

A Comment on Energy Security in the EU

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Developments in international economic, industrial, political and military affairs largely depend on the access states and other political communities have to energy supplies. Such wide-scale dependency increases the acuteness of competition between international actors for the remaining fossil fuel resources. This competition has led to the massive rise in the price of petroleum for states and by extension, consumers. Together, competition and price rises has already begun to strain the economies of petroleum-dependent countries and promises that strains will continue to be felt.

Energy dependency is essentially due to the acceptance that economies of scale require the use of non-renewable energy supplies such as: petroleum, natural gas and even coal; those resources that are limited in quantity. Such dependency is not necessarily inevitable then, as the multitude of alternative resources such as, hydroelectric, has the potential to power even the most industrial society. However, it seems that the costs of transforming a non-renewable resource based economy are great, and states are reluctant to make the proper long-term investments while the relatively cheap and accessible non-renewable resources are readily available. This is short sighted and such policies are responsible for increasing international tensions as states compete for the diminishing non-renewable energy supplies.

The EU too, despite its identification of energy security and potential energy diversification as a prime driving force in its foreign affairs, fits into the above competition. I would like to spend the remainder of this commentary discussing energy security in the EU.

Whereas, in the 18th and 19th century European states were largely autarkic in energy production (due to the abundance of coal – the primary energy resource at the time), the present EU is not. Instead, it has come to rely on energy imports from unstable regions and states which do not share the current value system of the EU. This reliance is problematic for economic, environmental and political reasons.

Economically, the EU faces problems associated with supply and demand. As demand rises and supplies are heavily competed over, prices rise as well. This means that the cost of maintaining a non-renewable resource based economy (and industrial base) will get more expensive year by year. With OPEC (the traditional source for keeping energy prices balanced) either unable or unwilling to place a price-ceiling on petroleum; that resource is open to normal market forces, implying that the 50% price increase the EU has witnessed over the past decade is only an indication of things to come. Additionally, non-OPEC

members, notably Russia, Kazakhstan and Brazil, are not bound to OPEC decisions and thus as they become larger energy suppliers, are not restrained on how much they can increase prices and thus increase their own political and economic clout at the expense of the energy dependant EU.

This economic problem bleeds into the political realm. Currently, the EU has only a limited base of energy suppliers. The primary countries feeding EU economies are: Russian, Saudi Arabia, Libya and Iran. Dependence on the imported energy supplies from these states is full of political risks including:

- 1) The risk of energy blackmail for regional or political gains as seen in Russia's political use of energy in the Ukraine, Georgia, Azerbaijan and Armenia
- 2) The risk that the monies provided unstable or politically unsavory in exchange for their energy resources can be used to purchase arms or other tools that may assist in maintaining such regimes and/or increasing their international power

In general, energy dependence weakens the EU's international and regional clout and raises the clout of oil rich states.

Given this bleak situation, the natural question is why the EU simply does not work harder to break its energy dependency?

The short answer is addiction. EU states are addicted to 'energy through oil' and their economic and industrial activities are designed with oil in mind. The costs associated, in research and development and applying the changes to EU societies are extremely high. However, such changes are required. Additionally, in the meantime, the EU needs to launch a conservation programme and attempt to strike a balance between the supply and demand of energy. In other words, enforce policies that are aimed at reducing the frivolous use of energy. These policies should be directed at private citizens as well as commercial and industrial centres. This can be coupled with further advances in the development of renewable resources.

EU states will not be able to foot the bill for the complete renovation of its economic and industrial capacity alone; it will need help from the private sector. Apparently, the European commission is trying to coordinate EU wide changes that bridge public needs with private monies. For example, the Commission encourages EU members to use tax breaks for those companies which have adopted energy conservation models on their products.

These are steps in the right direction, though much more needs to be done in order to break the energy dependency of the EU. Change in approach often follows from changes in thinking. Unfortunately, changes in thinking tend to occur after it's too late. It is my hope that the EU (states and citizen) are able to recognise the economic, political and environmental dangers and take proper precautions before reaching the point of no return. Provisions over EU energy supplies and developments in utilising alternative energy sources is the only

guarantee that the EU will be able to preserve its international relations priorities based on democratisation, human rights and the social market system. Without such provisions, it is likely that the European 'zone of peace' will be eroded by the same competition currently plaguing other less developed regions. The Europe of tomorrow does not have to be the Europe of 1914.

Another European Cross-Road? Kosovo on the Brink of Recognition and Chaos

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The current situation facing Kosovo is the result of a long historic process which essentially began several hundred years ago. This process accelerated following the break-up of the Federal People's Republic of Yugoslavia in the early 1990s. While the series of conflicts between Croats, Serbs and Bosniaks resulted in national independence for the six Yugoslav Republics, Kosovo remained an inseparable part of Serbia, despite its strong independence oriented identity. This was to change in the late 1990s when the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) was formed and began a low-intensity conflict with Serbia in the hope of wresting authority away from Belgrade. As KLA attacks became more frequent, and negotiations broke down, Serbia responded in the spirit of 1990s Balkan excesses, with a deliberate policy of ethnic cleansing and wanton violence against both KLA targets and the Ethnic Albanian civilian population. As the humanitarian situation deteriorated NATO was prompted to intervene. This intervention went under the name of Operation Allied Force and was designed to end the humanitarian crisis in Kosovo. The problem then (1999) as now was what to do with Kosovo once NATO was in firm control of it. After operations in Kosovo subsided, the UNSC passed Resolution 1244 which retro-actively legitimated NATO military deployments – in what has become known as the 'Zorro Principle' which highlights the morality but illegality of an action – and authorised NATO to deploy peacekeeping forces under the command of 'KFOR.'

The 1999 war, and subsequent administration of Kosovo by NATO and the UN (under UNMIK), did not solve the Kosovo question. Ethnic tensions periodically flared-up (between Kosovar Muslims and Serbs) and until 2007, the future of Kosovo seemed very uncertain. However, in February 2007 Martii Ahtisaari, the former UN Special Envoy to the Kosovo Status Negotiations, prepared a contingency plan for the 'supervised' independence of Kosovo. The