

Review Article

# Geopolitics of Natural Gas in Russian-European and Russian-American Relations

Aula A. Sadeq

Department of Economics and Planning, Faculty of Economics, Tishreen University, P.O.Box 2125, Latakia Syria

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**Abstract** - Russia is an important energy supplier as it holds the world's largest natural gas reserves and it is the world's largest exporter of natural gas. This study aimed to show the role of Russian gas as an active part in shaping the Russian geopolitical relations with the European Union and America. Russia has redrawn its internal and external determinants of direct and indirect impact, strengthening its foreign policy. This study demonstrated the continued need of the European Union countries to import a greater amount of Russian natural gas and replace it with depleted oil, even if it costs it a state of tension with its American ally. This study also demonstrated the continued American need to control external energy sources to bridge the widening gap over time, which, if continued, would lose the unipolar policy, and multiplicity would become dominant.

**Keywords** - Russian Gas, Energy security, the Soviet Union, unipolar, multipolarity, international strategy.

## I. INTRODUCTION

Energy, with all its sources, contributed greatly to creating international economic relations, as it is the main driving force for global economic progress and directly affects the well-being of billions of people. But at the same time, it is subject to the influence of political and economic developments, international competition, and international conflict and cooperation.

The collapse of the Soviet Union has produced a new reality in which the Russian Federation has emerged as a representative state of the Soviet Union, despite its loss of about 20% of its Asian area, in the form of countries completely independent of Russia. Against the background of ambitions raised about the wealth of countries in that region and the emergence of Russia on its adjacent borders and the largest countries after the collapse and known for its policies incompatible with Western and unipolar politics, NATO stationed on the eastern borders of Europe and next to the Russian border and the American missile shield was deployed in the near regions like Poland and the Czech Republic and Russia in exchange for its missiles on the Polish border, specifically in Kaliningrad (Naama, 2016).

The American reaction reflects a realization of the role that Russia will play in the future as one of the most important international poles. In response to the US move, Russia supported the establishment of the Shanghai Security Alliance as a founding member alongside China of similar political orientation, In addition to other alliances of the economic type, especially the BRICS Group. In general, it sought to set up friendly relations and find common grounds for dealing with several countries such as India and the countries of South America while maintaining its comparative advantage as a producer and supplier of the first competitor to natural gas globally, as it holds around 67%. European and Chinese economies are the top importers of Russian gas (Al-Khoury, 2018).

## II. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In this research, a descriptive and analytical approach was followed to determine the impact of the quantities of Russian gas on the formulation of Russian-European and Russian-American geopolitical relations. All data of the analytical study can be traced back to the Energetic Security Agencies (Bp, 2018; Eia, 2017).

## III. RESEARCH RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### A. Determinants of Russian foreign policy

Policy determinants mean a set of foundations and data that have a direct and indirect impact on a country's foreign policy, which places that policy in the category of a dependent variable, taking the role of independent variables into affecting it individually or collectively. Some of these determinants are a secretion of the internal environment, such as geography, demography, and ideology, which constitute the state institutions and the military establishment, while others are subject to the external environment.

#### a) Internally

The Russian economy depends on the ability to reach warm waters in the Atlantic Ocean through the seaports that are under political control and the geographical borders of several countries. The Russian extension to the North to the Arctic Ocean causes the stop of Russian navigation traffic, the closing of various northern ports in the winter, and the ability of Europe and Turkey to hinder their access to seaports from the Baltic side and the rest of



the warm waters. As for its agricultural cover, it occupies 8% of the total Russian geography, which is concentrated southwest of the country on the borders next to the areas of tension such as Ukraine, the Caucasus, and Georgia, which makes it always subject to external unrest and influences (Porchevkaya, 2016; Al-Khoury, 2018). In addition to the geographical location of the capital, Moscow, in the west of the country and close to the border, which places it in the range of NATO.

Russian demography also imposes on the state a type of behavior according to religious diversity from a first perspective (where the country's Christians constitute the largest percentage that follows in the overwhelming majority of the Greek Orthodox community, while Muslims occupy 16% of the population in a steady increase that is starting to arouse the fear of a society that may face effects and consequences This increase is more severe than what faced the state of the great collapse of the Soviet Union); ethnic diversity from a second perspective (in which the indigenous population of the Russian race constitutes 81.5% compared to 18.5% for both Ukrainians, Tatars, Chuvash, and non-Russian Jews to the original population which amounted to 148.8 million n (According to 2014 statistics); and multi-partyism from a third perspective (despite the different political orientations of the thirty-seven state parties and their difference between support and opposition to the state policy represented by President Vladimir Putin. According to the latest approved statistics, both Justice and the Russian Communist Party / The Liberal Democratic Party / the best known of the United Russia Party founded in 2001 and which has the greatest impact on the policy of the State Duma, except that it and the rest of the parties are not considered an effective influence on the policy and direction of the Kremlin) (Druzenen, 2016).

On the other hand, Russia maintained the polarity between the two militaries from the military side at the very least, as Russia excels with its nuclear arsenal - amounting to 11,000 nuclear warheads between tactical (near-range) and strategic (long-range) tactics according to 2012 data, and it acts as a deterrent force for NATO forces and the US missile shield with its nuclear arsenal. The 8,500 warheads, according to the same year's estimates, are on both the US 8,500 nuclear arsenal (according to the same year's statistics) and the British, French, and Chinese nuclear forces (Al-Khoury, 2018). The above reasons would paint the features of Russian foreign policy in the context of its deep understanding of the geographical, demographic, economic, and geopolitical realities surrounding it.

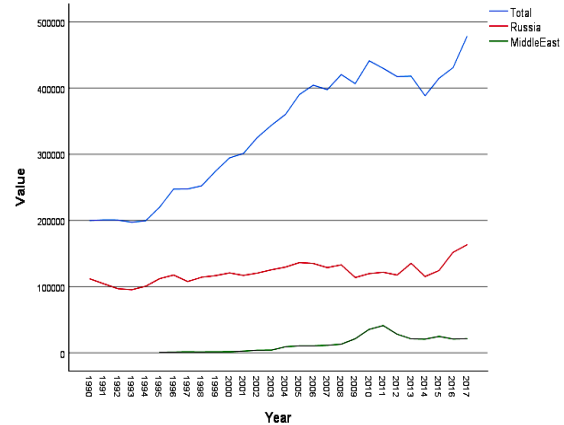
**b) Externally**

Russia, represented by President Putin, outlined a number of strategies in dealing with external influences that built on foundations that are in the Russian interest, the most important of them ( Druzenin, 2016):

- Politically: adopting a pragmatic logic in dealing with America, thereby moving away from the method of the direct clash.
- Economically: Advancing the economy and exploiting the country's invasive wealth in raising the efficiency of the production process, the economy as a whole, and external economic aspirations.
- Strategically: Russian policy seeks multi-polarization and entering into economic, military/regional, and international alliances that align with the strategies of the country as the BRICS Group and the Shanghai Organization for World Peace.

**B. European energy security in the light of Russian natural gas**

European countries generally give their economies a better degree, making those economies' progress a target of any step toward either side. Whereas, despite the great incompatibility that prevails in Russian-European relations, the latter has found its resistance from energy security to the Russian incubator, even if it has cost her a state of tension with her American ally (see Fig. 1).



**Fig.1 European gas imports Source: Results of statistical analysis using the SPSS 25 program**

The results of the analytical studies show that the European Union countries, in general, have realized the urgent needs of Russia's economies according to their invasive needs. The analysis showed levels of European oil production, offset by a decreasing level of consumption. This confirms the goal of European economies in adopting a policy of gas substitution as a prelude to fully operating economies on natural gas energy in preparation for the depletion stages foreseen by oil wells in general (see Fig. 2).

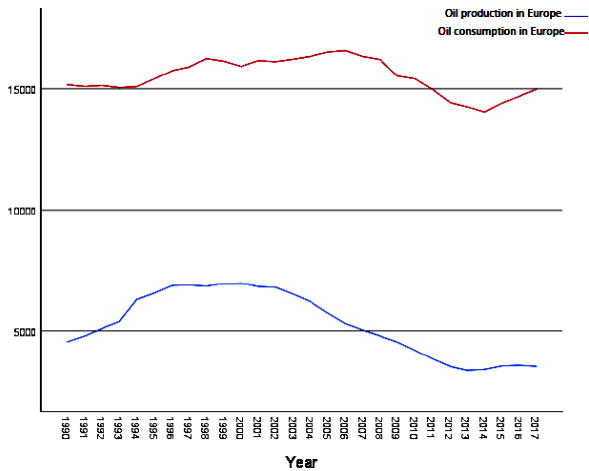


Fig. 2 Oil production and consumption in Europe (Bp, 2018; Eia, 2017).

On the other hand, the statistical analysis showed an acceleration in European gas consumption that is not associated with any results mentioned in terms of production, as the economies of the European Union depend on importing it from Russia primarily as a parent incubator on the one hand and due to the proximity of the distance which allows reducing time and transportation costs to its least on the other hand (See Fig. 3).

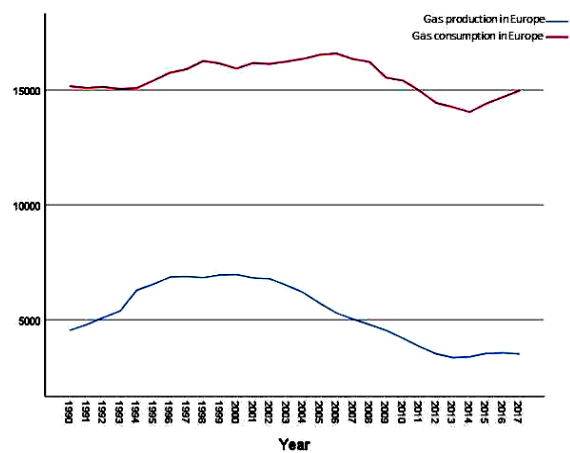


Fig. 3 Gas production and consumption in Europe (Bp, 2018; Eia, 2017).

European Union countries preferred this scenario only when it was the largest beneficiary of the establishment of economic exchange relations with Russia. Russia's exports of energy ores, primarily natural gas, are estimated at 75% to 1% for its exports of technology, machinery, and investment goods. This corresponds to 45% of European exports of modern technology and investment goods, in addition to 18% of petrochemicals and 10% of food commodities. Consequently, while Russia is a major supplier of raw materials and fuel for the European economic wheel, it is at the same time a major market for the disposal of European products of expensive and high-value modern technology (Vihma and Turkmen, 2015; Mitrova et al., 2016).

The Russian-European relations are characterized by their special nature and their extreme sensitivity, as it varies between conflicts of interest at times and agreement at other times. Both parties are a resource for the other and a market for it at the same time, but the political trends of both parties are in absolute disagreement. Despite this, Europe has considered securing its needs of gas and raw materials. It is a matter of energy security and an issue that affects its national security, and its importance has exceeded other political and even military considerations, given that more than 40% of its gas needs are met by Russia (Paltsev, 2014).

Putin restored Russia to its international position that was before the collapse of the Soviet Union, and the first steps in this policy were self-sufficiency in Russia's resources, which prompted it to dispense with any foreign aid and deal with the major countries, including America and the European neighborhood as a political and economic counterpart in terms of capabilities and capabilities. The Russian state has pursued this policy, whether in economic recovery or a strong return to the international scene and having an active role in international forums (Gürel et al., 2014; Bouzidi, 2015).

The European need and energy security priorities have contributed to giving Russia an opportunity to prove its active role on the international scene, and Russia has grabbed every opportunity to return that role through its foreign policies and strategies on the ground, which was represented by the largest network of natural gas pipelines that covered European lands and access to its markets (Grama, 2012; Koch-Weser and Murray, 2014).

It is worth noting that the countries of the European continent do not represent a single block in relation to Russia, as similar interests (in the energy field at least), and share many elements produced by the lights under the banner of the Soviet Union, made the countries of Central and Eastern Europe complementary partners of the Russian geography, whose lands are corridors Transit of gas pipelines towards the western European markets, despite the differences that have arisen in recent years over transit conditions and strategies, in addition to being the closest exchange market for Russia's natural gas exports and thus the least costly (Dickel et al., 2014; Colombo et al., 2016).

While the goals and interests of Russia conflict with the countries of the western European continent, despite the complexity of economic relations and trade relations between them, as mentioned before, each is a market for the other and supplier at other times. Each of the two parties seeks to impose its position on the international scene by influencing the other's presence and limiting its influence, as Western European countries are striving to find a gas alternative to Russian gas, also to avoid the passage of those supply lines through Russian territory (if any) In trying to ease the impact of Russian ability in the international arena and in various fields, it is also striving to enact laws so that it is difficult for Russian energy companies (Gazprom) to spread in European markets (Macis, 2018).

Russia has met the attempts of the European West to win the support of some countries of the eastern continent and support them in their differences with Russia (as happened in the recent Ukrainian-Russian crisis) by taking policies along gas transmission lines, to divert their tracks to avoid their passage in some countries, and subject them to laws of double standards, in addition, To take measures more like sanctions toward countries in turmoil such as Ukraine (Aktürk, 2014), they may sometimes even cut off energy supplies to their economies. As a result, it established the northern torrent pipeline, bypassing Western European allies, specifically Ukraine and Poland, and the Turkish torrent line that replaced the Turkish port and the Black Sea to reach the exchange markets, as it came as an alternative to the southern torrent after Russia stopped working on it against the background of European Union policies towards Russian resource (Prophet, 2016).

**C. The role of energy security in the international polarity (Russian-American relations)**

The United States of America possesses energy stocks (natural gas and oil) that qualify it to be one of the major energy producers at the international level, as is the case of the Russian incubator compared to being two economic giants (Jaffe and Hayes, 2006). The economic analysis of the statistical study shows that American production of natural gas, similar to Russian production, is increasing with time (See Fig. 4) and that the consumption of both economies of the same energy part is also increasing (See Fig. 5), which makes the gap between production and consumption of both semi-fixed (See Fig. 6). However, the difference lies in what covers this widening gap with the development of the economy and the advancement of technology, as Russian geography saves fields of gas reserves that are enough to meet the needs of the economy, no matter how wide that gap between its production and consumption widens. Whereas the United States does not have a similar stockpile, which prompted the country's foreign policies to be in its own best interest (Todorev, 2008).

The Russian supremacy in the reserves of energy has become a threat to the principle of unipolar (which is concerned with the United States of America and through which it was able to control the sovereignty and wealth of many countries, which was established in the wake of the collapse of the Soviet Union and even the start of the Russian emergence on the international scene again) and warns a multi-world Poles in which Russia, with its own capabilities, will be a new pole and a gateway to polarity (Hayali and Moussaoui, 2009).

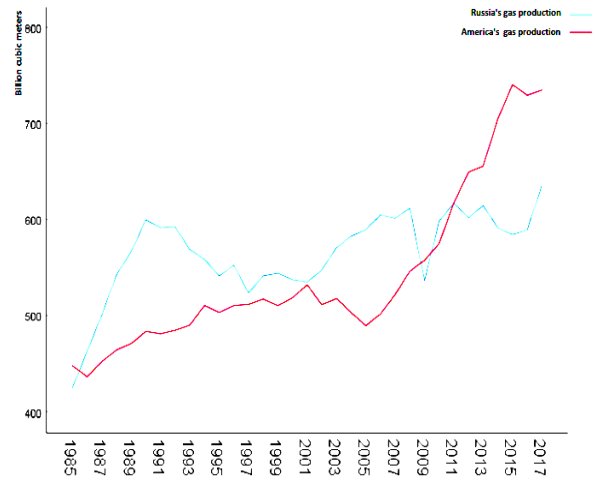


Fig. 4 Gas production in Russia and America. Results of statistical analysis using the SPSS 25 program

Hence, it required action by the United States of America (through which it tries to maintain its international position and ensure its energy security, given that the latter has become the main determinant of the national security of any country) to ensure its share of global gas reserves, which is determined according to its ability to dominate. Within the geographical scope of its property. From the American point of view, the Middle East represents the most prominent arena for resolving the ongoing conflict with Russia, as the eastern Mediterranean gas has become an American obsession shrouded by fear of Russian control over it, which will increase its international presence and its effectiveness in international forums at the expense of unipolar (Jaffe and Hayes, 2006; Bouzidi, 2015).

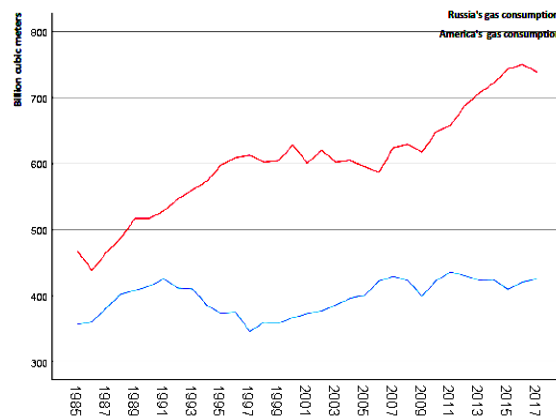
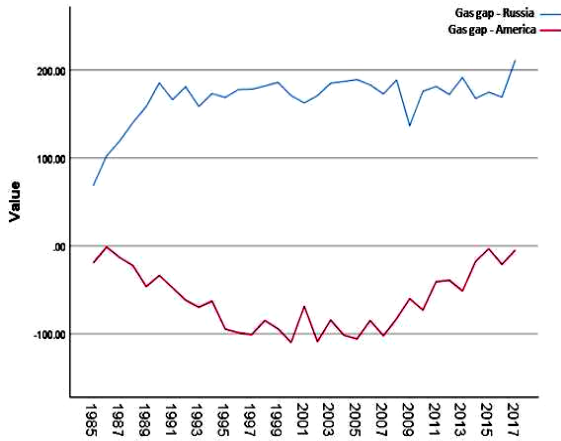


Fig. 5 Gas consumption in Russia and America. Results of statistical analysis using the SPSS 25 program

The road map for peace in the Middle East was drawn up on the basis of a humanitarian phenomenon concerned with peace in the region and its interior, a secret map hanging in the White House. Designed with absolute secrecy by the men of the American diplomacy and the most prominent mapmakers, most notably Amos Hochstein, her direct engineer, and international energy coordinator, where it was later leaked and showed the stations and fields of the Eastern Mediterranean gas and existing and future pipeline projects (Abboud, 2019).



**Fig. 6 The gap between gas production and consumption in Russia and America. Source: Results of statistical analysis using the SPSS 25 program**

The gas discoveries in the region formed the basis of America's international and regional policies, which see these discoveries \_ “dazzling” according to the White House and the US Department of Defense - an economic necessity as fuel for economies on the one hand, and a strategic necessity to map out current and future policies with each of the European Union and Russia from Second hand. The following map shows the map as leaked from the corridors of the White House (Fig. 7).

This map was the main reason that incited the National Security Council to establish the Gas Forum for the Eastern Mediterranean. It aims primarily to integrate many economies concerned with the subject of energy. The aim behind this is to impede the Russian presence in the region by winning the members of that forum after forming one unit loyal to the United States and its endeavors in the region. According to this policy, America sought to resolve border disputes over the demarcation of maritime areas between Lebanon and the Zionist entity in a move that paves the way for concessions to explore in the region. It seeks to control an additional gas resource that supports its economy, as well as providing Europe with its gas needs instead of Russian gas, as the American economy is the largest economy that consumes natural gas, consuming 22% of the total global gas consumption (Kurdo, 2018). The German economy tops the list of European gas consumers, with a large disparity with its American predecessor, as it consumes 2.5% of global gas consumption (it is mentioned that China and Japan are ranked second and third globally with gas consumption estimated at 11% and 5.7%, respectively) (Bozidi, 2015 Kurdo, 2018).

It was brought to light that America is the first supporter of any anti-Russian pipeline and its interests in the region as the idea of a gas supply line from the Zionist entity (Israel) to Europe. However, all other gas discoveries until now and full economic analyzes deny Europe's ability to replace Russian gas according to the huge European gas needs and the huge Russian supply capacity that reached 200 billion cubic meters in 2017. Russia supplies the European economy with half of its gas needs covered by supply methods Of foreign affairs, which in turn is more than two-thirds of the European economy's need for gas. However, achieving European sufficiency in the Eastern Mediterranean gas and excluding Russia from the energy map as much as possible remains an American hope based on a set of promising data, although most are based on seismic models and surveys, although they are sophisticated, they are not characterized by absolute accuracy (Stulberg, 2013).

Between the controversy of Russian and the Eastern Mediterranean gas supply for the European economy, Iran ranks second globally as a potential giant provider of unique privacy (Kurdo, 2018).

**IV. CONCLUSION**

Russia has endeavored to gain a new international specific weight, represented by its geopolitical integration in the region. This helped her to restore her position in the international field and athwart of all the plans that she tried to isolate.

Russian gas will remain the focus of attention of European economies due to the location and expansion of the Russian geography that borders the largest number of European countries, which reduces transportation costs by a large percentage, making it a competitor to American gas.

The American gas gap does not portend long-term self-sufficiency, as alternatives must be provided, and here the Middle East gas is the most likely. Therefore, the latter must build international relations and enter into alliances that protect his gas reserves from attempts to exploit them.

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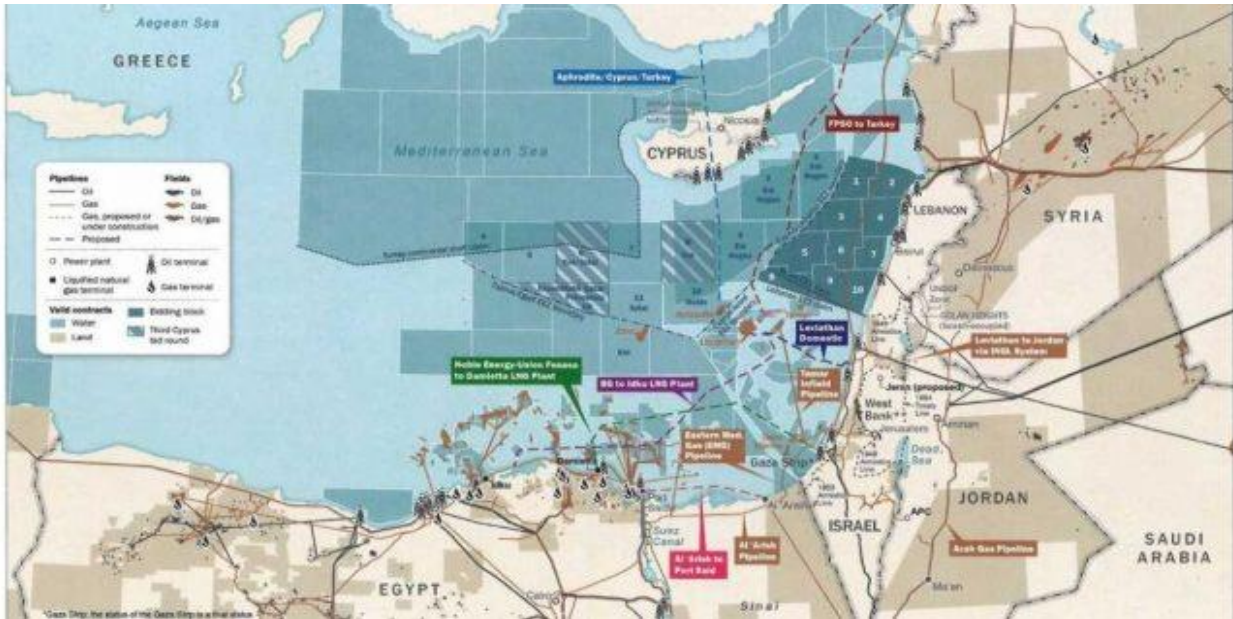


Fig. 7 Map showing stations and fields of the Eastern Mediterranean gas and existing and future pipeline projects (Abboud, 2019)

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