

**A CONSTRUCTIVIST APPROACH TO THE
SECURITY OF THE EUROPEAN NATURAL GAS
SUPPLY
THE BLACK SEA REGION AND ITS GEOPOLITICAL
SIGNIFICANCE**

By
Poiană Oana-Ancuța

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Supervisor: Professor Péter Balázs

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ABSTRACT

All major projects at the European level in the field of energy tend to lead back to Russia and three years after the first Ukraine gas shut-off in 2006, European countries faced another gas trade interruption, which seemed to accelerate the development of several alternatives policies and projects meant to diminish the hegemonic position of Russia. In the light of these recent events and by virtue of its strategic location, the Black Sea Region has gained unprecedented importance as a transit region of gas from the Middle East and the Caspian Sea area to the European market. Utilizing a constructivist approach this study will argue that Russian energy threats construct a Black Sea Region identity that encourages the energy trade cooperation in the region and lays the foundation of a future Common European Energy Policy.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

WBSR- Wider Black Sea Region

BSS- Black Sea Synergy

BSEC- Black Sea Economic Cooperation

BTC- Baku-Tbilisi- Ceyhan pipeline

IEA-International Energy Agency

INTRODUCTION

The energy security issue has represented an important topic since the Second World War and evolved as a dominant concern mainly for the European countries which are facing now an overdependence on Russian energy supplies. According to the International Energy Agency, the European energetic demands will increase from 50% to 70% until 2030, and the European Union dependency will reach 90% on imported oil and 70% on imported gas.

¹Although the European Union has made numerous efforts to avoid the deterioration of its relations with Russia, the recent gas dispute between Russia and Ukraine related to the energy security issue and more specifically to the security of natural gas supply, has intensified the tensions between the two.

In the light of these recent events, diversification of supply has become an important priority of the European Union, consequently by virtue of its strategic location; the Black Sea Region has gained unprecedented importance as a transit region of gas from the Middle East and the Caspian Sea area to the European market. As it has been frequently underlined by many authors, the new European energy era is characterized by an ongoing economically and politically motivated pipeline race. The worsening geo-political environment for the European Energy Security and the numerous competing gas pipeline projects in the Black Sea Region brought into attention the energy security dimension of the region that until recently represented only a secondary aspect of the European interest.

Although there have been many studies that analyzed the European Union's interests in the Black Sea Region, relatively little attention has been devoted to the impact of the Russian energy threats on the process of Black Sea regional identity creation . Therefore, this

¹ International Energy Agency statistics : <http://data.iea.org/ieastore/statslisting.asp>

study will fill a theoretical gap in the existing literature by analyzing the role of the Russian energy threats in constructing a Black Sea Region identity that will encourage the energy trade cooperation in the region and will set the bases for a future Common European Energy Policy. In order to test the hypothesis put forth by this study, we will utilize a constructivist approach that will emphasize the way the Black Sea Region was shaped by the new interactions related to the energy security dimension.

The topic of this study represents for the moment, one of the most debated subjects in the energy security field. Therefore, the data that has been included refers to the evolution of the most recent events related to energy security.

The paper can be considered as an interpretative, theory-based case study which utilizes mainly qualitative methods and second data sources. It is important to mention that this study is not intended to give recommendation regarding the best European energy strategy that should be implemented in the Black Sea Region but it contains an element of prediction, since it starts from an assumption which claims that a Common European Energy Policy can be built on a successful Black Sea Region energy cooperation. Its purpose is to develop theoretical founded criteria that would attempt to asses the probability of a future Common European Energy Policy implementation.

The structure of the study reflects the logical steps of the research which starts with a general analysis of the European energy security context and is gradually narrowed by focusing on the increased geotrategical significance of the Black Sea Region. Finally, it emphasizes the necessity to create a Black Sea regional identity as the prerequisite of a Common European Energy Policy and it argues that Therefore, the first chapter of the paper introduces the topic in the broader context of the current European Energy Security with a special emphasis on the European Natural Gas Supply Security and clarifies the complex concept of energy security. The second chapter of the study lays the foundation for an

empirical analysis stressing the geo-political significance of the Black Sea Region which emerged as an important actor particularly after the repeated European Energy Security threats coming from Russia. This chapter also looks at the main European Foreign Policy actions pursued in the Black Sea Region and will discuss the overall areas of interest that determined the European Union to develop a coherent strategy towards this region. The second part of this chapter will briefly evaluate the different positions of Black Sea countries toward Russia taking into consideration especially the energy sector. The last chapter uses a social constructivist approach in order to analyze the way the Black Sea Region was shaped by the new interactions related to the energy security dimension and evaluates whether the European Union can utilize the shared Russian energy security threat as an instrument to promote a new Black Sea Region identity based on regional energy trade cooperation. The study concludes by stressing the need for a new coherent and unitary European strategy toward this region which would enhance energy trade cooperation. This strategy should take the opportunity constructed by the current energy security context which increases the chances of its implementation due to the Russian' common perceived energy security threat. An induce negative cognitive association with Russia can represent the nexus of energy cooperation between the Black Sea countries. Consequently, this would represent the first significant step towards a Common European Union Policy implementation.

CHAPTER 1: THE NEW ENERGY PARADIGM AND THE EUROPEAN ENERGY SECURITY

The aim of this chapter is to provide a broad picture of the current European Energy Security with a special emphasis on the European Natural Gas Supply Security which represented a salient issue of the European Union agenda over the last decades but reemerged as a priority after the recent gas dispute between Russia and Ukraine. After a brief overview of the main factors which advanced the idea of “A New Energy Paradigm”², the chapter will analyze the particularities of the energy security concept emphasizing its complexity that causes multiple difficulties in finding a widely- accepted definition. Finally the chapter discusses the European Union policy towards Russia, mentioning also the main measures that the European Union has undertaken to insure its resources supply and reduce its energetic vulnerabilities. This chapter contributes to a better understanding of the complex causal mechanisms that framed the main argument of our study, namely it shows how Europe’s growing dependency on Russian supplies reinforced the geopolitical significance of the Black Sea Region and endowed it with the power of influencing the future of a Common European Energy Security.

1.1. The concept of Energy Security

During the last two hundred years, energy evolved as one of the dominant themes of international affairs and achieved further credence due to several events which indicated its incontestable significance for human welfare. The increasing demand for energy at the global

² The term has been largely utilized in the existing energy literature and was introduced by Dieter Helm in 2007 when his book “The New Energy Paradigm” was first published.

level, climate change, the instability of the global energy market, the regional deficits of supply and the dependence on imported gas and oil represent just a few factors that determined a structural break which in turn led to the emergence of a new energy paradigm. The cumulative effect of all these factors created the context for a paradigm shift which emphasized two new major objectives: climate change and security of supply.³ As Helm argues in his article, “in the 1980s and 1990s energy was treated as just another commodity, which could be left to market forces” and this period symbolized one policy paradigm that was characterized by “a set of ideas surrounding privatization, liberalization, and competition.”⁴

Although the new energy paradigm was acknowledged for almost a decade, its manifestations have never been more visible than after the recent political events which reflect the global shift in energy policy objectives. The manifestation of the new paradigm certainly demonstrated that energy sector can become a politicized game characterized by a series of new threats and uncertainties which “may have particularly dramatic repercussions for today's international system.”⁵ The new energy paradigm affected the way scholars and politicians used to perceive the evolutions of world affairs in such a manner that currently, almost all the aspects of foreign policy have to be shaped so as to answer the new challenges in the energy sector. Therefore, strategic thinking today appears to treat the security of energy supply as an *existential threat*, acknowledging the shift that has to be made from the predominantly military thinking to a more broad security agenda which would include energy security as one of its crucial aspects. In other words, the battlefield in world affairs has changed and so did the weapons.

³ Dieter Helm, *The New Energy Paradigm*, Oxford University Press, 2004, pp. 5

⁴ Dieter Helm, *The New Energy Paradigm*, Oxford University Press 2004, pp.9

⁵ Christopher Flavin, Seth Dunn, “A New Energy Paradigm for the 21st Century” *Journal of International Affairs*, Vol. 53, 1999, p.1

This different approach of security underlines the fact that the traditional thinking about security which is deeply rooted in a Realist paradigm (which highlights the military capabilities) can no longer explain the decisions on the International Relations arena. This is not to say that from now on, strategies should be formulated in terms of non-military threats and should focus solely on the new energy aspects of securitization. Instead, the above arguments stress that although military capabilities remain very important, the attention is now distracted from them due to the emergence of a new energy paradigm which gives priority to natural resources as strategic weapons. As Klare argues “ in this new, challenging political landscape, the possession of potent military arsenals can be upstaged by the ownership of mammoth reserves of oil, natural gas, and other sources of primary energy. “⁶

According to Buzan, Wæver and Jaap, security is seen as related to” survival from an existential threat posed to a designated referent object, which justifies the use of extraordinary measures in order to administrate it.”⁷ Each attempt to define the energy security in analogy with the classical definition of security encounters at least three major questions. When can we affirm that a lack of energy supply represents an (immediate, intentional) existential threat? ⁸ What exactly can be considered as a referent object in the energy security definition? What extraordinary measures can be taken by highly dependent countries to administrate the situation? Some experts argue that “reliance on imported energy per se is not a security problem because there may be high dependency without any supply

⁶ Klare, Michael T, *Rising Powers, Shrinking Planet*, Henry Holt & Company, USA, 2008, p. 2

⁷ Barry Buzan, Ole Wæver, Jaap de Wilde, *A New Framework for Analysis, Security Analysis: Conceptual Apparatus*, Boulder Lynne Rienner, London, 1998, p.21

⁸ The terms “existential threat” and “referent object” as they appear in Buzan, Wæver and Jaap’s definition of security include a wide range of aspects when applied to energy security. On the one hand, the term “existential threat” can refer for example to reserve depletion, gas shut-offs, unexpected increase in oil or gas prices or as we can often encounter in the news, it can symbolize a country (see the example of Russia http://209.85.229.132/search?q=cache:5zxmcAH7PdMJ:www.russiatoday.com/Politics/20090506/Some_NATO_countries_still_see_Russia_as_existential_threat_expert.html+Russia+as+an+existential+energy+threat+%3F&cd=1&hl=ro&ct=clnk&gl=hu&lr=lang_en|lang_ro&client=firefox-a). On the other hand, the “referent object” term can signify a specific group of countries from a specific region on the globe, global economy, and political stability and by extension, the wellbeing or survival of humanity.

risk.”⁹ This raises another question of how we can integrate energy security threats which are so complex and thus very hard to assign inside the realm of security as defined above. Considering all these controversial issues, energy security threats should claim their own conceptualization of security, a conceptualization that would reflect their multi-dimensionality. Although the defining process of the energy security concept does not constitute the direct purpose of this study, a clear conceptualization of the term is necessary for subsequent investigation.

Despite the fact that the existing literature on energy security does not offer a general accepted definition of the energy security concept, we can identify several attempts to define it. One of these belongs to Barton et al, which define the energy security concept as “ a condition in which a nation and all, or most, of its citizens and businesses have access to sufficient energy resources at reasonable prices for the foreseeable future free from serious risk of major disruption of service.”¹⁰ This definition raises several questions, as it contains ambiguous terms such as *foreseeable*, *serious* and *major*, which can hardly be defined or measured. Their meaning can differ from one consumer to another and they are very context dependent.¹¹ The crucial element of the energy competition which should be taken into consideration when defining the concept of energy security should be the degree of dependency that one region is faced with and which are the costs of reducing it.

One definition that attempts to incorporate these issues is provided by the European Commission which affirms that:

Energy supply security must be geared to ensuring the proper functioning of the economy, the uninterrupted physical availability at a price which is affordable while respecting environmental concerns. Security of supply does not seek to maximize energy self-

⁹ Sanam S. Haghighi, *Energy Security: The External Legal Relations of the European Union with Major Oil- and Gas- Supplying Countries*, Hart Publishing, Oregon, 2007, pp.9

¹⁰ Barton, et al, *Energy Security. Managing Risk in a Dynamic Legal and Regulatory Environment*, Oxford University Press, 2004.

¹¹ Erik Helgerud, *Towards a European Strategy for Energy Security? Member States Diversity and EU Institutional Capacity*, Master's Thesis, University of Oslo, May 2008.

sufficiency or to minimize dependence, but aims to reduce the risks linked to such dependence.¹²

However, once again the elusiveness of this second definition leaves room for interpretation firstly because it mentions the ambiguous term *affordable* whose understanding highly varies from one economy to another and secondly because it states the goal of reducing the risks of energy dependence without specifying the means. One interpretation of this definition would be that it is exclusively tailored to European Union's concerns regarding its overdependence on Russian supplies and it seeks to underline its goal in order to avoid a misperception from Russia, a situation that would create an energy security dilemma.

Although the European Union has made numerous efforts to avoid the deterioration of its relations with Russia, the recent events related to the energy security issue and more specifically to the security of natural gas supply, have intensified the tensions between the two. The next section of this chapter will underline the main historical divergences that characterized the diplomatic relationship between Russia and European Union focusing on the highly politicized energy cooperation sector. It will list the main European Energy Policy actions and will analyze possible patterns of the puzzling past and recent events regarding gas supply interruptions and the main initiatives and projects that attempt to decrease the level of European Energy Supply Insecurity.

1.2. European Energy Policy: Towards an External Energy Policy

According to the International Energy Agency, the European energetic demands will increase from 50% to 70% until 2030, and the European Union dependency will reach 90% on imported oil and 70% on imported gas.¹³ This data urges for a rapid formulation and

¹² Commission, *Towards a European Strategy for the Security of Energy Supply*, Green Paper, COM, 2000, 769 Final.

¹³ See International Energy Agency statistics at : <http://data.iea.org/ieastore/statslisting.asp>

implementation of a common European Energy Policy which would focus not only on the European energy market fulfillment but one that would also take into consideration a series of other important factors such as the reliability of the main energy sources, instability of transit routes, geopolitical elements and the dynamics of the political environment.¹⁴ However, the realization of this plan appears to be an extremely difficult task, given the diverse energy interests of member states which for the moment impede effective cooperation.

Although the energy security issue was part of the European agenda for so many years, the European Union has only relatively recently showed a real interest in adopting a series of policy initiatives that aim to create a Common European Energy Security Policy. This tardily decision to create a legal and economical framework of cooperation in the European energy system can be explained partially by the absence of serious energy supply threats since the oil embargoes in 1973-1974. Therefore, Europe has centered all its initiatives on liberalization of electricity and gas markets through Gas Directive 98/30/CE and Electricity Directive 96/92/CE.¹⁵ The European internal energy market has been further consolidated by the Directive 2003/54/EC (concerning Common Rules for the Internal Market in Electricity) and Directive 2003/55/EC (concerning Common Rules for the Internal Market in Natural Gas).

According to Helm, the effect of all these initiatives did not create an integrated market in Europe; on the contrary, it led to a series of national markets with bilateral connections.¹⁶ Another important step towards the completion of the European energy market was the 2005 Energy Community Treaty, which aimed “to create a legal framework for an integrated European market for electricity and gas and to establish a regional energy market that is compatible with the internal energy market of the European Union.”¹⁷

¹⁴ See Dr Frank Umbach, German Council on Foreign Relations, *The New EU Energy Policy: Balancing the internal Market and external security of supply*, Policy Dialogue - 29 January 2007, p. 5

¹⁵ Dieter Helm, *The New Energy Paradigm*, Oxford University Press, 2004, p.441

¹⁶ Dieter Helm, *The New Energy Paradigm*, Oxford University Press, 2004, p.440

¹⁷ International Energy Agency/OECD, *Energy in the Western Balkans*, 2008, p. 35

Although these market related policy objectives have brought some benefits, the European Union shifted its strategy towards the realization of a common external energy policy and focused its future policy initiatives also on other significant issues, such as climate change and its dependency on imported energy supply.

This shift can be clearly observed if we look at the 2006 European Union Green Paper which aims not only to “complete the internal European gas and electricity markets, to create solidarity between member states in order to enhance a more sustainable, efficient and diverse energy mix and to create an integrated approach to tackle climate change” but also to “establish a strategic European energy technology plan and a coherent external energy policy.”¹⁸ However, the scope of the Green Papers is only to initiate discussions on a specific topic and encourage further negotiations between the actors. That is why they are perceived as “soft law” instruments which cannot lead to concrete implementation of the discussed projects.¹⁹

Whereas some visible progress has been made in terms of sustainability of the internal market, the creation of an External European Energy Policy has still a long way to go. For the last two decades Europe relied too much on markets and this determined member states to form bilateral relations with the main energy supplier countries rather than uniting their forces for creating a Common European Energy Policy. As it was stated in the summary of a recent policy dialog concerning the new European Union Energy Policy, the market cannot provide the solution to the security of supply issue and the only viable method to address it lies in “Europe negotiating with external energy suppliers with a unitary voice, reducing energy consumption and expanding domestic production.”²⁰ If the procedure of ratification of

¹⁸Sanam S. Haghighi, *Energy Security: The External Legal Relations of the European Union with Major Oil- and*

Gas- Supplying Countries, Hart Publishing, Oregon, 2007, p. 172. See also : <http://www.inforse.dk/europe/eu-greenp-energy.htm>

¹⁹ Idem, p.208

²⁰The New EU Energy Policy: *Balancing The International Market and External Security of Supply*,

the Lisbon Treaty will be completed, European Union would gain a sense of symbolic unity which would help Europe to reverse the asymmetric interdependence which is now favoring Russia. Furthermore, the Lisbon Treaty would be the first Treaty that includes clear provisions on energy issue. The article 176 A of the Treaty asserts that:

Union policy on energy shall aim, in a spirit of solidarity between Member States, to: (a) ensure the functioning of the energy market; (b) ensure security of energy supply in the Union; and (c) promote energy efficiency and energy saving and the development of new and renewable forms of energy; and (d) promote the interconnection of energy networks.²¹

As it has been illustrated, European Union measures in the energy field primarily focused on internal market completion and gradually moved towards the creations of an external energy policy as its energy supply dependence increased. The next section of the study would argue that the major factor which urged the European Community to adopt a series of important measures for securing its energy supplies, was the insecurity experienced in the aftermath of Russian gas cut-offs of January 2006/2009, which signaled the worsening of the geo-political setting that could have future dramatic effects on the European natural gas trade.

1.2.1. Security of Natural Gas Supply in Europe

This section of the study will assesses the growing significance of natural gas resources and evaluates its potential as a political weapon of the supplier countries, with a particular focus on Russia. Over the last few decades, Europe has experienced an unprecedented demand for natural gas which in turn lead to an increased anxiety regarding its gas import dependence. If “in 2005, natural gas represented the second largest source of primary energy in the European Union , new analysis conducted in 2006 shows that

Policy Dialogue - 29 January 2007

²¹ http://europa.eu/lisbon_treaty/full_text/index_en.htm

increases in demand could reach 1 per cent per year up to 2015.”²² In addition to this, according to the most recent energy forecasts “natural gas would be the fastest growing fossil fuel source in the next 2–3 decades in Europe.”²³

One of the clearest evidence that security of natural gas supply has become a serious concern can be found in the new *World Energy Outlook 2009* which mentions the prospects for global natural gas markets among the main three topics it covers. Furthermore, related to the gas issue, the study addresses several important questions such as ” how hard will the credit crisis and economic recession hit gas demand and investment in gas supply and how will geology and geopolitics affect future gas supplies.”²⁴ Taking into consideration these concerns, the European Union has to develop a coherent energy strategy that will reduce its dependence on imported gas. The greatest threat for the European Energy Security results from a combination of two major aspects: on the one hand, the growing natural gas demand which increases its dependency on imported gas, and on the other hand, the concentration of gas supplies on few territories, for example, Russia which does not represent a reliable trade partner. According to recent statistics, Russia provides 24 per cent of European Union total gas consumption and 44 per cent of its gas imports. It is also expected that in the next 25 years the gas import rate will be double (see also graph 1 and 2 in appendices).²⁵

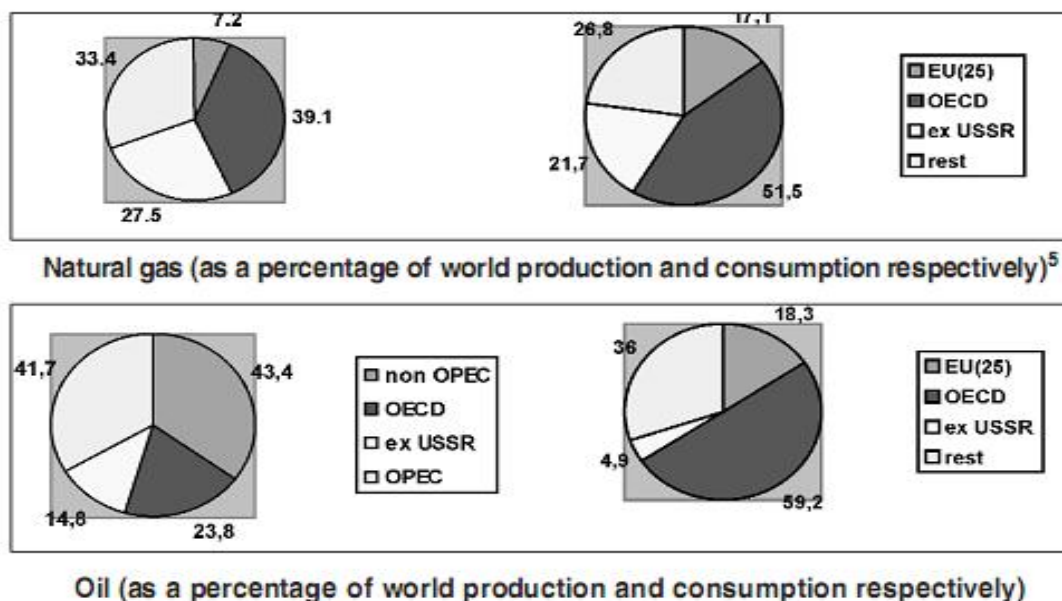
²² Anouk Honore and Jonathan Stern, *A constrained Future for Gas in Europe? The New Energy Paradigm*, Oxford University Press, 2004, p.225

²³ Anouk Honore, *Future Natural Gas Demand in Europe, The importance of the Power Sector*, Natural Gas Research Programme, Oxford Institute for Energy Studies, 2006, p. 5

²⁴ <http://www.worldenergyoutlook.org/2009.asp>

²⁵ Stacy Closson, “Energy Security of the European Union”, CSS Analyses in Security Policy, Vol. 3, No. 36, ETH Zurich, (June) 2008, p.

World Energy 2006



Source: Statistical Review of World Energy 2006. British Petroleum
<http://www.bp.com/productlanding.do?categoryId=6842&contentId=7021390>

Our analysis will focus exclusively on gas for two major reasons. One rationale for considering gas the main source of threat for the European Energy Security is offered by Weisser, who argues that for the moment, gas “challenged the supremacy of oil as the leading source of energy and reached a dominant position in electricity generation.”²⁶ The second argument can be easily observed if we analyze the latest event concerning the European Energy Security, i.e. the 2009 gas dispute between Russia and Ukraine. This conflict emphasized two major characteristics of the gas market:

- Both gas market and gas dependence are regional.
- Although in the past, gas was not used as a political weapon, when analyzed within the Russian Energy Security framework, it gains a strong political character which makes it a more interesting issue to be examined from a theoretical point of view.

²⁶ Hellmuth Weisser, *The Security of Gas Supply A Critical Issue for Europe?*, *The International Journal of the Political, Economic, Planning, Environmental and Social Aspects of Energy*, Elsevier Science Publishing Company, 2005, p. 5

The second rationale for centering our attention exclusively on the gas issue is that lately gas disputes tend to have strong political implications. If used as a political weapon, gas supply interruptions can have devastating effects for the future of the European Energy Security.²⁷ Analyzing the patterns of gas trade interruption in Europe(see table 1), one can easily argue that Gazprom's export monopoly can be utilized as a political blackmail method which constitutes a serious threat for the European Energy Security.

Table 1- Gas Trade Interruptions

Gas Trade Interruptions		
Year	Initiating party	
1997-1998	Transit country	Russia. Gazprom refuses to transport Turkmen gas to Europe.
2004		Gazprom cuts supplies to Belarus (and to Europe via Belarus Connector) in pricing dispute with Belarus.
2005-2006		Gazprom cuts supplies to Ukraine during a pricing dispute but tries to keep supplies following to Europe through cross-Ukraine pipelines.
2009		Gazprom cuts supplies to Ukraine during another pricing dispute. Russia also accused Ukraine for stealing the gas. The two countries could not reach an agreement on prices and transit fees for the following year.

Source: <http://pesd.stanford.edu>, Natural Gas and Geopolitics, David G.Victor, Program on Energy and Sustainable Development Stanford University. The original table does not include the recent 2009 gas interruption.

For a better understanding of the energy threat that Russia can cause to European Energy Security, the following section of the study will investigate the broad-spectrum of historical relationships between European Union and Russia, with a particular focus on energy sector and will illustrate the different roles played by the two actors.

²⁷ The regional character of the European gas market and European gas dependence requires a clear distinction between the meanings of the "European" term. In this study we will utilize the "European" term as it was defined by Honore and Stern, particularly as "a group of countries interlinked by pipelines through which gas is exchanged."

1.3. The liberal values of the European Union and Russian pragmatism

The deterioration of the Russian relations with the European Union can be traced back to Cold War and the collapse of the Soviet Union. As Eyal claims in his article entitled “Return to the Past”, Russia’s increasing frustration for not being taken seriously after the collapse of the Soviet Union and the Western proposal for cooperation from a position of equality represented the main factors that shaped Russian assessment of its relations with the European Union. In Eyal’s view, “The West is paying now for mistakes committed twenty years ago.”²⁸ Ever since, the European Union has sought methods to coexist with Russia, which evolved as an indispensable global actor due to its growing geo-strategic influence and its well-planned military, economic and diplomatic actions. While the European Union framed its policy according to liberal values and democracy promotion, Russia successfully advanced its pragmatic interests and contented itself with the image of an imperfect democracy.

European Union’s high expectations regarding a possible rapprochement with Russia in 2008, after Dimitry Medvedev replaced Vladimir Putin at the Russian presidency, were deluded as the new strategy proposed by Medvedev represented actually a continuity of the former Russian agenda. As Bovt shows in his article, the new president followed the same political line as Putin (who is still controlling the Russian foreign policy from his present position as a prim minister) “namely promotion of Russian business abroad, integration into the global economy” and the use of oil and gas resources in order to increase Russian power in relation with the European Union.²⁹

One of the most important events that completely changed the prospects for a European Union-Russia rapprochement was the five-day war with Georgia in August 2008. The way European Union has tackled Russian -Georgian conflict confirms the fact that its

²⁸ Jonathan Eyal, “Europe and Russia, A return to the Past”, *RUSI*, vol.153, No. 5,(October) 2008, p. 44

²⁹ George Bovt, *Russian Foreign Policy under Dimitry Medvedev*, Eurussia Center, Brussels, pp 20

options are drastically reduced and raises the question of whether it has the political cohesion and self-confidence to actually convince Russia that it should respect its commitments as a member of international community. As Moshes inquires in his article, the real issue that has to be addressed is” whether today’s European Union, which after all is a value- based community of nations, can have a strategic partnership- let alone relationship of integration – with a state that does not adhere to the same principles.”³⁰ Regarding the issue of how should European-Union act towards Russia, the European Council on Foreign Relations report shows that European Union governments are divided into two major approaches to Russia. The first approach “sees Russia as a threat that needs to be managed with soft-containment”, the second approach “sees the country a potential partner that can be transformed through creeping integrations into the European system”.³¹ The new Russian empowerment through gas and oil and the accentuated financial crises has increased the heterogeneity within the European Union member states which now act individually to secure their own interests. The above arguments emphasizes how deeply divided Europe can be when it comes to negotiate with Russia. The lack of unity represents the main reason why the European Union failed to create a common view concerning its relations with Russia. Russia’s *divide et impera* strategy proved its efficiency especially in the energy sector where it gained a privileged position by achieving a number of diplomatic victories. According to Prokhorova, the European Union is currently “in disarray, triggered by a constitutional impasse and the non-cooperative behavior of the new member states.”³²

If the procedure of ratification the Lisbon treaty will be completed, European Union would gain a sense of symbolic unity which would help Europe reverse the asymmetric interdependence which is now favoring Russia. The next section of the study analyses the

³⁰ Arkady Moshes, *EU-Russia relations: unfortunate continuity*, Fondation Robert Schuman, European Issues, no. 129, 24 February 2009, pp 7

³¹ Mark Leonard and Nicu Popescu A “ *Power Audit of EU 27*”- *Russia relations*, European Council on Foreign Relations, 7 November 2007, pp. 1

³² Elena Prokhorova, *The war and peace of the EU-Russia Relations*, Eurussia Center, Brussels, pp 2

uncertainties between Russia and the European Union revealed in January 2009 as a result of the Russian- Ukrainian gas crisis. As US Senator Richard Lugar stated,” Russia is a major worry because it can cripple economies without a shot being fired.”³³

1.3.1. EU-Russia ambiguous energy cooperation

All major projects at the European level in the field of energy tend to lead back to Russia and three years after the first Ukraine gas shut-off, in 2009 European countries faced another gas trade interruption, which seemed to accelerate the development of several alternatives policies and projects meant to diminish the hegemonic position of Russia and diversifying the energetic routes to Europe. Nevertheless, through the last years the issue of energy supply and transit has dominated almost all EU summits and the debate regarding the European overdependence on Russian gas. According to Helm, “energy policy has to a considerable extent become foreign policy and recent developments between Russia and the Ukraine have highlighted the foreign policy dimension with Europe”. He also argues that in the last years, Europe was facing a” re-politicization of energy security given the international dependencies, the state ownership of reserves, and the histories of the main suppliers’ governments”.³⁴

Another argument which supports the idea of re-politicization belongs to Stern, who suggests that the Russian government sends signals to Europe that it has the power to cut off gas supplies as part of the Putin Administration foreign policy which “sees energy trade as an

³³ Nina Bachkatov, *EU-Russia relations worsen*, Le monde diplomatique- English edition: <http://mondediplo.com>

³⁴ Dieter Helm, *The New Energy Paradigm*, Oxford University Press, New York, 2007, p. 1

important means of projecting its political power and influence internationally.”³⁵ In 2006 as part of his discourse at the German Marshall Fund conference in Riga, US senator Richard G. Lugar stressed that energy will be the most likely cause of armed conflict in the future and that “the use of energy as an unconcealed weapon in international relations is not merely hypothetical; it is happening now.”³⁶

Considering the above mentioned issues, the European Union has to decide whether Russia represents a reliable supplies state and thus direct its policy towards creating further European treaty arrangements with Russia, or its policies should focus more on creating a new pipeline route to Europe via Turkey, carrying supplies from Middle East and Caspian Sea. It is rather difficult to estimate the best direction and explore further the costs and benefits of each option, but if we take into consideration the most recent actions taken by the European Union we can observe that the 2009 gas trade interruption determined the European Union to promote alternative routes that by-pass Russia. One of these actions that reflect the European concern with energy supplies is the revival of the Nabucco project, which represents one of the most advantageous initiatives that has been recently discussed and supported at the Nabucco Summit in Budapest this year. The worsening geo-political environment for the European Energy Security and the numerous competing gas pipeline projects has stressed the strategic importance of several European regions. One of these regions that play a pivotal role in the European Energy Security is the Black Sea Region. The next chapter of the study will look more closely at the different preferences and interests of the Black Sea countries and will explore the potential for a regional energy trade cooperation that would possibly represent the foundation of a future Common European Energy Policy.

³⁵ Jonathan Stern, *The new security for European gas: Worsening geopolitics and increasing global competition for LNG*, Oxford Institute for Energy Studies, Paper for the CESSA Conference, Cambridge, December 2007

³⁶ Energy security, *Georgia hot topics for NATO*, RFL <http://www.isn.ethz.ch/news/sw/details.cfm?ID=16981>

CHAPTER 2: THE BLACK SEA REGION AND ITS GEOPOLITICAL SIGNIFICANCE

After clarifying the complex concept of energy security and investigating the current state of affairs regarding the European Energy Security, the next chapter of the study would lay the foundation for an empirical analysis stressing the geo-political significance of the Black Sea Region which emerged as an important actor particularly after the repeated European Energy Security threats coming from Russia. It will claim that the recent threats received from Russia constructed this region as an energy axis which connects the European Union with the main energy suppliers from Caspian and Central Asian regions. The Black Sea Region also represents the perfect case to illustrate how the interplay between different member states with divergent interests and preferences can influence the creation of a future Common European Energy Policy.

The chapter will first look at the main European Foreign Policy actions pursued in the Black Sea Region and will discuss the overall areas of interest that determined the European Union to develop a coherent strategy towards this region. The second part of this chapter will briefly evaluate the different positions of Black Sea countries³⁷ toward Russia taking into consideration especially the energy sector. It will claim that their interests are best reflected in their levels of support for the different pipeline projects in the region. Finally the chapter will analyze the main two competing pipelines projects in the region and their prospects for implementation, taking into consideration the political implications that might occur.

³⁷ The BSR includes the following countries: Ukraine and Russia (N), Turkey (S), Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan (E), and Bulgaria, Romania, Moldova, and Greece (W).

2.1. The Foreign Policy of the European Union in the Black Sea Region

The Black Sea region has acquired an increased significance in the Post-Cold War era, becoming a geopolitical center. More recent events and initiatives, such as The Black Sea Forum (Bucharest 2006), Black Sea Synergy, European Union's engagement in the recent Georgian crisis, GMF workshop focusing on the Black Sea Region, , illustrate the importance of the Black Sea region and its decisive role for the future of the Wider Europe. The latest round of enlargement together with Turkey's application, European Union's strategic partnership with Russia and bilateral action plans with Ukraine and Georgia determined a reformulation of its neighborhood policy.³⁸ If before the 2007 enlargement, the only link between European Union and Black Sea Region was represented by Greece, which was the only European Union member state in the region, once Romania and Bulgaria entered the European Union, the geo-strategic interest of the Union in the Black Sea Region became increasingly visible and the "interests of the new member states become axiomatically EU interests".³⁹

The first perception of an emergent common interest in the Black Sea Region took the form of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation Project, which aimed to "integrate the Black Sea area to the world economy, to enhance cooperation among its members and to convert this sea area into one of peace, stability, and prosperity."⁴⁰ Over the last years the Black Sea Economic Cooperation Project, become a comprehensive organization, which offered the possibility for the countries in the region to cooperate with the European Union on an

³⁸ European Commission , *Black Sea- bright future*, 11/04/2007

³⁹ Michael Emerson and Marius Vahl, *Europe's Black Sea Dimension- Model European Regionalism*, Pret-a-Porter, in Adams et al., p 21

⁴⁰ The Work Programme of Turkey During Its Chairmanship of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation Organization (BSEC)(1 May – 1 November 2001

institutional level.⁴¹ During this period, the Black Sea region was defined in association with the twelve member countries of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation Project.⁴²

In 2001, the member states of BSEC established an Economic Agenda and decided to concentrate their cooperation on different sectors such as energy, trade and investment, transport and communications, environment, tourism, combating organized crime and other non-conventional threats. Their activities also focused on institutional renewal and improved governance.⁴³ However, according to some authors, BSEC can no longer respond to the challenges of the evolving European system and it needs to reformulate its relationship with the European Union and to reconsider its strategic concept of organization in order to achieve more interaction.⁴⁴ Given the contrasted interests of the Black Sea Region countries, the European Union's policy toward this area was firstly "constructed more on the principle of differentiation, the regional approach being avoided."⁴⁵ However, the debate regarding the promotion of a regional cooperation model in the Black Sea area as opposed to a bilateral approach has been intensively discussed in the literature and different types of solutions have been proposed.

In 2007 the European Union have launched the Black Sea Synergy, an initiative that aims to develop regional cooperation, strengthen civil society and contribute to regional stability. The Black Sea Synergy "acknowledges the strategic importance of the Black Sea Region for the European Union and stresses European Union's wish to support regional cooperation between Black Sea states in a large range of sectors, by promoting concrete

⁴¹ Mustafa Aydin, *Europe's next shore: the Black sea region after EU enlargement*, European Union Institute for Security Studies, Paris, 2004, p. 22

⁴² The BSEC included the following countries: Ukraine and Russia (N), Turkey (S), Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan (E), and Bulgaria, Romania, Moldova, and Greece (W).

⁴³ Black Sea Economic Cooperation. *Economic Agenda for the Future towards a More Consolidated, Effective and Viable BSEC Partnership*. Istanbul: BSEC PERMIS and ICBSS, October, 2001

⁴⁴ Sergiu Celac, Panagiota Manoli, *Towards a New Model of Comprehensive Regionalism in the Black Sea Area*, Southeast European and Black Sea Studies, Routledge Publisher, England, 2006, p 119

⁴⁵ Zagorski, Andrei. "Policies towards Russia, Ukraine, Moldova and Belarus." In *European Union Foreign and Security Policy: Towards a Neighbourhood Strategy*, Routledge, 2004.

projects, more coherence, and better coordination.”⁴⁶ The renewed Black Sea regionalism proves to be a successful initiative if we are to analyze the Commission’s report on 19 June regarding the first year of implementation of the Black Sea Synergy. The final remarks of the report reveal the practical utility and the potential of this new European Union regional policy approach.⁴⁷ Although the Black Sea Synergy stressed the irrelevance of creating more institution to address the problems of the region, other initiatives continued to appear. This fact raises the question of whether the European Union has developed the appropriate mechanism in order to create a strong unified voice across the region, or is it still searching for a for suitable strategy.

In June 2008 the European Council “welcomed the polish-Swedish proposal to create the Eastern Partnership, ushering in closer and more institutionalized cooperation with the European Union’s Eastern Partners”.⁴⁸ This initiative comes, as a reaction to the PES initiative for “Union for the Black Sea” which represents a practical counterbalance to the “Union for the Mediterranean” launched by the French Council presidency and recently decided by the European Summit.⁴⁹ Unlike the Union’s Black Sea Synergy, the Polish-Swedish proposal on the Eastern Partnership “goes beyond the current ENP, by deepening bilateral relations and creating a permanent formula for multilateral cooperation.”⁵⁰ Although they are said to be complementary projects, these initiatives have competing dimensions that do not seem to be compatible with the current Black Sea Synergy regional cooperation model. While the Black Sea Synergy promotes the concept of *regional cooperation* and aims to create a unique and coherent policy framework towards the region⁵¹, the new Eastern Partnership launched in 2008, promotes the concepts of *bilateral cooperation* and

⁴⁶ Leonard Orban , EU commissioner for multilingualism.

⁴⁷ Commission Communicat to the Council and the European Parliament on 19 June 2008

⁴⁸ Presedency Conclusions, Council of the European Union, Brussels, 19-20 of June 2008, pp 19

⁴⁹ <http://manifesto2009.pes.org/en/debate/post/757>

⁵⁰ Polish-Swedish proposal on the Eastern Partnership, May 2008 available via: <http://www.tepsa.eu/docs/draft>

⁵¹ European Commission, Communication from the Commission to the Council and the European Parliament, Black Sea Synergy: A New Regional Cooperation Initiative, COM(2007) 160 final, Brussels, 11 April 2007

multilateral co-operation.⁵² According to Tsantoulis the launching of the two initiatives “complicate somehow the formulation of a coherent EU policy towards its eastern neighborhood as it also indicates a degree of overlapping agendas and policy priorities.”⁵³ (See also table 1 in appendices)

One solution for creating a coherent regional policy in the Black Sea Region would be to identify and define cooperation priorities and the most appropriate mechanisms for achieving them. A useful classification that could serve as a starting point for the prioritization process is offered by Hatto and Tomescu which identified five dimensions that define European Union’s interest in the region:

- a) Democracy, respect for human rights and governance
- b) Frozen conflicts and regional stability
- c) The fight against organized crime and terrorism
- d) Energy Security
- e) EU as a Foreign Policy Actor⁵⁴

Our study argues that Energy Security currently represents the top of the ENP agenda towards the Black Sea Region and that this dimension can better facilitate the creation of a regional framework for cooperation since it is concerned with the central objective of the ENP which is securitization. The next section of the study claims that Energy Security dimension constructs Black Sea Region as a buffer zone between Europe and its neighbors, an area that has a great significance for the future of the Wider Europe.

⁵² Joint Polish-Swedish proposal Draft Paper, Eastern Partnership, 23 May 2008, <http://www.msz.gov.pl/Polish-Swedish,Proposal,19911.html>

⁵³ Yannis Tsantoulis, “Black Sea Synergy and Eastern Partnership: Different Centers of Gravity, Complementarity or Confusing Signals?”, Policy Brief, no.12, February 2009, p. 5

⁵⁴ Ronald Hatto and Odette Tomescu, “The EU and the Wider Sea Region: Challenges and Policy Options”, Garnet Policy Brief, no.5, January, 2008, pp 1

2.1.1. The geo-strategic significance of the Black Sea Region for the European Energy Security

Since the European Energy Security issue emerged as a salient aspect of the ENP, it has been stressed that the Union should search to create a partnership and seek cooperation between Black Sea countries. This would help in time to overcome its energy dependence and reduce its energy vulnerabilities. Geographically located at the crossroads of the main supplier countries and main consumer markets of the European Union, Black Sea Region forms a natural energy bridge and represents a key actor of the European Energy Security.⁵⁵ If a decade ago the Black Sea Region “was on the far edge of Europe’s consciousness, now it became the next frontier of European strategic thinking in terms of energy security.”⁵⁶

As it was already illustrated in 1.2.1 section of this study, the overall context of oil and natural gas supply security in Europe represents a sensitive issue which asks for a New European Energy Policy. In this context, diversification of supply has become an important priority of the European Union, consequently by virtue of its strategic location; the Black Sea Region has gained unprecedented importance as a transit region of gas from the Middle East and the Caspian Sea area to the European market. As “natural gas is a network-bound commodity”⁵⁷, the Black Sea Region become the playground of an energy game where all the states in the region struggle to follow their own interests and impose their own rules. As a result, a European Energy Security strategy in the region has to take into accounts not only economical factors but social and political factors as well. In order to have an operational gas market and link the energy export infrastructure in the region, European Union has to create a

⁵⁵ Burcu Gultekin- Punsmann, “ Black Sea Regional Approach: A potential contributor to European Energy Security”, Policy Brief, no.6, International Center for Black Sea Studies, May 2008, p.1

⁵⁶ Charles King, *The Wider Black Sea Region in the Twenty-First Century*, Center for Transatlantic Relations, 2008, p.1

⁵⁷ Burcu Gultekin- Punsmann, “ Black Sea Regional Approach: A potential contributor to European Energy Security”, Policy Brief, no.6, International Center for Black Sea Studies, May 2008, p. 2

sense of unity in terms of political interests and this goal can be achieved only through shared governance structures.⁵⁸

However, the most challenging issue of the European Union remains to find the appropriate strategy to enhance its energy security without deteriorating its relationship with the largest natural gas supplier, Russia. The privileged energy status of Russia allows it to shape the interests of the Black Sea countries increasing the energy prices, reducing or even cutting-off their energy supplies. Nevertheless, if Russia continues to use its energy supplies as political weapons, the Black Sea countries will have to diversify their sources and routs.⁵⁹ In this respect different companies and countries have promoted new pipeline projects but none of this succeeded to gather the necessary support for implementation. (i.e. nabucco pipeline which was launched in 2003) This situation appears to have changed after the last gas supply interruption in January 2009 which drastically changed the image of Russia as a reliable supplier.⁶⁰ As a consequence several pipeline projects were intensely discussed at the European Union level and this time there are serious reasons to believe that they will receive the financial and political support for implementations. All the diversification strategies that have been proposed stress the central role of the Black Sea Region. Therefore, the next section of the study would analyze the two main competing pipeline projects underlining the geo-economic and geo-strategic interests that essentially reflect the different positions of Black Sea countries toward Russia.

⁵⁸ Charles King, *The Wider Black Sea Region in the Twenty-First Century*, Center for Transatlantic Relations, 2008, p. 155

⁵⁹ Necdet Pamir, "The Black Sea: A Gateway to Energy Security and Diversification", *Southeast European and Black Sea Studies*, June 2007, p. 250

⁶⁰ Idem , p. 225

2.1.2. Pipelines race: Nabucco versus South Stream

Although the primacy of energy route and source diversification to the European Energy Security has been constantly highlighted after each round of energy supply interruption from Russia to Europe, the European Union did not show so far a clear attempt to support any pipeline project that would serve the diversification purpose. This could be partially explained if we consider the broad control strategy developed by the main Russian gas company, Gazprom, which directly jeopardizes the European diversification strategy.⁶¹

As it has been frequently underlined by many authors, the new European energy era is characterized by an ongoing economically and politically motivated pipeline race. Generally, the outcome of the natural gas pipeline projects is influenced by a series of factors that go beyond their geographical planned route and as a result in most of the cases, there are many uncertainties related to their supporting countries, agenda and funds.⁶² This is also the case of the most well-known two competing pipelines projects designed to provide Europe with gas supplies.

The first major European natural gas pipeline project that aims to diversify energy sources was launched in 2003 by five European companies, representing the following transit countries: Turkey, Romania, Bulgaria, Hungary and Austria.⁶³ Although the project has been “listed as a priority by the European Commission and the energy ministries of the five partner countries have signed a joint ministerial statement in its support”⁶⁴, the project has been delayed for six years and even at the moment there are many uncertainties concerning its implementations. Once the Nabucco pipeline project would be completed, it will solve the diversification issue as its primary purpose is to transport gas from Turkey to Europe (by-

⁶¹ Burcu Gultekin- Punsmann, “Black Sea Regional Approach: A potential contributor to European Energy Security”, Policy Brief, no.6, International Center for Black Sea Studies, May 2008, p. 6

⁶² International Energy Agency/OECD, *Energy in the Western Balkans*, 2008, p.83

⁶³ International Energy Agency/OECD, *Energy in the Western Balkans*, 2008, p. 85

⁶⁴ Idem, p. 85

passing Russia) via Romania, Bulgaria, Hungary and Austria. Initially the project was meant to be completed by 2011, but due to its numerous delays it is now expected to be operational by 2014.⁶⁵ There is no doubt that the realization of Nabucco pipeline project has serious political implications since it has faced so many different challenges that ranged from financing difficulties to disputes among the partners. According to Norling, “Nabucco is much more than just about gas; it could potentially be the glue that keeps both Europe’s common energy policy and Europe’s engagement with the states around the Caspian Sea together.”⁶⁶

Although the Black Sea Region countries are facing common energy security challenges, cooperation in the region could not easily be achieved. Furthermore, it is expected that the current global financial crisis may cause a delay in Nabucco works. Despite all these impediments the long postponing of the Nabucco project cannot be entirely explained. In his speech at the Nabucco Summit in Budapest, the Czech prime minister inquires whether Europe is prepared to initiate this project:” Are we prepared to effectively promote the freedom, independence and stability of both producing and transit countries on the route of the planned Nabucco pipeline? We need effective cooperation with the countries of the Caspian and Black Sea region; we need their real independence.”⁶⁷ According to Stern, “for Nabucco, the diversification of supply idea is a reflection of the deteriorating relationship between Russia and the rest of Europe. The idea that gas from outside Russia will be more secure is a purely political argument.”⁶⁸ The recent bilateral agreement signed at Kremlin between Russia and Hungary advancing the support for the South Stream pipeline (which

⁶⁵ See recent news “South Stream, Nabucco competition escalates”

www.seenews.com

⁶⁶ Nicklas Norling, *Gazprom’s Monopoly and Strategic Decision for Europe*, Silk Road Paper, Central Asia-Caucasus Institute, November, 2007, p. 1

⁶⁷ <http://74.125.77.132/search?q=cache:OZ5L6wOCwZQJ:www.eu2009.cz/en/news-and-documents/speeches-interviews/speech-by-mirek-topolaneck-at-nabucco-summit>

⁶⁸ <http://www.offshore-technology.com/features/feature1643/>

came one month after the Nabucco Summit in Budapest) perfectly illustrates European Union's failure to agree upon a common agenda towards Russia. Hungary is the blue fuel oligarch's fourth largest Union customer and its energy policy is dictated by pure pragmatic business interests. The Hungarian case represents now one of the best examples of Black Sea Region disunity that jeopardizes the accomplishment of Nabucco pipeline project and more broadly negatively affects the prospects of a Common European Energy Security.

However, Hungary does not represent the only Black Sea country to impede the implementation of the project. Turkey also setback the project by demanding 15 per cent of the Nabucco gas for its own use and a gas entering tax for transiting its eastern border. After Prague meeting Turkey reduced its requirements and offered hope for a Nabucco revival.⁶⁹ In the light of these recent events it appears that the main problems with Nabucco are on the one hand, the indecision of the countries that are part of the project, and on the other hand the lack of commitment of the involved companies.⁷⁰ Whether Nabucco pipeline project is going to be implemented or not remains an opened question by the end of June 2009 when according to the Prague declaration EU and Turkey would sign an intergovernmental agreement.

Maintaining the idea of a politicized energy security game, the South Stream joint project negotiated between the Russian and Italian energy companies it is seen as a competing project which aims to increase Russia's monopoly on Europe. Although South Stream pipeline represents a much more recent initiative than its rival Nabucco project (it was launched in 2007), it already signed agreements with four partner countries and claims to be a more efficient project in terms of financial resources. The project includes a seabed section that would bypass two Black Sea countries, namely Romania and Ukraine (for more details regarding the route see fig. 1 in the appendices). However, according to Socor these two

⁶⁹ "South Stream, Nabucco competition escalates": www.seenews.com

⁷⁰ Nicklas Norling, *Gazprom's Monopoly and Strategic Decision for Europe*, Silk Road Paper, Central Asia-Caucasus Institute, November, 2007, p.7

countries can stop the project on a legal base in order to gain more time for opening the Central Asian gas for its competing project, Nabucco.⁷¹

Although Russian officials argued that South Stream project does not compete with other pipeline projects, the Russian view of Nabucco is equated with “no more than a political undertaking.”⁷² From this point of view Nabucco represents a “nice project for politicians”, a project that cannot be successfully implemented, especially because it opposes one of the most important energy security rules having too many transit countries.⁷³ In addition to this argument, Gultekin-Punsmann asserts that “diversification strategies ignoring Russia are doomed to failure or low efficiency.”⁷⁴ Both Nabucco and South Stream pipeline projects have a number of unresolved questions and for the moment it is difficult to affirm whether one project would be more successful than the other or which one would be built first. Strategically located at the crossroads of Europe, the Middle East and Central Asia, the Black Sea Region represents now a crucial area for both projects. This section of the study illustrated how both Russian and European energy security discourses are mutually constructed during the negotiation stages for the implementation of the major natural gas pipelines in the Black Sea Region. It also underlines how Russia accentuates its “otherness” in the region by adopting an energy security discourse which tends to undermine or even ignore Europe’s energy diversification projects. An unexpected outcome of this differentiating process would be the creation of a “Black Sea Region Self” which could constitute the basis for a future Common European Energy Security. The next chapter would

⁷¹ Vladimir Socor, “Gazprom’s South Stream Project can be halted in The Black Sea”, Eurasia Daily Monitor, Vol.5, issue 43, March 6, 2008, p.1

⁷² Nabucco and South Stream The Race Heats Up: <http://www.turkishweekly.net/news/78142/nabucco-and-south-stream-the-race-heats-up.html>

⁷³ Unofficial statement of the Political Adviser to British Petroleum, Berlin, at a public lecture in Budapest, CEU, February 2009.

⁷⁴ Burcu Gultekin- Punsmann, “Black Sea Regional Approach: A potential contributor to European Energy Security”, Policy Brief, no.6, International Center for Black Sea Studies, May 2008, p. 6

analyze in detail the issue applying a social constructivist approach and would emphasize the crucial role of the Black Sea Region for the European Energy security.

CHAPTER 3: A CONSTRUCTIVIST APPROACH TO THE SECURITY OF EUROPEAN NATURAL GAS SUPPLY

CASE STUDY- BLACK SEA REGION

As seen from the previous chapters, the Black Sea Region has a dual nature in terms of both geostrategical and ideational determinants. Geo-strategically, it constitutes a bridge and a border between East and West simultaneously uniting and dividing different countries with various economical, political and cultural interests. This study does not seek to reduce the significance of this region to the energy security issue; on the contrary, it claims that the method of addressing the current challenges of energy security can be explained by its complex history as a region which constantly juxtaposed some of the most significant European actors.

Therefore, the study will use a social constructivist approach in order to analyze the way the Black Sea Region was shaped by the new interactions related to the energy security dimension and will attempt to evaluate whether the European Union can utilize the shared Russian energy security threats as an instrument to promote a new Black Sea Region identity based on regional energy trade cooperation. It will also claim that a successful Black Sea Region cooperation in the energy sector would represent the first step toward a Common European Energy Security. However, previous to this analysis, we would have to look at the main characteristics of the interactions between the Europe's "Self" and its two main significant "Others" (Russia and Turkey). Finally it will claim that the energy security dimension brings Turkey closer to the European "Self" and accentuates the Russian "Other".

3.1. Constructivism

Although a widely utilized concept, constructivism is a rather ambiguous theory due to a lack of agreement among the constructivist authors who do share its core assumption but cannot agree with a common definition. In order to avoid confusions it must be state that this study mainly refers to a conventional understanding of constructivism and employs Aldler's acceptance of constructivism. According to him, constructivism is a middle-ground theory and it constitutes the "view that the manner in which the material world shapes and is shaped by human action and interaction depends on dynamic normative and epistemic interpretations of the material world."⁷⁵ .

Focusing on the "constitutive role of norms and shared understandings"⁷⁶, constructivism holds that "agents and structures are co-constituted and therefore agents are always dependent on the structures in which they are embedded."⁷⁷ Furthermore, according to Zehfuss the social identity of an actor "exists only in relation to others and thus provides a crucial connection for the mutually constitutive relationship between agent and structure. This identity is continuously defined in process of interaction. " ⁷⁸ Elaborating on "identities "and "interests", Wendt argues that "actors behave according to the roles assigned to them and their identities represent the basis of their interests."⁷⁹ As such, "identities and interests are intersubjectively constituted ".⁸⁰ This ontological assumption has been also applied to

⁷⁵ Emanuel Adler, " Seizing the Middle Ground: Constructivism in World Politics", European Journal of International Relations, 1997, p.322

⁷⁶ K.M.Fierke," Constructivism", International Relations Theories. Discipline and Diversity, Oxford: Oxford University Press, p.170

⁷⁷ Idem, p.170

⁷⁸ Maja Zehfuss , Constructivism in international relations: the politics of reality, Cambridge University Press, 2002, p. 45

⁷⁹ Alexander Wendt, , *Anarchy is what sates make of it: the social construction of power politics*, International Organization 46, 2, 1992, pp. 396-399

⁸⁰ Idem, p. 401

regions and it was claimed that they are also “socially constructed and susceptible to redefinition.”⁸¹

Drawing mainly from this last assumption, our study will argue that Black Sea Region represents an area that has been shaped and reshaped in a process of interaction between several major international actors. Its identity as a region has been constructed to serve different purposes that reflected the interests of very different identities. Moreover, the interaction process took place at different levels and it always involved a sense of competition between the actors who tried to impose their own set of norms and values and export their own models of identities.

One level of interaction that shaped the Black Sea Region identity involved the tensioned relationships between Russia and the European Union. Russia as an actor has been constructed as Europe’s significant “Other” and conversely the European identity has been constructed in a perfect opposition with Russian identity.⁸² The second level of interaction involved Turkey which also represents a European “Other”. However, in Turkey’s case the rivalry was not as intense as compared to Russian case. Given these circumstances, it can be argued that for the moment, the Black Sea region identity is not yet very well defined although a significant number of regional projects are being developed. According to Aydin, the Black Sea Region “is a new creation much as the willingness to cooperate in the region.”⁸³ In the next section, our study will analyze the dynamic process of interactions that constructed Russia and Turkey as Europe’s “Others” taking into account the impact of the new interactions that took place in the energy sector.

⁸¹ Emanuel Adler, “Seizing the Middle Ground: Constructivism in World Politics”, *European Journal of International Relations*, 1997, p. 345

⁸² Iver Neumann, “Russia as Europe’s Other”, European University Institute, Florence, Norwegian Institute of International Affairs, 1996, p.

⁸³ Aydin, Mustafa, *Europe’s next shore: the Black sea region after EU enlargement*, European Union Institute for Security Studies, Paris, 2004

3.1.1. Europe's significant "Other", Russia

In order to test the hypothesis put forth by our study, we first have to analyze whether Russia can actually constitute a significant "Other" of the European Union as to induce a strong perception of distinctiveness which in turn would determine the creation of an antagonized "Black Sea Region Self". According to Neumann "Russia, in whatever territorial shape, by whatever name, as whatever representation, has a history as Europe's main liminar."⁸⁴ He claims that Russia has constantly been portrayed as a "border", a concept which comprises an intrinsic meaning that can be easily associated with several derogatory terms such as "threat", "enemy", "danger".⁸⁵ As Wendt argues "the meaning in terms of which action is organized arises out of interaction."⁸⁶ In other words, the representation of Russia as the significant "Other" of Europe constitutes the result of a long history of interactions between the two actors which has been mainly characterized by political, military and economic tensions. Once more, Neumann perfectly summarizes the tensioned relationship between Russia and Europe as it follows:

There are uncertainties surrounding its Christian status in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, uncertainties about the extent to which it could succeed in internalizing what it learned from Europe in the eighteenth century, uncertainties about its military intentions in the nineteenth century and its military-political ones in the twentieth century, and now again uncertainties about its potential as a liminar—uncertainties everywhere.⁸⁷

In addition to Neumann's statement, the present study argues that in the twenty-first century Russia's perception continues to be surrounded by uncertainties, this time concerning its fluctuant position in the energy sector which constructed its image as an unreliable long-

⁸⁴ Iver, B. Neuman , *Uses of the Other, "The East" in European Identity formation*, Borderlines, vol. 9, University of Minnesota Press, 1999, p.128

⁸⁵ Idem , 128

⁸⁶ Alexander Wendt, *Anarchy is what sates make of it: the social construction of power politics*, International Organization 46, 2, 1996, p. 403

⁸⁷ Iver Neuman,

term supplier. Furthermore, it is expected that the current economic crisis would also lead to a deterioration of Russian- European relationship. In this context, Black Sea Region represents an area that could enhance cooperation between the two actors because it “bears potential for common projects of mutual interest.”⁸⁸

As it has been already argued in the **1.3.** section of this study Russia promoted its image of a pragmatic, arrogant, imperfect democracy in contrast with European Union values that promote cooperation, security, democracy, human rights and rule of law.⁸⁹ Considering itself as the descendant state of the Soviet Union, Russia shapes its foreign policy in a traditional power politics framework which isolates it from the big “European family”.⁹⁰ Using its energy supplies monopoly as a political weapon Russia seeks to impede the potential for region-building in the Black Sea area. However, the European Union – Russia relationship is characterized by increase interdependence. The two entities continuously redefine their identities and interest in a series of interactions that irregularly and asymmetrically distributes power to them. Without the European market, Russia would no longer be the dominant energy actor in the region. As Ferrero-Waldner added in one of his discourses “European markets take around two thirds of Russian gas exports, and the revenues from our custom are vital to Russia's economic growth. Managing this interdependence will be an important challenge.”⁹¹ In addition to this, if European Union succeeds to create a Black Sea Region identity and promote good energy trade cooperation it would also gain a symbolic “transit monopoly” that would affect the balance of power in its

⁸⁸ Mustafa Aydin, “Europe’s new region: The Black Sea in the wider Europe neighborhood”, Southeast European and Black Sea Studies, 2005, p. 257

⁸⁹ Judith Kelley, ‘New Wine in old Wineskins: Promoting Political Reforms through the New European Neighbourhood Policy’, Journal of Common Market Studies, 2006, p. 29

⁹⁰ Peter M.E. Volten and Blagovest Tashiev “International Relations, Politicla Culture, and Security: Conceptual Challenges”, IOS Press, 2007, p. 19

⁹¹ Ferrero-Waldner, Energy Security and Foreign Policy, Foreign Policy Association, World Leadership Forum 2008 New York, 24 September 2008

favor. However, as it can be observed in fig. 1, Black Sea region is not just a transit zone for the European Energy supplies, it also represents an area of ideological and religious colision. There is a “religious and ideological competition between Turkic/Islamic areas in the West Black Sea Region, the Byzantine periphery and orthodox Eastern Slavs”⁹² which further deepens the gap between the main actors in the region. Russia has accentuated its “Otherness” and drastically reduced its chances to be integrated in the European “Self” especially because for the moment, it represents a threat to the European Energy Security. However the second Europe’s “Other”, Turkey seems to take advantage of its key position in the energy game and advance its negotiations for European Union membership.

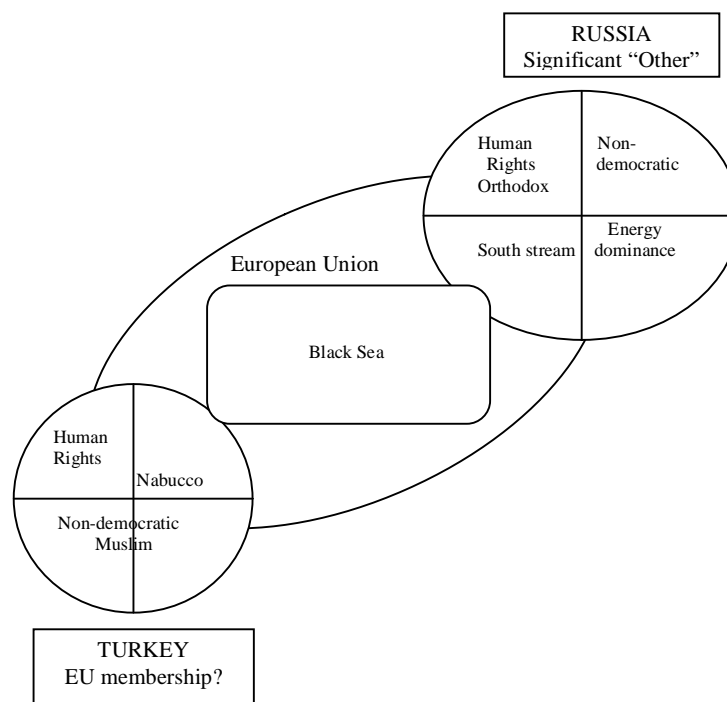


Figure 1- The two significant “Others” of Europe and the Black Sea Region

⁹² Graeme P. Herd and Fotios Moustakis, “Black Sea Geopolitics: A Litmus test for the European Security Order?” Frank Cass London, vol.5, no.3, 2000, p. 125

3.1.2. Energy, the key for Turkey's accession?

Turkey dedication to the energy security issue and its willingness to assume a leading role in the Black Sea Region reflect its interests to join European Union. Yet, The European Union seems to have blocked its accession talks and showed its reluctance regarding Turkey's ability to fulfill accession criteria.⁹³ Having a long history as an imperial power, Turkey seeks to increase its visibility and geostrategic position, not only in the Black Sea Region but also as a future member of the European Union.⁹⁴

After ten years of negotiations, Turkey might succeed to “unblock its accession talks in the energy area due to its strategic location.”⁹⁵ Its territory can become the nucleus of several oil and gas pipelines that are currently under discussion or that are already operational (see Blue Stream, BTC, Nabucco and the completed interconnector to Greece).⁹⁶ In this context, Turkey's chances to “become part of successful European integration as an existing socially constructed reality”⁹⁷ significantly increases. A closed collaboration between Turkey and the European Union could bring mutual benefices two both parts as “Turkey would gain transit fees and the opportunity to prove that it is an indispensable partner of the European Union, while the European Union would gain reliable alternative supply route.”⁹⁸

Although Turkey represents one of the European “Other”, and it might not fulfill the requirements for becoming a full-fledge European Union member, its increasing interaction with the European Union in the energy sector and its decision to support Nabucco represent

⁹³ Katinka Barysch, “Turkey's role in European energy Security”, Center for European Reform, December, 2007, p1

⁹⁴ Peter M.E. Volten and Blagovest Tashiev “International Relations, Politicla Culture, and Security: Conceptual Challenges”, IOS Press, 2007, p. 19

⁹⁵ Katinka Barysch, “Turkey's role in European energy Security”, Center for European Reform, December, 2007, p.2

⁹⁶ Idem, p. 3

⁹⁷ Peter M.E. Volten and Blagovest Tashiev “International Relations, Politicla Culture, and Security: Conceptual Challenges”, IOS Press, 2007, p. 13

⁹⁸ Idem, p.1

an important step towards the realization of a Common European Energy Security and in the same time reduces the Self/ Other division. It can also be argued that the Russian threats to the European Energy Security created a sense of unity among Black Sea countries and determined Europe to reconsider its relationships with Turkey. Thus, this context of identity convergence in the Black Sea Region now favors a regional cooperation in the energy sector.

Using a constructivist assumption we can argue that a strong foundation for a “Black Sea Region Self” was constructed in the process of interaction concerning the energy security issue. However, this foundation alone does not guarantee the construction of a Black Sea regional identity since this would require also other region making tools. One important condition that must be taken into consideration when trying to develop a common identity of the Black Sea countries is the realization of a single, complex, unitary and coherent strategy toward this region.

This would create a sense of unity in a region which “is already a jungle of agreements, alliances and acronyms.”⁹⁹ Considering the multitude of different and competing interests of the countries in the region the European Union strategy should individually consider the interests of each Black Sea Region country and analyze their own way of relating to the European “Self”. Far from following this purpose, the recent initiatives promoted by the European Union in the region have overlapping objectives and their delayed implementation underling the fact that “European Union lapses in envisioning a proper regional framework for its Eastern neighbors and, beyond them, for the post-Soviet area.”¹⁰⁰ Although a modest start, the Black Sea Synergy and the Eastern Partnership represent important steps toward a future Common European Policy. In this sense the greatest challenge for European Union at the moment is to improve solidarity in the region and translate into deeds the objectives that have been already included in the above mentioned documents. We argue that European

⁹⁹ Tassinari Fabrizio, “A shadow EU Strategy for the Wider Black Sea Region Area”, IOS Press, 2007, p.72

¹⁰⁰ Laure Delcour, “A Missing Regional Dimension? The ENP and Region-Building in the Eastern Neighborhood”, 2008, p.48

Union should take the opportunity created by the current energy security issue and enhance the project for a Common European Energy Policy. The path toward a Common European Energy Security is perfectly summarized in the following statement:

Put simply, Europe needs to use its economic and political weight on the world stage in a much greater way than it has done in the past. It needs to define clearly its goals and aspirations regarding its energy partners, both suppliers and consumers, and then speak with one voice to pro-actively promote these interests.¹⁰¹

3.1.3. A renewed regional identity for the Black Sea Region

It has been argued by many authors that the Black Sea Region does not form a region in itself and no method of regional identity creation can be envisioned for this region. They claim that “Black Sea region an intellectually constructed region, is not seen as such from the outside (by the international community), nor from inside (by the Black Sea countries themselves).”¹⁰²

On the contrary utilizing a constructivist approach this study argues that in the new emergent European energy security order, the Russian’ common perceived energy security threat can represent the nexus of cooperation in the Black Sea Region. Before analyzing the probability of a regional identity creation in the Black Sea Region, we first have to question the concept of “European identity” because this represents the referent for the new regional identity that has to be created. The idea of Europe, as we understand it today has evolved as a result of a very dynamic process. European identity is a perpetually negotiated phenomenon.

¹⁰¹ Andris , Piebalgs, (2006). A Common Energy Policy for Europe. EU Energy Policy and Law Conference, Brussels 9 March 2006
URL:<http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=SPEECH/06/161&format=HTML&aged=0&language=EN&guiLanguage=en>

¹⁰² Discussion with experts on Black Sea affairs during the International Conference “ The New European Architecture in the 21st Century; Promoting Regional Cooperation in the Wider Black Sea Area”, Milos Island, Greece, 3-7 September 2002.

Using European Union as a tool of continuing expansions of its borders, Europe re-defines itself periodically. As such, European identity represents an improved and broader awareness for the diverse dimensions of global threats and challenges.

A closer analysis of the main European Union initiatives toward the Black Sea Region reveals that its region-building project it is essentially a security project. As such, the recent intensification of the energy security issue can only contribute to a reinforcement of the project because it constructs a context in which the concepts of “*region* and *security* are combined in a manner that creates the former by emphasizing the latter.”¹⁰³ With security as a core objective, the Black Sea Region becomes also a political project “for security is not something that simply exists, but something that is purposefully shaped by political actors.”¹⁰⁴ If properly utilized by political actors, the idea of energy risk mitigation can become the catalyst of the regional identity formation process. As Nye’s asserted, “regions are what politicians and people want them to be.”¹⁰⁵ In the light of these arguments, Black Sea Region can be politically constructed not just as a “transit zone, but a focus of energy security action *per se*”¹⁰⁶ In this sense Russian *divide et impera* foreign policy and its obstructionism works in favor of a “collective self” construction. In other words, Black Sea Region “is an asset only in security dynamics which are by definition competitive, military-centric and structured by interstate rivalries.”¹⁰⁷

Discussing the concept of security Wendt argues that “notions of security differ in the extent to which and the manner in which the self is identified cognitively with the other, and...it is upon this cognitive variation that the meaning of anarchy and the distribution of

¹⁰³ Felix Ciuta, “Region? Why Region? Security, Hermeneutics, and the Making of the Black Sea Region”, Geopolitics, Routledge, 2008, p. 129

¹⁰⁴ Peter M.E. Volten and Blagovest Tashiev “International Relations, Political Culture, and Security: Conceptual Challenges”, IOS Press, 2007, p.3

¹⁰⁵ J.S. Nye, *International Regionalism*, Boston, Little Brown, 1986, p.338

¹⁰⁶ Tassinari Fabrizio, “A shadow EU Strategy for the Wider Black Sea Region Area”, IOS Press, 2007, p.71

¹⁰⁷ Felix Ciuta, “Region? Why Region? Security, Hermeneutics, and the Making of the Black Sea Region”, Geopolitics, Routledge, 2008, p. 125

power depends.”¹⁰⁸ Applied to our case, a positive identification between the Black Sea Region countries can emerge if the current energy security setting would be properly utilized as to induce a negative cognitive association with Russia. Within this new framework, the politicians play a crucial role as “ security producers” and the creation of a Black Sea regional identity depends on the Black Sea countries governments’ will to unite their political discourses and promote this region as a “European Union’ inland sea” both geographically and politically. Thus, once created, the Black Sea Region “Self” would constitute a part of the European “Self” and would serve two main purposes. On the one hand it will be a “gatekeeper of European identity, the filter through which the core identity is challenged and changed”¹⁰⁹ and on the other hand it would represent a “gateway to serving widespread diversification needs, provided that the countries in the region can rationally cooperate.”¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁸ Alexander Wendt, *Level of analysis vs. Agents and Structures : Part III*, Review of international Studies 18, 1992, p. 183

¹⁰⁹ Graeme P. Herd and Fotios Moustakis, “Black Sea Geopolitics: A Litmus test for the European Security Order?” Frank Cass London, vol.5, no.3, 2000, p. 123

¹¹⁰ Necdet Pamir, “ The Black Sea : A Gateway to Energy Security and Diversification”, South European and Black Sea Studies , vol.7, no.2, June 2007, p. 262

CONCLUSION AND FURTHER RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

This study has evaluated the likelihood of a future Common European Energy Policy based on a regional model of energy trade cooperation in The Black Sea Region. It has argued that the current energy security framework in the Black Sea Region has the potential to develop a “Black Sea Region Self” as opposed to the Russian “Other”. This common identity would lead to a successful energy trade cooperation which in a long-term would represent the foundation of a Common European Energy Security Policy.

Strategically located at the crossroads of Europe, the Middle East and Central Asia, the Black Sea Region represents now a crucial area for the two main gas pipeline projects. Their implementation would be decisive for the regional identity since they are supported by actors that share different political interests in the region. From a constructivist perspective the Black Sea Region represents an area that has been shaped and reshaped in a process of interaction between several regional actors that had different and competing interests. The main finding of the study is that Black Sea Region identity formation remains for the moment an ongoing process and Europe can benefit from the newly energy security context to implement a coherent strategy towards this region and shape its identity. Although very different the Black Sea countries can find mutual benefices from an energy security regional cooperation. In order to secure its energy supplies and advance the Common European Energy Policy, the European Union should act as with a unitary voice and create a coherent Black Sea Region strategy.

Taking this as a starting point, a further research of the topic would apply the constructivist framework to a larger number of countries in Black Sea Region and would separately evaluate their support for a Common European Energy Policy.

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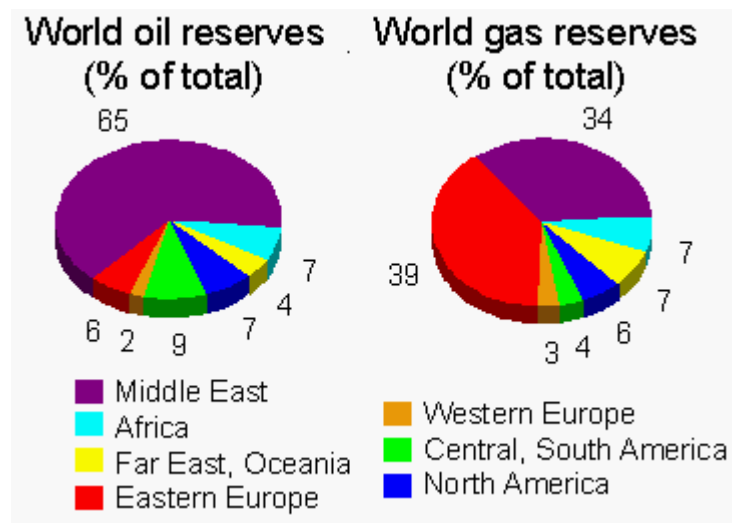
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APENDICES

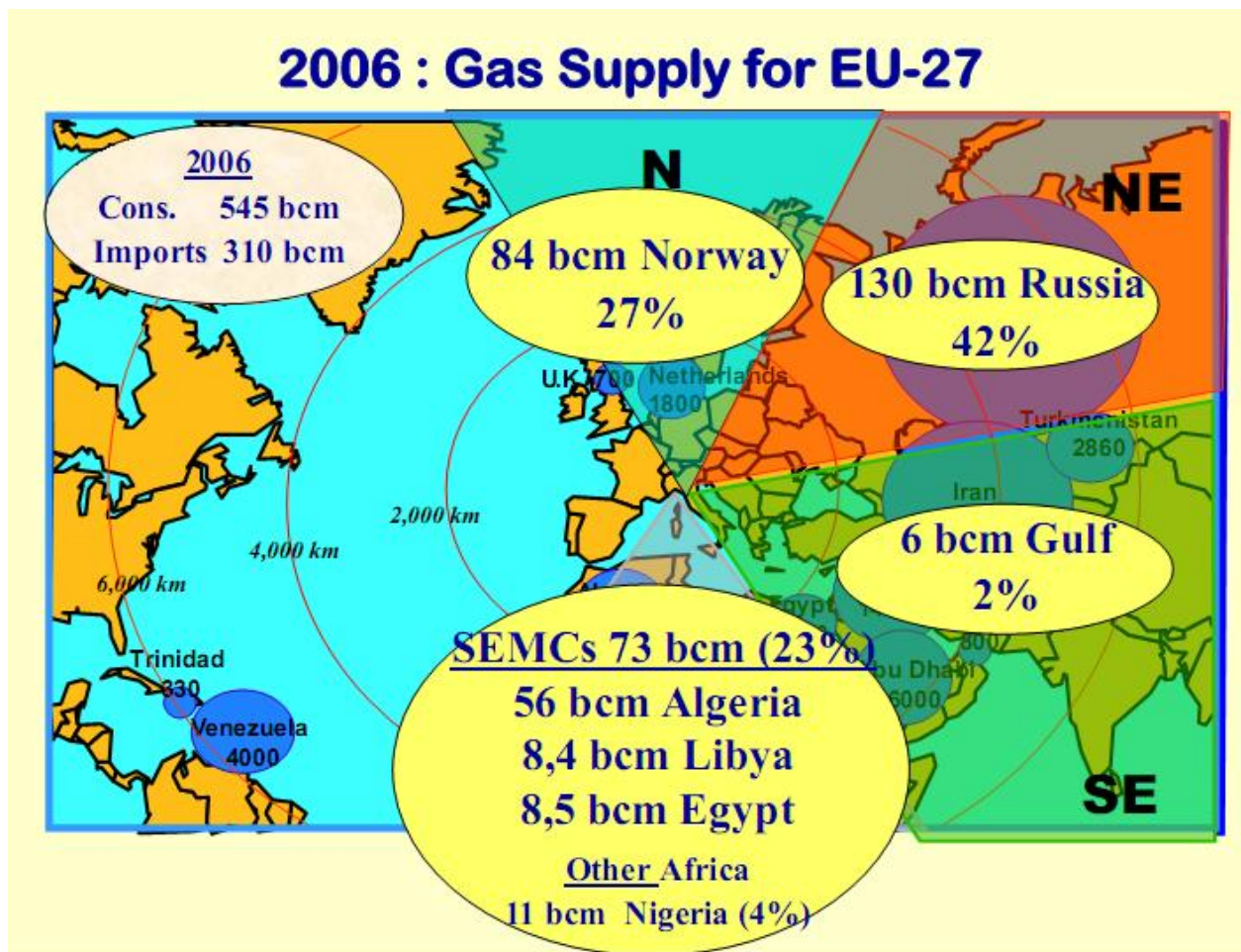
Graph 1 -Energy Statistics



Source: Energy Information Administration. Official energy Statistics from the U.S. Government <http://www.mhhe.com/earthsci/geology/mcconnell/eap/oilgas.htm>

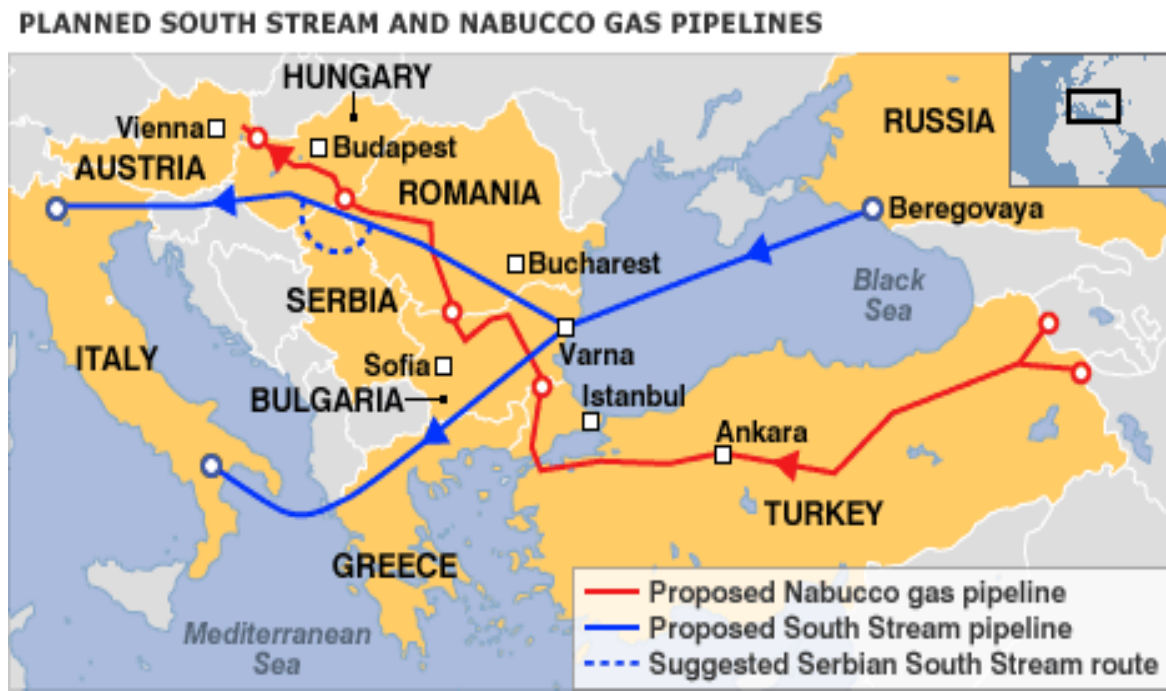
Distribution of global oil and gas reserves expressed as a percentage of global reserves. Two-thirds of the world's oil and one-third of all natural gas reserves are located in the Middle East. Russia has 33% of the world's natural gas and Saudi Arabia has 25% of the world's oil.

Figure 2-Gas Supply for EU



Source: Manfred HAFNER Fondazione Eni Enrico Mattei (FEEM) Security of Gas Supply in Europe Long term natural gas demand and supply outlook for Europe: Import potential, infrastructure needs and investment risk mitigation “FEE

Figure 3 -Planned South Stream and Nabucco Gas Pipelines



Source: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/7854208.stm#map>

Figure 4- Black Sea Natural Gas Transit Routes

