

Analysis of the Global Energy Strategy Game in the Post-Epidemic Era: Finding Evidence in Russia's Energy Export Policy

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Abstract. Since the globalization of the economy, energy cooperation between countries has achieved excellent results, with Russia meeting the energy import needs of its neighbors, especially the EU countries, with its abundant hydrocarbon supplies. However, as the productivity of countries increases, the uneven distribution of energy around the world has created a tighter energy supply situation and the need for security of energy supply is growing in the EU. At the same time, Russia and Ukraine have been involved in a number of conflicts over geopolitical and ideological issues, which could lead to the risk of disruption or reduction of energy supplies to end-consuming countries around the world. Although many scholars have studied Russia's energy cooperation with other countries, the process of international cooperation is fluid and therefore this paper will continue to analyse Russia's energy export policy for 2022, analyze the main drivers and impediments to Russia's energy cooperation with the European Union, and provide an outlook on future cooperation. The paper will therefore continue to analyse Russia's energy export policy in 2022, analyse the main drivers and impediments of energy cooperation between Russia and the EU, and provide an outlook on future cooperation.

Keywords: Russia's energy, Export, Global Energy Strategy.

1. Background

International politics is the decisive factor affecting the energy policies of major countries. When considering the diversification of energy export markets and import sources, a large country needs to consider not only from the perspective of market economy, but also from the perspective of international politics. The national energy import and export policy determines the country's security, economic and social development capacity to a certain extent, but the uneven distribution of energy worldwide is also the cause of international energy disputes. Russia has rich oil and gas reserves in East Siberia and the Far East. With the arrival of the 21st century and the rise of crude oil prices, Russia's oil exports have grown rapidly. Russia has gradually strengthened its energy diplomacy as an important part of its energy diplomacy strategy. In the economic and trade relations between the EU and Russia, Russia and the EU have established a long-term partnership on the basis of complementary energy needs and have achieved many win-win results on the basis of trade cooperation and joint opening of oil and gas fields and construction of oil and gas pipelines. However, the ongoing natural gas dispute between Russia and Ukraine has caused tension between Russia and Europe.

On the other hand, the international energy landscape is changing at an accelerated pace, with the implementation of the shale gas revolution and the US dramatically increasing the utilisation of its oil and gas resources. In the future as the US becomes more and more established as an energy player, then it will become a strong competitor to Russia in the European market. Cooperation between the EU and Russia has become more difficult due to the interdependence of supply and demand markets, the politicisation of energy and the complexity of geopolitical relations.

As the EU and Russia stand in opposition to each other in the face of security concerns in Ukraine following the outbreak of the Russo-Ukrainian war, a single interdependence on energy will not allow either country to cope with the volatility of international energy markets. The EU's current reluctance to continue to deepen energy cooperation with Russia will inevitably mean that the vacant supply and demand space between the EU and Russia will also need to be filled, meaning that more energy

exporters outside the European market will be involved, thus gradually influencing or even changing the international energy landscape. Therefore, whatever the final outcome of the Russia-Ukraine conflict, it will have an impact on the world energy landscape. The study of Russia's energy export strategy is of great relevance to the understanding of international energy markets.

2. Literature Review

As the COVID-19 epidemic spreads around the world, countries are experiencing a degree of social disorder and economic regression. Although the long-term impact of the epidemic on the global energy industry will be limited, it will accelerate the restructuring of the global energy mix and drive the world's energy mix towards a new pattern of predominantly low-carbon energy sources such as natural gas and new energy sources. In particular, natural gas and new energy sources will play an increasingly important role in the energy transformation process and may become the world's most important clean energy source [1]. The results of BP's survey show that Russia has natural reserves of 48.8 trillion cubic metres in C1 and 19.6 trillion cubic metres in C2 [2]. Russia has the world's richest natural gas reserves and has long been an important energy producer and exporter in the world. Long influenced by the centralist policies of Russian President Vladimir Putin and the continuing rise in global energy prices, Russia has entered the 21st century as a global power to be reckoned with. Therefore, it is extremely important to study Russia's resource export policy and its impact on international energy security in the post-epidemic era at this stage.

The issue of Russia's energy policy has received a great deal of scholarly attention, and scholars generally agree that Russia's policies can pose a challenge to global energy security. Stanislaw stated that Russia has the classic phenomenon of resource nationalism, which refers to the control or domination of energy resources by the state, with the resulting possibility of serving such power for political purposes [3]. Meanwhile, scholars have further confirmed the policy and direction of Russian energy diplomacy. Deng asserts that Russia's foreign strategy is now largely compatible with its energy strategy, and that energy policy has become one of the most important means by which Russia can realise its interests [4]. Much of Russia's gas and oil are exported to European markets through Ukraine, however, since the Orange Revolution in 2004, Russia has used a diplomatic policy of interrupting gas supplies to sanction Ukraine and the EU [5]. As evidenced by the long-running Russia-Ukraine conflict, geopolitics remains an important factor that many scholars believe can influence the global energy landscape. Guo suggests that the morphological characteristics of gas exports and Russia's geographical location inevitably lead to geopolitical struggles [6], and that Russia has established the Nord Stream and South Stream pipeline projects in order to protect its position in the European market in the hope of diversifying European energy supply channels [7]. The economic factors behind energy and policy issues have actually played a large role, especially since the beginning of the Russo-Ukrainian war, and scholars are generally aware that Russian energy policy has a wider impact on the global economy and energy system. Although the consequences of the crisis have had a fatal impact on the Russian economy, the world economy is already beginning to feel the effects of the crisis. Inflation, already raging in most economies around the world, is steadily rising in just a few days of this crisis due to the sharp rise in oil, gas and food prices [8,9]. Returning to the purpose of the study, the reality of energy diplomacy shows that, due to the political-strategic nature of energy resources, Russia will face diplomatic security issues and the diplomatic challenge of engaging in playful cooperation with other countries. This will require the Russian government to change the structure of its raw material export-oriented economy, and this will mean reversing existing policies [10].

3. Finding and Discussion

3.1. Russia's energy strategy and evolution

Prior to the 21st century, Russia's energy strategy was focused on how the country could address issues such as supply in the energy crisis and industrial reform, with the main aim still being to focus on the recovery and development of the national economy. In the 21st century, Russia's economy has grown more rapidly, and its economic strength has increased significantly. As a result, Russia has introduced a new energy policy: Russia's Energy Strategy until 2020, Russia's Energy Strategy until 2030 and Russia's Energy Strategy until 2035, which define the strategic objectives and main tasks of Russia's energy development [11].

The 2020 Plan aims to meet domestic and foreign energy demand, strengthen, and maintain stable national economic growth and Russia's position in Russia's geopolitical and international energy markets. Based on the progress made in Russia's energy construction and cooperation in the region, Russia has proposed for the first time in the 2020 Plan the Asia-Pacific region as the first Russian oil and gas export diversification development goal and established a target of achieving 30% and 15% of oil and gas exports from the Asia-Pacific region in 2020.

Based on the 2020 plan, the 2030 plan updates the objectives of energy reform and innovation in Russia. The Russian government wants to create a transformative and innovative energy sector, with increased development of energy-related infrastructure as its main task. Through this sector, it will improve the efficiency of energy production and processing and modernize the entire institution while protecting the environment. This would not only satisfy Russia's foreign political and economic interests, but also contribute to the country's innovative development.

In response to internal and external risks, Russia completed a revision of its 'Plan to 2035' in 2015. The reasons for this are the slowdown in the country's economic growth and the reduced domestic demand for hydrocarbons, while the deterioration of energy extraction conditions, ageing equipment and outdated technology are also hindering energy development. The new energy development strategy therefore focuses on reforming energy modernization, increasing innovation, improving energy competitiveness, enhancing policy support for the introduction of and investment in external technologies, and working to diversify exports to balance external threats and ensure national and regional energy security. Russia has also made progress in improving energy efficiency, with its CO₂ emissions actually falling by 2.4% in 2016 compared to the average of the last decade [12]. Russia's share of global carbon emissions has been lower than its energy consumption, which is also due to its extensive use of natural gas (which emits only water and carbon monoxide) as a substitute for non-clean energy sources, reducing environmental pollution. In addition, Russia has increased its investment in energy development in the eastern regions of the country in the 2035 Plan and has strengthened the expansion of the gas supply system to the Far East, an objective that builds on the 2020 Plan to develop new oil and gas fields in order to increase energy supplies. This goal is also a further intensification of the development of new oil and gas fields to increase energy supply for export and a strategic shift eastward, based on the 2020 Plan. The above strategy sets out the general direction of Russia's energy goals for the 21st century and defines the basic need for steady growth of the Russian energy economy, diversification of energy exports and innovation in energy technologies.

3.2. Changes in the global political landscape

Firstly, the political orientation of the former Soviet Union member states in Eastern Europe and Central Asia has changed. With the expansion of NATO to the east, the Eastern European countries, which used to act as a buffer between Russia and Western Europe, have become NATO outposts. The Kosovo war in 1998 and the military strikes against the FRY in 1999 also showed that the US-led West was further weakening Russia's geopolitical space. Russia's own political and economic difficulties at the time led to the entry of the West into its sphere of influence in Central Asia and its successful involvement in Central Asian affairs. For example, in 1999, under the active promotion of

the United States, Azerbaijan, Georgia and Turkey signed an agreement on the construction of a pipeline from Baku through Georgia to the Turkish port of Ceyhan, which, despite strong opposition from Russia, was not altered to the detriment of Russian interests. The establishment of the pipeline has also increased the tendency of the former Soviet states in Central Asia and the Caucasus to leave Russia. The United States supports the pipeline not only because it hopes to secure long-term energy supplies for Europe, but also because it wants to intervene in Central Asia on energy issues, thereby gaining a foothold in the region and thereby exerting geopolitical influence in the region in order to weaken or even suppress Russia's traditional political influence in the region. Since Central Asia was conquered by force by Tsarist Russia during the Tsarist period, the region has no deep historical ties to the Soviet Union or even its successor, Russia. Western involvement would not only help the economic development of the Central Asian states but would also weaken the long-established traditional political influence of Russia, killing two birds with one stone for the emerging nationalist states of Central Asia. Moreover, in 1999, the presidents of five former Soviet Union member states - Georgia, Uzbekistan, Azerbaijan, Moldova and Ukraine - took part in the 50th anniversary of NATO in the face of strong discontent from Russia, and Uzbekistan even took the opportunity to formally join the GUAM alliance. The GUAM alliance is seen as an emerging counterweight to Russia in the CIS.

Secondly, the West, led by the US, has been squeezing Russia's geopolitical space. On the one hand, the collapse of the Soviet Union has led to political turmoil and economic depression in Russia. The Western countries have taken the opportunity to influence Russia's domestic political situation through the Chechen war, control of economic aid and human rights issues. On the other hand, the West has brought in a large number of Eastern European countries through the double expansion of NATO and the European Union, which has resulted in fewer and fewer buffer countries between Russia and the European continent, and Russia's geopolitical space is constantly being reduced. This has led to a reduction in the number of buffer countries between Russia and the European continent, and a constant compression of Russia's geopolitical space. This was coupled with political turmoil at home and a decline in overall national power as a result of economic depression. Russia was in the midst of external and internal problems. Since Putin came to power, he has studied the international situation and the situation in his country and found that Russia has a traditional advantage in energy, which he can use as a capital for his foreign strategy. What Russia needs is a partner who has a need for energy and who can have a significant impact on the international political landscape today. On this basis, the EU is the natural choice of partner. Since the Soviet Union has been supplying energy to Europe since the Cold War, Russia can make use of this relatively well-developed pipeline system, as well as its own European ties. Cooperation with the EU would meet Russia's aspirations in every respect. On the other hand, with the advent of the new energy era, coal is gradually being replaced by oil and gas, but the EU has few natural resources in this area, while consumption is high.

3.3. Russia divides EU internal members through energy policy

The EU is aware that it can no longer rely on individual countries to meet global challenges as it has done in the past. It is only as a whole that the EU can be well placed in its dealings with energy suppliers, transit countries and other consumers. The EU is therefore actively developing a common external energy policy, hoping to speak with one voice on international energy issues, using a variety of policies and a comprehensive approach to energy diplomacy to ensure the realisation of its energy strategy and thus its energy security. To achieve these goals, the EU has made various attempts at common external energy diplomacy, such as coordinating external energy policies, strengthening relations with energy partners and promoting international energy dialogue and cooperation. But despite the EU's enthusiasm, the results have been modest. On the one hand, because of the aforementioned, France, Germany, the UK, Italy and other major EU countries have given priority to themselves in dealing with energy issues, ignoring the interests of other member states and privately signing bilateral energy agreements with Russia or engaging in economic cooperation in the energy sector, which has led to internal divisions in the EU. Although the four countries mentioned above

have been playing an active role in ensuring the functioning of the collective energy security system, they are naturally affected by the fact that they each have different levels of cooperation with Russia. Interestingly, while they have always wanted to limit Russia's monopoly in the energy sector in the EU, they have always worked closely with Russia at the national level. In my personal opinion, therefore, the desire of the EU, led by the four countries mentioned above, to unite against Russia's energy monopoly is really just a means to an end. If the confrontation is successful, it will help to weaken Russia's monopoly in the energy sector and ensure energy security. If it is not successful, it will also put pressure on Russia, hopefully forcing it to make concessions on oil and gas prices. In addition, it will not offend the US by cooperating with Russia. Russia will not be able to take punitive measures against all energy consumers in the European market who have taken the initiative to control the monopoly of foreign capital on the energy market.

On the other hand, the Russian side also prefers to cooperate through bilateral agreements rather than multilateral ones. This is because it is in Russia's interest to use bilateral agreements instead of multilateral ones to keep the EU powers in check. Russia has always favoured bilateral rather than multilateral agreements, in part to reduce the resistance to agreement, and the scarcity of energy has led to the emergence of a seller's market in which European countries have been at a disadvantage. Russia's advantages are therefore better reflected in bilateral agreements. By using bilateral agreements to bring benefits to the EU powers and to keep them in check, Russia is able to mitigate its anti-Russian voice from within the EU and prevent the EU from effectively pursuing a unified energy foreign policy. From this point of view, bilateral agreements can be used to bring in the EU powers while avoiding damage to their own interests and making access to European markets less difficult. Even if the EU powers choose to compromise with Russia, the average country will not have the strength to bargain with Russia. In other words, Russia has not made concessions in the face of the EU's Common External Energy Policy, as it has taken reasonable measures in response.

The different levels of dependence on Russian gas among the EU member states have led to differences in their consumption structures, with Estonia, Finland, Latvia and Lithuania having a 100% dependence on Russian gas, while other Central and Eastern European countries such as Slovakia (97%), the Czech Republic (74.6%), Hungary (65.9%), Slovenia (50.9%), Poland (42.5%) and Greece (79.1%) [13], some of the southern European countries, are also relatively dependent, but countries such as Luxembourg, Norway, Denmark and Spain are almost not dependent on Russia at all. The countries with a high level of dependence on Russia's energy sources have no choice but to accept Russia's gas terms passively due to their own energy scarcity and geographical constraints to open up new import pipelines, so the most effective way to counteract Russia is through a unified EU decision. Firstly, In the EU, France and Germany are not very dependent on energy imports, based on their self-sufficient energy production capacity. Secondly, Italy and Spain have access to sufficient natural gas from North Africa through offshore energy pipelines, and Russia is not the focus of their cooperation. The stronger EU member states are therefore more willing to maintain a mutually beneficial relationship with Russia. The "opposing" camps of the old and new members often prevent the EU from making unified decisions, or often require "sacrificing" the interests of one side to the other. This gap is the perfect opportunity for Russia to find a breakthrough in response to the pressures of the EU's unification policy. Russia uses the differences between its member states to divide the internal forces of Europe and to maximise its energy interests one by one, as seen in the case of the Nord Stream and South Stream pipelines. The Western European countries, represented by Germany, France, the UK, the Netherlands and Denmark, prefer to maintain close and friendly energy cooperation with Russia; however, the three Baltic states often vote against European-Russian energy cooperation on the basis of ecological and environmental issues, sovereignty issues and transit costs, and these countries' serious energy concerns about Russia make them more worried about the threat to their territorial integrity and political influence. As a result, it is difficult to maintain a coherent and long-term EU policy towards Russia, and the future of European-Russian energy cooperation will remain predominantly bilateral and multilateral. This often prevents the EU from implementing a coherent policy and affects the process and efficiency of its dealings with Russia.

3.4. Regional security and geopolitics influence Russian energy policy

The EU-Russia energy relationship will be directly affected by the security problems in Ukraine and indirectly by the security situation in Central Asia-Caspian Sea. The divergent positions of the EU and Russia on Ukraine and the capture of energy markets in Central Asia will increase the confrontation and competition between the two sides.

However, in the context of the Russo-Ukrainian war the US has hit Russia with far greater sanctions than the EU, which have had an impact on Russia's energy development and interfered with the progress of Euro-Russian energy cooperation. Since the Cold War, unilateral economic sanctions have been a common tactic used by the US against Russia on divergent and antagonistic international issues, and prior to the Russo-Ukrainian conflict, the US took into account the energy dependence of its ally, the EU, on Russia, and the US Punitive sanctions have not focused on Russia's ongoing production and export of oil and gas but on Russia's Arctic oil reserves and the long-term development and exploitation of shale oil, but since 2014, the US government has been imposing new sectoral sanctions aimed at increasing the long-term development costs of the Russian energy sector. As a result of the sanctions policy imposed on Russian companies by the United States, projects to develop large deposits in Russia have been hampered and have had to increase production from previously developed fields, while redeveloping smaller fields. Despite the series of controls and sanctions imposed on Russia, Russian oil and gas production and exports are still increasing. As the US sanctions cycle becomes longer, it will be difficult for Russia to maintain its current level of oil and gas exports and the rate and magnitude of decline in its oil production will increase. Between the feedback of project investment cycles ranging from 5-7 to 10-12 years, it can be expected that after 2023-2025, Russia's oil and gas production will be at risk of a significant decline, which will exacerbate the turmoil in international energy markets and have a lasting impact. The sanctions imposed by the US on Russia's energy structure have limited the global activities of Russian energy companies and slowed their internationalisation, so Russian state-owned companies will need financial support from public sources, which will expand the share of state-owned companies in the energy market.

US sanctions against Russia have also interfered with European-Russian energy cooperation on pipelines, as was the case with the South Stream project, which fell through, and now with Nord Stream 2, which has also seen US opposition. Section 232 sanctions on energy pipeline investments under CAATSA would potentially affect the existing Nord Stream, Blue Stream and Turkish pipelines through the Baltic Sea and Turkey and, more seriously, would increase the risk of multinational companies cooperating with Russia, forcing the partners to consider the cost-effectiveness of cooperation with Russia and thus reducing the trust of Russian companies in their international standing. This will have a direct impact on European companies, which have a dominant position in the Russian energy market - forcing them to reduce their investments in Russia or even to leave the Russian market, causing a negative impact on European-Russian energy cooperation and creating a vacuum of cooperation in the European-Russian energy market, as well as attracting competitors from Asia and the Middle East, making the European-Russian energy cooperation face a more complex market environment. The politicisation and instrumentalisation of energy markets is increasing, all of which could have far-reaching consequences for Europe's energy security. Although the joint US-European sanctions imposed on Russia over the last five years have not, on the whole, crushed the Russian economy, they have had a negative impact on the Russian energy sector.

4. Conclusion

4.1. Conclusions on Russia's energy policy

The effectiveness of Russia's energy policy towards Europe is mainly due to the fact that it is targeted and adapted to the international situation, and that it effectively brings into play its inherent strengths in the energy sector, placing it in a favourable position in the long term in the process of

energy cooperation with the EU, better fulfilling the objectives of its energy strategy and ultimately contributing to the realisation of its national interests. On the one hand, Russia is assessing the situation on the international energy market in a rational manner and adapting it to the situation. Russia's energy policy is highly targeted and effective, as can be seen from measures such as competing for gas sources, dealing with pipeline bypasses, helping Russian energy companies to enter the EU market and dividing the EU internally.

In addition, as Russia already controls a larger share of the international energy market and is stabilising its energy supply through pipeline bypasses, cheaper prices and more stable supply will help Russia to increase its share of the EU energy market. Moreover, the fragmentation strategy of the major EU powers will make it even more difficult for Russian energy companies to enter the EU energy market, which will enable Russia to realise its national interests through its energy policy in the long term. What is even more crucial is the focus of Russia's energy policy towards the EU, namely the source of energy supply, which is precisely the problem that the EU is unable to solve. On the other hand, the EU's own structural deficiencies and the lack of viability of its energy projects are among the factors that have led to the current situation. But Russia with its abundant energy reserves has a definite chance of becoming a political power. And if Russia uses the right energy policy on the basis of its abundant energy reserves, it will be able to make more of a difference in the political landscape of Europe and the world.

4.2. Geopolitical factors

Russia's diplomatic strategy is now largely linked to its energy strategy, and energy weapons have become an important means of realising Russia's interests. It seeks to diversify its exports not only in order to secure its own energy export revenues, but also in order to cooperate with other countries around the world, improve its political status and increase its influence in the international political landscape. It is for this reason that the EU energy market has resisted Russia's monopoly, which would have resulted in Russian dominance of the EU energy market and the opportunity for Russia to control the EU through energy. The US, as the world's only superpower, will not stand idly by as Russia seeks to increase its political influence through energy diplomacy. In addition, regional powers such as China, Japan and India have been looking to strengthen their cooperation with Russia in the energy sector in the hope of implementing a higher level of foreign strategy by ensuring energy security. The question of how to choose between them is also one that Russia needs to address.

4.3. Russia's energy export policy should be based on price regulation

An analysis of the effects of Russia's energy policy towards the EU yields the reasons for the remarkable effectiveness of Russia's energy policy towards the EU. From an objective point of view, the primary objective of an energy supplier is to ensure a stable supply of energy at reasonable prices. Given the scarcity of energy, the energy market will remain a seller's market for a long time, so as long as the supply of energy can be guaranteed at a reasonable price, there will be no need to worry about the lack of partners. Investment in extractive industries, in pipelines and transport, or in foreign bulk energy, are all means of achieving these goals. As far as possible, energy suppliers should avoid the risks that can occur in the course of energy transactions. For example, reducing the number of countries through which pipelines pass is a more practical approach, as it not only avoids being held hostage by transit countries, but also reduces energy transport costs. From a subjective point of view, energy supplying countries should take into account the concerns of consuming countries and adopt more rational ways of accessing their markets, for example by cooperating with local energy companies. This will not only make it less difficult to enter energy markets but will also increase the political influence of energy suppliers in consumer countries.

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