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CHALLENGES OF THE EUROPEAN UNION-RUSSIA PARTNERSHIP IN THE FIELD OF ENERGY

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Abstract

Despite often conflicting positions, the European Union and Russia continue to be mutually important strategic partners in almost all economic areas. However, it seems that one economic aspect stands out in comparison to others in terms of this dependence, and that is energy. Although the European Union is showing a tendency to become energy independent, such ideas are still in their infancy, which is why many countries of the "Old Continent" continue to be dependent on Russian gas as one of the leading energy sources, primarily due to reduced use of dirty, fossil fuels. However, they are indeed being forgotten in the European Union. On the other hand, the Russian economy is largely dependent on fuel exports, primarily oil and natural gas, and due to the energy independence of the growing superpowers, India and predominantly China, which have opted to use energy from their coal communities, the European Union continues to be Russia's most important strategic partner. However, after the Navalny affair, the future of the already agreed "North Stream" was called into question due to anti-Russian protests throughout the European Union. This paper is dedicated to researching the extent to which the European Union depends on Russia in terms of EU energy security and whether there is a potential alternative to the one for Nord Stream?

KEY WORDS:

- Energy
- European Union
- Geopolitics
- Russia
- Security

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Methodology

The paper's primary goal is to examine whether there are relevant energy alternatives that the European Union and the Western Balkans could use to avoid enormous economic and social consequences if the supply of Russian gas is interrupted.

When we talk about the methodological approach used in this paper, the author's commitment favors a method that combines qualitative analysis as primary. Quantitative analysis is applied when comparing the concept of "North Stream" and other energy alternatives that the European Union must inevitably consider. Also, I believe that quantitative analysis will help analyze European Commission documents and visualize the available data. In addition to the previously mentioned methods used in the paper, the paper will include a brief analysis of the positions of political blocs in the European Parliament on energy security and the European Union's future.

The units of observation in the future work will be Russia and the European Union, while the unit of analysis will be their relationship at the supranational level since mutual relations between Russia and the European Union as two significant geopolitical actors in the world of international relations transcend national borders.

Sources include, but are not limited to, Eurostat, the European Commission, data from the Energy Community, and the energy corporations themselves. Also, newspaper and academic articles in English in Russian will be used in the research.

Research limitations are primarily reflected in the language barrier that prevents the use of sources available only in Russian.

Introduction

The European Union and Russia continue to be mutually critical strategic partners in almost all economic areas, despite often opposing positions, especially from a political and ideological point of view.

However, it seems that one economic area is more important than others, and that is energy, an area in which Russia acts more as a service provider to the European Union (European Commission, European Commission, n.d.), instead of as a strategic partner, which is why I would dare to say that Russia has a kind of advantage over the European Union. This claim is supported by the fact that the European Union imports 29.8% of all crude oil reserves from Russia, 42.3% of all solid fuel reserves, and 40.1% of the total amount of natural gas that EU member states import every year. Former US President Donald Trump was also one of the prominent advocates of suspending the construction of the "North Stream," warned at the NATO summit in 2018 about the urgency of diversification of energy sources. Russia. (DiChristopher, 2018) However, the European Union member states depend on Russian energy. However, the Western Balkans countries also represent significant consumers of Russian energy, which is why energy dependence is spreading from the European Union to almost the entire "Old Continent." This type of dependence of the Western Balkan countries has a significant role in terms of strategic positioning of the Western Balkan countries, which must strike a kind of balance, which is why it often happens that strategic positioning ends with positioning in the "status quo." Although the European Union has decided to become energy independent in the future, this is still not the case, which is why many EU member states continue to be dependent on Russian energy, which is reflected in the fact that the European Union imports 29.8% of oil from Russia, 42.3% of solid fuel reserves and 40.1% of all-natural gas reserves. What is quite interesting is the fact that even the largest European powers have failed to become energy independent, as we can see in the example of Germany, which imports 60% of its natural gas reserves from Russia, while certain Baltic and Scandinavian countries such as Latvia and Finland utterly dependent on Russian gas. The European Union recently presented a "green deal" based on "green hydrogen" as a fundamental element, but it should be emphasized that this plan will not be possible to implement before 2050, while the European Union is dependent on African resources. Although world officials continue to warn of

growing dependence on Russian energy, it seems that alternative solutions for the supply and transport of energy would not meet the needs of European consumers, with energy costs being significantly higher than they are currently. Precisely for these reasons, it is necessary to make a comprehensive analysis to try to understand how important Russian energy sources are in the foreseeable future for consumers on European soil and try to project future events between these two geopolitical actors.

Observing the research's academic and social justification, I would like to emphasize that the social justification of the forthcoming work is reflected in its importance for the European Union, the Western Balkans, and Bosnia Herzegovina, which is also significantly dependent on Russian gas. On the other hand, the research's academic justification is reflected in the fact that apart from the European Commission's documents, no comprehensive analysis has been made on which potential energy alternatives for the European Union would be presented. Academic research in the field of energy security is still not at a high level, especially not in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and I hope that the future work will contribute to this academic field and the broader field of security and political science.

A historical review of the relations between Russia and the European Union and their economic and energy interdependence

The legal basis for relations between the European Union and Russia is a bilateral partnership and cooperation agreement signed in June 1994, which was initially signed for ten years. Nevertheless, the partnership and cooperation agreement was important for both parties that the parties agreed that the agreement would be automatically renewed every year. The agreement sets out the main common goals and establishes an institutional framework for bilateral cooperation between them. (EUR-Lex, EUR-Lex, 1994)

At the St. Petersburg Summit in May 2003, the European Union and Russia strengthened their cooperation by creating four common areas (the economic field, the area of freedom, security and justice, the area of external security, and research education and culture). (European Commission, European Commission, 2003)

Four years later, in 2007, the European Union and Russia, together with Iceland and Norway, adopted a "Northern Dimension" regional policy concerning cross-border cooperation in the Barents and Baltic Sea areas. (Unit for Regional Cooperation, 2009) In 2008, negotiations were launched between the two sides on mutual, legally binding commitments regarding political dialogue, justice, freedom, security, economic cooperation, research, education, culture, trade, investment, and energy. (European Commission, European Commission, 2008)

In 2010, the two sides launched the project called "Partnership for Modernization" (European Commission, European Commission, 2010) and in 2011, a discussion on the accelerated visa regime was concluded, which was a significant step forward for both citizens of EU member states and citizens of Russia, and which was launched in 2006. (EUR-Lex, EUR-Lex, 2006) At the time, it seemed as if relations between the European Union and Russia were at an enviable level and that the two sides had managed to overcome deep-rooted ideological differences.

Russia's unilateral decision to intervene and subsequently annex Crimea has led the European Union to sever all Russian relations. Russia annexed Crimea in March 2014, and subsequent evidence that Russia supported the rebels in eastern Ukraine caused a kind of international crisis. These events have led to bilateral relations between the EU and Russia and the suspension of talks on visa facilitation and a partnership and cooperation agreement. The European Union is currently implementing certain economic sanctions against Russia due to the events in Crimea. (Damen, 2019) However, the sanctions were additionally tightened after poisoning with nerve agents, which became a kind of modus operandi in Russian everyday politics, and whose consequences were experienced by former Russian intelligence Sergei Skripal and Russian opposition politician Alexei Navalny.

Due to the sanctions imposed by the European Union on Russia in 2014, Russia imposed a kind of counter-sanctions on citizens of EU member states, the United States, Canada, and Australia, which are reflected in sanctions concerning agricultural goods, raw materials and food, which led to strengthening Russian agriculture.

Russia also uses "stop lists" of citizens of EU member states and the United States, who have criticized the Russian authorities and their actions, preventing them from entering the territory of the Russian Federation. (Gorbachev, 2015)

Due to all the political actions that we mentioned earlier, which took place after the annexation of Crimea, it seems that the European Union and Russia are moving away from a kind of compromise on Ukraine and Russia's political situation, which is currently characterized as a strong authoritarian regime. These two geopolitical actors continue to be interdependent because of their importance to the other side's economy.

Suppose we define "interdependence" as "a state in which one side is dependent on the other" (Cambridge Dictionary, 2021), then, just like Finon and Locatelli. In that case, we can say that "there is interdependence between Russia and the European Union in the energy sector." (Finon & Locatelli, 2007) This claim can be supported by the fact that the European Union is dependent mainly on importing Russian energy, while the Russian economy depends on the profits made by exporting oil, solid fuel (coal), and natural gas to the European Union.

Despite the thirteen-year economic recovery that Russia experienced after the economic collapse in 1999, it still failed to diversify its economy, one of its basic economic problems. This is evidenced by the fact that Russia's budget largely (over 50%) depends on energy exports. Although a certain percentage of energy exports can be used to strengthen other industries, this is not the case, as the state-owned Russian energy giant Gazprom is used almost exclusively to finance the government and as an extremely successful tool for conducting international diplomacy to reward or punishing others, mostly European countries, whose views are not in line with those of the Russian government. (Finon & Locatelli, 2007)

In addition to the problem of diversification of the economy with the aim of economic growth, Finon and Locatelli state that Russia is also facing the problem of diversification of the energy market, as evidenced by the fact that the Russian federal

government is almost completely dependent on energy exports to the European Union. the geopolitical region exports about 80% of all energy raw materials produced annually in Russia. (Finon & Locatelli, 2007)

As Rasz and Raik state, we could say that the best chances for ensuring a stable future in Europe exist if the European Union and Russia can maintain interdependence in terms of energy security and energy markets. Reliable energy supply and constant demand for energy by the European Union member states serve as a tool for stabilizing the relations between these two geopolitical entities. However, if there is a disturbance in only one aspect, a stable relationship of actors could grow into a continuous doubt and lead to energy insecurity (Rácz & Raik), which may eventually result in an open conflict between the sides. However, given the benefits both sides have from the existing relationship, it is unlikely that such a scenario will occur.

However, events such as the Ukrainian gas crisis in 2009 showed how vulnerable the European Union countries are when it comes to energy security, while Russia's reputation as a reliable supplier of energy has also been damaged. The then US President Donald Trump also spoke about this at the NATO summit in 2018, but German Chancellor Angela Merkel ultimately rejected and ignored his remarks since Germany is among the European countries that are most dependent on Russian energy sources. 1 (Simsek, 2019)

Russia as the main strategic partner of the European Union in terms of energy

As stated by Mateo Ciucci, "the challenges facing the European Union in addition to the problems mentioned above of increased energy imports and increased dependence and limited diversification of energy sources also face other problems such as high and volatile energy prices, increasing global energy demand, security challenges in transit countries, efforts to use renewable energy sources, transparency and further integration and interconnection of energy markets. "All these conditions must be met, and risks must be eliminated in order to establish an integrated energy market, security of energy supply and establish a stable energy sector, which is the very core of the European Union's energy policy. (Ciucci, 2020)

The European Commission's report states that for their needs, the member states of the European Union must import energy from third countries. In 2018, the products that were mostly imported into the European Union were oil and petroleum products, which make up about two-thirds of the total imports of the European Union, followed by natural gas with 24% and solid fossil fuels with 8% of total imports. (European Commission, European Commission, n.d.)

According to a 2014 report by the European Commission, the EU imports 53% of the energy it consumes. Dependence on energy imports refers to crude oil (almost 90%), natural gas (66%), and a lesser extent, solid fuels (42%), as well as nuclear fuel (40%). Energy security of supply affects every Member State, even if some are more vulnerable than others. This is especially true for less integrated and connected regions such as the Baltics and Eastern Europe. The EU's external energy account represents more than a billion euros a day (about 400 billion euros in 2013) and more than a fifth of total EU imports. The EU imports more than 300 billion euros in crude oil and petroleum products annually, one-third of Russia. EU energy security should also be seen in the context of growing global energy demand, which is expected to increase by 27% by 2030, with essential changes in energy supply and trade flows. (European Commission, European Energy Security Strategy, 2014)

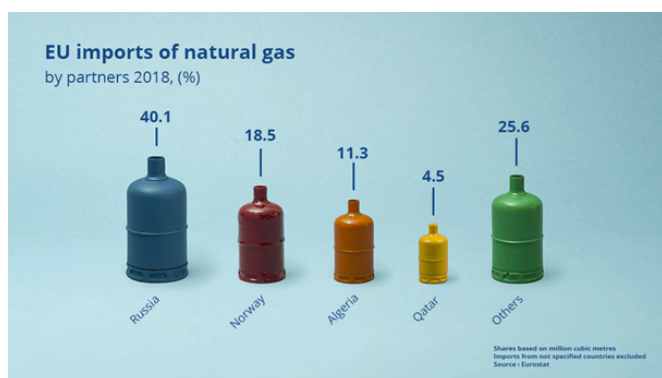


FIGURE 1 - COUNTRIES FROM WHICH THE EUROPEAN UNION IMPORTED THE MOST NATURAL GAS IN 2018 (SOURCE: EUROSTAT)

The European Union's energy supply stability may be jeopardized if a high percentage of imports is concentrated among relatively few external partners.

In 2018, almost two-thirds of crude oil imports outside the EU came from Russia (30%), Iraq (9%), and Saudi Arabia, Norway, Kazakhstan, and Nigeria (7% each). A similar analysis shows that almost three-quarters of natural gas imports to the EU came from Russia (40%), Norway (18%), and Algeria (11%), while almost three-quarters of solid fuel imports (mainly coal) came from Russia (42%).), The United States (18%) and Colombia (13%). (European Commission, European Commission, n.d.)

With such energy indicators, it would be more accurate to say that Russia has a particular monopoly over the EU regarding energy security and energy stability. In that case, Russia cannot be considered an interdependent partner but as an exclusive supplier of energy services. Therefore, in 2014, immediately after the Ukrainian crisis, the European Commission began to develop new plans for energy independence and implement direct actions to increase the European Union's capacity to overcome potential disruptions in energy supply during the winter of 2014/15.

Energy as the basis of Russian foreign policy

The pro-Western stance of Ukraine, which reached its peak during the Orange Revolution and its promise to join Western institutions, primarily NATO, the Kremlin, as expected, did not accept with enthusiasm. Russia responded to the mentioned Ukrainian activities by threatening to introduce a much higher price of energy to Ukraine, which would significantly change the previous Russian policy of selling energy to Ukraine much lower than the prices globally. Russia has also put enormous pressure on Georgia and Moldova, two countries that have pursued a policy of moving closer to the West and away from the cap of Russian patronage. Shortly afterward, Gazprom raised energy prices it exported to the two countries to illustrate their ultimate dependence on Russia and obstruct their aspirations for reform and alliance with the West. Furthermore, Gazprom demanded and imposed much higher gas prices on Poland and the Baltic states. These four countries point out clear opposition to Russia in their foreign policy, which is why Russia used its energy map and imposed a severe burden on their economy to punish them for being tied to the Western camp. In Lithuania's case, the sharp rise in gas prices imposed by Gazprom

was one of the main reasons why the Baltic country could not meet the criteria for the European Monetary Union and therefore did not join it in 2007 as planned. At the same time, however, Russia is subsidizing the regimes it supports with free energy. It provides free energy to Abkhazia and South Ossetia, two regions that have unilaterally seceded from Georgia, to support movements that violate Georgia's sovereignty. We could say that Russia seems to be trying to bring former Soviet allies into its sphere of influence to reduce cooperation with the West as much as possible. The construction of a northern European natural gas pipeline is the foundation of Russia's energy plans. The project will allow Moscow to supply gas directly to northwestern Europe's most lucrative markets, bypassing Ukraine, Belarus, Poland, Slovakia, and the Baltic. In this way, Gazprom will supply its partners from northwestern Europe while reducing supplies to former Soviet allies unless it unquestioningly obeys the Kremlin's will.

Potential energy alternatives of the European Union and their cost-effectiveness

In September 2020, Poland offered Germany a possible alternative to Nord Stream 2, said Polish government spokesman Piotr Muller. He added that the "North Stream 2 Project" is contrary to the idea of solidarity and energy security of the European Union, and as an alternative, he proposed the use of the Baltic Pipeline. " (Editorial Staff, 2020)

The Baltic gas pipeline is a project created as a cooperation between the Danish Energinet and the Polish gas transmission system operator GAZ-SYSTEM SA. The Baltic gas pipeline is a continuation of the already existing Polish and Danish gas infrastructure, and gas transmission services will begin in October 2022. The new pipeline will expand the flow capacity to 10 billion cubic meters of gas per year. To gain insight into the amount of gas in question, it is enough to point out that the total Danish gas consumption for 2016 was 2.5 billion cubic meters. (Energinet, n.d.)

Although this capacity should be more than sufficient for the Danish economy, available Eurostat data indicate that Denmark has changed from an energy-independent country to an energy-dependent country by more than 300% in just 18 years.

A third alternative would be the East-Med pipeline (Israeli-Cypriot-Greek gas pipeline) through the eastern Mediterranean, which was agreed in 2020 (Protothema.gr, 2020) but whose construction is often opposed by Turkey, which has no economic benefits from the pipeline. (Meter, 2020) The 1,900-kilometer pipeline would have a maximum potential capacity of 10 billion cubic meters of gas (Tugwell, 2020) and connected to already built pipelines on Italy's south coast. (Protothema.gr, 2020) However, such a capacity would once again not be sufficient to meet all the needs of the European Union population.

The latest published alternative is the "European Green Agreement," a European Commission plan that seeks to replace natural gas with green hydrogen. (European Commission, European Commission, n.d.)

The new European Green Deal and the recently adopted European Commission strategy for introducing hydrogen as the primary fuel, which should replace fuels used in the European Union by 2050, are unfeasible without the use of African resources. Especially resources in the North African region. Without Africa and its energy and spatial potentials, primarily the solar and wind energy of North Africa and the southern Mediterranean, the new green strategy of the European Union are unfeasible. Namely, this EU strategy plans to use North Africa's solar and wind energy to produce green electricity, which in turn would produce so-called green hydrogen, i.e., hydrogen obtained entirely from renewable energy sources. In contrast, so-called gray and blue hydrocarbons produced by hydrocarbon processing are not environmentally friendly fuels. Green hydrogen produced with the help of electricity obtained from wind and solar energy by electrolysis of water is the only one that meets the requirements of the "new European green policy." (Stefanov, 2020)

However, as North Africa lacks water resources, the question arises - where will the water for the production of green hydrogen come from. In all published plans for developing a European green economy with North Africa's potential, this issue is almost completely ignored, so European green policy indeed intends to use no less than - the Mediterranean Sea for this purpose. (Devlin, 2014)

Thanks to the import of hydrogen from North Africa, Europe could create a stable and sustainable energy system. Furthermore, a common European and North African approach to renewable energy and hydrogen would create economic development that would ensure social stability in North African countries, potentially reducing immigrants from that region to Europe. " (Wijk, Wouters, Rachidi, & Ikken, 2019)

Another potential alternative would be importing LNG (liquefied natural gas) gas transported by ships, primarily from the MENA area (the Middle East and North Africa). After its temperature drops to -161 degrees Celsius, the gas becomes liquid and stored in bottles. These bottles can then be stored on ships and shipped to any European port with a regasification plant in which the LNG temperature rises once more until it re-enters the gaseous state, after which it goes to the international gas pipeline network. Although such a solution would diversify gas suppliers, the main problem with such techniques is that the gas thus obtained is 50-70% more expensive than gas transported through pipelines. (VisualPolitik.en, 2018) Besides, such techniques are not usually applicable in Europe because MENA countries usually choose to transport LNG to the Asian market, where natural gas has the highest price.

The future of relations between Russia and the EU

Stable interdependence, with expectations that it will remain so in the future, can improve national security. When both trading partners have confidence that key interdependencies, such as energy supply and demand, are secure, the costs of disrupting economic trade outweigh the benefits of creating other trade-offs. In the case of energy interdependence between Russia and the European Union, this balance is particularly sensitive. The Ukrainian crisis of 2009 called into question Russia's reliability as a reliable supplier of energy for customers in the European Union. As a result, both the European Union and Russia are "dancing on the edge of the sword" and constantly balancing power relations to ensure maximum benefits and reduce potentially catastrophic losses. Since the global economic crisis in 2008, energy demand has generally declined, primarily

due to the development of new technologies and the increasing use of renewable energy sources, which has had a profound impact on the Russian economy. The Russian government should do everything in its power to convince Europe that it is ready to make the necessary adjustments to ensure stability in the energy market and once again prove to be a reliable partner in this bilateral relationship. Recent concerns about Gazprom's financial stability could accelerate the implementation of EU plans to diversify its energy supply, leaving the Russian authorities in a dilemma. Russia can either convince the EU that it is ready to accept marginal short-term losses by adjusting its energy trade policy to the new reality in the EU. Russia will significantly expand its energy export market by investing in infrastructure to access the Asian market. Since Russia is now a member of the World Trade Organization (WTO), Russian political elites have little choice but to adhere to a WTO member's multilateral obligations. If Russia plans to expand the overseas market for its energy exports, we should see new contracts with Asian countries, such as China. The start of construction projects to build new liquefied natural gas (LNG) terminals and/or oil pipelines to transport Russian oil and gas to Asia. . Until Russia takes significant steps to secure its energy export market with non-EU buyers. Political leaders are signaling that they still expect profits from future trade with the EU and that Russia will continue to rely on energy exports to the EU market.

After a Russian opposition politician, Alexei Navalny was poisoned with the nerve agent Novichok in August 2020, anti-Russian protests broke out across the European Union. The main goal was to sever diplomatic ties with Russia and impose new, stricter sanctions on Russia, reflected primarily in economic sanctions. Although the poisoning of opposition politicians in Russia has become a kind of "modus operandi," the question arises why Vladimir Putin would try to remove from the political scene a mediocre opposition politician who does not pose too much of a threat to Vladimir Putin's authoritarian government.

The anti-Russian protests were mostly orchestrated and supported by the United States, led by Donald Trump, and Great Britain and France, which immediately imposed additional sanctions on Russia

due to the incident. Trump, Macron, and Johnson have gone so far as to convince German Chancellor Angela Merkel that stopping Nord Stream 2 is the right step. However, Angela Merkel and her team (which includes Gerhard Schroeder, an adviser to the German chancellor and a shareholder in Gazprom) (VisualPolitik.en, 2018) decided to reject official Washington's proposal and proceed with the construction of Nord Stream 2.

In early September 2020, AfD Vice President Tino Chrupalia said that "the incident with Alexei Navalny must not be a reason to stop the construction of the Nord Stream 2 gas pipeline." (Chrupalla, 2020)

A statement from the German Ministry of Economic and Energy was received in October, stating that the German government is not considering stopping Nord Stream 2. "The German government is not examining legal possibilities to stop the construction of the pipeline or any claims for damages in the relationship. For the federal government, these are hypothetical issues that the government does not comment on, "the media quoted a statement from the German ministry as saying. (Neuber, 2020)

Shortly afterward, this position was repeated by German Foreign Minister Heiko Maas. "I start from the fact that Nord Stream 2 will be built. The only question is when? We decide on our energy policy and energy supply here in Europe," Maas said, adding that the United States is exercising its right to (US) independent energy policy. Furthermore, that is precisely what Germany is doing. (Redaktionsnetzwerk Deutschland, 2020)

The mentioned Russian-German gas pipeline, built by Gazprom's European partners: Royal Dutch Shell, OMV, Engie, Uniper, and Wintershall - which together and in equal amounts, with about 950 million euros (each company) finance in the amount of 50% 50%) for now looks pretty secure and with a bright future. Suppose that Germany, or the EU in general, decides to terminate this project, in addition to financial losses of European companies, they face significant financial compensation and loss of a large number of guaranteed jobs related to this pipeline and its further construction and distribution to construction pipelines, especially in northern

Germany. This is probably why Chancellor Merkel, listening to the robust German industry's views, continues to insist on separating this energy project from the Navalny case, which, as Merkel states, does not directly concern Germany.

After Donald Trump lost the election and Joe Biden became president, it seems that Washington has let Berlin go when it comes to German dependence on Russian gas and that the construction of the Nord Stream 2 pipeline will be completed.

Conclusion

Although often ideologically and politically opposed, Russia and the European Union remain vital strategic partners in almost all economic areas. In contrast, Russia is one of the most exclusive energy security services in the European Union. Relations between the European Union and Russia have significantly cooled after Russia's unilateral annexation of Crimea in 2014. The consequences can be seen in almost all bilateral cooperation fields, except for the most important one for the European Union - energy. In addition to energy security, the Russian Federation has a significant impact on maintaining physical security within the European Union as Russia prevents many radicalized people from Chechnya, the South Caucasus, and the Middle East from continuing on their way to the European Union. Also, participation in the OSCE Minsk Group serves as a guarantor of stability in the Nagorno-Karabakh region, and this contact group also serves as proof that there can be good cooperation between East and West when needed. If we look at the potential alternatives of the European Union in terms of imports of Russian energy, we can see that their capacities are not sufficient for the needs of the European Union population, while the use of LNG gas is not financially viable. Officials of European institutions often complain that one of Russia's problems is that Russia represents an authoritarian regime. However, let us look at alternative solutions. We cannot say that Algeria, Qatar, or Azerbaijan represent more democratically advanced regimes than Russia. Russia will undoubtedly continue to use its energy sources to control regional and foreign policy in general. At the end of this paper, we can conclude that European energy policy is currently stable. The Nord Stream construction will be completed despite US opposition and despite the EU's growing energy dependence on Russia; the European Union will not diversify its energy sources soon.

Endnotes

[1] Certain Baltic states such as Latvia and Lithuania, and Finland as a Scandinavian country are almost entirely dependent on Russian energy

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