

GEPOLITICS OF SECURITY: 'BORDERLAND TRIANGLE', OPTIONS AND OBSTACLES

Güvenlik Jeopolitiği: 'Sınır Bölgesi Üçgeni', Seçenekler ve Manialar

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ABSTRACT: During the Cold-War period, the centre of geopolitics moved to the US, as opposed to one that was based in Europe for a long time. The expectation that the Europe might gain its preeminence and central role in global politics again is gaining support, partly because of Caucasia's increasingly prominent position in world politics due to the presence of resources. In this environment, Europe's eastern neighbors including Turkey can be the new centre of politics because of their proximity to the 'new' political centre. However, there is a lack of unity and disorder in the eastern parts of Europe. Therefore, Europe must seriously focus on those members if it wants to utilize and not to stay away from the increasingly important theatre of global competition for resources and influence.

Keywords: EU Security, Borderland Triangle, Turkey, Caucasia, Eastern Europe

ÖZ: Soğuk savaş sırasında jeopolitiğin merkezi ABD'ye kaydı. Kısmen Rus doğal gazına alternatif olarak Hazar bölgesinden gelecek gaz için bir güney koridorunun ortaya çıkmasına bağlı olarak Avrupa'nın küresel siyasette yeniden önemli ve merkezi bir konuma yükselebileme beklentisi de önem kazanmaya başladı. Doğu Avrupa ve Kafkasya'nın küresel siyasette pivot bir rol oynadığını iddia etmediğimiz için bu tebliğde analizimiz MacKunder vari değildir. Ama bölgedeki yatırımların ve küreselleşmenin artan düzeyi bu bölgeyi jeopolitik bir aktöre dönüştürmektedir. Bu uluslararası ortamda enerji üreten ve tüketen ülkelere yakınlıkları dolayısıyla Avrupa'nın doğu komşuları siyasetin yeni merkezleri haline gelebilirler. Bu minvalde bu tebliğ Avrupa'nın kaynaklar ve siyasal güç için küresel

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rekabetin uzağında ve dışında kalmak istemiyor ve etkili bir aktör olmak istiyorsa doğulu komşularına daha fazla dikkat sarf etmesi gerektiğini öne sürmektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: AB Güvenliği, Sınır Bölgesi Üçgeni, Türkiye, Kafkasya, Doğu Avrupa

Introduction

International Relations underwent deep transformations after the late 1980s. During the Cold-War period, the centre of global politics – the one that is looked up to for decision – moved to the US, as opposed to one that was based in Europe for a long time. The expectation that the Europe¹ might gain its preeminence and central role in global politics again is gaining support, partly because of Caucasia's (defined as the Anglo-American concept of the Caucasus plus the Western Central Asian states) increasingly prominent position in world politics due to the presence of resources. Trends indicate that increasing level of globalization and investment in the region makes it important to a variety of geopolitical actors. In this international environment, Europe's eastern neighbors, 'borderland triangle'², occupies the new centre of politics because of their proximity to the 'new' political centre. However, there is a lack of unity and disorder in this area.

As a potential global player, Europe needs to play an increasingly important role in this area. This is due to several reasons, ranging from its own energy security to a secure global world order. In that sense, Europe has several options that can lead to exert its influence. However, this is not free of conflict and competition. For example, Turkey's entrance to the European Union (EU) might quell disorder in the eastern flank of Europe as well as might pave the way the establishment of two *de facto* Europe. One centers on the relatively rich members in Western Europe, the other one extends from Poland to Turkey covering mainly 'borderland triangle' area and even including long-time member, Greece. The latter grouping might be called as 'periphery Europe' in comparison to the Western Europe.

What is critical here is the influence of the EU on a 'borderland triangle'. Therefore, Europe must seriously focus on this area if it wants to utilize and not to stay away from the increasingly important theatre of global competition for resources and influence in Caucasia. After a historical and theoretical discussion of the Caucasus and the EU's energy policy, this ar-

1 Europe and the European Union are used interchangeably in this article.

2 See the Map 2

ticle analyses opportunities and obstacles that the EU might face in coming years. Additionally, this paper in a modest manner intends to be a policy paper recommending strategies that should not be ignored by involving actors.

1. Caucasia As Center Of Global Politics: A Geopolitical Trajectory

Eurasia once was world's politically, economically, and geostrategically significant landmass for centuries. In the contemporary geopolitical reformation, Eastern Europe and Caucasia are still continuing to be vital center of the continents in terms of their increasing economic growth, cultural diversity and natural resources (Brzezinski, 1997). In order to understand Eastern Europe's and Caucasia's pivotal vitality for the new world order, there is an exigency to investigate the historical discourses of Eurasia from pre-world wars to Cold War and to dismantling of socialist Soviet states. Therefore, this article is located at the intersection of three general bodies of literature: pre-First World War (classic realist geopolitics), between the World Wars and Cold War Period (German geopolitics and containment of communism), and Post-Cold War era (free-market system and new world order).

Pre-World War I. Eastern Europe, Anatolia, and Caucasus had kept their importance globally and regionally for centuries (Trenin, 2002). These regions were the home of many civilizations and empires for many years. One can rarely see another region in the world that this geographical landmass meant so much to rival empires and other global powers in regard to establishing geostrategical control over Eastern Europe, Anatolia, and Caucasia. First time in the late nineteen century of political geography Mackinder theorized and conceptualized this region as pivotal territory (outer crescent) to British Empire's foreign policy (Mackinder 1904). In 1904, British Geographer Mackinder argued in his paper called '*the geographical pivot of history*' that land power was still vital to control Europe and Central Asia particularly and world politics in general. He strongly puts emphasis on Black Sea Basin, Caspian Basin and Eastern European crescent as determining landmarks for Europe to dominate over the world politics. Mackinder in his most cited article indicated that 'who rules East Europe commands the Heartland; (where Russian empire and Soviet Union ruled) who rules the Heartland commands the World-Island; (Europe, Asia, and Africa) who rules the World-island controls the world' (Mackinder, 1904). In the eve of British Empire's diminishing primacy on Eastern European landmass impelled British state crafts to deal with

increasing German and Russian ‘land-power’ with their technological developments and demographic growth. Mackinder foresaw Germany’s and Russia’s rail-road expansion from Berlin to Anatolia and then to Bagdad. Such shift from navy-power to land-power would bring end of the British Empire and ascend of German centered imperialist power to the stage of world politics. In this atmosphere, Mackinder’s closed-centered (O’Hara and Heffernan, 2006) geopolitical narration gained substantial approval from British Rulers to the West of Atlantic.

Between the World Wars and the Cold War Period. In this period, German political geographers invoked the idea of Mackinder’s hegemonic heartland concept to justify their country’s strategic needs. Karl Haushofer reinterpreted Mackinder’s heartland theory and formulated the ‘German geopolitik’. His ‘lebensraum’ impacted German foreign policy during the interwar period. There was a general inclination about geostrategical eastward shift among European thinkers of the interwar period in the geopolitical center of gravity. To forestall such a shift, the French political geographer Paul Demangeon, as well as other geopoliticians, advocated greater unity among the European states before World War II (Brzezinski, 1997).

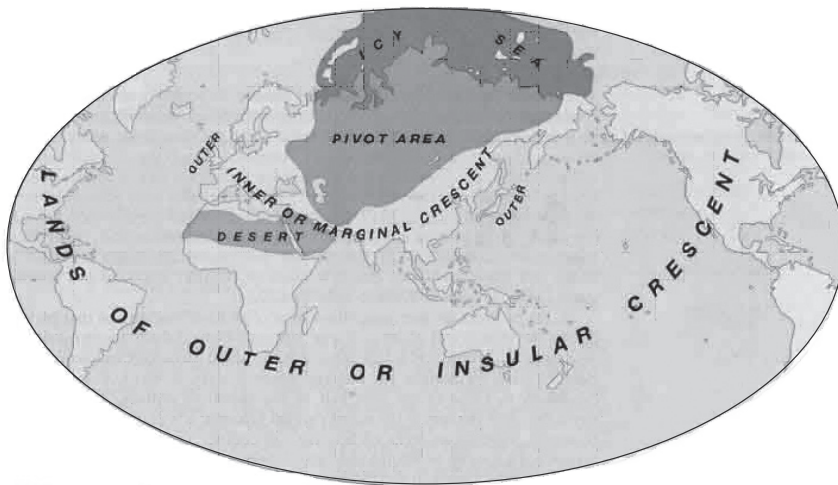


Figure 1: Map of the pivot area

Source: www.upf.edu/materials/fhuma/portal_geos/intgeo/g2/t2/images/kno_391.jpg

During the interwar period, on another continent, Nicholas John Spykman, an American classic realist thinker and statecraft, reformulated Mackinder’s heartland theory in a way that Russia (land-power) could be contained.

Spykman focused on importance of 'rimland' in contrast to Mackinder's heartland. Spykman's rimland theory consisted of the European coast land, the Arabian-Middle Eastern desert land, and the Asiatic monsoon land. Spykman's emphasis on containing Eurasian derived from the region's demographic weight, natural resources and industrial development (Spykman, 1944). Spykman falsifies Mackinder's dictum and says 'if there is a slogan for the power politics of the Old World, it must be who controls the rimland rules Eurasia; who rules Eurasia controls the destinies of the world' (Spykman, 1944).

Both Mackinder's heartland and Spykman's rimland theory visualized geographic location of Eurasia which played a significant role in determining the immediate priorities of the super powers. The greater super power states have military, economic, and political power, the greater the radius, beyond their immediate neighbors, of those states' vital geopolitical interests, influence, and involvement (Brzezinski, 1997).

Post-Cold War Era. After the collapse of Soviet Union in 1989, the United States, a non-Eurasian power, enjoyed international primacy, with its power directly deployed on three peripheries of the Eurasian continent, from which it exercises a powerful influence on the states occupying the Eurasian hinterland. Brzezinski as an American policy maker and scholar gives a prescriptive policy on US's maintaining power over Eurasian landmass which he encoded in the 'Eurasian Chessboard' concept. He advocated bringing Ukraine and Black Sea into the Western orbit to increase US involvement into Caucasia (Eurasia's Balkans). The objective of this heartland control by the West was to preclude Russian's taking control over 'near abroad' and establishing anti-Atlantic pact between Russia, Iran, and China (Brzezinski, 1997).

However China, on the other side, turned its attention to the Tran-Caucasian Oil and natural gas resources in order to comply with its energy needs. Therefore, China, with its increasing economic, militaristic, and political aspirations for Caucasia and central Asia, showed its interest for this region and began searching to be one of the regional dominant powers as well. On the other side, Russia declared the severity of Eastern Europe and Caucasia for its national security. For Russia, these regions are too important to ignore. Countries in these regions either have natural resources or on the route of transportation of natural resources. Besides other factors that make these regions important for Russia, these regions are occupying geographies that are considered as Russia's arms and legs in globalizing world economy.

2. 'The Borderland Triangle', Europe And Beyond

Departing from above-outlined theoretical and geopolitical importance of the region, this study suggests that defining a new geopolitical area, 'borderland triangle' is useful to locate Europe in ongoing clash of influence on 'Eurasian Chessboard'. 'Borderland Triangle' ranges from the plains of Eastern Europe that comprise Poland and Balkan countries to Turkey as an immediate neighbor to the Middle East. Another line comes down from Eastern Europe to Caucasia covering Ukraine, Georgia and even Azerbaijan. It touches Iran but not necessary include it (Map 2).

Mainly two characteristics make this area important. First, historically this area has been an interaction and buffer zone between east and west as well as south and north. As part of this interaction and counter-interaction process, the borderland triangle area is very diverse in culture, religion, political systems as well as perspectives and perceptions on the world and region per se. Because of those existing differences, the borderland triangle area has never been conflict-free. Clashes and conflicts showed itself either in 'cold' or 'hot' wars (Miller, 2007). Secondly, borderland triangle has been the gateway to caucuses whether one comes from the west, north or south. Today such gateway status exists in a way that creates interdependence between Europe and Caucasia. While Caucasia needs Europe in order to open up to the world economically and socially, Europe needs Caucasia for its energy security. This interaction of interdependence usually takes place in the borderland triangle. In both cases, the situation of conflicting and peaceful interaction of interdependence between Europe and Caucasia, 'borderland triangle' area is to be prime one to get affected positively or/and negatively.



Figure 2: Tentative area of borderland triangle, map is modified by the Authors.

The ‘borderland triangle’ which in part overlaps with other geopolitical concepts such as O’Loughlin’s (2000) ‘buffer zone’, is the gate way to land-locked Russia to reach and control Mediterranean trade.

In contemporary geopolitical reformation, countries that centered in the ‘borderland triangle’ have not lost their vitality for the West (the EU in particular); in contrast their importance has increased even greater in terms of their energy resources and geo-transferability of those natural resources. Most of these countries provide headquarters to the world’s most active and advanced oil companies (Amineh & Houweling, 2005).

In the 1990s the US involvement in Balkans and brokering a peace there was directly related to the overall peace in Europe and especially in the ‘borderland triangle’ area. At the same time, Germany and France mobilized rapid accession of Eastern Europe into the EU after the collapse of Communist regimes. The whole idea was to create stabile and conflict free Europe especially in eastern flank of Europe. In this context, the borderland triangle countries from Poland to Georgia and from Ukraine to Turkey became pivotal once again for European states. The European Union has sought to detach Eastern Europe and the Trans-Caucasus geostrategically from the direct influence of Russia. Eastern European and Caucasian region with its enormous richness of natural resources and its proximity to warm seas became vital to Europe’s energy security.

It is imperative to emphasize here that the European Unions' primordial position as an active geostrategic player in Eastern Europe and Caucasia will provide to the EU a predominant role to secure Caucasia's energy resources and energy transportation routes. Borderland triangle's geo-proximity to Europe and Caucasia is extremely vital to the European states. Especially Turkey's geographical position in this triangle is very important in terms of diffusing western values (democratization, security, free market, and human rights) to Caucasia and establishing economic and cultural ties with Turkic-speaking nations. Turkey is also a country that is in the chessboard game not only because of its being cultural bridge between Caucasia and Europe, but it is also in the game because of its geographical position in being between energy transportation routes from Caucasian resources to the European market (Amineh & Houweling, 2005). Especially after the ruling party Justice and Development Party (AKP) took control of governing in 2002, Turkey's geopolitical importance and its geo-cultural position in the former Ottoman states from Balkans to Caucasus and from northern Black Sea to the Middle East were given a priority by the foreign policy makers. Thus, during the party's decade of ruling, Turkey became an attractive center for people from its neighbors and a hub for business and transporting goods. AKP's emphasis on building the third bridge on the Bosphorus, Canal Istanbul project which includes a plan to open a sea route from Black Sea to Marmara Sea parallel to the Bosphorus, Marmaray railroad that connects Asia to Europe, and ongoing constructing of Europe's largest airport in Istanbul should be read in this direction.

While grand geopolitical theories will continue to be a valuable tool for understanding, predicting, and formulating super powers' positions on the borderland triangle, one needs to consider the interest-based cooperation with these countries as well. In this context, European states' deprivation of Energy resources and Middle East's unstable situation compel the EU states to find alternative ways of accessing energy resources. This compulsory search for energy needs escalates the importance of the borderland triangle and its vitality to bring Europe as a key player onto the world political stage.

3. The EU Policies Toward The 'Borderland Triangle' Area

As touched briefly in earlier sections, the European Union is aware of the importance of the area. Therefore, after the Cold War the EU policy toward the area could be outlined under three categories: enlargement, security, and energy-trade links. All of them have overlapped in their impact and contribution for securing the area and gradually increased the influence of the EU. A short summary is needed in analyzing the future directions.

Enlargement: Since the fall of communist regimes in Eastern Europe, the European Union opened up its borders to another 12 countries.³ The EU has also started accession negotiations with Turkey, Macedonia, and Croatia. The EU's enlargement policy is based on political and economical conditions outlined in Copenhagen Criteria.

The main philosophy behind the enlargement policy has been the EU's political, economic, and strategic influence toward economically unsolid, politically unstable areas. The EU aimed to accomplish stable, peaceful, and prosperous backyard on its eastern flank. In addition to that the EU expanded its market place to 470 million people. The EU, by the enlargement, would gain bargaining power with other regional and global powers. EU's 2004 enlargement, which was the biggest enlargement in its history, provided the EU more free trade zone between members (Murphy, 2006). The EU projected that with new members' integration to the Union, it would help member states to democratize, internationalize and create optimal resolution between neighboring states such as former Czech-Slovakian countries. Free movement of labor would also give an opportunity to all the new and old members of the Union to establish exchange of knowledge between the member states. Following the collapse of Soviet Union, Eastern European states already started de-regularization of the state-controlled market and trade conditions (Egresi, 2007). Some of states took radical action to deregulate the economy and formulize the social system under the surveillance of World Bank and European Union. In order to decrease negative impact of such immense integration to the Union, The EU enlargement policy paid special attention on improving candidate states' foundational institutions such as political, monetary, and civil organizations. In short, not only has the EU expanded its trade and security zone by enlargement process into the 'borderland triangle' area, but also increased its position within the post-cold war international power structure.

Security: Even though European Union does not have an established military force as the one of NATO, recently the EU has developed a small NATO-like joint armed force in use of peacekeeping, resolving conflict, and intervening in need of crises management operations. In 1993, the European Union established Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) within the Treaty on European Union in Maastricht. The EU's common security and defense policy was expanded and reformulated in 2001 with the Laeken Declaration at the European Council. The Laeken Declaration adopted a statement on the operational capability of the European Security and Defense Policy (ESDP), officially recognizing that the EU is now capable

³ Cyprus, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Slovakia, Slovenia (2004) Bulgaria and Romania (2007) Croatia (2013).

of conducting some crises management operations. Interim structures established after the Amsterdam treaty have become permanent. The Amsterdam Treaty identifies five fundamental objectives of Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP, 15 Feb 2008): 1) to safeguard the common values, fundamental interests, independence and integrity of the Union in conformity with the principle of the United Nations Charter; 2) to strengthen the security of the Union in all ways; 3) to preserve peace and strengthen international security, in accordance with the principles of the United Nations Charter, as well as the principle of the Helsinki Final Act and the objectives of the Paris Charter, including those on external borders; 4) to promote international co-operation; 5) to develop and consolidate democracy and the rule of law, and respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. The Amsterdam Treaty also identifies several ways to accomplish these objectives: a) The European Council is in charge of defining the principles and general guidelines for the common foreign and security policy; b) European Council is again in charge of deciding on common strategies such as common strategies on Russia, Ukraine, Mediterranean and the Middle East Peace Process; c) General Affairs Council can adopt joint actions and common positions (ibid).

Regulations of these treaties are obliged to commit the Member States adopting a certain position and a certain course of action. The CFSP provides an important accomplishment to the European Union's security and foreign policy dimension. As implementation of such policy, the EU has sent or contributed several peace missions in neighboring countries, notably in the 'borderland triangle' area. Kosovo, Macedonia, and Bosnia-Herzegovina are the ones to be mentioned here. Moreover, the EU as a sign of being global actor has sent troops to Congo, while contributing the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Afghanistan from the beginning (Saikal, 2006). The EU, especially with its involvement in the Balkans, has extended its security zone within the 'borderland triangle'. The recent recognition of Kosovo independence by many EU members has also showed the willingness to secure the area that is crucial for the EU.

Energy/Trade Links: With increase in price of crude oil and natural gas, the EU needed to reexamine its short and long term energy policy and its challenges for 27 member states. According to some EU report on energy security, energy prices and global demand for energy will increase nearly 60% over the next twenty years. More than 50 percent of the EU's energy resources come from outside of the member states. Most notably, the Eastern flank of the EU member states dominantly relies on Russian oil and natural gas. As this is the case currently, in 2030, the EU's natural gas

supply needs will reach to 80% of its total energy need. According to the Eurostat, the EU imports the 26% of its oil and 29% of its natural gas needs from Russia in 2004.

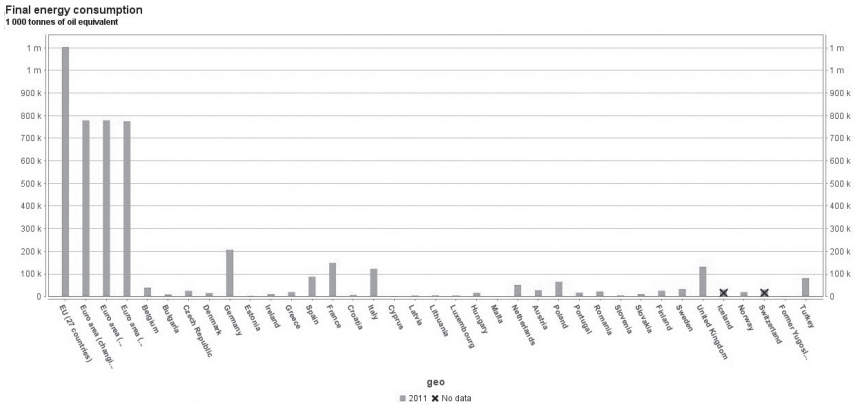
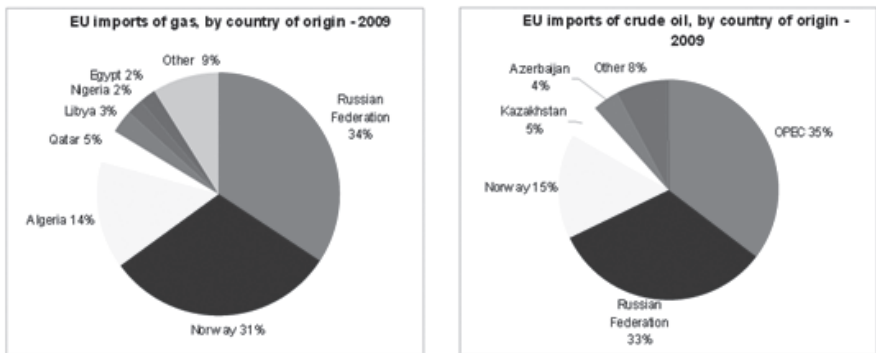


Figure 3: Final energy consumption of the EU states

Source: Eurostat

This situation limits the EU member States’ power of negotiation with Russia, whereas, the same fact empowers Russia to effect and intervene the EU’s policies toward the ‘borderland triangle’. As the EU states are aware of the fact that Russia has capability of controlling more than 50% of EU’s oil and gas supplies, they are careful in their relations with Russia. These relations between Russia and the in some cases can create conflict in political issues. While the EU is the main buyer/consumer of Russian natural gas and energy, Russia has a tendency to use natural resources as a political weapon toward the EU member states in general and former Soviet states in particular such as Georgia and Ukraine.



Source: Eurostat May 2011- Intra-EU trade excluded

Figure 4: EU imports of gas and oil by country of origin

As stated earlier, the EU does not only have strategically significant energy resources ties with Russia, but EU also has strong ties with other non-European but energy producer countries like Iran, Iraq, and Caucasian states. In fact, the EU's energy security contains a major long term plan that aims to secure and control the path of energy distribution and build emergency back up in transition zones such as in Ceyhan, Turkey.

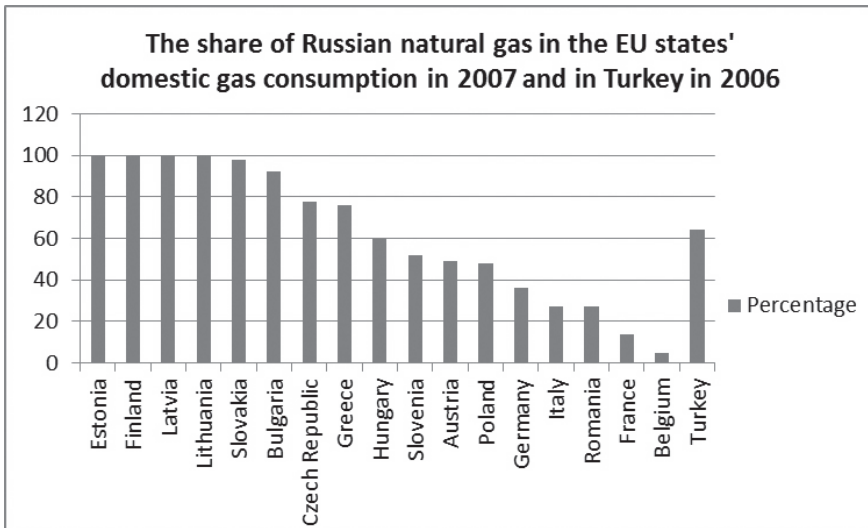


Figure 5: The share of Russian natural gas in the EU states' domestic gas consumption in 2007 and in Turkey in 2006

Source: The chart is modified by the authors data collected from the European Commission's annual assesments.

What is interesting and important here is that most of the energy pipelines between the Europe and Russia and other states in the Caucasia has to go through the 'borderland triangle'. This single reason, alone, forces Europe to pay more attention to the security issues of the borderland triangle, as the more secure and conflict-free the borderland triangle is, the safer the energy needs of the EU is guaranteed.

The 'borderland triangle' is also important for the EU investments. After the 1990s, most of the European companies either moved their factories to the Eastern Europe or opened new ones. This was not only important for the developments of the 'borderland triangle' countries, but also opened new horizons for the European companies toward Foreign Direct Investment policies (e.g. Egresi, 2007).



Source: www.eia.doe.gov

4. Necessity Of A New Geopolitics For The EU: Options And Obstacles

As outlined above, since the early 1990s, the EU has conducted common and consistent foreign policy towards the 'borderland triangle'. It has used various policy instruments ranging from trade agreements to offering full membership into the EU. That is to say that the EU has used the enlargement policy, wittingly or unwittingly, to help in other policy areas such as economic and security policy. In general, historically enlargement policy has been a significant act of the EU that promoted security in the whole of area of Europe. Same pattern is currently under way in the 'borderland

triangle'. However, the question remains whether offering membership as a tool of foreign policy can be used forever and to what extent. As Dahlgren (2006) also argued progress toward EU enlargement must be part of evolving coherent EU foreign policy.

During the Cold War, the role of the European Community (to become the European Union) at international level was limited. As America's junior partner in the Euro-Atlantic alliance, it provided vital economic and military support for the US in its efforts to contain the Soviet power and thus constituted a key part of the Cold War global order. With the end of the Cold War, Europe's future role in international relations has been thrown into doubt. Still, the fact is that European influence in international affairs is more dependent on what goes on inside the EU than on European strategies and policies towards the rest of the world (Nicolaidis, 2004).

As Maull (2005:791) rightly emphasize a truly *common* foreign and security policy of the EU would require that national and European policies be effectively aligned around the same objectives, and that all available resources at national and European levels be channeled into their realization. Some argue that the EU thus acquires international actor status mostly by default (Maull, 2005:792). A good European foreign policy will have to begin at home, now more than ever. Its home is the closest 'borderland triangle', which is the first step towards a long-term oriented foreign policy. Therefore, the EU should focus its external efforts on its immediate neighborhood, namely the geography defined as 'borderland triangle' area.

Certainly, any influence in 'borderland triangle' has also implications beyond this area. During Putin presidency in Russia, Russian foreign policy towards the Central Asia and the 'borderland triangle' has been more 'hard-headed and effective' (Allison, 2004:277). As Russian officials insist that the US strategic presence in Central Asia and 'borderland triangle' should be temporary (Allison, 2004:793), prospect for power vacuum in this area is not beyond imagination. In this condition, the EU could exert its influence and probably fill the gap that the US currently occupies in Central Asia in general and 'borderland triangle' in particular. The more influential the EU in 'borderland triangle', the more influence the EU probably could exert in Central Asia too. And the sooner a secure and conflict-free zone is created in the 'borderland triangle', the powerful the EU is in its influence on other areas.

The EU has had various instruments to promote its interest in the world and to be seen as a global player. Especially its attempt to gain a stronger international position has led to acquire capacities that belonged to only

states before. However, the amount and quality of capacities cannot tell alone what an actor is able to do, since capacities have to be mobilized to support a certain policy (Hill, 1998:24-27). Thus a long-term strategy and perspective is the key in guiding to use capacities. It is our understanding that if the EU wants to play such a role, it is required to play a determining role in the 'borderland triangle' based on a long-term strategy. In that sense, there are three essential options that one can see in 'borderland triangle' area with regard to the EU's foreign policy and options and its broader implications.

Rapprochement with Russia. In the 'borderland triangle' area, there is already an ongoing clash of interests and influence either through the local actors or energy routes. The EU has shown the willingness to incorporate Balkans through membership so it can solve the security problem there. At the same time, the EU has started accession negotiations with Turkey; a country occupies the south of 'borderland triangle' and highly important in terms of population and as an economic powerhouse. Georgia and Ukraine have also indicated their willingness to join into NATO first and hopefully then to the EU as part of their westernization process in which they believe would also decrease the influence of Russia over them.

In this context, the EU has three key countries whose futures are directly related to the EU's influence on the 'borderland triangle' and therefore in the whole central Asia. Turkey's possible membership has already created a sense of 'fear' in Europe that led opposition voices to be heard, especially in France and Germany. Georgia and Ukraine's aspiration to join to the European family has also been approached with suspicion as it later created tension and even deterioration in the EU's relations with Russia. Given the recent example of Russia's annexation of Ukraine's Crimea region and overtly showing of its defiance toward the EU and the US once again puts this region in a delicate geopolitical position for the triangle area. If the current positions of the countries continue, the EU needs to make a clear strategic decision. Europe can choose to have a rapprochement with Russia to which many EU countries' energy needs depend on and announce that further EU involvement in Ukraine is stopped and the enlargement process including the borderland area and beyond has ended. This can only be done after all the Balkan countries are taken in. The position of Serbia⁴ with regard to Kosovo and even to the EU is actually delaying to inclusion of all Balkan states into the EU structure. As uneasiness toward Turkey is on the rise in Europe, this is not an unthinkable option. The closer Georgia and Ukraine get to the EU or even to EU membership, the stronger anti-Turkish

4 Official candidate for membership in the European Union

sentiments will be in terms of accepting the full membership of Turkey. Possibly, inclusion of Turkey, Georgia, and Ukraine will be too much for the EU to digest and the EU elite might come to the conclusion that the enlargement process should be stopped. This will make ‘borderland triangle’ a buffer zone between Russia and the EU, whereby both agree that neither would exert nor impose its will on those countries but share benefit with cooperation.

De Jure unity, de facto division. The second possible scenario with regard to the EU’s policies toward the ‘borderland triangle’ assumes that Turkey will become member of the EU, but Georgia and Ukraine will not be included into the process. Arguably, Ukraine’s rehabilitation and admission are also very important to the future of the EU especially in the case of increasing by Russian influence in recent years (de Blij, 2006:704). However, Turkey’s possible membership will definitely bring Europe to face the immediate problems in the Middle East, Iran and even Central Asia to some extent. Economically and population-wise, Turkey will be a new powerhouse within the EU akin to France, Germany and UK. Strategic implication of Turkey’s membership is probably beyond our imaginations now, as no one can imagine how or to what extent Turkey will be influential after entering into the EU structure. However, there is already an ongoing *de facto* divide within the EU. It is not an old Europe versus new Europe divide as Rumsfeld argued, but it is a division between the traditional EU members such as France and Germany named as center, and new members into the EU consisting most of the countries within the ‘borderland triangle’ named as periphery. In this *de facto* division, there is a lack of leadership in the poor/periphery part of Europe. Rather than old-new Europe divide, this division has its roots in history and can be called as rich Europe versus poor Europe. Richness and poorness is not directly related to their economic well-being, but based more on perception⁵. This might change in the long run, but we see no possibility to change in the short-run.

If/when Turkey enters into the EU, such division might be clearer and visible. Istanbul is already one of the biggest economic hubs of the Europe. With Turkey’s inclusion, Istanbul will be the center of attraction from all over the Europe, especially from the ‘borderland triangle’. Those countries who are part of the EU might find its closeness to Turkey and Istanbul more than they do towards France or Germany. Eastern European countries, Greece and Turkey could *de facto* establish and lead a divide-poor Europe while traditional Europe still continue to become as a rich Europe. This is more than imaginable and has its historical and cultural roots as mentioned.

5 The tension between Germany and Greece over Greece’s debt issue can be an example here.

While Eastern Europe, Greece and Turkey might be different religiously, there exists closeness among the people. Even today, many people from those areas feel at home when they visited Turkey, or vice versa, rather than they visit France or Germany⁶. One can trace such closeness of feeling back to the Ottoman period, however those nations in the 'borderland triangle' has a tradition of living in a multicultural environment historically while traditional Europe does not have such an experience. This makes sense when we think of immigration policies of the traditional European countries. Minorities exist in 'borderland triangle' area too, but no one sees this as a problem or a potential risk. The existence of the Serbian case in the Balkans has different historical reasons that will not be discussed here as our focus is more on strategic insights rather than a historical one.

To put it in a nutshell, while Turkey's membership into the EU could contribute the EU's global standing, it might also decrease its role by creating a *de facto* division. If ever exists, such division would not show itself in ending the EU, but come to surface in decision-making process.

Great Players and the EU. As mentioned above, Caucasia has become the center of global politics. Energy, gas, oil and strategic center-ness have located once this area again in the center of global competition and clash. Currently the US has embedded in the area through the invasion of Afghanistan and military presence in several countries. However, there is an increasing Russian sentiment toward the US and the EU in general as a reaction to their policies in the area. There are several key players in the area: the US, the EU, Turkey, Russia and Iran. Although Turkey has a delicate relation with the US and the EU, it has also approached to Iran and Russia in last several years (e.g. Kiniklioglu and Morkva, 2007: and Hill and Taspinar, 2006). Such *de facto* coalition among Turkey, Iran and Russia seems to have understood that unless they act together the outside power will always be powerful in the area. Not stating this explicitly, the greater cooperation is underway among the three in energy, gas and trade links. This process, if capitalized in an organization more accurately, might crate a setback for the US policies in the area. Once again, responsibility comes onto the EU to involve in this state of affairs to dilute such a *de facto* coalition. It is also imperative for the EU as it needs and depends more on Russia in terms of energy security. Therefore, we argue that if the EU could secure the 'borderland triangle', probably it could exert its influence more in terms of energy games in the area. This is also important for the US. The US is an outside player and would not be naturally accepted in its

6 Latest developments on easing the entrance between Greece and Turkey for short visits count a great deal in terms of bringing the two nations together in every way.

involvement as it is today, therefore the US might come across more opposition from the local players, mainly from Russia. Unlike the US, the EU is a natural player in this area. This is an advantage in voicing the concerns, grievances and the issues that might affect negatively on the global affair and the west in general. In short, if the US is excluded or in case isolated from the Caucasia, the EU needs to fill the shoes of the US. Given the ongoing deep and not-much-spoken cooperation among Turkey, Iran and Russia, this should not be seen as in impossible option.

With regard to Black Sea Region, Ciuta (2008:141-142) argues that it is a European security integration as well as it re-claims the geopolitical significance of the region. One can observe a similar trend in the Russia-Turkey-Iran cooperation as security integration as well as claiming the central Asia as (only) their backyard. As this might seem contradictory, it is worth to consider as a possibility.

Conclusion

This article focused on the role of EU in a Caucasia-centric world with a special reference to the 'borderland triangle'. Historically this area has been pivotal in global geopolitics. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, this area, coupled with an increasing exportation of energy to the world, once again is considered to be the 'new' center of global politics. The EU has used enlargement process as its first dealing with the security and development issues. However, given the existing Russian hard-line policy toward the area those policies cannot be considered as main policies any more. A new approach is needed. EU has three options to follow. It can prefer a rapprochement policy with Russia and share the economic benefits while ignoring the values such as democratization and human rights that it professed so far. At this juncture, Turkey occupies a delicate position. Whether Turkey is to be included into the EU or not is directly related to the EU's options in the Caucasia-centric world. If Turkey is in, it can create a *de facto* two Europe. If it is not included, Turkey along with Iran and Russia can determine the influence and options of the both, the US and the EU, in the area. The EU is better to start considering all options without deliberately choosing one beforehand.

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