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**ENERGY SECURITY.
BLACK SEA – CASPIAN SEA CORRIDOR**

Mihai NEAG, PhD, Elisabeta-Emilia HALMAGHI

“Nicolae Bălcescu” Land Forces Academy, Sibiu

Abstract:

Amid divergent economic and strategic interests of the great regional and international powers, energy security remains a complex problem which requires pragmatic solutions tailored to the needs of security. Stability and economic prosperity on the Black Sea - Caspian Sea corridor can not be understood and strengthened but in relation to the stability and prosperity of the states in this area, but also in proximity. Analysing power relations and conflict developments in this region, but also those in the surrounding areas, it can be noticed that the instability of part of the system is transmitted in it, and the consequences are serious, varied and difficult to manage.

Key words: energy security, Black Sea, Caspian Sea,

1.Introduction

The term security was extended to so many areas of social, economic, cultural, spiritual life, that it is very hard to grasp where the boundary between security studies and other disciplines that study the human society is. Security analysis should be addressed on its multiple dimensions of manifestation: political, social, economic, military and environmental. Barry Buzan offers a complete overview of security dimensions: *„military security refers to mutual interaction of armed offensive and defensive capabilities of the states with their perceptions regarding the intentions of others; political security envisages organizational stability of states, systems of government and ideologies that give them legitimacy; economic security includes access to resources, finances and markets necessary to maintain an acceptable level of wealth and power of the state; social security consists of sustainability, with acceptable development, of the traditional culture of language, culture, religion, national identity and traditions; environmental security designates the maintenance of planetary and local biosphere as essential support system of human existence”*. [1]

The current dynamics of changes in the security environment is influenced by many factors that induce a number of trends, of which a major influence is of those causing the acceleration of regional integration and globalization processes, multiplication of state fragmentation attempts, renewed efforts by states to preserve their influence in the dynamics of international relations, diversification of involvement of non-state actors, rational convergence of efforts to build a new security architecture.

Security issues of a state arises from the report, existing at a given time, between threats with which it is confronted and the ability to seize appropriately, to interpret them correctly and to counter them effectively.

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2. Trends in energy security

Energy resources have permanently and overwhelmingly influenced the evolution of human society and its economic development, oil and gas continuing to be a reason for cooperation, but also for confrontation and disputes between the actors of the international system, for holding and controlling them, access to them, supplies, distribution and use, increasingly modeling, at the same time, the economy, security, foreign policy and states' priorities. Hydrocarbons and energy infrastructure are particularly important for both producing countries and for the transit of energy resources consumers. Any potential disruption to their flow can generate a series of negative consequences both on countries' economic growth and on ensuring the necessary energy for the population. In this context, energy security asserts strongly as a special side of national, regional and global security.

Uneven distribution of energy reserves, concentrated in certain geographic areas results in other geographical areas' dependence on their import from surplus areas, leading to a fierce competition for access to resources. Access to or loss of access to these resources can have unpredictable consequences, from internal economic instability, with incalculable effects, to changes in international rankings, phenomena which basically would destabilize the world. All the more so as all developed economies depend on energy resources, and the limited nature and spectrum of their exhaustion amplify the complexity of the problem. Therefore, in the security strategies, we increasingly meet the concept of energy security, as a strategic objective for any country run is, essentially, access to energy sources, especially oil and gas.

Energy security is today a priority for all actors on the international stage of life, but especially for those with poor energy resources and high demand. Moreover, more and more actors of contemporary international environment found that energy can be used as a lethal weapon in relations between states. From this perspective, it is no wonder that lately, more and more states have placed energy among the priorities of national security policies and strategies.

At the beginning of the third millennium, energy security is endangered by six major threats: the finite nature of oil and natural gas resources; global climate changes; interruptions of supply flows; high energy costs for developing countries; use of energy revenues to support undemocratic regimes; use of energy as a tool of pressure [2].

The vision of energy security depends largely on regional and global context and on the position in the economic cycle. Energy security status is defined by the following vectors: security of energy supplies, securing existing energy routes, identification of alternative routes of energy, identifying alternative sources of energy, securing energy markets.

Energy security is at the crossroads of all security dimensions, as its realization depends on achieving a certain degree of political and military consensus, has a direct impact on the economy, society and the environment, and, not least, aims to protect every human individual. Walter S. Jones defined the concept of power as "the ability of an international actor to use its tangible and intangible resources so as to influence results of international relations for its own benefit" [3]. This illustrates the actuality that any state will make use of all the resources at its disposal, including the energetic ones, to impose its will and influence the behaviour of other actors in order to achieve their own interests. Summarizing, we can say that power means resources, strategies and results.

Energy security is one of the fundamental objectives of Romania's energy strategy, along with the economic competitiveness of the energy sector and environmental protection and climate change mitigation. Defined by a state's capacity to provide the necessary energy imports uninterruptedly and affordably, energy security is a primary

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concern of the countries of South East Europe (SEE), which includes Romania, given the quasi-monopolistic nature of the market for natural gas in this region. [4]

According to the report of the working group “Security and energy diplomacy”, the concept of energy security should be distinguished from the energy independence with which it is often confused. In an era of globalized markets and energy interconnections, energy independence, which refers to the national energy self-sufficiency and insularity, is a counterproductive political aspiration and economically inefficient. Internally, energy security depends on the quality of infrastructure, energy governance and energy policies, chapters in which Romania recorded significant arrears. [5]

Energy diplomacy refers to the act of foreign policy through which states (or blocks of states) promote their energy interests. Energy security is the overriding concern of energy diplomacy. In the “*EU energy security strategy*”, the key to improving energy security is “primarily for enhanced cooperation at regional and European level regarding the functioning of the internal market and, secondly, *a more coherent external action.*” [6] To be effective, energy diplomacy must necessarily be accompanied by actions of economic diplomacy, diplomacy of science, environment, etc. However, the official energy diplomacy is complemented by track two diplomacy type, at the level of NGOs, of the members of academic community, of the activities of the energy or technology companies.

Energy insecurity has the potential to create a major crisis. This suggests the need for a risk and threats prevention strategies to interrupt the supply of energy resources that would minimize the effects on supply levels in the event of a major regional or global crisis.

3. Black Sea-Caspian Sea Corridor – an unstable security environment

The contemporary world as a whole is dependent on energy resources, of which oil and gas are of utmost importance, being the pillars of achieving energy security. In this context the Extended Black Sea Region gains a strategic importance in the geopolitical and geostrategic areas of the European Union to ensure energy security. This region, directly neighbouring the European Union, is considered to become the most central to the flow of energy resources, especially hydrocarbons in the Caspian area. But at the same time this space is sprinkled with providing sources of instability and insecurity, and some of these sources are maintained in order to hinder and endanger energy flow. Major challenges and risks are determined primarily by settlement of frozen conflicts, peacekeeping, border demarcation, democratization, confrontation to have a privileged access to energy resources, terrorism.

The complexity of involved vectors, regional instability and relatively high density of actors in a relatively small geographical area give a strategic importance to the Black Sea, unprecedented in recent decades. The theory stated by Morgenthau on *prestige policy* of the states seems to be valid, if we consider the position and attitude of Russia in this region. [7]

Russia’s efforts to demonstrate its power through military invasion of independent and sovereign states, the use of energy resources or their political and economic subordination successfully enroll in the theory set out by Morgenthau. Starting from Morgenthau’s theory, it can be said that, to fulfill the objective of imposing hegemony in the area between the Black Sea and the Caspian Sea, the division of western unity is a constant endeavour and a major foreign policy objective pursued by the Kremlin. But revisionist actions isolated Russia of a West that it wanted to integrate in.

Russia strives to impose its hegemony on the corridor located between the Black Sea and the Caspian Sea. One of the Russian state’s steps for restoring and expanding

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influence in the former Soviet space is the establishment of the Eurasian Economic Union (UEE) consisting of Russia, Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan. Eurasian Economic Union seeks the establishment of a common economic space in the Eurasian region and advanced integration of member countries. [8] Other countries that Russia would like to integrate into the UEE are Ukraine, Moldova, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia and Belarus, members of the Eastern Partnership launched by the European Union in 2009. As leader of the Organization, Russia intends to become a connection point between the European Union and Asia, thus maximizing its negotiating position in relation to the West, especially regarding a sensitive issue such as access to Caspian resources and those of Central Asia.

In any case, the conflict between Russia and Ukraine and the annexation of Crimea have questioned the efficiency of the whole institutional cooperation edifice in the Black Sea, practically demonstrating the incapacity of all mechanisms of cooperation established at the regional level, regardless of the initiators, in the face of a new geopolitical reality that indicates that the Russian Federation is the most important pole of power in the region. *Hard-power* policy pursued by the Russian state is the way in which Moscow promotes its strategic interests in the former Soviet space, but also throughout the region between the Black and the Caspian Sea.

Tensions and conflicts in the South Caucasus constitute a genuine insecurity complex both at the confluence of Eastern Europe with Central and Eastern Asia and Russia's southern border. Caucasian region is important to the West because of Azerbaijan's energy resources in the Caspian Sea, considered as an alternative to Russian gas and proximity to the Middle East. Amid the confrontation between Russia and the international community in the case of Ukraine, the dispute over Nagorno - Karabakh is a major source of conflict and does not seem to be important on the agenda of the great powers.

Due to the geostrategic importance of the region and due to the decision taken at the Istanbul Summit in June 2004, NATO has appointed a Special Representative for the Caucasus and Central Asia [9]. NATO has built relationships with every country in the South Caucasus individually through partnerships. Major objectives of the Alliance in the region are energy security and critical transport infrastructure protection. Energy resources from the Caspian Sea cross Azerbaijan and Georgia, reaching the global market and thus, cutting off their flow, affects the security interests of the Alliance. Due to the Southern Gas Corridor through which Azeri natural resources arrive in Europe, energy infrastructure of Azerbaijan has also become critical to European end consumers and therefore to the Alliance. Given the threats that the South Caucasus is facing, such as drug trafficking from Afghanistan or other areas of Central Asia, terrorist groups and Islamic extremist organizations operating in the vicinity, maintaining and developing cooperative relationship with NATO is crucial for countries in this region.

Through the Eastern Partnership, the European Union has developed cooperative relations with Armenia and Azerbaijan. At the Eastern Partnership Summit held in 2015 in Riga, the discussions focused on projects of multilateral cooperation on energy security and improving the energy infrastructure. The major objective of the Eastern Partnership is to create an area of stability and prosperity, peace and democracy by continuing the reform process in all partner countries.

Given the success of revisionist actions carried out by Russia and the lack of response from the international community, in proportion to the seriousness of the invasion of a sovereign and independent state, it can be said that in the area between the Black Sea and Caspian Sea, the Russian state is the actor who leads all geopolitical "games".

South Caucasus is a region of particular importance for the stability and economic

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prosperity of the countries on the corridor between the Black Sea and the Caspian Sea. South Caucasus is of special importance for the West because of energy resources held by Azerbaijan in the Caspian Sea considered as an alternative to Russian gas, but also because of its proximity to the Middle East. Regional security might be jeopardized if serious escalation of unresolved conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan on Nagorno-Karabakh separatist region of Azerbaijan.

However, we believe that neither Russia, nor the West will support the use of military force to resolve the conflict given the consequences of a war in the Caucasus, and the other files of the moment (the conflict in Ukraine, Middle East conflicts, refugee crisis). European countries that depend on natural resources provided by Azerbaijan could face suspension of supplies, and Russia might face specific issues of military engagement on a new battlefield but also with a large wave of refugees, situations difficult to be managed by a weaker economy like that of the Russian state. Also, a war would affect the security and stability of the entire Caucasus which is a buffer against Islamic fundamentalist nuclei expansionism in the Middle East.

Tensions in the South Caucasus would have dangerous consequences for Europe's energy security. A regional war would jeopardize transit of hydrocarbons through pipelines Baku Tbilisi-Ceyhan (BTC) and South Caucasus (SCP) which are located very close to the line separating Armenian armed forces from Azerbaijani. In terms of a regional war, Azerbaijan would be isolated and the capacity of the authorities in Baku to promote a foreign policy oriented toward the West would be drastically diminished.

South Caucasus is a geopolitical and geostrategic corridor for which the powers engaged in the struggle for Eurasia will fight on all "fronts" in the future, too. Russia has for centuries played an important role in this region and it is a fact that great powers must take it into account in any decision on the future of the Caucasus. Russian Federation will not give others the power centers in an area that it considers vital to its interests without a fight that will go on all levels. A possible recovery of Moscow's control over Azerbaijan and/or Georgia will make the West's useless efforts to diversify supply sources and routes of energy resources and the steps taken by the European Union for the democratization of the region.

The doctrine of "near foreign countries" is seeking control of all former Soviet territories, and the ultimate aim pursued by the Russian Federation is to control all energy resources transiting the Black Sea - Caspian Sea corridor. Finally, armed confrontation is not the solution for ensuring stability of the South Caucasus, but identifying opportunities for cooperation between the West and Russia since the Caucasus is a "gateway" for the penetration of both Western markets and Russian markets in Central Asia and Middle East. Blocking this "gate" through a war in the South Caucasus will bring enormous economic and social damage both to Russia and the West.

Another very important player for the area between the Black Sea and Caspian Sea is Iran. Resolving the Iranian nuclear issue has been a constant concern of the great powers on the international agenda in recent years. It remains to be seen whether the nuclear deal will remain anchored in a matter strictly related to the denuclearization of Iran punctual or is part of a broader diplomatic, economic and strategic undertaking that covers resizing the regional security architecture. Geopolitical context favours Iran bringing Washington and Tehran on same side in the fight against terrorism and restoring diplomatic relations between the two countries is the starting point of a genuine and unpredictable geopolitical revolution in the Middle East. An Iran that is no longer isolated from the United States and the European Union has the potential to become one of the most important geopolitical and geo economic players in the Middle East.

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The security situation in the Black Sea – Caspian Sea corridor and thus in the European Union may be adversely affected by events in the Middle East. The exodus of extremist ideologies and terrorists in the Middle East to the West through migration taking place at unprecedented levels in recent years can seriously affect Western stability and values as demonstrated by the terrorist attacks carried out in France.

4. Conclusion

What is currently happening in the world exceeds problems and conflicts in Eastern Europe, Caucasus and the Middle East. We assist at the setting up of a new global order that will gradually increase the competition between the world powers and resize some of the relationships and alliances between states. In the center of global competition that will ultimately change the paradigm of global power is the interest to control and secure energy resources and transport infrastructure which will cross Central Asia and the Caspian-Black Sea corridor linking the Far East to Europe.

The stake of all aggressions and actions of Russia on the Black Sea - Caspian Sea Corridor is huge, Kremlin aiming to destabilize Eastern Europe, especially the dissolution of the entire Euro-Atlantic construction. It is interesting that although Russia's relations with the United States, European Union and NATO have deteriorated significantly after the military intervention in Ukraine, the Kremlin has strengthened political and economic relations with the two important regional powers: Turkey and Iran.

In the current geopolitical and geostrategic architecture, regardless of geographical location or level of involvement of a state in solving regional problems, the indivisibility of security calls for joint efforts to effectively manage threats to stability and security.

It is possible that the international security environment is faced with major changes such as the dissolution of states and the emergence of new entities on the geopolitical map of the world, reconfiguring the composition of the Security Council of the United Nations and of the European Union and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. The events of recent years indicate that large international players have started a crucial match that will most likely end by reshaping the world that could exceed the weight and consequences of what happened at Yalta in 1945.

Notes:

- [1] Barry Buzan, *Popoarele, statele și teama*, București, Editura Cartier, 2000, p. 57.
- [2] Dick Lugar, *Energy Security is National Security*, <http://lugar.senate.gov/energy/security/index.cfm> , accesat la 14.10.2016.
- [3] Walter S. Jones, *The Logic of International Relations*, Seventh Edition, Harper Collins Publishers, 1991, p. 241.
- [4] <http://cursdeguvernare.ro/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/Raport-Sesiune-Lucru-Securitate-si-diplomatie-energetica-final.docx> , p. 7, accesat la 20.10.2016.
- [5] <http://cursdeguvernare.ro/securitate-energetica-lunga-lista-de-vulnerabilitati-lista-scurta-de-solutii.html>, accesat la 20.10.2016.
- [6] Barry Buzan, *op.cit.*, p. 20.
- [7] *politica de prestigiu* are două obiective: prestigiul ca scop final sau prestigiul în sprijinul unei politici imperialiste.
- [8] <http://www.capital.ro/uniunea-economica-eurasiatica-formata-la-1-ianuarie-vrea-sa-dialogheze-cu-ue.html>, accesat la 12.06.2016.
- [9] http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_50101.htm, accesat la 08.10.2016

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- [6] www.europeanideasnetwork.com