

“Creating Insecurities: The Consequences of EU Energy Policies”

by Nicholas Hildyard, Co-Director, The Corner House, UK

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What’s Left Out?

Government policies are often far more revealing for what they leave out and *don’t* say than for what they actually do say. The European Union’s 2008 [Energy Security and Solidarity Action Plan](#) is no exception.

I will briefly highlight six issues that the policy does *not* discuss because it is the omissions that are the more telling.

The six omissions are:

1. Conflict
2. *Insecurity*
3. Human Rights
4. Militarisation
5. Millennium Development Goals – and lastly, but most critically
6. Energy Security for Whom? Energy Security for What?

Omission One: “Conflict”

A key proposal in the EU’s Energy Security Action Plan is to diversify energy supplies and transit routes, through new pipelines such as the Southern Gas Corridor initiative to supply gas from the Caspian and Middle Eastern regions to Europe. The aim is to reduce the dependency of the EU – and in particular its Eastern European members – on supplies of gas from Russia, which has made it plain that it intends to use its energy resources as an instrument of its foreign policy (indeed it has already

done so, as you know all too well, cutting off supplies to the Ukraine and hence to many East European countries in 2009).¹

But this diversifying strategy merely displaces the flash point for conflict from the Baltic to the Caucasus and other areas, expanding, not decreasing, the number of potential “threats” to energy supply in the process. Instead of Poland being at risk from Russia shutting off gas to Belarus, it will in future be at risk from Iran and Azerbaijan falling out, Turkmenistan and Azerbaijan quarrelling, Azerbaijan going to war with Armenia, Iraq and Iran having a stand off and many other combinations of potential Central Asian diplomatic squabbles.

The Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan oil pipeline, which takes oil from the Caspian to the Mediterranean, via Azerbaijan, Georgia and Turkey, is illustrative of the problem. Although of dubious commercial viability, it was pushed through by President Clinton of the USA to ensure that Europe had access (in theory at least) to a source of oil outside the Gulf or Iran (thanks Bill!). The pipeline passes through or near seven different war-zones, including Abkhazia and South Ossetia in Georgia and the Kurdish region of Turkey. Azerbaijan, a dictatorship that likes to sell itself as “an island of stability” in the region, is candid about the threats, describing the South Caucasus as one of “the most volatile and vulnerable regions in the world”.²

Already, the pipeline has been bombed, an action for which the Kurdish PKK movement in Turkey claimed responsibility, causing it to be shut down for a lengthy period. A PKK statement at the time said “If the Turkish State insists on waging war, similar operations will continue”.

It was also damaged by Russia during its August 2008 war with Georgia. And in case anyone in Georgia, Azerbaijan but especially Brussels missed the significance of the conflict, Russia’s representative to NATO stated: “There are two dates that have changed the world in recent years: September 11, 2001, and August 8, 2008,”³ “It’s possible that after ten years we will have a very big war, because in Central Asia we see a lot of contradictions, there is Europe, the United States, China, Russia, Muslim terrorists, so it’s a dangerous combination of different interests,” Konstantin Simonov of the Director of the National Energy Security Fund in Moscow in November 2008.

Other planned pipelines are likely to be just as conflict ridden. The EU places considerable hopes, for example, on a new 4000 kilometre-long Trans-Saharan pipeline to take gas from the Niger Delta through Niger to Algeria's export terminals. The project is estimated to cost around \$12 billion and claims to supply up to 30 billion cubic meters of natural gas per year to Europe.

1 Kopysc , A., “Poland's energy security: Dealing with Russia”, *Energy Security*, 29 February 2008, <http://www.iags.org/n022908.htm>

2 Rzeyeva, G, “Azerbaijan’s New Energy Act”, *Energy Security*, March 2011, http://www.ensec.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=280:azerbaijans-energy-balancing-act&catid=114:content0211&Itemid=374

3 Quoted in Karbuz, S, “Losing the Energy Battle: How and Why the US and EU need to engage the Black Sea Region”, *Energy Security*, July 2010, http://www.ensec.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=255:losing-the-battle-why-and-how-the-united-states-and-europe-need-to-engage-the-black-sea-region&catid=108:energysecuritycontent&Itemid=365

Quite apart from the expense and the considerable technical difficulties involved in constructing such a pipeline, a number of guerrilla groups have already threatened to ensure that it never functions.

MEND, the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta, which has carried out attacks on oil and gas installations in Nigeria, has already stated that it will sabotage the pipeline's construction, whilst other dissident movements further North – including the Mouvement des Nigériens pour la Justice (MNJ) in Niger and the southern branch of al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) – also threaten disruption.⁴

Omission Two: *Insecurity*

Related to the first omission of conflict is the second one of *insecurity*. Oil and gas exploitation in many of the countries on which the EU depends for its supplies has caused considerable social and economic hardship for communities immediately affected by production. In fact, “energy security for the West has often meant insecurity for the rest.”⁵

Yet the role of the EU's current policies and practices in generating *insecurities* in oil and gas producing countries – and the implications of such insecurities for future EU energy supplies (and even for the ordinary security of the EU's people) – is neither addressed nor considered.

Nigeria, currently a major supplier of oil and gas to Europe, is a case in point. Despite Nigeria earning some \$400 billion in oil revenues since independence from Britain in 1960, little of that wealth has benefited local communities in the oil producing areas, many of which still have no access to electricity or clean drinking water.⁶ Whilst the oil and gas flow to the West, and local elites and multinationals get fat on the profits generated, local people receive only the pollution from oil spills and breathe the choking fumes of gas that is illegally burned off in such quantities that the fires can be seen from outer space. One response has been armed resistance, epitomised by MEND (*see above*), which has not only attacked oil and gas infrastructure in the Niger Delta but also kidnapped foreign oil workers. Another has been calls by civil society groups to diversify Nigeria's economy away from oil production and, in response to the threat that oil and gas pose to climate, embrace a policy that would “[keep the oil in the soil](#)”.

4 Fabiani,R., “Is the Trans-Sahara Gas Pipeline a Viable Project? The Impact of Terrorism Risk”, *Terrorism Monitor*, Volume 7, Issue 25, 13 August 2009
[http://www.jamestown.org/single/?no_cache=1&tx_ttnews\[tt_news\]=35412](http://www.jamestown.org/single/?no_cache=1&tx_ttnews[tt_news]=35412)

5 Stokes, D. and Raphael,S., *Global Energy Security and American Hegemony*, The Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore, USA. 2010. p.216.

6 For further details, see:

UNDP, “Niger Delta Human Development Report”, 2006,
http://hdr.undp.org/en/reports/nationalreports/africa/nigeria/nigeria_hdr_report.pdf

Obi, C., “Oil extraction, dispossession, resistance and conflict in Nigeria's oil rich Niger Delta”, *Canadian Journal of Development Studies*, Vol 30, Nos 1-2, 2010,
http://www.uam.es/otros/gea/Documentos%20adjuntos/Obi-CJDS_v30n1-2.pdf

Such forms of resistance are not restricted to Nigeria. Similar hostility to oil exploration – and particularly to its unevenly shared benefits – is evident in many other countries and is growing.

But such resistance, though clearly relevant to Europe’s future energy supplies, is not mentioned in the EU’s Energy Security Action Plan, let alone analysed. Despite the plan’s claim to be a policy for “solidarity”, the possibilities of Europeans joining with Nigerians and others to build a fair and just transition towards a non-fossil fuel future is not even considered. Instead, the EU is committed to continuing to rely on fossil fuels for the vast bulk of its energy way into the future, with all the attendant climatic insecurities that we heard about this morning.

Omission Three: Human Rights

For decades European countries have supported a string of dictators – from the Shah of Iran through to Sonny Abacha in Nigeria, Saddam Hussein in Iraq and the Saudi royal family – in order to keep the oil and gas flowing. To that list, the EU is now adding (or has added) the current leadership of Azerbaijan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan (where boiling dissidents alive is one of the recorded methods of torture) and Kazakhstan, all of which have appalling human rights records.

The words “human rights” do not appear anywhere in the EU’s Energy Security Action Plan. No doubt there are those who would argue that this is a sad but inevitable outcome of energy “*realpolitik*”. If we want to continue transporting yoghurts from one end of Europe and back again before they are consumed, the reasoning seems to be, then we must be “realistic” and also accept that freedom of expression, freedom from torture, freedom to organize are “non-issues” when it comes to sourcing energy. The Arab Spring tells a different story. Far from repressive regimes “securing” our energy supplies, they are increasingly a threat to such supplies, as the uprising in Libya, with all its attendant military costs for NATO, underlines.

Pragmatism in energy politics is in effect increasingly aligned with a respect for human rights. The “*realpolitik*” of those who favour any “son of a bitch” so long as he is “*our* son of a bitch” (as President Franklin D. Roosevelt supposedly said of Nicaraguan dictator Somoza in 1939 and other US officials said of Batista in Cuba in 1963) is becoming obsolete and will continue to decline so long as the movements for democracy in the Middle East and elsewhere gain ground. It is also, one might note, a “*realpolitik*” that is at odds with the obligations of the EU member states under the Lisbon Treaty.

Why then is the issue of human rights with all its attendant implications not discussed in the EU’s Energy Security Action Plan? How might the policy be different if human rights were made a priority alongside meeting Europe’s future energy needs (however such needs might be defined and by whom – that’s another issue left out of the plan, by the way).

Omission Four: Militarisation

Governments increasingly view energy security as an issue requiring military support. For decades, the US military, including the navy, has been deployed around the world to ensure that oil flows out of the ground, into tankers and pipelines, to be sold on international markets. It has also provided training to suppress any internal dissent that might question neo liberal markets and energy exports.⁷ It's not surprising that the Pentagon is by far the largest single consumer of oil in the world.⁸ Having ignored Africa for decades, the US has now established an African Command (AFRICOM) to "promote a stable and secure African environment in support of US foreign policy"⁹ (*read*: to ensure that the oil and gas keeps flowing to markets and to the West),¹⁰ leading some commentators to describe Nigeria and its neighbouring oil producing states as "the next Gulf"¹¹ (as in "Gulf War"). Other areas have become militarised as Europe and the US seek to ensure that oil keeps flowing to their market economies (which should not be confused with their citizens: energy poverty is a growing issue in the US and Europe as more and more people find themselves unable to afford the prices at which energy is sold).

Omission Five: Millennium Development Goals The EU's Energy Policy of 2007 promises to "support developing countries in promoting sustainable and secure energy supply and use" in furtherance of the UN's Millennium Development Goals.

But far from outlining proposals that might provide poorer people in the developing world with clean, sustainable and affordable forms of energy, the Energy Security Action Plan is concerned primarily with how developing countries can be used to supply Europe with energy, even at the expense of access to energy in their own countries.

Desertec, one of the mega projects being pushed by the European Union, is a case in point. The plan involves building and connecting a host of solar and wind energy plants in the deserts of North Africa and the Middle East to supply mainland Europe with up to 15% of its electricity demands, at a cost of €573 billion. The project requires industrial volumes of water – something of a scarcity in the Sahara despite a huge underground aquifer – to clean the mirrors and solar collectors that will be used to generate electricity, thus denying local people access to water. It would also depend on massive subsidies to bring the costs down so that the electricity produced could compete with fossil-fuel generated power. Moreover, host countries, such as

7 Stokes, D. and Raphael, S., *Global Energy Security and American Hegemony*, The Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore, USA. 2010.

8 Ibid. p.40.

9 The headquarters of the United States African Command (AFRICOM) is in Germany. Its mission is to conduct "sustained security engagement through military-to-military programs, military-sponsored activities, and other military operations as directed to promote a stable and secure African environment in support of U.S. foreign policy".

See: US African Command, "Fact Sheet", <http://www.africom.mil/getArticle.asp?art=1644>

10 Obi, C., "Oil extraction, dispossession, resistance and conflict in Nigeria's oil rich Niger Delta", *Canadian Journal of Development Studies*, Vol 30, Nos 1-2, 2010, http://www.uam.es/otros/gea/Documentos%20adjuntos/Obi-CJDS_v30n1-2.pdf

11 Rowell, A., Marriott, J., Stockman, L., "The Next Gulf", Constable, London, 2009.

Morocco, see it as a distraction from the more pressing priority of supplying clean energy to their own citizens.

Indeed, far from assisting developing countries to meet the Millennium Development Goals, the EU's policy amounts to a nationalistic "help-yourself game"¹² in which the developing world is viewed as an energy store whose resources can be looted first and foremost for the benefit of the European and US economies. Access to energy for poorer people is likely to be still further undermined by the EU's emphasis on extending energy markets and pushing for the privatisation of energy generation and supply in developing countries. Such privatisations have already resulted in large numbers of poorer people being priced out of access to energy.

The experience of Uganda is illustrative. In 2005, the privatised Ugandan power company, Umeme, was taken over by Globaleq, a company backed by a private equity fund that is in turn backed by the UK government using taxpayers' money). Umeme then increased its prices by 24 per cent and then by another 37 per cent. Many poorer Ugandans have been forced to steal electricity from the grid because of these high prices; Umeme's corporate communications manager, Ms Kemigisha, is reported to have called for their execution: "In his Independence Day address, President Museveni implored the judicial system to make electricity theft a capital offence, and we should all support this."

Omission Six: Energy Security for Whom? Energy Security For What?

The EU Energy Security Action Plan states that "energy infrastructure is the central nervous system of our economy". But Europe has never been one economy. The economy of the European transnational company is not the economy of the local producer or retailer. On the contrary, one generally prospers at the expense of the other, as the growth of supermarkets has demonstrated to the detriment of the local grocer and greengrocer. Moreover, their energy and infrastructure needs are entirely different. Supermarkets and big retail chains have "just-in-time" delivery systems that could not function without motorways and autobahns to enable their fleets of lorries or trucks to act as mobile warehouses. Thus the Action Plan fails to ask the basic question: "Energy for *Whom*? Energy for *What*?" It simply assumes that the energy Europe needs is the energy that corporate Europe demands.

Would the plan have been different if the energy needs of other sectors of our economies had been prioritised? If the experience of grassroots-based energy planning in Asia and elsewhere is anything to go by, the answer is undoubtedly "Yes".

In Nepal, for example, the government initiated a nationwide "options assessment" for energy projects, in which communities were asked to assess their energy needs and propose solutions. The result? Numerous villages made proposals to build their own mini-hydro schemes, some run collectively, some privately. The outcome was to produce three times more energy at a third of the cost of the large-scale hydroelectric project (Arun 3) that the World Bank was pushing – and that was designed to serve a different sector of the Nepalese economy.

12 Noel, P., "China's Rise, Energy and International Security", 11th Asia-Pacific Security Forum, 2007, http://www.eprg.group.cam.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2009/02/pn_chinasrise_energysecurity_revised_07081.pdf

To conclude: The EU's Energy Security and Solidarity Action Plan will not deliver any kind of security for the mass of people globally as it does not act in solidarity with them. It threatens to leave the majority of Europeans *more* at risk from disruptions to energy supplies and resource conflicts, *more* divided socially and economically, and to leave *more* people, both in Europe and abroad, without access to energy. It is a policy that is, at heart, about securing energy for the few by dispossessing the many.

The debate that Europe needs to have – Energy for what? Energy for whom? – is still to be had. Initiating it, encouraging it and seeing it through is one of the most urgent tasks facing us today. It would, I believe, encourage a very different view of energy security to that currently on offer – one that is more firmly grounded in climatic and energy realities than the EU proposal, and one that would not be at odds with the interests of poorer people in the developing world but would be supportive of them.