

NEW GEOPOLITICS OF ENERGY IN SOUTH AMERICA. CRITICAL UNCERTAINTIES

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Overview

The purpose of this paper is to analyze the changes occurred in the South American energy sector where, as an alternative to the changing global scenario, can be recognized the existence of a New Geopolitics of Energy that seeks to guarantee energy security of States, through process of resource nationalism and the resurgence of the state's presence in the search and domain of energy resources. This would be one of the central dynamics of global affairs in the coming decades.

In South America the geopolitics of energy, presents a contrasting scenarios overlay projects with realities, and integration with growing conflicts that create instability, most of the problems with the resources not coincide with the project viability, neither with distribution of the resource or reserves, or depend on infrastructure, but obey economic and political decisions from the 90 that occurred in the region, which is currently being redefined, combined with historical geopolitical conflicts still unsolved.

Geopolitical analysis allows, understanding the facts, as a product of a South American reality - changing and uncertain-and interpret the complexity of the existing dynamics in the social, political and economic factors that gave origin. Also understand the power relationships that are established for the emergence of new geopolitical situation in the regional and global space, where reality is being built in the everyday.

In the South American case in particularly process of nationalization of resources generate a policy territorialisation, produced as a result of decisions and political alliances between states - centered not on the market but in the political power exerted on a territory - leading to territorial dynamics of uncertainty and instability in energy matters to regional scale, which threatens regional development and improving the quality of life of the people involved in the process.

Resurgence of conduct "statist" about energy resources is a result of dependence of the States of hydrocarbons in a context of shortage in production that generates threats to energy security and quality of life of the population of the countries most developed, as well as remarks conditions of vulnerability and dependency on the main consuming countries. All these, traditional and emerging economies-grow and compete for the same sources of energy.

On this context, in South American scene, occur three major changes in terms of growth of global reserves. First-in 2008 - large oil discoveries in Brazil in the pre-salt area, positioning it not only as a country achieving its energy self-sufficiency but also a surplus nation in energy resources, which added to its growing economic presence and politics as an emerging country with one of the largest areas in surface and huge population, adding a significant improvement its global positioning. Add to this the final certification of oil reserves in Venezuela in 2010 (remembering that in many cases is associated with gas fields) that placed first, above Saudi Arabia. Finally, in 2011, the recognition that third global reserves of shale gas are located in Argentina.

Another fact that must be faced when discussing the New Geopolitics of Energy is that it will remain dependent on oil, becoming scarce and with greater demand, because despite efforts of scientists around the world to replace them by renewable energy or hydrogen, the fact is that no country could do it on a large scale. However, the increasing use of unconventional resources such as shale gas, shale oil, tigh gas and thigh oil may modify the global energy map.

Methods

All civilizations have an energy order, implying a link between producers and consumers and whose central axes of action are conflict, conciliation and a dominant energy source¹. In this context, the construction of a new world energy order is the center of current conflicts that can be understood as positions relative to the control of resources, since there is no development without energy. The Geopolitics of Energy seeks to analyze and understand these conflicts.

Perspective of contemporary geopolitics of energy, shows changes of particular importance in this second decade of XXI century, where energy is one of the key elements that set these changes in power relations between States which

¹ **Sánchez Albavera Fernando (2006):** *Latin America and the search for a new world energy order*. Nueva Sociedad 204, pág.39.

originate a series of critical uncertainties, among them: how will these changes affect the global energy market, what will be the consequences of power relations between States, where will be located the new winners and losers spaces, all reserves will become technically recoverable resources, what will be the dependency changes and new vulnerabilities that will occur. All these questions, focusing on the South American region, can be answered from a geopolitical approach that overcomes the dominant economic slant in the energy issue.

In this framework highlights the contributions of the Geopolitical Method such as a model of analysis alternative / complementary in economic studies and consideration of Territory as territorial anchoring and not just as productive enclave, among others, resources and actors are main protagonists. A multidimensional geopolitical analysis of the political, economic, social, environmental and territorial involved in energy issues together with a multiscale analysis that takes into account the interactions between global, regional and national scale.

Results

The application of geopolitical analysis to the energy issue allows us to understand the geopolitics of energy in South America as a result of a changing and uncertain reality, at the same time interpreting the complexity existing and dynamics of the social, political (resurgence of nationalism) and economic changes, as well as to understand the possible emergence of new geopolitical situations in a regional space in which reality is being built daily. Knowledge exposed here of geopolitical, economics and political conflicts, are important to trace the possible scenarios for the evolution of energy markets and security of societies of regular supply. Vulnerability is the counterpart of Energy Security, to any country aspires and which should be avoided with joint actions to promote the regional integration. From the foregoing, three critical uncertainties arise that must be considered in the South American region:

The first critical and fundamental uncertainty is whether the South American region, despite the existence of resource nationalism, more and more increased in the countries of the region, may generate confidence to attract foreign investment needed to transform the existing resources in technically recoverable resources and economically viable: new discoveries of unconventional resources, resources of conventional oil and gas and resources of deep and ultradeep waters, are still potentials.

The second of the critical uncertainties, derived from the first, is whether the South American region will overcome the conflicts of power between states, recognizing the importance of energy interdependence-like way of achieving regional energy security, and develop their potential for oil and gas that would allow them compete with the Middle East and Africa, because of its higher regional political stability within the global geopolitical context.

The third critical uncertainty is, if after the death of President Chavez, Venezuela will maintain its energetic cooperativism with Cuba and Central American countries, through financial, political and social support provided in the context of ALBA, whose main actor is Venezuela as supplier of energy resources and as a counterweight to United States influence in Central America. Decisions arising from a new government can affect oil prices globally and impact in the region.

Finally there is a certainty, the region has quantity and variety of resources, not yet exploited, also has a low consumption and a higher ratio reserves/production. All of these provide potential for its insertion on a global scale.

Conclusions

The sum of various factors developed in the paper, allow us to glimpse - in the near future- a new crisis in the region in the period 2015-2020 if not taken the necessary steps to reverse the current situation, that generates a lack of energy security. It is here where the geopolitical and strategic, allowing a differential analysis of energy security scenarios, which goes beyond the dominant economic vision because, are economic and political decisions that sometimes define the actions performed by States. Therefore, promote a strategic alliance between States, addressing the issue from a global perspective without leaving aside regional particularities, is not only recommended, but a real priority for South America.

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