the goal is to keep crude oil and natural gas prices high.

Also, the decision to “rubleize” trade relations shows that Russia is starting the process of de-dollarization of the world economy, as a result of which currency parities will be determined in the future quite differently than before (in addition to higher gas prices, the problem for the EU is that, in the short, the euro has weakened against the ruble, so its purchasing power for purchasing Russian energy

products is lower). The EU's strong reactions and announcements about giving up Russian energy supplies would make sense if the attempt to politically isolate Russia and break (or at least complicate) its existing relations with non-Western actors had succeeded. In this way, the EU has entered a hybrid war, and it seems that the consequences of the Russian response and the use of energy sources as an unconventional means have been badly assessed.

Because of everything, the current confrontation not only announces, but is also already leaving behind very dramatic outcomes for which the EU is not prepared at all, nor does it show that it has an adequate response.

4. RUSSIA'S COUNTERMEASURES: THE STRATEGY OF LEAVING EUROPE WITHOUT AN ALTERNATIVE

In addition to everything, when observing Russia's countermeasures, it is also noticeable that both foreign and especially security policy are often projected on the basis of energy policy. Much of the Russian setup is similar or identical to the American setup. Put simply – the US wants to use NATO to force the EU to stop buying Russian energy products. Russia's answer is to make NATO completely dysfunctional by stretching the US on several fronts and threatening Europe's energy security. In support of this conclusion, it is necessary to look at the network of alliances and the outbreak of certain armed conflicts in the previous years. Certainly, the outbreak of armed conflicts and the escalation of crises are influenced by a large number of factors. With this analysis, we only want to warn that energy security and energy policy are one of them; it is by no means prejudiced that these are the exclusive or the most important factors.



Map no. 4: Baku – Ceyhan Gas Pipeline and Baku – Supsa Oil Pipeline

The Russian intervention in Georgia in 2008 enabled the essential surveillance over the Baku-Ceyhan gas pipeline, which was supposed to serve as the primary direction for the construction of the ‘Nabucco’ pipeline (and later for TAP) and the Baku-Supsa oil pipeline (Map no. 4). Support for Bashar Al Assad and direct involvement in the Syrian war prevented the overthrow of the regime in Damascus, the establishment of a new, pro-American (or pro-Western) one, and the design of the Qatar-Turkey gas pipeline. Open support for Marshal Khalifa Belqasim Haftar in the Libyan civil war prevented the victory of the so-called GNA – Government of National Accord, in the creation of which the USA invested. The strengthening of foreign political ties with Egypt, Palestine and Algeria had the effect of making long-term energy security planning of the EU impossible by relying on the Trans-Saharan (Map no. 5) and Eastern Mediterranean (Map no. 6) gas pipelines. The story surrounding both of these projects is complex. In the case of the trans-Saharan connection, it is open to question how it is possible to secure such a long line, bearing in mind the unstable environment and the large number of terrorist or paramilitary formations with opposing political goals in that part of the world. The Russian companies Rosneft, Gazprom and Sroytransgaz are present in Algeria, and since 2010, they have been building new energy capacities and exploring potential deposits of fossil fuels.



Map no. 5: Planned route of the Trans-Saharan pipeline

When it comes to the EastMed project, there is a problem in the demarcation, i.e., conflicting claims of interested parties where their exclusive economic zones are (Egypt, Israel, Turkey, Greece, Jordan, plus Palestine and Cyprus, where there is a territorial problem because of the unrecognized Republic of North Cyprus). It is interesting to look at the historical shift in Russian-Turkish relations from this context, as well as the establishment of the trilateral framework Russia-Turkey-Iran. Turkey is becoming an important distribution hub for the Russian gas (Balkan Stream, whose capacity can be increased in the future by building new lines), but it is also a potential hub for other gas pipelines. As long as Turkey has the capacity to block (together with Egypt and Palestine) the realization of the EastMed gas pipeline, there is no alternative to Russian gas for the EU from this strategic direction.

Finally, there is the escalation of the Ukrainian crisis, which effectively put the EU in an impossible position. By renouncing the Russian energy sources, the EU economy becomes uncompetitive on the global market, which creates social and political tensions with unforeseeable consequences within EU member states. The optimism of Ursula von der Leyen or the European Commission regarding the cessation of purchases of Russian energy products in 2027 or 2030 is one thing, but the reality is quite different. If the trend of buying expensive energy sources (and not a little more expensive, but many times more expensive) continues until 2030, if it lasts eight years continuously, it can completely reshape the European political reality under the pressure of economic hardships and social protests.



Map no. 6: Planned route of the EastMed gas pipeline

Therefore, Russia responded decisively to the USA and, since 2008, has challenged all of its acquisitions in the Caucasus (it was planned for Georgia to join NATO and its stronger presence in Afghanistan), the Middle East (essentially, the development of the situation in Syria represents a defeat for the USA) and North Africa (via Libya, Egypt and Algeria), thus preventing the implementation

of the NATO 2020 Strategic Concept and leaving Europe without alternative supply routes when it comes to natural gas. Also, by establishing completely new relations with Turkey, it resulted in Turkey not following the policy of its Western allies at all since the beginning of the war in Ukraine, and by acting together with Iran, it made Europe aware that an alternative from Iran and its second largest “reservoir” of natural gas in the world, which was difficult to implement anyway (due to the opposition of the USA), no longer exists.

CONCLUSION

It is impossible to plan the EU security policy without ensuring energy security. Stable access to energy sources is the basis for creating economic policy. Considering the importance of the EU for the entire Europe, it is impossible to ensure continental security without the EU’s energy security. The thesis that it is necessary to reduce imports and rely on one’s own resources has been present in the EU projections for years. However, little has been done in this regard. Ever since the end of the 1960s, the connections with the Russian (Soviet) energy sector have had the effect that, over the decades, the dependence of European consumers on Russian producers has become greater. Only since 2010, and thanks to the USA, which used NATO, did the creation of new strategies begin to reduce the EU’s dependence on Russian energy sources.

However, with its political actions and military interventions, Russia prevented these strategies from being implemented. Europe’s security still depends on Russian energy, and little can change in that respect, regardless the announcements by EU officials that a different scenario is possible by 2027 or 2030. Even contrary to those claims, following current trends and the high degree of success of the Russian political action and military interventions, it should not be ruled out that new crises or new wars will follow, if by continuing the current US strategy (using NATO) some new scenarios of “energy separation” of the EU from Russia are attempted. Viewed from that angle, the escalation of the Ukrainian crisis may not be the last of such nature in Europe.

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