

The stakes of EU/Russia summit in Helsinki Brussels and Moscow between energetic partnership and “gloeconomic struggle”

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In the years of the post-Cold War, the European Union and Russia have engaged themselves in the elaboration of an ambitious global partnership. Signed in July 1994, The Cooperation and Partnership Agreement (APC) is reinforced, five years later, by the adoption of a “common European strategy” regarding Russia (June 1999), completed afterwards by the opening of a “political and security dialogue” an “energy dialogue” (October 2000). The supplying in the hydrocarbon and the energy security of European Union member states constitute the major file of this partnership at first sight. This difficult negotiation is more linked on the “gloeconomic struggle” than the “dialogue”. The upcoming summit in Helsinki (Finland), on the 24th of November, risks attesting it once again.

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Also available in French.

In accordance with all probabilities, the upcoming summit in Helsinki (24th of November 2006) will confirm the disillusiones of the Twenty-Five as for the hopes with which the European Russian energy partnership was invested with.

European disillusiones

The first thing is the global energy dependence of the European Union (EU): it is written within the numbers in the table. In the 2030 perspective, some 70% of the energy demands of the European Union will be satisfied by the appeal to imports, up against 50% at present. Russia guarantees for 21% of the oil import of the Twenty-Five (second line) and more than 41% of their import of natural gas (first line). The main idea was to integrate Russia, improperly reduced to an energetically periphery, in a large European economy area, focused on the European Union, future pole of power of the emergent “multiple world”.

It is in this ambitious European perspective that the European Charter is signed (Hague, 17th December 1991), then transformed in treaty (Lisbon, 17 December 1994). This text aims to promote the energetic cooperation by opening

this area to the free competition and by juridical guarantying of the investments, the

	Volume of import of russian gas in 2004 (billions of m ³)	Part of Russian gas in provision (january 2006, in %)
Germany	36,1	35
Poland	6,3	42
Ukraine	34,3	n. i.
Lithuania	n. i.	100
Latvia	n. i.	100
Estonia	n. i.	90
Bielorussia	10,2	n. i.
Austria	n.i.	59
Bulgaria	n. i.	100
Croatia	n. i.	40
France	13,3	24
Greece	n. i.	70
Hungary	9,3	65,9
Italy	21,6	36,5
Moldavia	1,8	100
Romania	n.i.	25
United Kingdom	n. i.	2
Slovakia	5,8	100

Sources : *Kommersant Vlast*, 19th December, 2005, and *Enerpresse*, N° 8 985, January 2006. Cited by Céline Bayou, in *Le gazoduc nord-européen : révélateur d'une nouvelle géopolitique des rapports Russie-Union européenne*, May 2006, available on www.diploweb.com.

transit and the exchanges in this eminently strategic sector. The 30th of October 2000, in Paris, the launch of the "energy dialogue" (the Prodi plan) marks the real launch of the EU-Russia partnership. The purpose of the European Commission president at the time, Romano Prodi, is to increase the energy supplying from Russia, emerging "market democracy", opened at the time for the political and economic reforms.

Russia, plenary force

The "technomorphic" version of "the end of history", the European speech on the going further of the geopolitics is refuted by the will of Moscow to present Russia as a plenary force. Far from sticking to the functional and economic vision of the Prodi Plan, Vladimir Poutine and the Russian political elite use the the hydrocarbons ex-ports to this end ("gas wars" with Ukraine and Georgia in 2005-2006). Vice first-minister and assistant director of Gazprom, Dimitri Medvedev has clearly held responsibility for it: "Russia's force depends on its economic power and of its political health. Arguing for the natural energetic wealth, he pursues: "Six years ago, we had no power. Today, we have it"¹. The North European Gas Pipeline example is highly confirmed²...

The EU-Russia "energy dialogue" leans on the repeated refusal of Moscow to ratify the energy Chart. Such a decision would imply the end of Gazprom monopoly on the natural gas exports. This would allow European enterprises to accede directly and on low cost to resources in Central Asia. The stake is not only to oppose the dominant position of which "Russia Society" abuses, as a monopolistic producer.

Beginning of 2006, the interruption of the Russian gas delivery to Ukraine had repercussion in many European Union countries and emphasised the fragility of the European system energy supplying. Signed on the 4th of August 2006, the partnership between Gazprom and the Algerian public group Sonatrach scares the apparition of a "OPEP of gas"? Moscow and Alger catch in pincers the European Union (the two societies assure for 36% of its natural gas

supplying). The financial force of Gazprom and its will to invest in the network of European distribution stir up the reluctance of the governments of the Twenty-Five. The threat to reorientate the Russian energetic exports towards Asia, at the expense of the EU, together with the disappointments of Shell at Sakhaline, nourishes the European fears. The "Society of Russia" mortgages the future of a Europe dependent now and then by middle-east hydrocarbons.

The others "tough points" of euro-russian relations

In the wrong way of economic reductionism, the energetic negotiations between the European Union and Russia reveal themselves first of all political, in the polemological meaning of the term. This issue cannot be separated by other "tough points" of the Euro-Russian relations. We shall specifically remind the difficulty of giving a concrete meaning of the four "spaces" – economy; freedom, security; justice; external security; research, education, culture – meant to organise the partnership EU-Russia. In Moscow, the inclusion of Ukraine, Moldavia and the South Caucasus in the "European neighbourhood politics" is perceived as an intrusion in the "close stranger" of Russia. In Brussels and a number of European capitals, the Russian temptation of reporting the extension of APCs to next Union members and the refusal of seeing in the "close stranger" a "common neighbourhood", let appear fears of the coming back of force politics. The references on eurasism of Russian politicians, the Moscow force games in the Organisation of cooperation in Shanghai (OCS), quickly presented as a "counter-NATO" and the will to give more military substance to the Organisation of the Treaty of collective security of CEI (OTSC), show the spectrum of a Russia taking the face of an altaique world, reducing Europe at a simple occidental appendix of the Eurasian terrestrial mass.

This vision is partially fantastical but it attests of the fact that Russia is perceived by its occidental neighbours as a "geopolitical embarrassment". The Russian state's drift does not facilitate a just perception of things. The observers hesitate on the nature of the regime: suspended autocracy on the fate of Vladimir

¹ Congres of the World Journal Association, Moscow, 4-7 June 2006

² See Focus page 4.

Putin or polocracy based on the fragile stabilities between rival oligarchs? We can still say that Russia alienates itself of the pluralist-constitutional regimes and the occidental norms. The “vertical of power” endangers the State of law and the “rule of law”.

European or western energy strategy?

The 8th of March 2006, the European Commission has presented a Green Chart on energy³. This document proposes to increase the security of supplying of the European Union by reinforcing the coordination of foreign and energy policies of the member states, the Twenty Five confining to the Commission the care of elaborating and conducting an authentic common strategy on energy. This communitarian approach of stakes would allow reinforcing the power of negotiation of the EU with Russia and the big provider countries. There is the difficulty. The “economic patriotism” of the states and the politics of the “national champions” do not go in the direction of an integrated energy market and of a reinforced Commission. The dream (illusion) of a power-Europe is dispersing and Europe evolves towards a pan European confederation, obstructed by the intergovernmental mechanisms: a tough sovereignty in a soft Europe.

As it is of the threshold of critic intensity to respond the energy challenge, some member states propose to enlarge the coordination framework of foreign and energy policies on the euro-Atlantic space. It’s in that way that the Polish president, Lech Kaczynski, has proposed the implementation of “an energy NATO” (The 8th of March 2006) , including the United states. The arbitrary power of the United States would allow surpassing the inter-European divisions, of counter balancing the political energy weight of Russia and to reinforce the negotiating power of the Occidental towards the entirety of supplier countries. Not debated, this proposition deserves to be reminded. At the moment these lines are written⁴, Poland actually opposes its veto to the renegotiation of the EU-Russia

partnership, object of the Helsinki summit. Previously, the Polish government demands that Russia should ratify the Treaty on the Energy Charter (TEC).

The expression of “an energy NATO” is in phase with the numerous euro-Atlantic representations governments. However, it does not respond to the issue of the weight of the Europeans in the elaboration of the conduct of an occidental energy strategy, the evocation of the civilisation community and the open-door doctrine that do not make for thinking, conceiving and conducting a strategy. That we choose to think it in a European manner or a euro-Atlantic one, the coordination of politics of the Twenty-Five is linked of the efficiency principle. It presupposes political elites that have the same common interests that should be shared with the national political opinions. Nothing big is made without moral greatness.

Whatever the retained format, the Twenty-Five will be necessarily taken to give a bigger attention to the Black Sea and Caucasus, access corridor to the energy resources of the Caspian basin. Thus, the member states of GUAM (Georgia, Ukraine, Azerbaijan and Moldavia) open the possibility of looking the alternatives of the Russian gas. From a quantitative point of view, the Caspian is not a new energy Middle East but its additional value would allow compensating for the exhaustion of hydrocarbons deposit of the Black Sea. The integration of Bulgaria and Romania in the European Union, the thorny Turkish file and the stakes of the European neighbourhood politics make of the Black Sea a new euro-Atlantic frontier.

³ Green Chart called « A European strategy for a certain energy, competitive and lasting. See <http://europa.eu.int/comm/energy/green-paper-energy/index-en.htm>.

⁴ Monday 11-20-2006.

Focus

The North European Gas Pipeline, a strife matter

The 8th of September 2005, the Russian president Vladimir Poutine, the German chancellor Gerhard Schröder, the representatives of Gazprom, of EON Ruhrgas and Wintershall (a BASF agency) have signed in Berlin an agreement on the construction of the pipeline linking Russia to Germany directly, The North European Pipeline Gas (NEPG). Gazprom controls 51% of the actions of the consortium constituted for this purpose, the two German companies dividing equally the rest of the capital. Weakened after the recent legislative German elections, Gerhard Schröder has further on been put at the head of the supervising Council of the consortium charged to exploit the NEPG ; these incestuous relations between state responsibilities and economic affairs have stirred up an ethical debate in Germany.

The NEPG project has made more obvious the tautness of the energy connections, and more widely economic between Germany and Russia. This link project of the Russian and German networks will materialise by the construction of a submarine pipeline of 1200km of length, under the Baltic sea. It will start from Portovaiia, in the Vyborg region (Russian-Finland border) to the Lubmin (north German shore). The NEPG should come into force in 2010 and transport 27,5 billions of m³ of gas yearly, which is a quarter of the annual German consumption in 2006. A second tube could afterwards be added, completed by extensions to the Scandinavian Peninsula (Finland and Sweden), the Russian enclave of Kaliningrad, Netherlands and United Kingdom.

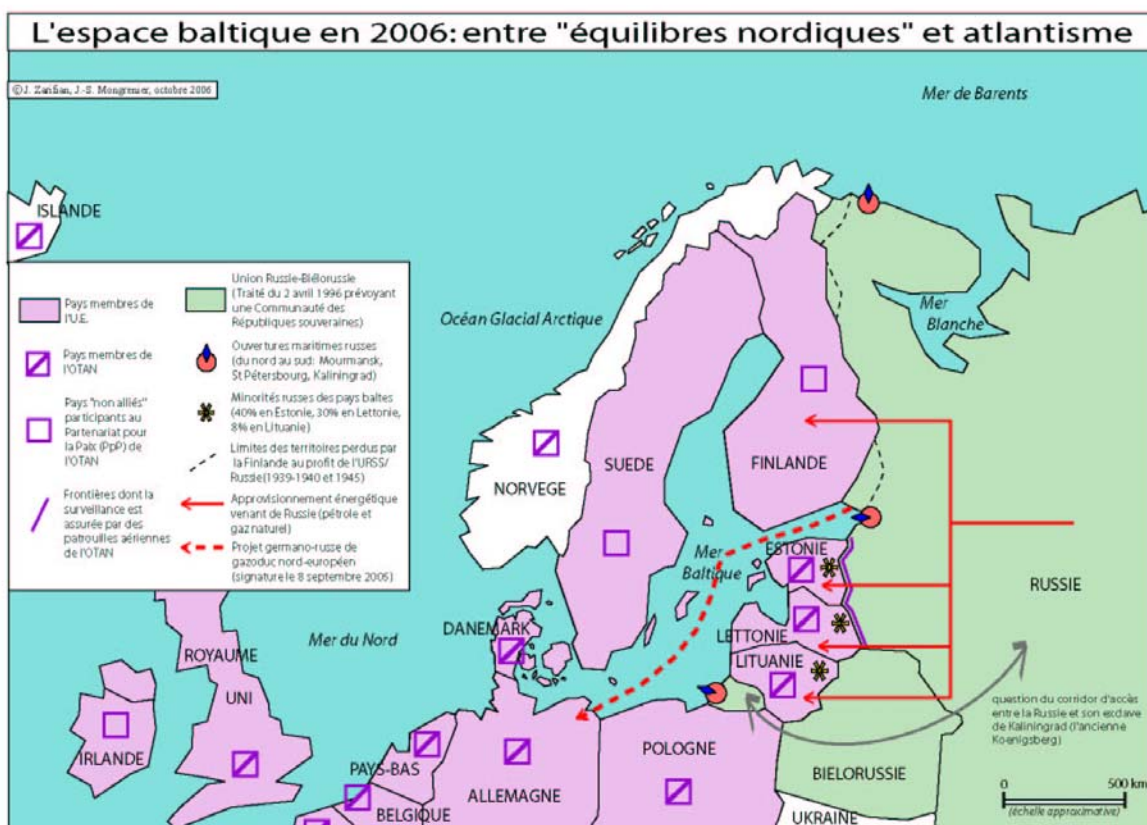
Even though elaborated bilaterally, the NEPG project has been ratified by the European Commission. At Moscow as in numerous West-European capitals, it is well-seen to give rise to the economic rationality and grand-continentality of the North-European pipeline.

Yet, one could not obscure the geopolitical dimension of the NEPG, dimension openly assumed by the Russian authorities. Its trace allows going round Poland, Ukraine and the Baltic states, judged by Moscow as politically unstable and hostile to the Russian interests. At the press conference the 8th of September 2005, Vladimir Poutine has made a questionable joke: "A and B are standing on a tube. A falls down, B disappears, what happens to the tube »*. Transit countries for the Russian hydrocarbon, Ukraine and Poland were clearly aimed.

We therefore understand that the NEPG has stirred up a number of critics from Poland. At a *Marshall Fund* conference, in April 2006, the Polish defence minister, Radek Sikorski, has gone from comparing this pipeline to the German Russian pact on the 23rd August 1939. Depending quasi-totally on the Russian gas, the Baltic States leaders have not appreciated the bilateral German Russian game either. From there on, all the countries in the Central and Eastern Europe, dependent on two thirds of the Russian gas, is sensitive to the energy stakes. In Western Europe, the attitude of numerous Center-European governments is understood through the « national-populism ». The label is meant to outdo the so-named political forces in the public infamy and disqualify its critics.

It turns out though that the NEPG also rouses the concern of the honourable finish and Swedish social-democracies. Aside from its heavy environmental impact on the Baltic Sea ecosystems, this pipeline will cross the Swedish economic zone on almost 500 km and the finish one on 369 kilometres. The consortium in charge of the project plans the construction of a platform of maintenance at the north-east of the Swedish island of Gorland. The security of the pipeline and this platform probably turned into an observation and spying centre, will serve as a pretext for the North Russian Fleet to deploy in the Swedish economic area. These perspectives reinvigorate the Cold War phantoms and the Baltic Sea could again be shared in an influence zone. In the end, the only European thing that the NEPG has is its name.

Baltic space in 2006



* The joke is reported by Céline Bayou, in The North-European pipeline : revealing of new geopolitics of the EU-Russia relations , May 2006, available on www.diploweb.com.

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