

The EU Position toward Frozen Conflicts Influence on Security and Energy Stability in Black Sea Region

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Summary: *This article is dedicated to the problem of the EU activity in Black Sea region "frozen conflicts" solution. It's obvious that energy security and stability of the European Union states mainly depends on Black Sea region political stability. The activating of any so-called "frozen conflict" in the region can lead to instability of EU member states. That's why European Union is trying to influence on the process of Nagorno Karabakh, Abkhazia and South Ossetia, and Transnistrian problems. The position of the EU often is unclear, but all its activities directed to peaceful settlement of these conflicts.*

Key words: *European Union, Black Sea region, "frozen conflicts", energy stability, Caucasus region, peacekeeping, policy of "small steps", concept "two states – one nation".*

The beginning of new century has been marked by new processes in world politics. The collapse of the USSR led to huge changes in international politics and international relations. Firstly, the USA tried to dominate over the world. Then the process of formation of multipolar world started. The last led to changes in importance of regions in the world politics.

During last decades the role of Black Sea region becomes increasingly important to energy security of not only regional states, but also the European Union. After Bulgaria and Romania entrance into the EU, the role of Black Sea region for Europe became critical. Indisputable fact, that the region is situated at the crossroads of trade and energy transit ways from Caspian Sea to Europe. Frozen conflict presence and activation in the region can destroy European continent stability.

The EU states depend a lot on the situation in the Black Sea region. And Black Sea states depend on EU foreign policy. So, they are interdependent. We can define several different factors which influence on Black Sea strategic situation. First of all, as it was told above, this region has a big importance for European security both in energy and political aspects. That's because Black Sea region is disposed on the way of oil and gas transit from Caspian Sea and Central Asia and connects Europe with Asia. It's necessary to stress, that there are many different ways for deepening regional cooperation and cooperation between Black Sea regional states and other world states.

But the next point is that there is the political instability atmosphere in the region. There are at least three frozen conflicts there – South Ossetia and Abkhazia (between Georgia and Russia), Nagorno Karabakh conflict (between Armenia and Azerbaijan), and Transnistrian problem (in Moldova).

Thirdly, the security level in Black Sea region often depends on different-oriented interests of regional states and such big players as USA, the EU and big regional states. Turkey, Bulgaria and Romania are NATO member-states. Georgia and Ukraine (till the president elections of 2010) claimed their readiness to enter this organization. They participate in the program "Partnership for Peace". Russia is trying to keep its dominating status in the region and develops relations with NATO as an equal partner (cooperation in the Council Russia – NATO).

From the other side, Romania and Bulgaria are the EU member-states. Turkey is negotiating about the entrance in the EU, Russia is the strategic partner of the European Union and Ukraine and Georgia are trying to develop their relations with it. So, the interests of different states in the region are intertwined and contradictory. By the way, most of them are trying to enter the EU or to have at least good partnership relations with it.

This article is the attempt to analyze the problem of interdependence of activating of ethnic and so-called frozen conflicts and energy security question in the Europe, EU position toward these frozen conflicts solving.

As far as it was told above there are three main frozen conflicts in the area. First of all the attention will be paid to South Ossetia and Abkhazia problem. From security view, the geography of South Caucasus region has a principle importance for the EU. This region connects two seas – Black and Caspian and can play important role in world trade, because of borders with Black Sea states in the west, Turkey, Iran, Pakistan and India in the south, China – in the east and Russia in the north. During last years the EU is paying some attention to this region because of strategy of wider cooperation with Turkey and Middle East. The EU interest in the region contains dual approaches: keep “one step at a distance” from Turkey and move “one step closer” to Iran¹⁸.

August 2008 war between Russia and Georgia showed the importance of the region in ensuring energy security of the Europe. There were many different reasons for this war from both sides. Some of them can be considered as emotional. But for Russia there were also some pragmatic reasons to provoke Georgia to the war. First of all Russia has strong aspiration to return Georgia (as well as Ukraine, Moldova, Azerbaijan) into its sphere of influence. It was demonstrated by different ways and objection to Ukraine joining NATO is the smallest of them.

Russia also tries to use energetic factor against energy dependent European states. It's known that Russian Federation supplies almost 25% of overall consumption of carbohydrates, 12% of total consumption of coal and 35% of enriched uranium¹⁹. These data show the important role of Russia in energy supply of Europe.

But the European states are trying to diversify supplies of oil and gas into region. The building of the Baku-Tbilisi-Jejhan pipeline can be considered as such attempt. The USA and Great Britain lobbied for it and sponsored the project. The main idea of building such pipeline was the necessity of diversification of energetic transit ways and stabilization of world market. This pipeline was built without Russia participation and started to work on May 2005. Since the beginning of its work the geopolitical situation in the region has changed. Transporting large amounts of oil which can be done through Russian pipeline Baku-Novosibirsk now is doing now bypassing Russia. And this situation influenced negatively on Russia's positions in the region.

In this context it's obvious that Russian Federation is interested to keep its status as the main supplier of oil and gas into Europe. It has enough natural resources RF has the biggest gas reserves in the world), but it loses its impact on neighbor transit states.

The war between Georgia and Russia in August 2008 had many important consequences. We stop at the most important results of it. 2008 war between Russia and Georgia has changed the political map of the world de facto. In spite of unrecognizing the Abkhazia and South Ossetia independence by almost all world states (except Russia) Georgia lost its influence on them. Both Abkhazia and South Ossetia moved into sphere of Russian influence. And it's necessary to say that Russia reached that not only by war, but first of all by it previous foreign policy toward people of those territories. During last decade the usual practice for Russian authorities was granting Russian citizenship to Abkhaz and Ossetins. As President of Georgia E. Shevardnadze told in 2002 “around 50 thousand people in Abkhazia got Russian citizenship”. He stressed that such policy of Russian Federation is “hidden annexation of Russia against Georgia”²⁰. But Georgia could nothing to do with it and in 2008 have got almost enemy territories inside the state and war with Russia as the guarantor of the rights of Russian citizens outside the country.

¹⁸ Гирагосян Р. Перемены в области безопасности на Южном Кавказе // Connections: ежеквартальный журнал. – Осень. – 2007. – С.127.

¹⁹ Як зміцнити енергетичну безпеку України та Європи? Рекомендаційний документ / Підготували М. Гончар, О. Тодійчук // openukraine.org/doc/FinalPaperUA.pdf

²⁰ Эдуард Шеварднадзе: "Предоставление российского гражданства жителям Абхазии и Южной Осетии является "скрытой аннексией" России против Грузии" // http://www.rol.ru/news/misc/news/02/07/15_022.htm

Proclaiming independence by Abkhazia and South Ossetia was the strong blow on Georgia independence and territory integrity.

During the war the part of the Baku-Tbilisi-Jejhan pipeline was destroyed and started to work just within several weeks. That influenced on energy stability of the Europe and demonstrated that the situation in the South Caucasus region is far away from stability and predictability.

The situation with Georgia also showed that the EU should find new strategy of South Caucasus conflict regulation. During the emergency summit of the EU leaders of EU states-members condemned the policy of Russia toward unilateral recognition of Abkhazia and South Ossetia independence. They also reaffirmed support for Georgia's territorial integrity²¹. But till today the EU has little impact on resolving the Georgian-Russian conflict. From October 1, 2008 the EU Monitoring mission acts in Georgia. But its activity is limited to the territory of Georgia. Initiatives of the EU about future status of Abkhazia and South Ossetia didn't bring any concrete results.

Thus we come to the problem of Armenian-Azerbaijan relations in the context of Nagorno Karabakh problem. This frozen conflict is the Soviet legacy. There is no necessity to stop on the history of the conflict because it's well-known. The special feature of Nagorno Karabakh problem is the lack of common approaches in the problem solving by all participants of the negotiating process. There is no unified vision of future status of Nagorno Karabakh territory in Armenia and Azerbaijan and such great players like Russia, the USA and the EU.

In Nagorno Karabakh had a place a collision of two fundamental principle of international law – the principle of territorial integrity and the right of nation to self-determination.

For Azerbaijan the principal moment is to preserve the territorial integrity of the state. It suggested the "wide autonomy" to NK. It has to formally remain within Azerbaijan while receiving broad rights of autonomy. The Armenia insists on right of Armenians of former Nagorno Karabakh Autonomy Region for self-determination.

The normalization of Azerbaijan-Armenian relations depends on solution of Nagorno Karabakh problem. Both states have their own approaches for it. The Azerbaijan suggested the "phased" solution to the conflict which includes removing troops from the territory of NK, returning the refugees to the region, discussion of the status of NK.

Armenian side is in favor of a batch solution of the NK problem. It's based on synchronization: Armenia and Azerbaijan has to remove their troops from the NK simultaneously, refugees must return to their permanent place of living and the question of the political status of the NK has to be agreed²².

Russia plays a key role in negotiating process between Armenia and Azerbaijan. It's the co-chief of Minsk Group of the OSCE. From one side Russia is trying to be objective in searching ways of solution the problem. And on November 2, 2008 the Moscow Declaration was signed by presidents of Armenia, Azerbaijan and Russian Federation²³. In this Declaration all sides proclaimed their will to "contribute to the improvement to the situation in South Caucasus and ensure the establishment the regional stability and security"²⁴ By this Declaration the NK territories have to return to Azerbaijan, the refugees will return to NK and after that the question on NK status will be solved. The ideas are not bad, but the problem is that Armenia and Azerbaijan are not ready to constructive dialog in this direction.

²¹ Стародуб Т., Данильчук О. Питання співробітництва ОДЕР – ГУАМ з ОЧЕС, ЄС, НАТО у формуванні системи безпеки у Чорноморсько-Каспійському регіоні // Стратегічна панорама. – 2009. - №1. – С.95-96.

²² Фесенко О. Вірмено-турецький реверанс та карабаський «Феномен» // <http://uaforeignaffairs.com/article.html?id=441>

²³ Казмиров В.Н. Мир Карабаху: Посредничество России в урегулировании нагорно-карабахского конфликта. – М.: Международные отношения, 2009. – С.372.

²⁴ Ibid.

From another side Russia is trying to use Nagorno Karabakh conflict for keeping its leading positions in the region. Unsolved problem of NK status is the resource of influence on Azerbaijan from Russia. In the context of diversification of oil and gas transit by the EU (Baku-Tbilisi-Jeihan pipeline) and the transportation of part of Azerbaijan oil through Russia territory) the necessity of such influence for Russia is obvious.

The new dimension of possible NK problem solution appeared after Turkey – Armenia negotiations. On October 10, 2009 the Armenia-Turkey protocols were signed in Zurich. This event caused great debates between politician, analytics, different expert and public. Even on October 10 were the discussions about the reality of the event²⁵

The signing of the protocols became the important stage in Armenia-Turkey relations and had big influence on geopolitical situation in the Black Sea region.

Those protocols are not ratified yet, but they demonstrated the readiness of both states for negotiating. Moreover Armenia is getting the open borders with Turkey and the possibility to break through economic blockade. And Turkey is improving its relations with the EU and the USA.

Soon after Zurich events, on November 22, 2009 a regular meeting of Armenian and Azerbaijan Presidents S.Satgsyan and I.Aliev took place. They didn't agree on based point of NK conflict regulation. Furthermore, Azerbaijan side started to talk about the possibility of resumption of hostilities in NK. But these statements are rather a way to pressure and not a real foreign policy vector of Azerbaijan.

The main result of the negotiations in Turkey-Armenia-Azerbaijan triangle is the changes in political atmosphere and geopolitical situation in Black Sea region. It's obvious that Armenia is trying to diversify its foreign policy and go away from almost total dependence on Russia's foreign policy, to break the economic and transport blockade of the country.

Turkey is interested in strengthening its positions in the region. Through its territory the main part of the Baku-Tbilisi-Jeihan pipeline runs. Turkey takes an active part in realization of NABUCCO energetic project. It provides the gas transportation from Caspian Sea and Middle East in the European Union states.

Except normalization relations with Armenia Turkey is trying to improve relations with Iran. During last time several gas agreements were signed by Turkey and Iran. According to them the Iranian gas will run to Europe through Turkey.

Thus possible improving relations between Turkey and Armenia and Armenia and Azerbaijan can change the political situation in the region. In this context the positive solution of NK problem is the necessary condition for ensuring energy stability and security both in Black Sea region and in the EU. The EU has to be more active in this direction. Its uncertain position is into the hands of Russia which in 2008 demonstrated one of ways of its foreign policy in the region.

There is one more frozen conflict in Black Sea region which can not be ignored. It's Transnistrian conflict. The proclaiming of independence of Transnistrian Moldovan Republic (TMR) brought new dimensions in regional security and stability. This event was the reaction to the coming to power in Moldova pro-Romanian radical nationalists who supported the idea of accession of Moldova to Romania. The major role in heating of the conflict played Moscow, which tried to use the situation as a means of influence on Moldova and Ukraine.

The situation in the region continues to leave uncertain and unpredictable. From one side, Moscow "guaranteed" the territorial integrity of Republic of Moldova and sovereignty

²⁵ Госдеп США: об отмене армяно-турецких протоколов не может быть и речи // <http://news.am/ru/news/6298.html>

in exchange of consent of state neutrality²⁶. From another it supported a lot Transnistrian separatists.

At the present time the negotiation process around the Transnistrian conflict is difficult to restore in official format "5+2" (Moldova, Transnistrian republic, Ukraine, Russia, OSCE + USA and EU as observers). During last seven years only two meetings of Moldovan and Transnistrian leaders were held. They brought no concrete results. On March 18, 2009 regular meeting of presidents of Russia and Moldova and the leader of Transnistria has been held. The Common statement was taken as a result of the meeting. In the statement all sides of the conflict express their gratitude to Russian Federation for its mediation in searching the "sustainable and comprehensive settlement of the Transnistrian conflict"²⁷.

Moldova (including the Transnistrian region) is the transit state through which gas flows from Russia to Europe. Thus unresolved Transnistrian conflict has rather important impact on energy stability of the Europe. The position of the European Union in this question was unclear till the autumn 2010. In October, 2010 the Resident Representative of the EU in Moldova M.Kalman announced that Russia should close peacekeeping in Transnistria and the EU and the USA should become mediators in the negotiating process on Transnistrian conflict solving. Moreover, the representative of the EU M.Kalman declared rate toward reunion of RM and possibility of its integration into the European Union (of course, with Transnistrian region)²⁸.

The greatest dissatisfaction with the situation in the region expresses Romania. This country is concerned by the support that Russia gives Transnistrian separatists. But the activity of Romania in Moldova and Ukraine can provoke another ethnic conflict in Black Sea region. During last years Romania consistently realizes the concept "two states – one nation" toward Republic of Moldova. After liberal-democratic powers came to power in Moldova, Romania activated its activity in this direction. Bucharest continues to redouble efforts in spreading its influence in Moldova with the help of romanization Moldovan society.

On October 28, 2009 the parliament of Romania accepted decision about "restoration" Romanian citizenship for those foreign Romanians who "... lost it from independent from them causes as the result of different historical circumstances". This decision considers also their descendants till the third generation. All limitations concerning number of applications allowed to accept are cancelled. The terms of consideration are shortening to 3-5 months. In Bucharest the National Agency on granting citizenship is planning to be opened.

The similar policy Romania provides toward Ukraine, particularly in Bukovina and Odessa region. There is no exact data about number of Romanian passports issued in Bukovina. On web-page "Bukovina on line" there is an interesting journalist investigation: according to official data, from 2002 till 2007 citizens both of Ukraine and Moldova got 3041 passport. In 2008 300 people in Moldova and Ukraine got Romanian citizenship, but unofficially the number of issued passports both in Moldova and Ukraine is much bigger. The most part of such people are keeping their previous citizenship. But Ukrainian constitution prohibits double citizenship and Romanian authorities know about that. This

²⁶ «Большая черноморская игра». – Выпуск №46(0214). – 24.11.09 // <http://seatruth.com/issues/46/31-bolshaya-chernomorskaya-igra.html>

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Євросоюз веде переговори про відхід Росії з Придністров'я і об'єднання Молдови // <http://www.rbc.ua/ukr/top/show/evrosoyuz-vedet-peregovory-ob-uhode-rossii-iz-pridnestrovyu-14102010115100> Румунські школи згідні додатково вивчати українську // <http://www.molbuk.com/news/5286-rumunsk-shkoli-zgdn-dodatkovo-vivchati.html>

²⁸ Румунські школи згідні додатково вивчати українську // <http://www.molbuk.com/news/5286-rumunsk-shkoli-zgdn-dodatkovo-vivchati.html>

policy of giving Romanian citizenship to citizens of other states (in which double citizenship is prohibited) is the part of Romanian policy of "small steps". The aim of it is to integrate Bukovina and Bessarabia firstly into Romanian economic and cultural space, and later – politically²⁹. To some extent the Romanian policy in this region can be compare with Russian in Abkhazia and South Ossetia. And the EU member-states should take into account this situation, because it can lead to new "frozen" conflict in the region.

In conclusion it is necessary to underline that the situation in Black sea region is quite complex. There is a conflict of interests here. From one side Russia and its ambitions and potential as the main political player in the region. From another, there are the interests of the EU, USA and Turkey as the potential regional leader. The escalation of the any mentioned above frozen conflict in Black Sea region will lead to the energy instability in the region and the EU.

On our point of view, the EU states have to increase their activity in promoting the partnership and cooperation in the region. The last can positively influence on the geopolitical situation both in the region and security and energy stability of the European Union.

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