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Energy and Natural Resources Policy of the Russian Federation: An International Relations Perspective

Argun BAŞKAN*
Ege University

Abstract:
The Russian Federation's energy policy exemplifies a complex interplay of economic, geopolitical, and ideational objectives. Russia, a major global supplier of oil and natural gas, leverages its energy resources as strategic tools to influence energy-dependent states, particularly in Europe. This approach aligns with a Neorealist perspective, emphasizing Russia's strategy of entrenching energy dependencies to respond to a balance of threat, especially in response to Western sanctions following its annexation of Crimea and the conflict in Ukraine. Meanwhile, Neoliberal theories underscore cooperative aspects, highlighting Russia's partnerships with OPEC and alignment with China as stabilizing forces in an interconnected energy market. These partnerships mitigate the impact of sanctions and support Russia's sustained global influence, illustrating the stabilizing effects of economic interdependence. Constructivist interpretations further reveal Russia's identity as a resource-rich country, viewing energy policy as not only a geopolitical tool but a symbol of sovereignty and resilience within the international system. This paper thus aims to present a multidimensional analysis of Russia's energy strategy, detailing how these intertwined theoretical frameworks would help to explain Russia's enduring role in global energy markets amidst shifting dynamics toward renewable energy and sustainability. The implications for countries, such as Türkiye, are significant, as the global order increasingly intertwines energy, economic resilience, and security concerns.

Keywords
International Relations. Russian Federation. Energy. Geopolitics. Türkiye.

* Asst. Prof. Dr., Ege University, Department of International Relations, argun.baskan@ege.edu.tr, ORCID: 0000-0002-0419-9489.

Rusya Federasyonu'nun Enerji ve Doğal Kaynaklar Politikası: Uluslararası İlişkiler Perspektifi

Öz

Rusya Federasyonu'nun enerji politikası, ekonomik, jeopolitik ve fikirsel hedeflerin karmaşık bir etkileşimini örneklemektedir. Petrol ve doğal gazın önemli bir küresel tedarikçisi olan Rusya, enerji kaynaklarını, özellikle Avrupa'daki enerjiye bağımlı devletleri etkilemek için stratejik araçlar olarak kullanmaktadır. Bu yaklaşım, özellikle Kırım'ın ilhakı ve Ukrayna'daki çatışmanın ardından Batı yaptırımlarına yanıt olarak, Rusya'nın tehdit dengesine cevaben enerji bağımlılıklarını sağlamlaştırma stratejisini vurgulayan bir Neorealist bakış açısıyla uyumludur. Bu arada, Neoliberal teoriler, Rusya'nın OPEC ile ortaklıklarını ve Çin ile uyumunu, birbirine bağlı bir enerji pazarında istikrar sağlayıcı güçler olarak vurgulayarak işbirlikçi yönleri vurgulamaktadırlar. Bu ortaklıklar, yaptırımların etkisini hafifletmekte ve Rusya'nın süregelen küresel etkisini destekleyerek ekonomik bağımlılığın istikrar sağlayıcı etkilerini göstermektedir. Yapılandırmacı yorumlar, Rusya'nın kaynak zengini bir ülke olarak kimliğini daha da ortaya koymakta ve enerji politikasını yalnızca jeopolitik bir araç olarak değil, aynı zamanda uluslararası sistem içinde egemenliğin ve dayanıklılığın bir sembolü olarak görmektedir. Bu makale, Rusya'nın enerji stratejisinin çok boyutlu bir analizini sunmayı ve bu iç içe geçmiş teorik çerçevelerin, yenilenebilir enerji ve sürdürülebilirliğe doğru değişen dinamikler ortasında Rusya'nın küresel enerji piyasalarındaki kalıcı rolünü açıklamaya nasıl yardımcı olacağını ayrıntılı olarak açıklamayı amaçlamaktadır. Türkiye gibi ülkeler üzerindeki etkiler önemlidir, çünkü küresel düzen enerji, ekonomik dayanıklılık ve güvenlik endişelerini giderek daha fazla iç içe geçirmektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler

Uluslararası İlişkiler. Rusya Federasyonu. Enerji. Jeopolitik. Türkiye.

Introduction

The most important energy products that the Russian Federation supplies to the world markets are natural gas and crude oil. The export of natural gas in particular is of great importance for Europe's economic situation. However, the international environment has led to an outbreak of economic sanctions by the United States, the EU and other states due to Russia's annexation of Crimea in 2014 and the conflict in eastern Ukraine. This was a strategic response to reduce Russia's dependence on trade in fossil fuels. Although this has not brought the Russian economy to its knees, the long-term impact on oil production is undeniable. After all, these measures are capable of delaying the development of new sources of oil and gas, which in turn can lead to a paradigm shift towards sustainability, even if the costs increase in the short term. The complex bilateral relations of individual countries with Russia and the global scenario carry the risk of supply chain disruption for countries that were once part of the USSR. This is an area where Russia is lagging behind, as there was no clearly elaborated legal framework and policy guidelines on this issue. Moreover, China's unwavering support and its huge consumer market for crude oil and natural gas, second only to Europe, are a major obstacle for Western powers to bring Russia to its senses. As Russia has been coordinating its oil supplies with OPEC since 2008, one could say that this is a very important challenge. The growing importance of nuclear energy in Russia's energy mix must also be taken into account. It has an impact on world markets and international trade in a number of key consumer goods, including food and water, as well as other essentials. Added to this is Türkiye's geographical position in relation to Russia. This paper aims to provide some insights into recent events through such an analysis from an International Relations (IR) perspective.

An understanding of Russia's energy strategy would be contextualized within some important theoretical perspectives in the IR literature, particularly Neorealism and Neoliberalism. From a Neorealist perspective, Russia's use of energy as a political tool reflects its broader aims of asserting national dominance and ensuring security by threatening to withhold vital resources. In line with Waltz's version of Structural Neorealism, the energy exports act for Russia as a guard against the external threats by entrenching dependence, particularly in Europe. Using Stephen Walt's model, we would also argue that the interdependence correlates with a balance of threat with respect to how strategically Russia manipulates the direct supply of energy as its immediate response to perceived external pressures, especially through the Western sanctions.

Conversely, Neoliberal approaches look toward the potential of cooperation in energy relationships. Although there are political tensions, energy trade produces economic interdependence, like in the case of Russia's cooperation with OPEC and the energy partnership with China. Complex interdependence approach underlines the fact that, through its energy exports to economically dependent countries, Russia enjoys comparative stability of influence without leading directly into conflict, hence, an example of Nye's concept of soft power. The engagement in multilateral energy organizations and collaborations stands out as a hard-headed function of the role of energy not exclusively as a geopolitical tool, but part of a conduit to economic resilience and continued relevance in the world for Russia.

Constructivist views add another layer by locating the historical identity of Russia as a resource-rich state in influencing its energy policies and interactions. So, this paper analyses these dynamics through main theoretical frameworks of IR. It considers how Russia's policy balances the use of its energy resources for geopolitical gains with adapting to a change in the geopolitical environment toward a more sustainable energy future. This multifaceted theoretical approach would provide a view as to how Russia is using energy resources strategically, the consequences for world energy markets, and also the possible changes which might make international politics change according to the emerging dependencies based on energy.

This would also means that a framework of IR represents the general perspective of how state and non-state actors function worldwide. By looking at Russian strategy in energy and natural resources from the perspective of domestic and foreign influences, one would understand how these domestic and foreign influences may interact with Russian policy in this area. We would also gain another humble insight into the impact of these dynamics on other countries and the international system. In this area, energy and natural resources are considered key resources that can influence strategic political and economic objectives. For example, Russia exerts considerable influence on the European energy market and therefore also has considerable influence on the countries that depend on it. It is clear that Russia has used its energy and raw materials policies to strengthen alliances, combat adversaries and influence European energy prices and accessibility. Scholars of this field are delving into the nuances of Russia's energy and natural resource policies to gain a deeper understanding of the forces influencing these policies. They also examine the far-reaching consequences for other countries and the global system. In addition, they examine Russia's integral role in foreign policy and its profound influence on the global energy landscape.

This study examines the complexities of Russia's energy and natural resource policy within the context of geopolitics, highlighting its implications for international politics. The core issue is Russia's dual function as a primary exporter

of energy, particularly oil and natural gas, utilizing these resources as a political instrument. This frequently engenders a confrontation between economic interests and geopolitical strategy. The study highlights the outcomes of this dynamic, concentrating on the sanctions enacted by the West in response to Russia's annexation of Crimea and the ongoing crisis in Ukraine. These sanctions profoundly impact Russia's energy production and global energy markets, particularly affecting Europe, which is largely dependent on Russian gas.

The difficulty is in the fine balance Russia has to strike between turning its energy exports to political advantage and the dangers of over-relying on fossil fuels in a world energy market that is changing and moving towards sustainability. Another serious issue consists of the slow pace of the development of the Russian renewable energy sector, which can be explained by an underdeveloped regulatory framework and policy guideline. It also investigates the risks for post-Soviet states that are energy-dependent on Russian supplies and face potential supply disruptions due to Russia's political decisions. All these factors together shape what is available internationally.

Methodology

This study analyzes Russian energy and natural resources policy in the context of the interplay of foreign policies on the global stage. It focuses on answering some important questions. First, it addresses how national and international factors influence Russia's approach to energy and natural resources. Second, it aims to show how Russian policies affect other countries and the world as a whole. It also clarifies the role that energy and natural resources play in Russia's relations with other countries. The method is to carefully examine relevant materials from various sources. I look at the primary and secondary literature on Russia's energy and natural resource strategy. I will also examine writings on how countries network globally and what the global energy market looks like. In my rather qualitative investigation, I study both primary and secondary sources. These sources include government documents, academic papers and news reports.

Theoretical Interpretations

The nature of international interactions in the global energy market is quite complex, both from a Neorealist and a Neoliberalist perspective, with Russia playing a very important role in the world exportation of crude oil and natural gas. In order to be able to talk effectively with regard to Russia's policy concerning energy and natural resources, there is a need to develop an analytical framework based upon the principles of Neorealism and Neoliberalism as received in IR. These two paradigms present contrasting yet still somewhat complementary lenses through which one can examine and analyze the use of energy as a geopolitical tool by Russia and how this use is shaped by international economic and political structures. These theoretical positions thus

provide a solid framework through which energy geopolitics can be understood, particularly in the context of Russia's position as an energy power. The Neorealist perspective, placing great emphasis on state power and national interests, elucidates Russia's behavior: the country uses its energy strategically, capitalizing particularly on its vast energy resources to keep Europe - as well as other parts of the world - in a subsidiary position.

Neorealism would frame the states' preoccupation with survival under conditions of an anarchic international system, where power and security become the most salient concerns. In this respect, Neorealism, exemplified in Kenneth Waltz (Waltz, 1979), viewed the state as striving towards influence maximization and the insurance of security through control of the critical resources, such as energy. Russia's energy policy could be perceived as a continuation of the strive for strategic superiority, using vast natural resources as levers in world geopolitics. The annexation of Crimea and all that is happening in Ukraine is not an isolated incident but part of a greater Neorealist strategy to attain dominance over the neighboring regions, securing vital energy interests.

Stephen Walt's (Walt, 1987) theory of balance of threat, which is another variety of Neorealism, emphasizes how states form alliances not based on power but rather perceived threats. Russia's energy policy, especially in its dealings with Europe and China, exemplifies this. In response to the U.S. and EU sanctions following Russia's annexation of Crimea, Russia adapted by leveraging its energy exports as a tool of economic pressure, particularly against Europe. This shift reflects Russia's strategy to mitigate the threat posed by Western sanctions and maintain its influence, aligning with Walt's notion of states adjusting their behavior to perceived threats rather than material power calculations.

In Neorealist terms, energy relations are considered mainly in the context of geopolitical rivalry issues and concerns about security, whereby states conceptualize energy in zero-sum games and as causing conflict (Casier, 2016; Dannreuther, 2016; Wilson, 2019). Here, the energy policy of Russia is perceived as an instrument for wielding strategic leverage to attain wider geopolitical goals, and this often leads to tensions with other states, particularly within the EU-Russia relations (Zhiznin, 2020; Melchiorre, 2022; Olier, 2023; Wigell & Vihma, 2016).

By contrast, Neoliberalism provides a theoretical structure for the cooperative dimension of Russia's energy diplomacy. One of the seminal theories to emerge within this school of thought, the complex interdependence theory espoused by Robert Keohane and Joseph Nye (Keohane and Nye, 1977), emphasizes how states - even rivals - are connected through either economic or environmental linkages. Examples would include, but are not limited to, Russia's incorporation into global energy markets, coordination with OPEC,

and partnerships with China. Despite political tensions, energy seems to fend off the trend of being one area where economic interests breed cooperation, as other aspects of the relationship go sour.

Another related concept is soft power by Joseph Nye (Nye, 2004), where energy is used not only for economic reasons but as a flexing of muscles to force compliance without military invention. In the light of such a concept, through its control of Europe's energy supply, Russia, therefore, enjoys considerable soft power in influencing the foreign policy decisions of energy-dependent countries. Challenges to this soft power are finally coming from world movements toward diversification and greening of energy which confuses the long-term strategy of Russia.

From a Neoliberal perspective, economic interdependence and mutual benefits from trade and investment, particularly in energy, can help reduce geopolitical tensions and promote cooperation. This approach underscores the role of market dynamics and shared gains in shaping energy relations (McGrath, 2016; Wilson, 2019). EU-Russia energy relations, in particular, align with this view, as both sides have strong economic incentives to maintain stable energy trade, reflecting the mutual dependence that can actually foster a cooperative relationship (Dannreuther, 2016; McGrath, 2016).

The Neoliberal perspective emphasizes interdependence and cooperation in energy security, advocating collaboration despite geopolitical tensions, particularly between Russia and the EU. This is evident in energy transition and sustainability initiatives (Mitrova & Melnikov, 2019). The EU's regulatory frameworks aim to stabilize energy supply routes, reducing risks from Russian energy reliance (Goldthau & Sitter, 2015). This blend of competition and cooperation reflects modern energy geopolitics, where countries balance energy security within a shifting global landscape (Ibekwe, 2024).

From a Constructivist perspective, energy relations are shaped not only by material interests but also by historical animosities, ideological differences, and perceived security threats. This view emphasizes the influence of identity, norms, and beliefs on state behavior in the realm of energy politics (McGrath, 2016). The framing of energy issues as existential threats can lead to securitization, whereby states adopt nationalistic policies that escalate tensions and potentially trigger international conflicts over energy resources (Wilson, 2019). This approach suggests that energy politics is not just about economics or geography but also about how states perceive their interests and threats within a broader social context. Interestingly, this Constructivist approach resonates with the technically Neorealist Walt's balance of threat approach as mentioned above.

Constructionist theories go further to supplement the analysis by commenting on the social and political constructs of energy relations. The energy transition and cooperation discourse between Russia and the EU is, for example,

a classic interplay of identities, norms, and interests (Marusyk, 2019; Mitrova & Melnikov, 2019). This would, in turn, explain the fact that recent efforts by the EU to further diversify the sources of its energy supply and decrease its overdependence on gas supplies emanating from Russia are driven by the geopolitical dynamics at the point of intersection between material capabilities and ideational factors (Siddi, 2023; Marusyk, 2019).

Energy geopolitics, and especially that of Russia, can be envisaged as a challenging and multi-dimensional field influenced by various theoretical approaches in IR. These perspectives observe the motivations, strategies, and consequences of energy policies and interactions on the global stage. A multidimensional framework for analyzing energy relations would include a number of aspects, including geoeconomics. Often, the goal of Russia's energy strategy is a geoeconomic measure in which energy resources serve as an instrument to achieve broader economic and political goals. Such a strategy may sharpen internal EU divisions and undermine the cohesion of its policies toward Russia (Czerny, 2023; Wigell & Vihma, 2016). The interplay of geopolitics and geoeconomics is considered important in contextualizing Russia's energy diplomacy and its wider implications on international energy security (Zhiznin, 2020; Melchiorre, 2022; Wigell & Vihma, 2016). A comprehensive understanding of energy geopolitics thus requires an eclectic approach based on several theories. It also explains, within a multidimensional framework, the varying degree of cooperation and conflict that exists in the energy dimension of bilateral relations among countries, such as Russia and the United States, Germany, and Azerbaijan (McGrath, 2016).

The ongoing conflict between Russia and Ukraine has farther ensnarled the tangle of energy geopolitics in the region. A reevaluation of energy dependencies, as well as security strategies within the EU, have surfaced as a result of this tension (Meissner, 2023; Siddi, 2023). Thus, these sanctions and investigations into alternative suppliers underpin the importance of geopolitical position as a structural driver in the design of energy policy and international politics (Meissner, 2023). This well illustrates that energy geopolitics is not only about resource availability but also about strategic calculations that states make in response to geopolitical crises.

Russia's energy policy, deeply tied to its geopolitical goals, emphasizes its role as a key player in the global energy market through its vast natural gas and oil exports (Peña-Ramos et al., 2020; Zhiznin, 2010). The term "energy superpower" reflects how Russia uses these resources strategically, enhancing its influence on the global stage while complementing its military power (Peña-Ramos et al., 2020). Energy resources serve as both an economic and political tool, allowing Russia to exert pressure, particularly over energy-dependent regions. Yet, energy great power would be a more accurate depiction than energy superpower.

In conclusion, these IR theoretical perspectives allow manifold understandings of energy geopolitics and, in this respect, explain the reasons behind Russia's behavior. Neorealism dwells on geopolitical competition and security-related issues. Neoliberalism points to economic interdependence and cooperation, while Constructivism brings historical and ideological factors into the foreground, and geoeconomics deals with strategic use of economic resources. These put forward a multidimensional framework that integrates these perspectives, hence providing a more comprehensive explanation of the complex dynamics in international energy relations. An operationally eclectic approach will be used for the purpose of this analysis.

Putin's Power Project: The Strategic Significance of Russian Oil and Gas

Russia, a significant supplier of oil and gas, relies heavily on its hydrocarbon-based economy, which is vulnerable to global energy price fluctuations and demand changes. Despite this, the Russian leadership maintains a firm belief in the enduring dominance of hydrocarbons, even as wealthy OECD countries transition to renewable energies, leaving most low and middle-income nations dependent on fossil fuels (Benyaminova et al., 2019: 1225; Novikau, 2021: 105; Connoly et al., 2020: 521; Olah et al., 2018: 386). Due to Russia's large influence in the global energy market, its economic stability and policy decisions have a significant impact, particularly on nations and regions dependent on its hydrocarbon exports. The pressing concern is the negative impact of hydrocarbons on climate change associated with their central role in the Russian economy. This is a compelling argument for the country to diversify its energy portfolio and switch to cleaner, renewable resources. However, an immediate and comprehensive transition seems unlikely.

In Russian political and business culture, informal insider practices that withhold key information create a significant disadvantage for outsiders, particularly in understanding the complex, Kremlin-linked oil and gas sector, which significantly influences national security and the economy, despite a sizable but internationally non-competitive manufacturing sector dependent on domestic demand driven by energy exports (Kroenig, 2020: 162; Loe, 2019: 73; Novikau, 2021: 105-106; Connoly et al., 2020: 516-517). There are several other factors that contribute to the current inability of Russia's manufacturing sector to compete on the international stage. The country's over-reliance on energy exports is a key factor leading to the manufacturing industry being neglected. In addition, problems related to bribery and low productivity further exacerbate the situation. These circumstances make it clear why Russia is finding it difficult to shed its reputation as a petro-state.

In his 1997 dissertation, Vladimir Putin (Putin, 1997) emphasized the strategic management of Russia's vital raw materials and energy resources as foundational to national wealth, advocating for their central role in economic policy. Despite allegations of academic plagiarism in that dissertation (e.g.,

Corwin, March 27, 2006), his presidency has consistently pursued this vision, expanding state control in the sector and using it to enhance Russia's influence, particularly in Europe. Under Putin's rule, the state increased its level of control over the entire energy business. The most spectacular case is that when Mikhail Khodorkovsky, the powerful chief executive of Yukos, dared to challenge Putin, he ended up spending a decade behind bars. The assets of Yukos were then absorbed by the state-run Rosneft, under the leadership of Igor Sechin, a close associate of Putin from their days in St. Petersburg. This move solidified their alliance. The year after, the acquisition of TNK-BP in a mind-boggling $55 billion deal helped Rosneft to become, on paper at least, an oil producer larger than ExxonMobil. The purchase of Bashneft in 2016 only cemented its dominance further. Nowadays, Rosneft contributes 40% to Russia's total oil output, with the government owning slightly more than 50% of the company's shares and exercising controlling power (Yergin, 2020: 79).

From Soviet Shadows to Energy Titans

Following the USSR's dissolution, major corporations like Gazprom, Lukoil, Rosneft, Surgutneftegas, and Tatneft came to dominate the Russian energy market, sparking concerns over reduced competition, potential corruption, and increased consumer prices due to concentrated economic power (Benyaminova et al., 2019: 1225; Black, 2020: 199). Despite these criticisms, the rise of these entities has cemented Russia's significant global energy role, enhancing the national economy and job market. Despite the significant number of such companies, the Russian oil market is highly consolidated, with the four largest companies accounting for 70% of the country's oil production. (Aslund, 2019: 228; Filimonova et al., 2020: 310-311) The attractiveness of the sector for investment in the domestic and international capital markets is underpinned by the compelling need to stabilize production levels, expand the resource base, and significant capital expenditure.

Established in 1965, the Ministry of Natural Gas managed its vast natural gas reserves, maintaining state control over the industry unlike its oil counterparts, leading to the rise of Gazprom as a significant political and economic force. Gazprom not only funded the state budget and political campaigns but also engaged in strategic alliances with major companies like Shell, Ruhrgas, and ENI, enhancing its influence and access in the liberalized EU market, while domestic policies under Putin aimed at renationalizing the sector to curb the power of oligarchs and reinforce state control (Prontera, 2021: 653-655; Taylor, 2018: 156). To achieve this, the Kremlin enacted laws that allowed the state to acquire ownership of energy companies and tightened regulations on foreign companies operating in the sector.

As a state-owned energy company, Gazprom has not made much effort to reform itself. The company has a monopoly on the domestic market and supplies gas to the public and utilities, enjoying a certain degree of autonomy.

However, independent gas producers are gaining market share and lobbying for deregulation. Gazprom is wary of sudden changes in the structure of the gas market, even though reforms could bring efficiency benefits. The company is reluctant to change its status (Giddens, 2009: 45; Loe, 2019: 63). The EU requires Gazprom to fully comply with market norms and conditions (Abbas & Locatelli, 2020: 440; Herdegen, 2016: 95). Although the reform proposals seem promising, the EU is cautious about increasing dependence on Russia. Furthermore, alternative energy sources such as renewables have been proposed as a partial solution to the EU's energy security problems.

An Energy Triumvirate: Novatek, Rosneft, and Gazprom

Novatek and Rosneft are among the key and giant players in Russia's energy sector, close competitors, and partners with Gazprom in its business. Numerous factors influence their business, such as the Russian energy directives, the global LNG business and the sanctions imposed on Russia. They compete for shares in Russia and in the global energy markets, but also cooperate in certain ventures. Novatek owns about 10% of Russian gas production and is responsible for roughly 6% of the world's LNG business. The company was established in 1994 by its current CEO and Board Chairman, Leonid Mikhelson. Mikhelson has close ties to President Vladimir Putin, thus Novatek has gotten overwhelming support. Novatek develops vast gas reserves within the Yamal-Nenets region (YNAO), regarded as a colossal gas reserve fund. The Yamal LNG flagship plant was established in the 2017 with an annual capacity of 17.5 million tons - it is the largest in the world. Currently, Arctic LNG 2 is under development with a scheduled commissioning in 2023, which will become the largest plant with an annual capacity of 19.8 million tons. The major shareholders include Mikhelson (24.76%), Gennady Timchenko (23.49%), TotalEnergies (19.4%) and Gazprom (9.99%). Novatek sells gas in Germany and abroad. Gazprom is the largest customer, buying under long-term contracts. Novatek also exports to Europe, Asia and Latin America. Moreover, Novatek is a leader in Russian energy production and a global LNG trader, whose abilities are obviously either latched to, if not actually directly dependent on, government connections and access to enormous reserves (Forbes Russia, Non-Dated (a); Forbes Russia, Non-Dated (b); Novatek, Non-Dated).

Rosneft, Russia's largest oil company and a global giant, is strategically important as more than half (50.1%) of the company is held by the Russian government. Rosneft makes up for 40% in oil production in Russia and approximately 10% of the entire country's economic production. The company also has a large workforce of over 296,000 Russians employed. Since it was founded in 1991, Rosneft has followed lightning-fast growth through acquisitions and mergers. But the most important from all acquisitions is TNK-BP in 2013. The takeover made Rosneft the world's biggest oil company by revenue under the leadership of Igor Sechin, a powerful figure who has been closely

associated with President Vladimir Putin since 2004. The Rosneft outfit has witnessed a number of controversies in the last decade. It attracted sanctions in 2014 after Russia annexed Crimea. There were allegations of corruption and anti-environmental safety practices as well. However, Rosneft is still a key player in Russian energy business. The company has been rightly positioned to take every strategic opportunity from the abundant oil and gas reserves within the country. The company also reaches beyond Russia into developed markets such as China and India. Other major investors include BP (19.75%), Glencore (0.57%), and the Qatar Investment Authority (4.7%) (Rosneft, undated; Wall Street Journal, undated).

Gazprom, the largest natural gas producer in Russia, faces challenges from Novatek and Rosneft seeking to liberalize the market and diminish its monopoly, particularly in pipeline access and export rights on the Yamal peninsula (Frye, 2021: 229; Loe, 2019: 63–65). Gazprom and Rosneft exemplify divergent trajectories within the country's economic landscape. Rosneft capitalizes on high international oil prices for substantial profits. Gazprom, which is regulated by the state and pivotal in political energy strategies, maintains a more significant role in domestic gas supply at lower prices (Groce, 2020: 992-993). In addition, the Russian internal energy market is underdeveloped, which limits domestic demand for natural gas and oil. This leads to greater dependence on exports, especially to European countries. The lack of diversity in production and transportation networks is another problem that puts political pressure on the gas trade between Europe and Russia. Currently, the majority of Russian natural gas exports to Europe flow via Nord Stream.

Russia's Nuclear Odyssey

Nuclear power has been a cornerstone of Russian policy since the Soviet era, serving as a symbol of national prestige and subsequently a vital component of Russia's national security strategy due to its reliability as a base load energy source for the military and industrial sectors. The state-owned company Rosatom controls everything from uranium mining to plant operations. The Russian nuclear industry plays a significant role in the geopolitical arena and economic development, despite criticisms of pervasive corruption and safety compromises, leading to mixed public perceptions about nuclear energy safety following the Chernobyl disaster (Ćetković & Buzogány, 2020, p. 139). The Russian government has enormous plans for new facilities and the development of numerous new nuclear technologies. The Russian nuclear industry is facing some difficulties, so to speak. The difficulties that the Russian nuclear industry is facing mainly concern the safety of radioactivity. Accidents have occurred at several Russian nuclear power plants, some of which were very serious. The economic sanctions in Russia are therefore being felt in the nuclear power plants of other countries for the simple reason that Russia is struggling with the waves of its financial constraints. This is because the

sanctions are complicating the tight situation in which Rosatom already finds itself, both in terms of foreign financing and technology. The costs of some alternative forms of energy have fallen, e.g. solar and wind power plants. At the same time, nuclear energy has lost its competitiveness in some market segments (Bruusgaard, 2020: 3-4). Despite these challenges, Russia is likely to maintain its status in the nuclear energy market for many decades to come.

In recent years, the Russia's uranium production has risen despite the economic sanctions and the Covid-19 epidemic. However production is costly as most uranium deposits are located in very remote areas. In fact, most of the uranium mines in Russia are old and obsolete. Russia is estimated to have huge plutonium reserves. The main sources of plutonium are mainly by-products from nuclear power plants and weapons factories. Russia is one of the few countries to produce weapons-grade, highly enriched uranium. The aging and depletion of stocks has always been a problem in Russia. There is also the possibility of diversion of plutonium for unauthorized purposes. Russia has smaller reserves of thorium. Thorium is thought to be more promising than uranium-based power reactors and has far better safety and non-proliferation properties. Other nuclear sources that are still abundant in Russia are beryllium, lithium and zirconium. Thus, there are fears that some of the material could fall into unauthorized hands. This concern underlines the urgent need for secure management and monitoring of nuclear material to prevent possible misuse. Russia, also plays a crucial role in the global landscape of nuclear research and development. Progress in alternative nuclear fuels such as thorium demonstrates a commitment to advancing nuclear energy solutions. (Dolchinkov and Dolchinkova, 2019: 563-564).

The fleet of nuclear power plants operating in Russia consists of pressurized water reactors (PWRs), small modular reactors (SMRs) and fast neutron reactors (FBRs). PWRs are safe and reliable, but often have higher operating and construction costs compared to other fissionable reactors on the market. A new conveyor belt for nuclear reactors has emerged that is many times simpler and smaller compared to the traditional reactor model. SMRs are relatively inexpensive, quick to deploy and take less time to manufacture compared to PWRs, not to mention that they are more flexible and universal for power generation, heating or even water desalination. FBRs are reactors that can use the spent fuel of another reactor as fuel for themselves, which increases their effectiveness and reduces the amount of nuclear waste. However, the construction and operation of FBRs is more capital and skill intensive compared to the other reactor types. Russia is one of the other countries leading the world in the development and use of FBRs. The technology is seen as a breakthrough in the nuclear energy cosmos, an innovation anticipated by the global nuclear community, according to Russian state nuclear corporation Rosatom, with the aim that it will greatly contribute to meeting Russia's energy security challenge while meeting its climate commitments (World Nuclear

Association, December 2021; Rosatom, undated a; Rosatom, undated b). One study of the anti-Russian sanctions emphasized that stricter measures would probably be introduced to reduce the interdependence between the EU and the Russian nuclear industry. For example, 18 Russian-built nuclear reactors are in operation in Finland as well as in Slovakia, Hungary, Bulgaria and the Czech Republic. At the end of August 2022, Hungary announced its intention to build two new nuclear reactors with the help of Rosatom, once again realizing Russian involvement in many member states. According to data from the Euratom Supply Agency, 19.7% of imported uranium was supplied by Moscow to EU member states in 2021; Only Niger and Kazakhstan supplied more uranium to the EU (EUObserver, October 7, 2022; Meredith, October 14, 2022).

The Global Race for Fusion Power

Nuclear fusion is a process in which two or more atomic nuclei combine to form a single, heavier nucleus. This combination releases an enormous amount of energy simply because the mass of the resulting nucleus is somehow less than the sum of the masses of the original nuclei. Fusion energy is far from the easiest route to a safe, harmless and highly productive energy source that could make a significant contribution to protecting the environment from climate change. Even more disappointing is that the full commercial use of fusion reactors could remain out of reach in practice for a very long time. And besides, developing the fusion power era is expensive. As for the federal fusion research and development program, Russian budget is relatively small compared to other countries, such as the United States and China. For this reason, there are various policies in Russia - some domestic, some international - that affect the area of fusion energy policy. Meanwhile, Russia, along with other countries, is part of the international program for cooperation in the construction of the International Thermonuclear Experimental Reactor (ITER) fusion energy project (Gagarinskiy et al., 2022:307-308; Ott, 21 October 2022).

International cooperation in the research and development of fusion energy shows that countries are indeed willing to join forces to solve a common problem. However, this kind of cooperation also brings with it some tensions between Russia and the West. For example, disagreements between member countries have already led to the ITER project being delayed for several years (AFP, 6 January 2023). In this regard, Russia's participation in international fusion energy could be clouded by various US sanctions related to its ventures in Ukraine. It is therefore uncertain what long-term impact the Ukraine war will have on Russia's fusion energy developments. It could continue to invest in the development of fusion energy, even if it is further marginalized by the Western countries (Jack, 21 December 2014).

Hydrogen Horizons

Hydrogen can generate heat and electricity, power transportation and carry out production processes without carbon emissions. However, most hydrogen is currently produced from natural gas, which makes a hydrogen economy based on renewable energy difficult. For some countries, especially in Europe, a rapid transition to hydrogen would be even more difficult. Now that Russia is the world's largest producer of natural gas, the country is thinking about how its energy sector can meet the growing demand for hydrogen on the global market. The country has announced plans to capture 20% of the total hydrogen market by 2030. This meant an agreement with the relevant companies to bring this in as an increase in exports to Europe. This move had the potential to develop into long-term relationships but Russia's invasion of Ukraine put all at risk. Russia can also look to other markets such as China, where demand is almost as high as in Europe. (Casey, 24 March 2022; Patonia, 24 October 2022). The reckless dynamic nature of hydrogen production and distribution increases concerns about a hydrogen economy. The development of infrastructure for the distribution and use of hydrogen is also not yet mature and can be a really big challenge for the expansion of its widespread use.

The Unsung Hero: Coal's Critical Role in Russia's Energy Portfolio

Coal is pivotal for Russia's economy, extensively used in electricity generation and industrial production, especially in Siberia and the Far East, and is a major source of raw materials like steel and cement. Despite being a significant contributor to air pollution and greenhouse gas emissions, coal remains central to Russia's energy strategy and economic diversification efforts, evidenced by its third-place ranking among the world's largest coal exporters and the strong influence of its coal industry on both federal and regional policies (Churashev, et al., 2022: 1154). Following a ban on Russian coal, European energy companies have predominantly turned to Australian coal, reflecting a shift in global energy supply dynamics. Amidst a widespread energy crisis and efforts to combat hyperinflation, governments worldwide are increasingly exploring alternatives to natural gas and LNG, thereby underscoring the enduring relevance of coal in the global energy landscape (Euronews, 8 April 2022; IntelliNews, 8 December 2022).

Impact of Russia's Agricultural and Water Strategies

Russia, despite holding up to ten percent of the world's freshwater reserves, faces uneven distribution of water resources, with significant shortages particularly in the south and southwest exacerbated by climate change and deteriorating infrastructure (Suzdaleva, 2020: 53-54; Climate Change Post, 20 March 2023). Amidst these challenges, the government is exploring water exports, notably from Lake Baikal to China, amidst sustainability concerns and potential international environmental impacts (Goble, 13 September 2022). In Russia, food and water security concerns, exacerbated by the government's

prioritization of agricultural subsidies to decrease import dependency and enhance domestic output, have led to rising food prices and allegations of cronyism, particularly post the 2014 annexation of Crimea (Petrikov, 2022: 13; Lander and Kuns, 2021: 449). Concurrently, Russia's military actions in Ukraine have disrupted key agricultural exports like wheat and barley, intensifying global food security concerns, while targeted assaults on Ukrainian water infrastructure violate international law, worsening the humanitarian situation by hindering access to clean water (OECD, 5 August 2022; UNICEF, 15 April 2022; Zimmermann, 25 May 2022).

From Soviet Scars to Russian Renewables

The USSR, despite pioneering environmental legislation, experienced severe environmental degradation due to poor law enforcement, prioritizing industrial production over ecological health, which resulted in some of the most catastrophic pollution levels and biodiversity loss (Angus, 2016: 209; Benyaminova et al., 2019: 1225). This neglect, compounded by inadequate public information and the inability of disadvantaged groups to intervene, left enduring environmental scars across former Soviet territories following the regime's collapse. According to Statista (23 November 2022), Russia, despite its investment in renewable energy and legal commitment to the Paris Agreement, continues to maintain its fossil fuel sectors, facing increasing risks of forest fires and economic costs due to thawing permafrost affecting key natural resources. Furthermore, while the Northern Sea Route is becoming more accessible due to warming in the Arctic, several international companies have boycotted its use, protesting Russia's actions in Ukraine and expressing ecological concerns (Nilsen, 14 January 2020).

Russia's Wider Strategic Commodities Trade Footprint

Russia is a major global exporter of various essential commodities beyond just oil and gas, including wheat, timber, nickel, bauxite, and diamonds, which significantly influence key industries such as construction, manufacturing, and electronics. The Russian government, which owns many of these major companies, employs tariffs, quotas, and subsidies to control prices and support domestic producers, thereby impacting both domestic employment and international market dynamics (David-Barret, 2023: 224-225). The crisis in Ukraine has exacerbated the vulnerabilities in the global transition to a green economy, particularly concerning the access and supply chain of essential raw materials such as aluminum, with significant impacts from export restrictions, market inequalities, and geopolitical tensions. Notably, Rusal, led by CEO Evgenii Nikitin and part-owned by the sanctioned Oleg Deripaska, faced challenges from international sanctions and supply disruptions, further complicated by Australia's ban on essential raw material exports to Russia and issues in bauxite supply affecting Ireland's Aughinish plant (OECD, 4 August 2022). The affair surrounding Oleg Deripaska, co-founder and former

CEO of Rusal - the world's largest aluminum producer - relates significantly to national and international political economy, given the company's pivotal role in the Russian energy sector and its extensive global exports. Despite being hit by Western sanctions that impacted both Deripaska and Rusal with significant financial losses, the company circumvented these restrictions by engaging with alternative trading partners, particularly in Asia, thus maintaining its stature in both the global aluminum market and the Russian economy (Faulconbridge, 26 September 2023; Davies, 10 March 2022; Chaudhury, 29 August 2023).

A Word of Caution about the Population Decline and Economic Strains

Russia's demographic challenges, characterized by a shrinking and aging population, include labor shortages, high mortality rates, and internal migration that concentrates people in the Central Federal District (Statista, 12 January 2023) while depopulating the Far East and Siberia. This situation exacerbates ethnic (Goble, 18 August 2022), economic and strategic vulnerabilities, as health issues and the emigration of skilled workers, particularly in IT and energy sectors, reduce military readiness and economic potential, increasing the risk of regional conflicts over resources. The trend worsened after the beginning of the war in Ukraine (Air1, 31 March 2022). So, Russia's demographic challenges, including a shrinking workforce and the migration of skilled workers, exacerbate economic issues by increasing resource extraction costs and the likelihood of regional conflicts over energy access, further complicating the country's energy policy and development.

The Complex Web of EU-Russia Relations in the Face of Crisis

Russia uses energy exports for growth and political leverage in Europe. EU nations, wary of dependence and political risks, diversify sources amid Russian-Ukrainian war and sanctions. In the last decade of the 2000s and now in the 2010s, the EU had already gained experience in the energy sector through bilateral energy cooperation between its member states, with Russia always preferring individual relations. The practical energy relations could be continued until 2022 despite tense political relations (Dubsky & Tichy, 2022: 22). Such a current development of a dispute over Nord Stream 2 adds energy to the sour relations in energy trade between the EU and Russia. The EU is thus ready for a diversification of the energy mix and for projects such as the Green Deal, which promotes renewable energies in order to free itself from its heavy dependence on Russian imports.

The two major reasons are, first, the conflict in Ukraine, and second, the negotiation to secure the trade of gas. Today, the EU considers its dependence on Russia for energy much more a liability than an asset and, as a consequence, is less inclined to offer itself up to becoming dependent on Russian suppliers with the same enthusiasm it had before (Prontera, 2021: 667). The higher

portion of renewable energies, such as those derived from wind or solar power in the EU's energy mix, has in turn reduced the need for natural gas imports from Russia. In addition, the EU is implementing measures for increasing energy efficiency and, in general, to reduce the energy consumption of the bloc to further diminish dependence on imports of energy from Russia.

Russia has halted gas supplies to some countries and reduced supplies to others in response to the sanctions imposed because of its invasion of Ukraine (Kuzemko et al., 2022: 1). Since 2014, contradictory trends have been observed in the EU - efforts for more policy coherence alongside politicized debates on energy projects such as Nord Stream (Debardeleben, 2020: 577; Thompson, 2022: 75). Nord Stream 2 shows how external actors are challenging the EU's authority (Schmidt-Felzmann, 2020: 139). As the Russian economy is inward-looking and reliant on the domestic sector, it can withstand some sanctions (Li et al., 2022: 13). Therefore, the EU needs to reduce its dependence on Russian energy and consider the impact of non-EU actors on its control. It is important to note that the Russian economy can adapt and circumvent sanctions, so it is unlikely that sanctions alone can bring about significant change in Russian policy.

Shadow of Chinese Influence

Centralized cooperation with China has finally helped Russia, but has caused plenty of bickering for years. Relations between the two nations have only warmed in the last decade, and even now some Russians worry that China, with its new access to Russian oil and gas, could use it to expand its influence in Central Asia - at Russia's expense. Few China experts of the Russian academia are in direct contact with key policy makers in Moscow, leaving Russia with a haphazard China approach full of growing individualism and poorly organized politics that undermines its energy diplomacy with China. However, the organization of the decision-making process, with which the Putin government is extremely overburdened, is very difficult (Magnus, 2018: 186; Xu, Reisinger, 2019: 4, 16). According to a Chinese government official, Gazprom and Rosneft lack a comprehensive plan for the Chinese market. Both companies see China as a possible solution to falling demand in Europe. However, the disputes between the energy giants and Beijing's increasing influence on the Russian energy sector are making slow progress. The Kremlin is keen to expand energy exports to South Korea and Japan, but concerns remain about the costs and benefits of doing business with Russia (Xu & Reisinger, 2019: 8-10). The impact of these events on Russia's ability to fulfill its energy promises and secure long-term contracts in the Asian market is uncertain.

The energy partnership between China and Russia, while not without its criticisms, offers substantial mutual benefits, with Russia's fuel supplies reducing China's reliance on Middle Eastern and African energy sources, thereby diversifying its options and minimizing price volatility (Kryukov, 2022: 142).

Additionally, Chinese investments in projects like the Eastern Siberia-Pacific Ocean (ESPO) pipeline not only enhance Russia's energy infrastructure but also ensure a stable market for Russian exports, promoting economic growth in both nations within Eurasia (Sotiriou, 2022: 28). China is investing heavily in gas projects in the Arctic, including Yamal LNG and Arctic LNG 2, and is providing Russia with technological support for deep-sea exploration and development. These deals and partnerships are linked to China's Belt and Road Plan, the Polar Silk Road policy targeting the Arctic, and Russia's energy goals. China is using the Belt and Road to secure energy from Russia and countries along the route. Russia is using it and the Polar Silk Road to tap into Arctic resources and send more fuel abroad. The ventures are helping to create a new energy route between China and Russia and open up the Arctic to shipping. Experts warn that China could rely too much on Russian fuel. Nevertheless, China is investing in other areas such as renewable energy and nuclear energy. Russia's energy goals have recently focused more on China. However, China is looking for different fuel sources to avoid being dependent on only one supplier (Røseth, 2017; 23). Russia needs to renew its fuel industry to foster cooperation with China (Meynkhard, 2020: 65). Overall, the signs point to growing Sino-Russian cooperation in the energy sector. In the long term, however, it is unlikely that China will be exclusively dependent on Russia due to the diversification of its fuel mix.

Understanding the OPEC-Russia Axis

While Russia remains the second largest oil producer, its energy policy is in too many crucial respects on a par with OPEC's far too intrusive presence. OPEC's production in first place is colossal, accounting for about 40% of world production. This fact in itself gives OPEC an undeniable influence on the market and price fluctuations (Rahman, 29 April 2004). This makes strategic cooperation between Russia and OPEC to ensure stability and mutual benefit in managing the global oil landscape. Secondly, there is a general interest in maintaining equilibrium. A negative turn would then trigger a global economic downturn, which in turn would affect production and consumers. On the other hand, prices that are too low at the bottom of the cycle can dampen the willingness to invest in the industry and even lay the foundations for further supply bottlenecks. Only OPEC and Russia have been working quite actively in recent years to navigate this delicate path, with the aim of achieving a stable oil price that is satisfactory to both sides. After all, OPEC stands for knowledge and experience. Here Russia can apply its knowledge from extensive research and market insight to guide and refine its own decisions on an energy policy direction (Krutikhin & Overland, 2017). OPEC, a complex entity, balances conflicting interests of oil producers aiming for higher revenues, and consumers seeking lower prices, alongside diverse investor and external influences (Rousan et al, 2018: 28).

The shale revolution in North America, by providing a more flexible oil and gas supply, diminished the control of traditional oil-exporting countries over market dynamics, despite Saudi Arabia's attempts to curb U.S. shale production during 2014-2015. This led to a strategic partnership between Russia and Saudi Arabia in 2016 to stabilize oil prices, which, paradoxically, spurred an unprecedented surge in U.S. shale oil output, significantly enhancing the U.S.'s position as a major supplier of liquefied natural gas and reshaping global energy markets (Connoly et al., 2020: 512-513; Hudson and Day, 2019: 178). The oil and gas market has been destabilized by the rise of renewable energy sources such as solar and wind, coupled with the increasing popularity of electric vehicles, particularly affecting demand in the transportation sector. As a result, oil-exporting nations, including Russia, are compelled to adjust their economic strategies and lower oil prices, particularly to China and India, to maintain market share amid shifting global energy dependencies and Western restrictions on hydrocarbons (Faucont & Said, 30 December 2022).

Türkiye's Delicate Act with Russia and NATO

Türkiye's strategic position as a major importer of Russian energy and a critical transit point between the Black Sea and the Mediterranean underpins its pivotal role in Russian energy policy, highlighted by investments like the TurkStream pipeline which facilitates natural gas exports to southern Europe bypassing Ukraine. Additionally, Türkiye's influence in regional politics and its NATO membership leverage Moscow's interests, leading to increased Russian investments in Türkiye, such as the Akkuyu nuclear power plant and financial incentives, to ensure sustained access to energy markets despite Western sanctions on Russia's Ukraine policy.

A number of scholars (e.g. Aydın, 2020; Aydın, 2020; Bağcı & Gaudino, 2020; Balta, 2019; Ediger, Bowlus & Aydın, 2020; Erşen, & Çelikpala, 2019; Tanrısever, 2019) have also expressed that the response to Türkiye's energy exchange deals, especially with Russia, raises a high level of multi-layered economic and security concerns. According to a report by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, energy remains at the top of the list of trade relations with Russia. In addition, Minister Çavuşoglu added that cooperation with the country and especially with Russia will be at a qualitatively different level with projects such as TurkStream and the Akkuyu nuclear power plant. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs had announced that gas supplies from the TurkStream natural gas pipeline to start in 2020 (Ministry of Foreign Affairs). Türkiye aims to leverage its strategic location at the intersection of Europe, Central Asia, and the Middle East to enhance its stature as a key energy intermediary. Simultaneously, Türkiye balances its support for Ukraine against maintaining equitable ties with Russia, as evidenced by facilitating prisoner swaps and Ukrainian grain shipments through its Aegean ports, despite potential Russian endeavors to utilize Türkiye's ambitions to destabilize NATO affairs (Cohen, 9 December 2022).

Türkiye acted as a mediator in the Russian-Ukrainian grain crisis. In this context, reference was made to the agreement between Türkiye and the United Nations in July 2022, in which Ukraine was allowed to continue exporting grain and its by-products through the Black Sea. However, as Russia has repeatedly obstructed the export of food and fertilizers through Türkiye, it stopped its participation in July 2023. Since then, Ukraine has opened new humanitarian corridors for the transportation of grain to the port of Chornomorsk. Türkiye has since been working to resume grain trade and is supporting Ukraine in its search for alternative delivery options. On the other hand, the humanitarian corridor makes it clear to Ukraine's opponents that the grain is by no means in Russia's control. Türkiye has sent its warships to escort grain ships from grain-exporting Ukraine through the Black Sea. Türkiye has also supported Ukraine financially and logistically in developing the export options. (Saul, 27 September 2023; Polityuk, 22 September 2023; Kucukgocmen, 21 September 2023).

Discussion

This article assesses the opportunities and threats the shifting global energy landscape presents to the Russian energy sector in the international system. The war between Russia and Ukraine indeed has taken a heavy toll on the global energy market, which is heavily dependent upon Russian energy. In competition with renewable resources and the reduction in reliance of the European Union on Russian supplies, Russia uses new tools: expanding hydrocarbon exploration towards the Arctic, being more friendly to China, and trying to develop hydrogen economy. The sanctions and disrupted supply chains further tightened the rope around the Russian energy sector, pushing the globe for diversification. The European Union seeks to decrease its reliance on Russian energy by looking to alternatives such as American liquefied natural, but also in investment in renewable resources and energy efficiency. The conflict underlines the urgent need for diversified energy supplies toward the sustainable, secure energy future and has pointed out the global need to decrease dependence on fossil fuels while investing in technological innovation.

Despite the Kremlin's extensive rhetoric about the importance of Russia's own diversification and modernization, it is quite clear that there is little effort to develop new industries. Apart from the steady growth in agricultural production and exports, the profile of Russian production has hardly changed since 2000. While other hydrocarbon-exporting countries such as Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates are somewhat trying to get prepared for life in a hydrocarbon-free world, Russia is officially geared towards further expansion of oil and gas production and sales. As for future demand for oil and gas, there are several possibilities that could arise. In the long term, none of them could be climate friendly for Moscow. The government's forecasts

show how important oil and gas are still important for the economy (Connoly et al., 2020: 520, 526). Innovation in the Russian oil and gas industry depends on investment. The four main threats, i.e. financial underdevelopment, inefficient business operations, currency fluctuations and tax policies, are hindering foreign capital access in Russia (Filimonova et al., 2020: 319). A new and modernized diversified economy would significantly relieve Moscow's economy, which is traditionally heavily dependent on the sale of oil and gas to the outside world. In the longer term, however, demand for the fuel is likely to fall. This represents a risk for the government. Investment in the banking sector is a key driver of innovative movements in the oil and gas sector in Russia, but given the business processes, currency and tax regulations, the country is unlikely to be attractive to international capital. In addition, stricter environmental protection laws need to be introduced.

The analysis of Russia's energy policy reveals the strategic duality embedded within its approach to natural resources: while hydrocarbon-based exports secure economic leverage, they also serve as powerful instruments of geopolitical influence, particularly in relation to Europe. This behavior aligns with Neorealist perspectives, emphasizing Russia's objective of ensuring security and strategic dominance by controlling critical energy supplies. Consistent with Waltz's theory of Structural Neorealism, Russia's manipulation of energy resources reinforces dependency among neighboring and European states. This is illustrated by Russia's calculated use of energy exports as an economic countermeasure against Western sanctions following the annexation of Crimea and the conflict in Ukraine, which also exemplifies Stephen Walt's balance of threat theory.

Simultaneously, Neoliberalism provides a framework for understanding the cooperative facets of Russia's energy diplomacy, where partnerships with entities like OPEC and strategic alliances with China emphasize mutual economic benefits. Complex interdependence, as outlined by Keohane and Nye, explains why energy trade persists even amid political tensions, as economic interdependence tends to stabilize relationships despite friction. This is particularly relevant in Russia's relationship with China, which strengthens through sustained energy trade, ensuring both economic resilience and influence over the global energy market. The partnership with China and cooperation with OPEC illustrate Russia's use of energy not solely as a political instrument but as an integral component of broader economic interdependence.

Incorporating Constructivist insights would add depth by highlighting how Russia's historical identity as a resource-rich state informs its energy strategies and international interactions. The framing of energy policy as both a national identity and a strategic necessity underlines how Russia's actions are influenced not only by economic or security concerns but also by a constructed image of strength and independence within the international system. This is evident in the way Russia views its energy exports as an assertion of its sovereignty and as a symbol of its resilience against Western pressures.

In sum, these theoretical interpretations would provide a multidimensional perspective on Russia's energy policy. Using these intertwined perspectives would help to explain why Russia remains a dominant force in the global energy landscape despite external pressures and why its energy policy has complex, far-reaching implications for international politics, particularly in light of the ongoing Russian-Ukrainian war and global shift toward sustainable energy.

Some Possible Directions for Further Research

In response to the annexation of Crimea and the ongoing war in Ukraine, the Kremlin has long used the dependence of others on its natural resources to advance its political interests, and the US, EU and other countries have sanctioned Russia. In the positive scenario, these sanctions would have something of a long-term side-effect on Russian fossil fuel production and would accordingly point to sustainability and renewable energy sources. The examination of such a long-term, future-oriented possibility is technically beyond the scope of this study. However, it can be noted that further research would most likely involve quantitative methods, such as tracking Russian oil production over time, analyzing the impact of sanctions on Russian oil companies, and examining the willingness of consumers and businesses to switch to sustainable energy sources. Qualitative factors such as the political will to support sustainability should also be taken into account. It should be mentioned that the long-term impact of sanctions is a complex issue, with many possible unintended consequences, including an increase in the price of oil or/and a demand of Russian fossil fuels from the countries that would not belong to the group of sanctioning countries.

Conclusion

Russia remains a significant global power, maintaining substantial influence despite facing economic sanctions from the Western world since its annexation of Crimea. These sanctions, compounded by ongoing political tensions and armed conflict in eastern Ukraine, have undoubtedly left a lasting mark on Russia's energy sector. However, they have not succeeded in crippling the Russian economy entirely. Meanwhile, China, the world's largest crude oil consumer and second only to Europe in natural gas imports, has become a pivotal partner in global energy coordination. Adding to the complexity is Russia's intricate role in the trade of vital resources such as oil, food, and fresh water, which continues to shape regional and global dynamics.

The connection between energy policies and International Relations is exemplified by two major events: Russia's annexation of Crimea and its war with Ukraine. These events have elicited significant responses from the US, the EU, and most countries worldwide. The resulting economic sanctions and initiatives to reduce dependence on Russian fossil fuels are reshaping global

energy markets and impacting economies reliant on Russian imports. The energy linkages between Russia and the world highlight the intricate interplay among International Relations, economic dynamics, and environmental concerns, underscoring the need for integrated strategies. China's substantial energy consumption and its alignment with Russia further illustrate the complex web of power relations shaping the energy sector today. Another sensitive issue that is Russia's energy policy with respect to Europe and more recently its cooperation in the field of energy transportation with Türkiye being a transit country. The dependence of many European countries on Russian oil and natural gas exports is tending to decline though new discoveries and developing resources. These measures could significantly undermine Russia's financial stability, creating substantial economic hardship. Strategic efforts to reduce dependence on Russian energy could further strain its economy, demonstrating how deeply interconnected energy, economy, and security are within the international order.

The strategic use of energy resources by the Russian Federation illustrates a multi-layered approach that merges economic, geopolitical, and ideational objectives. Drawing from Neorealist interpretations, Russia's control over vast reserves of natural gas and oil is not merely an economic activity but a calculated geopolitical tool used to secure influence, particularly over energy-dependent states in Europe. Russia leverages its energy resources to maintain critical supply dependencies. The Russian-Ukrainian war and subsequent sanctions have only deepened Russia's resolve to wield energy as an instrument of power, underscoring its strategy of entrenching influence through essential exports.

The Neoliberal perspective would complement this by highlighting cooperative dimensions of Russia's energy diplomacy. Through sustained partnerships with OPEC and strategic alignment with China, Russia underscores the stabilizing role of complex economic interdependence despite political tensions. Such relationships, particularly with China, reveal Russia's reliance on international economic structures, whereby energy exports not only serve as geopolitical levers but as anchors for mutual economic resilience. This shift illustrates that Russia's energy strategy is more than a zero-sum game. It is a calculated balance between interdependence and autonomy, allowing it to navigate sanctions and other pressures while sustaining its influence on the global energy market.

Constructivist perspectives would further reveal how Russia's historical identity as a resource powerhouse shapes its current energy policy. Energy, in this context, is not only a tool for power but a symbol of Russia's sovereign stance within the international system. This identity-driven approach emphasizes resilience and self-reliance in the face of sanctions, aligning with a broader narrative of national strength and independence. The framing of energy policy as both a strategic and ideological pursuit highlights how Russia's actions

are influenced not only by material interests but also by a deep-seated drive to affirm its stature in global politics.

In summary, an eclectic and operational application of multiple theoretical frameworks would provide a comprehensive view of Russia's energy policy, encompassing security motives from Neorealism, cooperative tendencies from Neoliberalism, and identity-driven strategies from Constructivism. This perspective would help to explain Russia's continued prominence in the energy geopolitics landscape despite the Western sanctions and the global shift toward renewable energy. As the international system continues to evolve, the dynamics of Russian energy politics will play a crucial role in influencing the profound interconnections between energy, economics, and security.

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