AFTERMATH OF RUSSIA-UKRAINE WAR; LINKING AFRICA TO EUROPE: AN EXPLORATION OF NIGERIA AND MORROCO GAS PIPELINE DEAL

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Abstract
The aftermath of the Russian-Ukraine war and Moscow's use of the weapon of natural gas supplies against European countries in response to the Western sanctions had led many European states in search for alternatives to Russian gas. Russia supplies almost half of Europe's natural gas and 30% of its oil. Moscow cut gas supplies from a number of European countries like the Netherland,

Denmark and Germany, in response to none payment to Russia in rubbles. It notes that Russian war on Ukraine will be protracted, and may lead to energy crisis because Europe, with its weapon of sanctions wants to break the link with Russian gas in order to isolate Vladmir Putin's regime. The paper seeks answers to the following questions: will Europe succeed in breaking free of its energy dependence on Russia? Can African gas, especially Algerian, Nigerian, Morocco alongside Qatar gas, compensate for Russian gas? The study seeks to provide a critical contextualization of the Nigerian Morocco gas pipeline linking Africa to Europe in a thorough synthesis of extent literature. The paper argues that the Nigerian-Morocco gas pipeline project is a geo-political and geo-economic energy infrastructure involved in the project deploying a continuum of instruments and approaches in furtherance of a foreign policy issue. For Nigeria it affords the country the opportunity to re-assess its gas flaring to finding ways of exporting this gas to Europe. Nigeria has the largest gas reserves in Africa, and ranks as seventh largest holder of reserves in the world. The realization of this project would indeed constitute a true resource and alternative to Russian gas. The study used various scholarly and media reports to provide a vivid analysis of the events and the implications for Europe and Africa in particular. The study concludes that as the Russia- Ukraine disputes rages on and the gas dispute in Europe intensifies, the scenario of a total cut off of Russian gas seems plausible, prompting Europe to look for African sources of supply.

Keywords: Nigeria, Morocco, Gas pipeline, Africa, Europe, Russia-Ukraine war

Introduction

Since on February 21, 2022 that Ukraine began witnessing Russia invasion, scholars have attempted explaining the role of Russian leader Vladimir's decision putting Ukraine under invasion. Diverse of explanations have been adduced in this regard. Commentators from the liberal perspective conclude on the claims that due to Russian leader nature of being an autocratic leader and thus he has been running autocratic regime in Moscow as shown elsewhere. Similarly, Russian leader was once seen flagging up domestic support earlier that is (military campaigns in places like Chenchyna in 1990, Georgia 2008, and Ukraine 2014 all these bolster his position at home). In turn, the realists, focus more on American most especially overreach, and more specifically, the NATO's expansion into Russia's influence sphere, which set the stage for a confrontation with Moscow. At this juncture, realists also noted that the war between Russia and Ukraine signals the evolution of a multipolar order and far more importantly the end of 'Pax Americans'.

To others they opined that the conflict, particularly the period and timing of the invasion should be understood as a result of Russia's emergence as a petro-state with enormous foreign currency reserves. Be that as it may, to this crisis there had been several responses. On 2nd of March, 2022, there was an official African condemnation initiated in a vote that took place at the United Nations level on a resolution deploring in the strongest possible

terms of the Federation of Russia aggression against Ukraine (UNO 2022). In various quarters, the implication of this crisis has also been discussed as well as analyzed. In Europe, apart from humanitarian crisis it has created, the crisis has equally engendered infrastructure damage. It is also important to note the problem of gas consumption it has generated creating uproar following Europe's reliance on Russian gas. The debate concerning Europe energy security policy needs to be put in the right perspective as a result of the aftermath of Moscow's use of the weapon of natural gas supplies against European countries in response to western sanctions.

Therefore, this paper seek to examine the need why Africa should seize the opportunity of this crisis to re-engineer the Nigerian Morocco Gas pipeline project to Europe to compensate for Russia gas as well as eliminate gas flaring in Nigeria. This readily comes to mind as Nigeria is in dire need to re-positioning her interest in the global energy security amid rapid changes on the geostrategic scene.

The Nigeria Morocco Gas Pipeline Project to Europe

The strategic experts attention should by now be turning to Africa, far more importantly on the Nigeria Morocco gas pipeline to Europe. Beyond much argument, this no doubt is one of the biggest projects of interest from the stand point of the Europeans, but in order to achieve this big dream of ambitious project it indeed requires international efforts to come together and for the provision of needed infrastructure. According to the Nigerian Vice President, Professor Yemi Osibajo, 'Nigeria has one of the largest gas reserves in the world' (Deji 2022). This project realization and coming to

limelight would constitute indeed to a true resource as well as alternative to Russia gas, but it is pertinent to mention that this project faces a number of problems and constraint. Among the most prominent constraint is the length of the distance that the pipeline will transverse, for it will extend over 5660Km, and pass through well over 13 countries, (including Nigeria and Morocco), and these countries are: Guinea, Republic of Benin, Togo, Cote d'voire, Liberia, Ghana, Sierra Leone, Guinea, Bissau, Gambia, Mauritania and Senegal.

All the other countries belong, with the exception of Mauritania, along with Nigeria, to the West African countries economic group (CEDAO). Virtually, in all these countries political stability as a fundamental factor constitutes a constraints for the success of the project, and it is among the biggest constraints facing it. For comparison, the length one line of the 'Nord stream 2' project that connects between the Russia port of Ustluga and the city of Greenfield in Germany is 1234 SLM. The second constraint has to do with financing as the cost of the project is around $25 billion (Peter 2022) .The fact that the pipelines will pass through vast desert areas, can generate a threat from terrorist groups present in those areas (especially in Northern Mali) moreover, for the gas pipeline getting to the Mediterranean coastline requires very large financial investments, as well as earnest, and real securing of a guarantee against terrorist and other security threats.

Currently, Nigeria exports its gas in liquefied form i.e. via ship to Europe and among its most prominent customers

are Portugal, Spain and France, and they are countries that have stations for liquefied natural gas, but Germany, which is considered the largest European state threatened by the cutting of Russian gas, does not have a liquefied gas station, and there is the need for them to build two stations, per the statements of the expert on the power sector in the German African Business Association (Manjula 2022). According to Khadi Camara, Europe in year 2019 imported around 108 billion cubic meters of liquefied natural gas, among them more than 12 billion came from Nigeria (Abu-Bakarr 2022). It is instructive to note that Nigeria is among the ten countries that have the largest reserves of gas in the world. It has more supplies than required for its particular market and therefore it is capable of equal to the task of exporting.

Russia-Ukraine Crisis and European Union Energy Crisis

After invasion of Ukraine by Russia, the sanctions against the Kremlin, championed by Western countries, have really fueled energy crisis in Europe. After Ukraine was attacked by the Russian troops at the behest of Vladimir Putin, Canada, European Union, United Kingdom as well as the United States and some of their allies announced a series of sanctions against Russia (European Council 2022). With many of the sanctions targeting the Russian economy, especially the removal of some Russian banks from the SWIFT system, it is aimed that the Putin administration takes a step back in Ukraine. Ironically, rather than backing down, Putin intensified the attack, which led the United States to announce tougher sanctions targeting the energy sector. Russia announced in

retaliation for these sanctions, that it would export natural gas to Europe in "rubles" (Dylan 2022).

This could be seen as a way for Russia to support its unstable currency and also retaliate against its European neighbours for Western sanctions over the invasion of Ukraine. By forming a new front in the war, in this manner, Moscow signaled that it is willing to use Europe's excessive dependence on Russian gas as a political leverage. After refusal of Bulgaria and Poland to pay for Russian natural gas in rubles, Russia's halting of natural gas shipments to these countries on 28th April, 2022 indicates that the European energy crisis has escalated (Reuters.com, 2022). On the other hand, Uniper, the parent company of Federal Republic of Germany and Hungary, which has so far only imported Russian natural gas, stated that they can adapt to the Kremlin's proposed system to make gas payments in rubles without violating European Union sanctions (Daylimail.co.uk 2022).

It is worthy of mentioning to state that, 38.2% of the European Union's gas need in 2021 came from Russia, 21.9% from Norway, 18.4% as liquefied natural gas (LNG), 9.4% from Algeria, 9.1% was obtained from the production of European Union countries, 2.2% from Azerbaijan and 0.8% from Libya (Khuldyz 2022). Liquefied Natural Gas, which constitutes 20% of the total gas imports, in the total supply of 80 billion cubic meters of Liquefied Natural Gas in 2021, the United States of America owns 20%, Norway 2%, Nigeria 17%, Russia 18%, Qatar 20%, Algeria 14%, and the remaining 9% belong to other suppliers (Anadolu Agency 2022). While

further information reveals that the European Union's main supplier of natural gas is Russia, gas from this country is mostly sent to Europe via pipelines such as Yamal-Europe, which passes through Poland and Belarus, Nord Stream, using the Baltic Sea, and Ukraine, Soyuz and Turk Stream. Europe imported about 40% of the natural gas, in other words it is about 175 billion cubic meters from Russia in 2021.

Russian natural gas transported through Ukraine decreased by 70%. Accordingly, the supply, which was 140 billion cubic meters in 1998, decreased to 42 billion cubic meters in 2021. Natural gas coming through Ukraine mostly goes to Slovakia and from there to Austria and Italy (Euronews.com 2022). While the situation of the European Union with its main energy supplier is difficult, the European Union needs to either increase its purchases from other suppliers or find new energy suppliers. In this regard, the European Union's energy infrastructure is sufficient to buy more gas from North Africa and Norway and increase the amount of Liquefied Natural Gas imports, however, as stated, it is not possible to increase the gas supply in these quantities rapidly. Norway, which is the country that provides the highest gas flow to the European Union after Russia, explained that its gas production capacity is at the maximum level and it is not possible for them to fill it in case of Russia's interruption, causing a further reduction in options.

Algeria has the opportunity to increase its gas flow to Europe with Liquefied Natural Gas and gas lines to Italy and Spain. However, Algeria is expected to increase the

amount of gas by a few billion cubic meters per year due to the current infrastructure insufficiency. Close to about I8.1 billion cubic meters of gas was sent to Europe from the Trans Adriatic Pipeline (TAP), in year 2020 which was built to transport the natural gas extracted from Azerbaijan's Shah Deniz 2 field to Europe. It does not seem possible to increase this number rapidly (Anadolu Agency 2022). On the other hand, global Liquefied Natural Gas markets are already in a tight spot due to increased demand as a result of the economic recovery. Providing its Liquefied Natural Gas to Asian countries with long-term contracts, Qatar announced that it is already producing at full capacity and that it will not contribute to Europe if Russian gas is cut off (Reuters.com 2022).

The European Union, on the other hand, is making persuasive efforts to buy the gas of Asian countries that have made purchase agreements with long-term contracts in global markets. However, since Asian countries do not have many options in gas supply, it is stated that they do not approach the European Union swap requests warmly. The European Union's annual Liquefied Natural Gas import capacity is at the level of 157 billion cubic meters, enough to meet around 40% of total current gas demand. Even with continued flow from Russia, the European Union uses 66% of its total Liquefied Natural Gas capacity. For this reason, it does not seem possible to meet all the needs with Liquefied Natural Gas in a large-scale blackout. Experts point out that the global Liquefied Natural Gas capacity and Liquefied Natural Gas-carrying vessels are almost fully utilized (Energy.ec.europa.eu

2022). Natural gas prices in Europe rose significantly in the second half of 2021, long before the current crisis in Ukraine, mainly due to the strong increase in post-pandemic demand.

On 21st December, 2021, prices hovered below €50 per megawatt-hour throughout the summer, reaching a peak of €180 per megawatt-hour (Eurporal.europa.eu 2022) (Europarl.europa.eu, 2022). This came after relatively low levels of natural gas storage. European gas storage levels are very low during the winter season when demand is at its highest. European Union gas tanks are currently around 40% full, and this gas is expected to run out in a very short time if there is an interruption from Russia (Bruegel.org 2022). In this case, the European Union does not have many options except importing electricity, restarting coal power plants that are harmful to the environment and incompatible with climate targets, the extension of the duration of the nuclear reactors that are planned to be closed, and the activation of closed power plants. Considering the fact that the European Union needs to reduce domestic demand, it is foreseen that natural gas and electricity restrictions may be applied, especially in the industry that consumes high energy.

About a quarter of the European Union's oil imports also come from Russia. Europe's dependence on Russian energy caused the first crack in the West's collective response to Russia's aggression, and the European Union stayed out of a ban on oil imports from Russia by the United States as well as United Kingdom (Rferl.org 2022). At the summit held in Brussels on 24th March,

2022, European leaders announced that they plan to become completely independent of Russian energy supplies by 2030 (at the Versailles summit of the heads of state and government of the European Union on March 10-11, the date announced was– by 2027), while at present the European Union, according to the European Commission, in gas consumption depends on 90% of imports, about 40% of which on Russia, but the numbers vary greatly for individual European Union countries. Russia covers a quarter of crude oil imports and 45% of European Union coal imports (Konoplyanik A 2022).

In summary, Russia, which started to use its energy superiority as a political weapon during the war, as a counter reaction to the sanctions imposed on itself. On the other hand, Europe, which has a high energy dependency, must either accept Russia's payment terms or quickly find an alternative. Considering the speed and capacity of the above alternatives, it is obvious that Europe should accept Russia's terms for now and produce projects for the future.

Africa Gas as a replacement for Russian Gas to Europe

The Russia-Ukraine crisis has brought to the public gleam how much Europe depends on natural gas as it moves to green energy. Gas provides backup power when there is no sun or wind as sources of green energy. Natural gas is needed as an essential ingredient in fertilizer production and other resources. Countries in Europe are now jostling to cut out new deals from the Middle East and Africa that could bring them into fossil fuel deals for years more than

they envisaged. Some members of the European countries have entered into agreements with Algeria, Egypt, Angola and the Republic of Congo to make up for almost two-thirds of the gas it was importing from Russia. The European Union in addressing the gap in gas supply from Russia proposed to build import terminals for gas shipments from the United State and West Africa. Also, in seeking an alternative to Russia gas supply to Europe, European countries have come into agreement with Senegal, Nigeria and Angola as potential partners to fill the widening gaps.

German Chancellor Olaf Scholz mentioned that the European superpower was halting approval of Russia-owned Nord Stream 2 after President Vladimir Putin officially sent troops into eastern Ukraine. Nord Stream 2, an $11bn gas pipeline project owned by Moscow-backed energy company Gazprom, runs from western Siberia to Germany. The project was built to ensure a sustainable energy distribution across the European Union, especially as gas prices reached record highs in Europe – which gets more than a third of its natural gas from Russia. As the conflict continues in Ukraine, European gas prices have soared and there is the likelihood that Moscow could shut off supplies of gas, widely considered part of Putin's leverage against the West in his obsession with Ukraine.

Before that, European countries are willing to pull the stops to find contingency supply networks over a period of time. In fact, sources have it that the United States of America is in talks with Qatar over supplying of gas to the European Union as a crucial substitute for Russia.

However, during a forum of gas exporting countries held in Qatar, the bloc said it would be unable to provide a considerable amount of replacement gas to Europe in the event of sanctions against Russia. They stressed the need for significant investment in gas infrastructure, as well as long-term contracts, to guarantee a large supply to Europe.

Filling the Gap

This has led to an emerging debate about whether African countries, which have some of the world's deepest gas reserves, can step in to fill the gap – a demand of 150-190 billion cubic metres annually that Russia has usually supplied to Europe. Recently, Tanzanian President Samia Suluhu Hassan said the Russian invasion of Ukraine could prove to be an opportunity for gas sales as the East African country makes efforts to secure a new energy market outside Africa. "Whether Africa or Europe or America, we are looking for markets," said Hassan. "And fortunately, we are working with companies from Europe." Tanzania, which has the sixth-largest gas reserves in Africa – an estimated 57 trillion cubic feet (1.6 billion cubic metres) of gas reserves – says it has been working with Shell to utilize its vast offshore gas resources and export to Europe and elsewhere.

Africa's largest gas producer Nigeria has similar plans too. As the country plans to build a pipeline, a trans-Sahara pipeline, that is going to take her gas to Algeria, then to Europe." Nigeria's comments are buoyed by the recent signing of a MoU with Algeria and the Niger Republic and the ongoing construction of the Trans-

Saharan Gas Pipeline, a 614km (381.5 miles) long natural gas pipeline beginning in northern Nigeria. There is no official word on when the pipeline, first mooted in the 1970s, will be completed but it is slated to run through northern Nigeria into Niger and Algeria, connecting to Europe eventually. Still there are concerns about whether African countries can become a proper stopgap solution for natural gas as Europe tackles Russia's military onslaught against one of its own – or long-term suppliers.

Lack of Infrastructure

Experts say a historic lack of investment in gas infrastructure has hampered the energy industry in sub-Saharan Africa, unlike in Northern Africa. For instance, the Maghreb-Europe Gas Pipeline in Algeria – Africa's largest natural gas exporter – conveys natural gas through Morocco to Spain and Portugal, and the Medgaz pipeline links Algeria directly to Spain. Experts estimated that Algeria exported 9 billion cubic feet (255 million cubic metres) of gas to Spain in 2020 and up to 17 billion cubic feet (481 million cubic metres) annually before that. The drop was due to gas production dipping in a breakdown in relations with Morocco; last October, Algeria announced that it would immediately begin exporting gas directly to Spain.

"It is important to note that (North) Africa already has an established gas export market with Europe (before the Ukrainian crisis)". "The Medgaz pipeline capacity enhancements (in Algeria) are also expected to increase exports to Europe." But many African countries with massive gas reserves have also struggled to attract

investment to build gas infrastructure projects to supply the European market. Angola, which has 13.5 trillion cubic feet (382 billion cubic metres) of proven gas reserves, has experienced a sharp decline in oil and gas production in the last five years due to a combination of technical and operational problems, as well as a lack of upstream investment and incentives. In 2020, Nigeria put forward "A Decade of Gas", a Nigerian initiative to prioritize the gas industry and take advantage of a global transition to cleaner fuels.

As part of that drive, Nigeria has commenced construction of the 614km-long, $2.5bn Ajaokuta-Kaduna-Kano Natural Gas Pipeline. Most of the funding comes as a loan from Chinese banks. Still, like in many other African countries, significant investments are needed to build trans-regional and intercontinental pipelines, in order to open up access to Europe. And they all need loads of capital. Nigeria is hoping that its new industry legislation can provide a new framework to cut down on waste and corruption in the oil sector, reshape host community relations and ultimately, investment. "Nigeria is not presently a top investment destination for the oil and gas industry," said Joe Nwakwue, former chairman of the Society of Petroleum Engineers in Nigeria and ex-adviser to the junior petroleum minister'. This was why we pushed for a competitive fiscal arrangement in the bill."

"Additionally, to address the infrastructure challenge, Nigeria need to open up the sector to private capital," the country's current oligopoly would not suffice as the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation lacks the capital

to build our required infrastructure." Using vessels for direct transport of Liquefied Natural Gas across the seas could also put sub-Saharan African countries in prime position to become competitive producers and exporters.

Security of Supply

There are also other existential issues African countries have to fix first to be a ready alternative for Europe in situations of urgency. Mozambique holds roughly 100 trillion cubic feet (2.8 trillion cubic metres) of proven natural gas reserves, accounting for approximately 1 percent of the world's total reserves. But an ongoing armed uprising in the northern Mozambican province of Cabo Delgado, a gas-rich area that borders Tanzania, has hampered activity on a planned $50bn project. Elsewhere, a wave of security threats from armed groups has affected oil and gas exploration in Nigeria's oil-rich Niger Delta. "The key factor that remains a challenge for Africa as a reliable LNG producer and exporter revolves around security of supply," "Whilst the Liquefied Natural Gas discoveries in Mozambique are a great find, it is also important to recognize that insecurity leads to delays and instability of supply."

Nigeria-Morocco Pipeline Offers Europe Viable Alternative to Russian Gas

The current energy supply map of gas pipelines in Europe shows a high concentration of the sources of supply ... In total, more than 50% of the European Union's gas needs come from a single source of supply," it is the belief, that the current status quo "would naturally pose a threat to Europe as its energy needs **could be weaponised.** In light

of this data, the expert underscores the importance for Europe to work towards diversifying the base of its energy suppliers, noting that Africa is a promising alternative source of gas given the continent's important reserves of onshore and offshore gas. In addition, relying on African gas through the Nigeria-Morocco Gas Pipeline would reduce the risk of Europe replacing Russian gas with unconventional energy sources, and support the European Union in its endeavor to phase out coal completely, as well as prevent the emergence of strong gas dependence on Algeria, the expert adds.

First launched in 2016, the pipeline has recently been at the center of attention amid the ongoing Ukraine crisis, the tightening of global gas supplies, and the west's sanctioning of Russia. The ambitious project is extremely capital intensive as it requires a total investment of almost $25 billion and would take 25 years to go. Earlier this year, the project received significant funding from the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC). The investment went to fund the project's initial feasibility study also known as Front-End Engineering Design (FEED). Aside from its potential to end the era of Europe's dependency on Russian gas, the project promises significant socio-political advantages for the African continent, experts argue. The project will cut across 11 African countries, delivering a reliable and stable source of gas that would boost the continent's prospects to host business activities and contribute to socio-economic development.

Europe’s Strategic Interest in Completing the Nigeria – Morocco Gas Pipeline

The underlying vision is that African gas supplies would strengthen Europe's energy independence, which is essential for strategic autonomy. The preferred approach is to alter European paradigms that shape its relation with Africa, making the continent a partner and providing Europe with an opportunity for global strategic repositioning. A minimum six factors justify the strategic interest Europe should have in this project.

1. **Diversification of Europe's gas supply sources: a prerequisite for the continent's energy autonomy.**
   Europeans have long ignored the basic principle that "you should never put all your eggs in the same basket". Europe's dependence on gas imports grew significantly with completion of both Nord Stream 1 and Nord Stream 2 megaprojects that directly connect Russia to Germany via the Baltic Sea. Together, both structures can supply 110 billion m3 of gas to Germany, Europe's driving economic force. Other pipelines add to this concentration, including the 4,000km Yamal-Europe pipeline that connects Russia's Yamal Peninsula gas fields to Western Europe. Altogether, no less than 50% of European Union (EU) gas consumption originates from one single supply source. Obviously, this constitutes a serious geopolitical weapon that can and will be used against Europe in the event of strategic confrontation, e.g. the current situation in Ukraine.
   It is therefore vital for Europe to diversify its gas imports. To avoid catastrophic impacts should

supplies from any one provider run into difficulty. Furthermore, diversification is also required to mitigate the economic risk arising from potential abuse of monopoly or oligopoly positions by a dominant supplier. Europe currently appears to be looking eastward for new Asian suppliers, such as Azerbaijan. Africa, although a mere 14 km from Europe, remains insufficiently visible on European energy radars. And yet, Africa's gas resources are significant and the potential of onshore and offshore reserves holds great promise. The Nigeria-Morocco Gas Pipeline project would effectively contribute to the diversification of European gas resources and give Europe greater scope for action.

2. **Addressing Asymmetric threats through large-scale Economic Projects**

The Mediterranean is the world's only liquid continent, a wise man once said. A semi-enclosed sea more akin to a large lake, the Mediterranean has always been a space of encounter and exchange. This is its inherent and unalterable nature. This also illustrates why the barriers erected to preserve Fortress Europe prove little effective and, above all, counterproductive with each passing day. European concerns are legitimate. Africa is itself a victim of Europe's difficulties with illegal immigration and in security. Populist currents and extreme factions are the sole beneficiaries of the situation, as evidenced by the historic breakthrough of the extreme right in Sweden’s September 2022 elections. Yet, while European concerns are easily grasped, the course of

actions taken appears less than appropriate. Its main flaw lies in its focus on crisis symptoms from a purely unilateral perspective.

Instead, the focus should be on the roots of the problems in a participatory and inclusive way. Contributing to the emergence of a prosperous Africa would almost automatically cut down illegal migration flows. Facilitating trade and cooperation in joint projects generating shared wealth between both two shores of the Mediterranean creates the conditions for retaining illegal migrants in Africa and helps stem the flows of people in "economic distress". Building the Nigeria-Morocco gas pipeline would contribute to creating a new generation of measures that curb the asymmetric threats Europe faces.

3. **Preserving Europe's climate objectives: not substituting one short-term crisis for another long term one**

   Climate change is now widely recognized. Its impact on environmental balances confirmed and especially devastating. In September 2022, a third of Pakistan territory experienced unprecedented floods.

   In many ways, Europeans are a key constituent of the nascent climate consciousness. They strive to include climate-relevance to economic strategies and preserve environmental balances. The current energy crisis, however, threatens to undermine European gains in this area. Both alternatives to Russian gas, currently discussed in Europe, range from encouraging shale gas imports, on one hand, to reviving nuclear power,

on the other. Both alternatives entail significant adverse consequences to the environment. To some extent, this means replacing Europe's dependence on Russian gas, which has serious geopolitical consequences, with a dependence on non-conventional energy sources which have dangerous climatic consequences.

In this context, the Nigeria-Morocco gas pipeline, bringing natural gas from West Africa to Europe, has the merit of mitigating current solutions in Europe to replace Russian gas without sacrificing climatic balances. The goal is not to replace the two above mentioned sources, but rather reduce their impact through additional supply of conventional gas.

4. The strategic advantage of the Nigeria-Morocco gas pipeline over the Nigeria-Algeria alternative: Not repeating the same mistakes

Restructuring Europe's energy market should be done on robust and sustainable foundations. This restructuring should above all not reproduce patterns of the past that have proved their undoing. Europe’s current energy crisis is the direct result of excessive energy import concentration in the hands of a single supplier. It would therefore be a strategic mistake for Europe to favor the emergence of domination by a single country, Algeria in this case, over gas imports from West Africa. As a matter of fact, the Trans-Sahara Gas Pipeline project, promoted by Algeria, which aims to bring Nigerian gas through Algeria before rerouting it to Europe, would expose

Europe to additional risk and potential political shocks.

An Abuja-Algiers gas pipeline would provide a strategic opportunity to the regime in Algeria to add Nigerian and West African gas resources to its own energy resources in advancing its political agenda. And considering Algeria's strategic alliances, particularly in light of the deepening Algiers/Iran/Russia axis, the risk of Algeria's regime employing gas as a strategic weapon should not be discounted. Two recent moves illustrate Algiers' use of gas as a geopolitical weapon in this respect. First, in late 2021, Algeria shut down the Maghreb/European Gas Pipeline supplying Spain and Portugal with Algerian gas, in large part to protest agreements signed between Morocco, the United States and Israel. Then, in early 2022, Algeria moved to punish Madrid for its rapprochement with Rabat through a range of sanctions including reduced gas deliveries.

On top of all these considerations, the insecurity element along the proposed Algerian gas pipeline route also warrants concern. European support for the Nigeria-Morocco gas pipeline neutralizes the Nigeria-Algiers gas pipeline project, which would exacerbate Europe's energy dependency rather than reduce.

5. **Repositioning Africa/Europe in a fast-changing world: A Vertical Perspective over a Horizontal One:** Europe would gain by rebalancing its strategic direction from a horizontal model, which is hardly

productive, to a truly vertical model, which leverages its influence. Relations between Europe and Africa can easily be characterized as "a big mess". Geographical, historical and economic factors predestine both continents to strong cooperation. Furthermore, of all major global players, Europe is probably the one that is least "political" in its geography. It is the power cluster that trades and invests the least in its immediate vicinity. Economic transactions between the United States and North and South America are in sharp contrast to Europe's transactions with Africa. The same is true of China's transactions with Asian countries.

This vertical projection momentum in America and Asia grows deeper despite the historic and strategic dissimilarities among countries of these areas. In 2021, China successfully established the largest free trade area in the world (the Regional Economic Comprehensive Agreement), covering 15 Asian countries, including Japan, South Korea, New Zealand and Australia. Europe, on the other hand, is stuck in a horizontal model that focuses on strengthening transatlantic and Indo-Pacific relations to the detriment of links with the Mediterranean and Africa. On this point, the Nigeria-Morocco gas pipeline project is an opportunity to establish a new vertical dynamic. It would offer Europe additional drivers to attain ambitions for a geopolitical Europe endowed with strategic autonomy.

6. Supporting West African Economic Integration: The Opportunity of a 400+ Million Consumer Market:

The world is reshaping along regional dynamics in a context of global economic rivalry. The quest for additional market share for national exports has by and large replaced warlike adventures for additional swaths of territory. In such a context, regional economic integration is proving increasingly essential. It also enables valuable synergies between economic objectives and security imperatives. In an African context, this integration process, whether at continental level, under the aegis of the African Union, or at regional level, led by Economic Integration Communities, has yet to achieve its intended objectives. There is, in fact, a considerable gap between solid institutional and normative achievements and tangible results in terms of trade volumes and number of joint projects.

Weak regional economic integration in Africa negatively impacts not only African but also European economies. Today, the West African market accounts for over 400 million consumers, and should reach 600 million by 2050 according to United Nations projections. European investment in joint projects in West Africa would create more economic opportunity for European companies. In this context, European support for the Nigeria- Morocco gas pipeline project, crossing eleven West African countries and involving fifteen of them, would provide momentum to the ongoing economic integration in West Africa, which

would in turn constitute a vast consumer market for European economies. Ultimately, this could foster the emergence of a vast area of trade and prosperity that would allow the Europe/Africa vertical to become a balancing force in a world shaped by strategic conflict, pandemics and climate threats.

Concluding Remarks

It seems unlikely that Nigeria itself can constitute a sole alternative to Russia for meeting Europe's gas needs. While its important that greater energy cooperation between Nigeria and Europe in the realm of natural gas could give the Nigeria a chance to reassert herself as a global energy play in a way unseen for decades. As laudable as the project may be there is still the need for Nigeria to opt her capacity to transport additional natural gas to Europe via new pipeline running through west Africa and /on the Sahel and then onwards to north Africa and Europe . It is argued that the Nigeria –morocco pipeline was more viable and relevant in the long term because it takes into account geopolitical challenges since it is being built on the West coast to avoid conflict in the Northern Nigeria.

On the other hand, African countries through which the pipeline will pass also have a lot at stake bas it will compensate for irregular power cuts as well as being able to produce more electricity through natural gas. It is also understood that this project is also relevant for Africa's industrial development. This more than an industrial project, this pipeline has a diplomatic dimension, as it is part of West Africa diplomacy, in so far as the pipeline

would involve a large part of the ECOWAS members, as well as Moroccan diplomacy, which wishes to assert its leadership by demonstrating the implementation of a policy that is certainly African, but also oriented towards the European continent. Today, the reconfiguration of the global energy market is leading the Europe to diversify its energy supplies and suppliers and is targeting Nigeria, which is Africa's leading country in terms of gas reserves and the seventh largest in the world.

The opportunity present Nigeria's gas fields as an opportunity to supply gas through the pipeline linking Spain and morocco. In the context of the current gas crisis in Europe, Europe and United Kingdom needs to invest massively in gas project which would help solve the European energy crisis

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