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EU-Russia Energy Relations in the 21st Century²

ABSTRACT

This paper tries to portray the energy relations between the European Union and Russia, which are characterized by the recognition of mutual and joint interests in the fields of energy and the economy. This part of EU-Russia diplomatic relations is based on the principle of interdependency, which ties the two subjects into close cooperation and thus complements their otherwise turbulent relationship. The interests for which these relations are maintained are of high value to both parties and prove that EU-Russia cooperation is possible and sustainable, although with an uncertain future, having in mind other diplomatic concerns and current ongoing events in Ukraine in overall EU-Russia relations. Although far from ideal and filled with controversies and tensions, this sphere of diplomatic relations is very important and has large economic and political implications. This paper will give a brief overview of the events leading up to the existing controversies over Nord Stream 2, as well as the future implications and predictions of possible consequences regarding further energy relations between Russia and the EU.

Keywords: Russia, EU, energy, interdependence, diplomacy, gas, Ukraine, Nord Stream 2.

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² The opinions expressed in this paper are solely those of the author and are by no means the opinions or views of any other subject.

Introduction

Energy resources and finding adequate ways of acquiring them is one of the most crucial and sensitive topics in state relations among international subjects. Having in mind its necessity and importance, it plays an important role in diplomatic relations between countries. Energy is a source of trade; significant infrastructure objects are concluded and realized in order for its distribution; and, ultimately, it is an efficient bargaining tool in the hands of a state that owns and disposes of significant energy supplies in order to realize and carry out any desired goal. This rule, consequently, can be applied to actual EU-Russia energy relations, which are an integral and very important part of EU-Russia overall relations.

The research conducted in this paper delves into some research questions, such as: what are the key components and resources of EU-Russia energy relations and what is their significance in diplomatic relations? Furthermore, it discusses the principle of energy dependency and its impact on conducting foreign policy as well as efforts to find a solution to the problem through the EEA. It also shows the global geopolitical value of energy by showing how it impacts relations and affects multiple subjects such as the US, Ukraine, and individual states of the EU, posing the question of whether energy relations can really be distinct and separated from geopolitical ambitions and aspirations of opposing states, despite their economic potential and opportunity for mutual improvement and prosperity.

The theory of neorealism will be employed as a theoretical framework to provide a response to these questions by highlighting the competitive aspect of international relations with conflicting interests that policymakers tend to achieve in order to survive in a competitive international environment. Concretely, the theory of offensive realism, which like defensive realism, includes strategic and contextual factors in interpreting events in international relations but has a different explanation of the motives of actors in international relations and the reasoning behind their actions (which will be discussed later).

This paper will tackle topics such as the concept of pipeline diplomacy as an effective source of pursuing influence in various spheres of interest using energy as a powerful offensive and defensive bargaining tool, and global economic relations that could explain the reasons and motives of both sides for practical EU-Russia energy relations; the role of the US in EU-Russia energy relations; the importance of Nord Stream 2 as the latest energy project; and its purpose and very uncertain future.

Natural gas and petroleum oil - Demonstration of Russian soft power through “pipeline diplomacy”

As Dmitri Trenin correctly stated, Russia’s power in the 19th century relied on its army and navy. But now, the synonyms for that immense power are oil and gas, which have materialized into energy as the crucial resource for economic development and political influence.³ This strategic asset is an important and powerful weapon in Russia’s arsenal, which has been carefully and wisely used in diplomatic relations with the EU.

According to Eurostat, the average monthly value of imports of products related to energy for the EU in the first period of 2021 stands at 25.8 billion on a monthly basis, with crude oil being by far the most imported energy product (70.9% of total energy imports for 2021) and natural gas coming second with 16.6% in a gaseous state. That makes Russia the biggest supplier of gas to the EU, way ahead of other states like Norway or Algeria (which are also dominant in the export of petroleum products, although not as dominant as is the case with natural gas).⁴

The beginning of the 21st century was marked by an expanding and prosperous period of EU-Russia energy relations, with some strategic projects already underway, such as the Yamal pipeline⁵ or the then most significant project – Nord Stream⁶ (projects in which the Russian oil giant Gazprom was one of the parties). These initial prosperous projects were, though, quickly overshadowed by political tensions in Ukraine (which have already been underway due to the occurrence of the Orange revolution) and the transit of gas disruptions, with price also being an important factor in bargaining. These tensions caused disruptions in supplying Europe, bearing in mind that Ukraine is a transit country to the final EU destination.⁷ After the EU introduced sanctions on Russia, the main concern was how it was going to affect their energy relations. These relations are of great importance not only for the EU but also for the member states on an individual level (each member state has different views and needs regarding energy). The important fact is also that, even though oil is more lucrative, gas is viewed as an important asset with a strong political connotation.⁸ The outcome is that despite all

³ Dmitri Trenin, “Russia Leaves the West”, *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 85, Nr. 4/2006, p. 93.

⁴ Eurostat, “EU imports of energy products – recent developments: Main suppliers of natural gas and petroleum oils to the EU”, available at: https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=EU_imports_of_energy_products_-_recent_developments, 7. 2. 2022.

⁵ For more information see: Yamal – Europe, “Russian gas supplies to Western Europe”, available at: <https://www.gazprom.com/projects/yamal-europe/>, 7. 2. 2022.

⁶ For more information see: Nord Stream, “The gas pipeline directly connecting Russia and Europe”, available at: <https://www.gazprom.com/projects/nord-stream/>, 7. 2. 2022.

⁷ Marco Siddi, “EU-Russia Energy Relations”, *Finnish Institute of International Affairs*, 2020, p. 6.

⁸ *Ibid*, p. 7.

existing sanctions, energy relations still exist to this day, especially in regards to natural gas (excluding the Baltic States), although not in their previous form before 2014 and the dispute in Ukraine. These, nevertheless, show how important and crucial natural gas is to the EU, despite all the proclaimed goals of cutting off dependency on Russian energy resources.

Oil and gas are resources of strategic importance to Russia. Even before the crisis in Crimea, it was obvious how much of a strategic and important weapon energy really is. A prominent example was seen in 2009 when Russia withdrew from the Energy Charter Treaty (which was renamed the International Energy Charter in 2015⁹). Russia never ratified the Charter due to its refusal to grant free access to its sectors of gas and oil in the context of oil and gas liberalization and energy trade. These were regarded as interfering with Russia's state regulations in the energy sector.¹⁰ This event resulted in basing future substantial energy relations on dialogues of non-legally binding character (such as the Energy Dialogue, a mechanism of soft law created in 2000 without binding provisions, a concept already proved to be vague and not operational). The concept of reciprocity as a substitute to a non-existing legal bilateral agreement proves again that there are discrepant views in perceptions about the core meaning of the concept as well as approaches to energy relations in general, which were seen through Russia's adoption of laws on energy resources and state intervention with the requirement for government approval of any matters related to this issue, which is contrary to EU laws.¹¹ This was later the case with the South Stream project, an ambitious idea that was canceled because of non-compliance with EU standards, already imposed sanctions, and a lack of political will for realization. But Russia still found ways of expanding its energy diplomacy in other regions (for example, through the realization of the Turk Stream pipeline or the Power of Siberia), thus diversifying its energy exports and limiting the influence of unreliable transit countries.

The reason for this is that energy is Russia's weapon with which it influences other international subjects: through gaining economic revenue from energy exports and by influencing decision-making outside its borders through blackmail and gas cut-off threats. This strategy has been used since energy was discovered to be an important state resource capable of both improving the overall Russian economy and serving as a bargaining chip in international relations. By creating pipelines around the world through

⁹ The International Energy Charter, "International Energy Charter Overview", available at: <https://www.energycharter.org/process/international-energy-charter-2015/overview/>, 25. 3. 2022.

¹⁰ Anna-Sophie Maass, *EU-Russia Relations, 1999-2015: From Courtship to Confrontation*, Routledge Contemporary Russia and Eastern Europe Series, London, 2017, pp. 114-115.

¹¹ Natasha A. Georgiou, Andrea Rocco, "The Energy Union as an instrument of global governance in EU-Russia energy relations: From fragmentation to coherence and solidarity", *Geopolitics, History, and International Relations*, Vol. 9, Nr. 1/2017, p. 246.

infrastructural projects, Russia spreads its power and influence abroad, using the energy dependency of several EU member states to its advantage. Energy flow to Europe can also be seen in very important and strategic projects that have been concluded, such as Nord Stream 2, the famous pipeline to diversify export routes in Europe. This project has again sparked disparity between the EU member states (with some strongly and fiercely opposing the project, and others looking forward to it), also provoking other important international subjects (the US, for example), which shows how important EU-Russia energy relations are not just on a bilateral basis, but on a global and general one as well. Although Nord Stream 2 is the most important project recently completed but not functional, and probably will not be any time soon due to the war in Ukraine, there are also other pipelines with the same goal of diversification, such as YAMAL LNG (even though most of the gas will probably be distributed to the Asian market as it was already mentioned) and Gazprom's TurkStream, both as part of a foreign policy strategy to earn revenue from gas and oil and cut off transit of gas through Ukraine.¹²

Economic interdependency in EU-Russia energy relations

The dissolution of the Soviet Union marked a transitional shift in the economic policy of Russia from a centrally organized state socialism economy to one that is focused on a capitalist market, thus adjusting its economic diplomatic efforts towards improvement and modernization and promoting Russia's integration into the international economy through its presence in international organizations (such as, for example, joining the WTO in 2012).¹³

The goals set out were a consequence of the degradation of the Russian economy during the 1990s due to high unemployment rates, the struggles of transitioning toward a different economic model of a market economy, and hyperinflation.¹⁴ This greatly affected Russia's position not just in the global economic market but also in all other fields of state relations, which consequently affected its international status. Therefore, economic diplomacy was assigned to attract foreign investments, with the top priorities such as Russia's accession to the WTO (which happened after a lot of struggling and long negotiations in 2012), greater accessibility of Russian exports to foreign markets, cooperation with organizations such as the Asian Pacific Economic

¹² M. Siddi, p. 11.

¹³ Charles E Ziegler, "Russian Diplomacy: Challenging the West", *Seton Hall Journal of Diplomacy and International Relations*, vol. 19, 2018, p. 75.

¹⁴ *Ibid*, p. 79.

Cooperation, and general links with its near-abroad in terms of economic cooperation.¹⁵

However, the revenue extracted from selling natural gas and oil to the EU is of large and significant importance to the Russian economy. Just like the EU is largely dependent on Russian natural gas, Russia is more or less dependent in the same way on EU funds from exporting oil and gas, although it is important to note that the dependence on these funds has gradually declined in the last couple of years due to cooperation with China in matters of energy export to the Asian market, which makes Russia's market more diversified in terms of carbon fuels compared to the EU. This can be seen with the Yamal LNG project, launched in the Arctic circle in 2017 (with an expected supply of LNG from Russia to China of around 4 million tons) or the Siberian pipeline "Power of Siberia" in 2019, a 3.000 kilometer long Gazprom project which is the first pipeline that connects directly Russia and China, the world's largest producer and spender of natural gas, as well as plans to create "Power of Siberia 2", which would significantly bolster already existing energy relations and further decrease Russian dependency on EU funds (an outcome that is a side effect of sanction imposed on Russia by the EU and the US)¹⁶. This income is at this point still vital for the budget and cannot be easily changed and rescheduled to a different country.

There is a practical need to discuss the issue of mutual economic interdependence from a theoretical perspective. The central argument regarding mutual trade between states is that interdependence through trade generally reduces the possibility of the eventual emergence of conflicts between them, having in mind that the costs of such actions would greatly exceed the eventual benefits (depending on the composition of trade and the industrial sector for which its goods are the target of mutual trade), an assumption which is in line with commercial liberalism and its assumption that goods which are difficult to replace have a pacifying effect on states, thus preventing eventual conflicts because of the opportunity costs of those actions.¹⁷ This is also in line with liberal theories of interdependence, which equate economic interdependence with positivism and peace with the help of strategic interdependence (this combination is named integrative interdependence), a concept that brings stability from the states to the whole system in general.¹⁸ In other words, this theory implies that economic

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ Ivona Lađevac, "Odgovor Kine na novi bezbednosni izazov", *Čovek, prostor, tehnologija, ideje: međunarodna bezbednost u trećoj dekadi 21. Veka* (ur. Vladimir Ajzenhamer, Nebojša Vuković), Institut za međunarodnu privредu i politiku, Beograd, 2020, pp. 136-138.

¹⁷ Han Dorussen, "Heterogeneous Trade Interests and Conflict: What You Trade Matters", *The Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Vol. 50, Nr. 1/2006, pp. 89-90.

¹⁸ Zeev Maoz, "The Effects of Strategic and Economic Interdependence on International Conflict across Levels of Analysis", *American Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 53, Nr. 1/2009, pp. 225-226.

interdependence prevents conflict through mutual ties and fosters peace and stability.¹⁹ However, there is a small exception in which conflict is possible if trade further increases the already present dependence of a state that is more dependent than the other (which can be altered by changes in trade structure between subjects), alongside claims that appropriation of trade is an important factor as well (easily appropriable commodities have a low pacifying effect, which is the case with primary goods).²⁰

This theory, although dominant in the past for explaining relations between the EU and Russia, has shown practical imperfections. Economic interdependence and mutual ties in trade, despite showing practical bettering of overall relations between states and promoting peace and stability at the end of the 20th century and the beginning of the 21st, were overshadowed by other structural factors such as the EU expansion and political influence to the East and the geopolitical dispute over Ukraine, which gave rise to the first serious EU-Russia conflict during the Orange Revolution in 2004-2005. The same can be said for Russia and Ukraine, which were also mutually interdependent in the energy field, but their overall relationship nevertheless deteriorated after another structural factor – the annexation of Crimea and the beginning of the political conflict in eastern Ukraine, which is still present, causing a severance and halting of gas from Gazprom and ending interdependent energy relations in 2015. This may be because EU-Russia energy relations are those of asymmetrical interdependency, meaning that one state is more dependent than the other and thus faces bigger losses in the event of an eventual break in relations, giving political leverage to the less dependent international subject and intensifying potential conflict between them. However, even if it can be assumed that these relations are symmetrical, conflict can be prevented only if the mutual trade between states is of limited significance for overall trade or well-being. This implies the existence of “complex interdependence” in which it is hard to estimate which side is more dependent on the other due to many different aspects and dimensions of dependence, which minimizes the risk of using dependence as a tool of political influence due to possible dependence on the other side in another relationship between them, which is not the case in EU-Russia energy relations.²¹

¹⁹ There is already some theoretical research that supports the liberal paradigm over the realist theory in analyzing the results of national conflict behavior. For a detailed view, as well as concluding remarks to the research question, see: Z. Maoz, pp. 234–238.

²⁰ H. Dorussen, p. 104.

²¹ Andrej Krickovic, “When Interdependence Produces Conflict: EU-Russia Relations as a Security Dilemma”, *Contemporary Security Policy*, Vol. 36, Nr. 1/2015, pp. 6–8. For a detailed empirical analysis, see: Katherine Barbieri, *The Liberal Illusion: Can Trade Promote Peace?*, University of Michigan Press, Michigan, 2002, pp. 67–70.

This claim, however, cannot support the theory of realism in its pure form either, as it is the opposite of the liberalism principle. Realists claim that economic interdependence increases the possibility of conflict due to security concerns caused by eventual cutoffs in essential materials that are important for a state's economy, which is a consequence of the anarchic structure of international politics, forcing them to increase political control over vital sources of supply. The conclusion to this assumption is that liberal views have to be complemented by political and security concerns that are motivated by anarchy in international relations.²² Even though this theory could explain some major events that have occurred in modern international relations, some arguments can successfully contradict its theoretical assumptions. A prominent example could be used again in the case of Russia and Ukraine, which had substantially larger and more comprehensive economic interdependency in the 1990s than is the case now, but that did not cause conflict or spark security concerns.

This overview of two dominant theories used for the explanation of behavior in international relations shows the need to find the most precise and concrete theory to explain EU-Russia energy relations (even though it is often hard due to the unpredictability of events in everyday international relations). By definition, theories simplify complex reality; thus, this paper will attempt to define the current topic by reintroducing the theory of neorealism, i.e., offensive realism as its variant. This theory was developed by John Mearsheimer in his book "The Tragedy of Great Power Politics", and it also addresses the anarchical structure of the world. However, unlike classical realists, it incorporates additional structural factors in state relationships and the actions they take in their mutual interrelationship. This author points out the ordering principle of anarchy, which implies no higher central authority between independent states and which breeds insecurity between them with a constant need for dominance in the international community, a competition in amassing power and preventing the other side from doing so by using any means necessary, through manipulation, cheating, and even brute force if necessary, concluding that the state of tranquility and peace is not likely to happen for this reason.²³ The constant insecurity between engaging actors thus creates a classic security dilemma that prevents a positive regulation of the energy security dilemma between them, as the former is stronger than the latter.²⁴ Furthermore, the defending side in this chaotic relationship has to resort to a counter-strategy to protect its interests. To explain EU-Russia relations, it is adequate to choose the

²² Dale C. Copeland, "Economic Interdependence and War: A Theory of Trade Expectations", *International Security*, Vol. 20, Nr. 4/1996, pp. 10-11.

²³ John J. Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*, WW Norton, New York, 2001, p. 35.

²⁴ Vladimir Trapara, Nevena Šekarić, *Preispitivanje energetske bezbednosne dileme*, Institut za međunarodnu politiku i privредu, Beograd, 2019, pp. 45-47.

strategy of “balancing”²⁵ rather than “buck-passing”²⁶, which implies that the defending side has no external support in a potential conflict and is therefore forced to act on its own through any means necessary, including a military conflict to balance the scale of power and maintain the positive power shift.²⁷ This is different from the theory of defensive realism, in which actors take defensive actions to survive, not having inherently aggressive behavior but seeking security and power as means of combating anarchy and finding ways to maintain their position in the international world order.²⁸ This theory, although useful in explaining Russian defensive militant reactions to Western expansion into the post-Soviet space, does not explain the motives for which this expansion is carried out, which offensive realism can attribute to the expansionist EU and NATO enlargement ambitions into the post-Soviet space as a conquest for dominance and power in the international order, provoking Russia as the defending side and causing consequences typical when it comes to great power politics.²⁹ These are some of the many conceptual assumptions used in the theory of neorealism that can enable a possible explanation of the current tense EU-Russia relations in the geopolitical sphere. This theory adds strategic and contextual factors in energy relations that extend to their geopolitical competition to gain influence in Ukraine (for example, the Orange Revolution, Ukraine’s aspirations to join the EU and NATO, etc.), where energy is used as a political weapon for the ultimate power race.

It could be said that sensitive political disputes tend to be involved in any question brought before two corresponding countries, especially one regarding energy, which explains that energy is too big of an asset to not use it as a weapon for carrying out numerous goals. This can be seen, for example, with Russian efforts to suppress Ukraine’s role as a transit country through the mentioned stream projects, having in mind that this country profits from high revenues coming out of transit. Even though the signing of the 5-year transit contract in 2019 ensures further shipment of gas, the amount of gas shipped is steadily declining (from 65 billion cm² in 2020 to 40 billion cm² for the period 2021-2024), meaning that the gas route from Ukraine is not even close to using its full capacity (140 billion cm² of gas

²⁵ The “balancing” strategy implies preventing aggressors from upsetting the balance of power by committing to containing the threat through deterring or even fighting, if need be, the aggressor; J. J. Mearsheimer, p. 139.

²⁶ The “buck-passing” strategy implies the possibility of avoiding direct conflict by remaining on the sideline while getting another great power to contain the great power aggressor. *Ibid.*

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 270.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 19–20.

²⁹ For a detailed overview of the theory of offensive realism, see: YouTube, “Why Ukraine is the West’s Fault? Featuring John Mearsheimer”, available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JrMiSQAGOS4&t=9s>, 26. 3. 2022.

annually). Assuming that the Nord Stream gas pipelines (and their capacity of 110 billion cm² annually) are both put into operation at the same time (which is highly unlikely at this point, given that the Nord Stream 2 is currently a stopped and canceled project), they could replace the Ukraine gas transit route to EU countries, though there is a legitimate question as to whether this pipeline system is even necessary, given the constantly growing need for gas diversification and the increase in domestic production from the EU.

The European Energy Union (EEU) – reducing vulnerability and promoting diversification and interconnection

The most significant problem for the EU regarding energy relations with Russia was (and still is, more or less) energy dependency. This problem has been noted and became evident during the supply cuts of gas from Gazprom, which included the 2005/2006 crisis when Russia halted gas flow to Ukraine to increase its price (and very likely to exert political pressure on the western-oriented policymakers in Kyiv) and the 2008/2009 Russian-Ukrainian conflict³⁰ (which caused a 13-day cut off of gas to some member states that were 100% dependent on Russian imports),³¹ raising questions about some EU member states being more dependent than others on gas supply and thus undermining EU coherence and uniformity. This was further enhanced by differing views regarding the approval of pipeline stream projects, which resulted in bilateral rather than multilateral gas deals between Russia and some of the member states due to different individual energy policies, deepening the EU divide from within.³² This tactic is strategically used by Russia even today to weaken the EU from within and undermine some of the basic principles on which it is founded.³³ It has also worked as a strong bargaining weapon against Ukraine and Georgia (countries that have aspirations of joining NATO in the near future), thus proving to be a potent tool of economic strengthening while weakening its opponents at the same time.

This problem is closely tied to one of the key and fundamental questions in modern international relations: the question of energy security. This

³⁰ Ana Jovic-Lazic, Ivona Ladjevac, "Ukrainian crisis as a Security Challenge of the Contemporary World", *Social and Economic Problems and Challenges in Contemporary World*, Belgrade, 2016, p. 118.

³¹ Stefano Cabras, Department of EU International Relations and Diplomacy Studies, "American LNG and the EU-Russia relationship: The end of Moscow's Energy Weapon?", *EU Diplomacy Paper*, Nr. 2/2021, p. 15.

³² Irena Dimitrova, "EU-Russia Energy Diplomacy: 2010 and Beyond?" *Connections*, Vol. 9, Nr. 4/2010, pp. 7-8.

³³ Treaty on European Union, Article 2, *OJ EC*, C 325/5, 24. 12. 2002, available at: https://lexpacency.org/eu/TEU/ART_2/, 26. 3. 2022.

concept is differently interpreted depending on the role the concrete subject has in the energy market. For the exporter, it is the security of demand; for the importer (in this case, applies to the EU³⁴), it is a safe and continuous supply of energy resources; while for the transit state, it is generating secure revenue extracted from the given transit route.³⁵

This issue has been addressed in 2015 with the EU Energy Diplomacy Action Plan, which strives for strategic guidance in resolving this problem, energy cooperation, and dialogue with a goal of diversification of energy sources, suppliers, and routes, and enhancement of global energy architectures and multilateral initiatives that would strengthen energy diplomacy initiatives through its four pillars of action.³⁶ Furthermore, this goal has been enhanced and concretized with the conclusions of the EU Council regarding energy diplomacy (and climate change, in which energy, its sources, and usage also play an important role) in 2021 as part of its external dimension of the European Green Deal³⁷, with the primary goal of accelerating global energy transition to cleaner sources of energy, increasing efficiency of energy usage, discouraging investment into infrastructure projects in third-world countries that are based on fossil fuels, and stressing the importance of maintaining and strengthening the concept of energy security and resilience of the EU and its partners³⁸. These proclaimed goals might also indirectly have another important aim of decreasing future high dependency and usage of energy sources that come from Russia by finding alternate sources which are cleaner, safer, and healthier for the environment, while also reducing the political leverage that can come from that dependence at any time. There have been efforts so far to fulfill this hard task, such as the launch of the 2020-2024 Energy Strategy for Member States (with a presumed primary goal of decarbonizing

³⁴ Nevena Šekarić, "Evropska energetska bezbednost: slučaj Severnog toka 2", *Međunarodna politika*, br. 1179–80/2020, p. 123.

³⁵ Even though most of the definitions of energy security consider the idea of avoiding potential risks which would affect energy goods supply, there is no coherent and definitive answer to this question due to the different views from which its definition can be observed. Also, some authors add multiple factors to this idea, such as different severity filters (speed, sustention, sureness of impact, etc.) and scopes of impact (continuity of service supplies, economy, and impacts on the environment or society). For a full analysis of the concept of energy security, see: Christian Winzer, "Conceptualizing energy security", *Energy policy*, Vol. 46, 2012, pp. 36–48.

³⁶ EU Energy Diplomacy, "Implementation of the EU Energy Diplomacy Action Plan", available at: https://eeas.europa.eu/topics/energy-diplomacy/406/eu-energy-diplomacy_en, 26. 3. 2022.

³⁷ A European Green Deal, "Striving to be the first climate-neutral continent", available at: https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/priorities-2019-2024/european-green-deal_en, 26. 3. 2022.

³⁸ Council of the EU, "Council adopts conclusions on climate and energy diplomacy", available at: <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2021/01/25/council-adopts-conclusions-on-climate-and-energy-diplomacy/>, 26. 3. 2022.

the energy system, switching to cleaner energy sources, and reducing green gas emissions by the climate and energy framework for 2030)³⁹, but it remains very hard to answer the question that some member states addressed in regards to the incentive and interest of having an actual common energy policy, having in mind that different countries have largely different exposures to energy resources, as well as more profitable individual deals with suppliers instead of ones conducted on a common level.⁴⁰

This reasoning, even though economically understandable and justifiable, is contrary to some very important concepts that are the foundation of EU policy. Such is the principle of solidarity, which is entailed in Article 194 of the Treaty of Lisbon⁴¹, which promotes coherence between the member states with a specific solidarity mechanism in Article 122 of the TFEU⁴² related to energy policy. This mechanism entails the competence of EU bodies in this area but “in a spirit of solidarity between the member states”. However, solidarity is a qualitative concept, which means that it is prone to subjective interpretation by the member states of its meaning, although in times of crisis it creates a platform for the execution of measures during urgent situations to secure supply and resolve threatening problems.⁴³

To resolve this issue, there have been significant efforts from the EU to bolster its position in regards to energy independence by shifting the competence from the member states to itself through centralization. This has been materialized through the creation of the European Energy Union in 2015 to fulfill goals such as energy interconnection and improvement of infrastructure to minimize eventual disruptions of energy while also granting easier access to energy markets abroad and affordable energy through the Energy Union package and the five key pillars of the Union strategy.⁴⁴

These pillars represent the crucial steps of EU energy policy for the future. They are referring to topics such as reinforcing solidarity, trust, and security, promoting a completely internal energy market, sufficient energy, climate action, and promoting research, innovation, and competitiveness.⁴⁵

³⁹ European Commission, “EU Strategic Plan 2020–2024”, available at: https://ec.europa.eu/info/system/files/ener_sp_2020_2024_en.pdf, 26. 3. 2022.

⁴⁰ N. A. Georgiou, A. Rocco, p. 248.

⁴¹ Treaty of Lisbon Amending the Treaty of the European Union and the Treaty Establishing the European Community, available at: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=celex%3A12007L%2FTXT>, 27. 3. 2022.

⁴² Consolidated version of the Treaty of the Functioning of the European Union, Article 122, available at: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=celex%3A12012E%2FTXT>, 27. 3. 2022, art. 122.

⁴³ N. A. Georgiou, A. Rocco, p. 249.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 250.

⁴⁵ The European Commission, “Energy union – Five dimensions of the energy union”, available at: https://ec.europa.eu/energy/topics/energy-strategy/energy-union_en, 27. 3. 2022.

With this being said, the goal of this Union is not only to limit energy dependence but also to promote the transition to cleaner sources of energy, with annual reports coming each year where progress is evaluated. This initiative is a positive one and might solve a lot of current and future problems for the EU, not just in regards to energy dependency and coherence but also the occurring and rising problems of inadequate energy sources, which threaten to devastate the planet and cause fatal consequences.

The EEU is ultimately the final result of developing EU energy diplomacy regarding earlier attempts to liberalize internal energy governance. This is due to changing its position and orientation in regards to energy matters, as the original approach that was market-oriented has been replaced by one that has geopolitical implications due to the EU's more assertive stance on energy, taking into account its security aspects and implications on general relations with other state actors and strengthening its role in EU external energy policy.⁴⁶ Even though energy issues and their importance can be traced back to the beginning of European integrations (through the European Coal and Steel Community or European Atomic Energy Community) in the context of creating a supranational organization, their real and growing importance was highlighted due to energy and climate concerns in the last three decades. With that, the first step in that direction was the creation of the Green Paper on the security of energy supply in 2000, the "solidarity measure" concept document in 2006 ("A European Strategy for Sustainable, Competitive and Secure Energy"), and most importantly, the legal incorporation of energy policy into the Treaty of Lisbon in 2009, which is one of the first cases of transferring competencies to the EU from its member states.⁴⁷ All of these events correspond to the occurrence of several gas disputes with Russia starting from 2000 up to the emergence of the Ukraine crisis in 2014, as well as growing challenges in the energy environment such as scarcity of resources, the emergence of other competitive geopolitical energy players and uneven distribution of energy resources of key importance, which forced the EU to resort to a different strategy in energy matters and create its own energy diplomacy that it strives to realize in the future.⁴⁸ Whether the EEU will successfully serve its purpose remains to be seen, given that it is still a relatively new project, but it is encouraging to see that positive steps have been taken in the right direction.

⁴⁶ Nevena Šekarić, "Energy Security Issues: Reshaping European Regional Security Patterns?", *Europe in Changes: The Old Continent at a New Crossroads* (Katarina Zakić, Birgül Demirtaş), Institute of International Politics and Economics & Faculty of Security Studies, Belgrade, 2021, pp. 83–87.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 84–85.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 83.

The USA LNG influence in EU-Russia energy diplomacy

Another important topic to address regarding energy diversification is the role of the US and its LNG energy presence in the EU. Besides other distributors of LNG from the Middle East and Northern Africa, the focus will be on the US's LNG presence in energy relations with the EU and its exceptional performance in the production of gas from the beginning of the 21st century. What is known as the shale revolution provided a substantial increase in oil and gas production by around 60% thanks to the evolution of gas production using a combination of hydraulic fracturing and horizontal drilling techniques. This increase in oil production has prompted US policymakers to think about using this new advantage to better and strengthen their economic and political influence and perspective.⁴⁹ This reasoning was in line with the general realist approach of the US regarding energy as a source of confrontation and hostility between states with which political power and influence can be exerted on other states dependent on it.⁵⁰

The increased presence of the US in energy production, as well as the creation of the EEU, created suitable conditions for the adoption of the 2016 LNG strategy adopted by the EU as a means of diversification of energy sources, providing additional ways to acquire gas. Despite past failures in diplomatic energy initiatives with the US (such as the forming of the Nabucco pipeline, which failed due to inadequate economic support and the lack of political consensus in the EU), the new and most recent Nord Stream 2 project, an ambitious idea which aims to provide direct transfer of gas to Germany (bypassing some important geopolitical routes such as Ukraine), is strongly opposed by the US for reasons of geopolitical nature. This, in turn, combined with the substantial growth of the gas market of North America, which made it a highly competitive and dominant factor in the international energy field, marked the EU territory as one of the destinations for LNG as a way of reducing energy dependency, which in turn caused oversupply and hindered the dominant position of Russia's energy giant, Gazprom, forcing it to adapt to new circumstances of rising competition.⁵¹ This effort to reduce gas dependency on Russia is fundamentally a geopolitical plan to decrease Russian interference in the energy matters of Europe, having in mind the fact that the Nord Stream 1 and Nord Stream 2 pipeline systems can supply Europe with about 110 billion cubic meters per year, making them Russia's most important and strategic energy projects in Europe.⁵²

⁴⁹ S. Cabras, p. 22.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 6.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 23.

⁵² Андрей В. Манойло, Илья Е. Катков, "Политические аспекты реализации проекта <<Северный поток-2 >>", *Вестник Кемеровского государственного университета. Серия: Политические, социологические и экономические науки*, 2020, p. 19.

It would be naive and unrealistic to expect that these events and slightly changed circumstances regarding supply could replace Russian exports. It could be viewed as an additional source of diversification and a way of bargaining a lower price or conditions for gas supply with Gazprom, having in mind its lower cost and dependence on market conditions. But it is only a supplementing factor that still impacts EU-Russia energy diplomacy to a certain extent, given that gas is less and less hard to find and not as centralized as it was in the past. It makes it easier to find resources if needed, which nevertheless fulfills the purpose of LNG diversification for the US: to constrain Russia's energy bargaining power on the economic and general geopolitical level. Whether it will succeed in doing so depends on the future orientation and way in which energy relations will be conducted, having in mind the goals of switching to cleaner and renewable sources of energy, thus putting the use of current energy sources into question.

The Nord Stream 2 controversy: EU disunity as a consequence of incoherent energy policy of EU Member States

There is hardly a more controversial energy dispute currently active other than the ambitious Nord Stream 2 project, an approximately 1230 km pipeline transportation project designated to transfer large amounts of gas from Russia directly to Germany (roughly 55 billion cubic meters per year through the Baltic Sea), one of the EU member states, which would allow it to act more freely on the energy market in Europe.⁵³ Its nature and purpose were differently interpreted by Russia and some individual EU member states (referring to it as a commercial and economic project), such as Germany (although there was no coherent stance on this question, having in mind the structure of the new government that consists of three different parties), Austria, and the Netherlands, while completely differently by the US, the Baltic EU member states, and all other Central and Eastern European countries (claiming it is a politically motivated project designed to fulfill and carry out the geopolitical ambitions of the government officials in Moscow).⁵⁴

Having already mentioned the import of gas from Russia to the EU, and given that gas supplies are always in demand for consumption, it is possible to take into consideration the practical need for another pipeline apart from Nord Stream 1, through which a significant amount of gas will be transferred from one side to the other. However, there should be noted some of the practical benefits of this project, as well as its potential risks and downsides.

⁵³ Sebastian Zimmermann, "What is Nord Stream 2 and how does it link to the Russia-Ukraine crisis?", *Euronews*, available at: <https://www.euronews.com/my-europe/2022/01/24/what-is-nord-stream-2-and-how-does-it-link-to-the-russia-ukraine-crisis>, 28. 3. 2022.

⁵⁴ Станислав З. Жизнин, Владимир М. Тимохов, "Экономические и геополитические аспекты <<Северного потока-2>>", *Балтийский регион*, вол. 11, но. 3/2019, pp. 26-27.

Speaking about economic prosperity, there are numerous practical and useful benefits, some of which are: a 2000 km shorter export route from the base to the consumer in comparison to the one in Ukraine; lower economic operational costs; lower operational cost of gas transit to Europe; lessening of potentially harmful carbon dioxide emissions through replacing coal with gas in regards to electricity production; and potential bettering of geopolitical relations through enhancing EU-Russia energy security.⁵⁵

Besides this, it is practically useful to note and acknowledge expert studies that have evaluated the potential benefits of Nord Stream 2. Such are, for example, the studies from the Arthur D. Little Management Consulting Agency or the Ewi Energy Research & Scenarios Institute of non-profit character, which have concluded that the economic effect will exceed 5 billion euros, will decrease gas prices in Europe and thus make obsolete the practical need for expensive LNG imports, provide numerous full-time job opportunities in the EU and enrich different sectors of the overall economy of EU states and Russia.⁵⁶

Despite its practicality and numerous benefits, such an ambitious project was opposed by several countries indirectly involved and affected by the creation of this pipeline. Such is the case with some Eastern European states that advocate for stronger reliance on LNG resources from the US (and which have a traditional unfriendly stance towards Russia), alongside transit countries that would lose a significant amount of revenue from extracting transit taxes, as well as countries that are geographically close to the pipeline gas due to a possible increase in transit payments. Apart from this, some of the most notable reasons are fears of destabilizing the energy security of Europe and creating a larger dependency on Russian energy resources, avoiding the transit route through Ukraine as a geopolitical weapon to severely harm its economy, and the already discussed US geopolitical pretensions (shown through adopting legislation by which sanctions may be imposed on any subject cooperating with Russia in regards to energy pipelines)⁵⁷, which are aimed at promoting LNG transport and purchasing, as well as preventing Russia from acquiring a substantial key role in energy matters in Europe through its vast amounts of natural gas by simply avoiding the transit route through Ukraine.⁵⁸

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 30.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 31.

⁵⁷ For a more detailed overview of CAATSA sanctions, see: U.S. Department of The Treasury, "Countering America's Adversaries through Sanctions Act", available at: <https://home.treasury.gov/policy-issues/financial-sanctions/sanctions-programs-and-country-information/countering-americas-adversaries-through-sanctions-act>, 29. 3. 2022..

⁵⁸ С. З. ЖИЗНИН, В. М. ТИМОХОВ, pp. 33-34.

These fears of energy dependency as a foreign policy and geopolitical weapon at the disposal of Russia are understandable because the focus on acquiring external energy sources and markets is a legitimate foreign policy goal that helps this country strengthen its own internal state development, as well as exert influence in various spheres of interest. This can be seen in the Energy Strategy of the Russian Federation for the period until 2035, in which it is stated that “the purpose of energy development is to maximize the promotion of social and economic development, strengthening and maintaining national capacities of the Russian Federation in world energy at least until the year 2035”⁵⁹, as well as that “the fuel and energy system must contribute to other sectors of the economy in achieving national goals and strategic objectives set forth by the Presidential Decree of the Russian Federation”⁶⁰.

The Nord Stream 2 project was announced in the Russian federal government document for territorial planning pipeline scheme regarding transport in 2015⁶¹, marking it an important project which will extend the capacity of Nord Stream 1 by two more lines.⁶² This was followed by the conclusion of financing agreements between five European energy companies and Nord Stream 2 AG, providing long-term financing for half the estimated cost of the total project, marking the beginning of the Nord Stream 2 pipeline realization.⁶³

Regardless of whether this project is considered useful and meaningful or not, it poses and brings into perspective some inevitable problems and

⁵⁹ “Целью развития энергетики Российской Федерации является, с одной стороны, максимальное содействие социально-экономическому развитию страны, а с другой стороны, – укрепление и сохранение позиций Российской Федерации в мировой энергетике, как минимум, на период до 2035 года”, Russian Federation Ministry of Energy, *Energy Strategy of the Russian Federation for the period until year 2035*, available at: <https://minenergo.gov.ru/node/1026>, 1. 4. 2022, p. 4.

⁶⁰ “При этом топливно-энергетический комплекс должен внести до 2024 года свой вклад и способствовать другим секторам экономики в достижении национальных целей и решении стратегических задач развития Российской Федерации, определенных Указом Президента Российской Федерации № 204.”, Russian Federation Ministry of Energy, *Energy Strategy of the Russian Federation for the period until year 2035*, <https://minenergo.gov.ru/node/1026>, 1. 4. 2022, p. 4.

⁶¹ Российская Газета, „Схема территориального планирования Российской Федерации в области федерального транспорта (в части трубопроводного транспорта)“, 15/5/2015, available at: <https://rg.ru/2015/05/15/truby-site-dok.html>, 2. 4. 2022.

⁶² Газпромтрансгаз Санкт-Петербург, „Газпром» обсудил возможность строительства дополнительных ниток «Северного потока», available at: <https://spb-tr.gazprom.ru/press/news/2014/02/gazprom-obsudil-vozmozhnost-stroitelstva-dopolnitelnykh-nitok-severnogo-potoka/>, 2. 4. 2022.

⁶³ For a detailed overview of the parties partaking in the project, as well as a general overview of Nord Stream 2, see: Gazprom, “North Stream 2 Gas Pipeline – A new export gas pipeline running from Russia to Europe across the Baltic Sea”, available at: <https://www.gazprom.com/projects/nord-stream2/>, 4. 4. 2022.

facts apart from the ones already mentioned. The most notable one is that it questions the already imposed EU sanctions during the events in Ukraine, which have been in force since 2014 and have the goal of showing EU unity through a uniform answer to the political situation in Crimea, which is regarded as unlawful and unacceptable by the policymakers in Brussels. If the purpose of the sanctions is to impact the Russian economy through numerous imposed bans and restrictions, then allowing Russia to sell its gas through the new pipeline and acquire economic benefits is unclear and illogical. Furthermore, this project directly strengthens the position of Gazprom, allowing it to greatly influence energy relations in Europe and freely choose the transport routes through which gas will be redirected, influencing gas prices in Europe and ultimately having a significant role in the overall gas market in Europe.⁶⁴

This is a problem that deeply impacts the very core of some basic EU principles, such as the EU solidarity principle. Before the war in Ukraine, there was no coherent stance in regards to this project; some states were looking forward to it, and some were fierce opponents. This dispute threatened to undermine the EU from within, weakening its position and credibility in the eyes of its partners. This, along with the contradictory goals of reducing gas demand and promoting renewable energy sources (while simultaneously participating in the construction of an expensive and large gas pipeline), was a major source of concern for EU foreign policymakers.⁶⁵

Nord Stream 2 was finished in 2021, a year and a half ahead of schedule. Despite this, it is still not operational and has not yet been put into use due to the absence of an operating license from the German authorities and diplomatic tensions that have occurred in some EU member states over the migrant dispute (Poland, Lithuania, and Latvia) as well as the war between Ukraine and Russia. The project has not yet passed technical and regulatory certification, insurance, and some significant legal procedures, which leaves Nord Stream 2 highly unlikely to be put into function and operational in the near time.⁶⁶ However, experts in this field agree that the impact of a permanent suspension of this pipeline has more severe consequences for the EU than for Russia, having in mind that Russia has alternative access to an export of its gas in the form of the Asian market, while the EU alternative is the already discussed American LNG, which is not a long-term solution due to the high cost of refueling and supplying this type of gas to the European continent.⁶⁷ The vulnerability of the EU to Russian energy resource exports

⁶⁴ Szymon Kardaś, "The great troublemaker: Nord Stream 2 in Russia's foreign energy policy", *International Issues & Slovak Foreign Policy Affairs*, Vol. 28, Nr. 3–4/2019, p. 36.

⁶⁵ С. З. Жизнин, В. М. Тимохов, p. 35.

⁶⁶ The Heritage Foundation, "Nord Stream 2 is Complete – What Now?", available at: <https://www.heritage.org/europe/report/nord-stream-2-complete-what-now>, 16. 2. 2022.

⁶⁷ N. Šekarić, pp. 133–134.

has been seen lately in 2021 with a four-times higher increase in natural gas prices in comparison to last winter after the ending of state lockdowns from COVID-19 (which ultimately led to higher electricity prices, as well as a spike in Euro-area inflation) due to a global increase in demand, a longer winter and ever-increasing competition from East Asian countries for gas. Statistics once again show that in this situation, despite previous efforts to reduce dependency and multiple initiatives in this regard, the EU still imported 43.4% of its total imports of natural gas only from Russia in 2020.⁶⁸

Conclusion

The purpose of this paper was to briefly display the diplomatic aspect of EU-Russia energy relations. The analysis that has been concluded so far shows that current energy relations between these two subjects are at a stalemate, largely shackled by other aspects of their overall relations, especially by their geopolitical pretensions, with the securitization of energy resources being an integral part of energy relations. The question that remains after this analysis is whether any bettering of tedious and deteriorating energy relations can be seen in the near future. Judging by the events that have transpired so far, as well as current EU-Russia relations that are a consequence of the current war in Ukraine⁶⁹ and its course, it is very unlikely and unrealistic to expect any substantial improvement in these relations.

Current EU-Russia relations are characterized by mutual accusations, distrust, hostile rhetoric, and general signs of misunderstanding in which the EU keeps implementing rigorous measures such as continual sanctions on Russia's economic sector, hateful media rhetoric, and propaganda which spur tensions and increase existing hostility. Russia, on the other hand, responds in the same way, prioritizing its geopolitical interests and security goals over any substantial constructive discussion with the EU.

One of the rare positive signs of this generally tedious relationship is that there is still an energy flow from Russia to the EU (although substantially diminished, with the Baltic States stopping the import of natural gas)⁷⁰. It is questionable how long this situation will last, bearing in mind the constant EU striving for diversification and reducing energy dependency on Russia.

⁶⁸ Euronews, "Europe's energy crisis: Five charts to explain why your bills might go up this winter", available at: <https://www.euronews.com/2022/02/11/europe-s-energy-crisis-five-charts-to-explain-why-your-bills-might-go-up-this-winter>, 19. 4. 2022.

⁶⁹ The war that started on the 24th of February 2022 is still ongoing.

⁷⁰ Al Jazeera, "Baltic states stop Russian gas imports over Ukraine invasion", available at: <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2022/4/3/baltic-states-stop-russian-gas-imports-over-ukraine-invasion#:~:text=Latvia%2C%20Estonia%20and%20Lithuania%20stop,curb%20reliance%20on%20Russian%20energy.&text=Latvia%20says%20the%20Baltic%20states,wake%20of%20the%20Ukraine%20war,> 5. 5. 2022.

However, as was stated earlier, this energy relationship is of asymmetrical interdependence, in which the EU is more dependent on Russia than it is on the EU market. Russia has a constant increase in energy cooperation and trade with Asia, another important international actor and a large market, which in theory could replace dependency on EU funds. The EU here is under threat of a greater loss than is the case with Russia, as eventual alternatives from the US or other actors at this moment are still not feasible in the long run. Whether Russia will make a substantial turn to the Asian market is unknown, but energy trade between these subjects exists and is possible to further increase due to the current EU-Russia deep misunderstanding and problems.

EU-Russia energy relations are subject to their overall relations. Change must be made from the core approach to how each actor sees the other in order for them to be maintained and even improved. Changes must be made by both the EU and Russia, but also on an international level on which their future relations will be regulated. Some existing ideas are, for example, liberalization of the Russian energy sector, which would improve energy security and financing of oil and gas infrastructures, the openness of the energy sector to foreign investments, relaxing of the EU market and the competition principle, as well as an international legal act which would thoroughly regulate EU-Russia relations for the present and future.⁷¹

However, for these requirements to be met, genuine wishes and aspirations for improvement must exist. Current moves from both sides, behavior, and rhetoric contradict eventual hopes of positive change. EU-Russia relations must be changed from their core, which lacks trust and confidence, which is a consequence of multiple chains of events that have transpired so far. As long as there is no genuine wish to start from the beginning and resort to a different strategy from the one that has been conducted so far, energy relations will stagnate and possibly deteriorate, being prisoners to geopolitical ambitions and a battle for influence in mutually contested territories between both sides. With this being said, it remains to be seen whether the Ukraine armed conflict will serve as one of the turning points for this change, although the road leading up to positive change and a new beginning is still long, uncertain, and less and less likely.

⁷¹ Olga Khrushcheva, *A critical evaluation of the securitization process of EU-Russia energy relations: actors, audiences, and consequences*, Nottingham Trent University, 2013, p. 218.

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Петар Кордић

ЕНЕРГЕТСКИ ОДНОСИ ИЗМЕЂУ ЕВРОПСКЕ УНИЈЕ И РУСИЈЕ У 21. ВЕКУ

САЖЕТАК

Овај рад настоји да прикаже односе између Европске уније и Русије које карактерише уважавање заједничких интереса у области енергије и економије. Овај део дипломатских односа између Европске уније и Русије заснива се на принципу међузависности, који повезује два субјекта у блиску сарадњу и на тај начин допуњује њихов иначе турбулентан однос. Интереси због којих се ови односи одржавају су од велике вредности за обе стране и показали су да је сарадња између ЕУ и Русије могућа и одржива, мада са неизвесном будућношћу имајући у виду дипломатске проблеме у њиховим односима и тренутних догађаја у Украјини. Иако далеко од идеалне и пуна контроверзи и тензија, ова сфера дипломатских односа је веома важна и има велике економске и политичке импликације, а овде ће бити дат кратак преглед догађаја који су довели до данашњих контроверзи око Северног тока 2, као и будуће импликације и предвиђања практичних последица енергетских односа између Русије и ЕУ.

Кључне речи: Русија, ЕУ, енергија, међузависност, дипломатија, гас, Украјина, санкције, Северни ток 2.