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EU-Russian Energy Relations in Russian-Language Publications

Energy has always played a significant role in Russian research on Russia-EU relations. This is not surprising: the supply of oil, natural gas, and nuclear materials to the European Union is a significant part of Russia's exports to this region and to the world market as a whole. Energy cooperation is also traditionally positioned as one of the pillars of the strategic partnership between Russia and the European Union.

The issues of energy cooperation attracted the attention of economists, political scientists, specialists in the field of energy and international relations, which led to a rather wide range of issues. At the same time, the studies mainly analyzed empirical information, aspects of European Union legislation (especially with regard to liberalization). Researchers almost did not set the task of building or testing any theory on the example of energy relations between Russia and the European Union. This approach in general corresponds to the tradition of Russian studies of relations between Russia and the European Union: an orientation toward empiricism and descriptiveness.

What issues were the focus of Russian political studies of relations between Russia and the European Union?

Firstly, the analysis of statistical indicators, a description of the dynamics of production and consumption in the European Union, volumes and specifics of our country's exports, as well as the substantiation of the naturalness of the interaction between Russia and the European Union, the depth and duration of this partnership were characteristics of Russian works. At the same time, authors often referred to the historical experience of cooperation.

Secondly, Russian authors retold main provisions of the EU legislation, especially with regard to energy security and liberalization. The reasons for the focus on two of the three main directions of the EU energy policy (the environmental component has traditionally been ignored) are obvious. The security component determines the possibilities of exporting Russian oil and natural gas to the EU, and changes in legislation, especially liberalization, determines the conditions under which Russian hydrocarbons enter the EU's market.

With rare exceptions, the analysis of the EU legislation was descriptive, key legal provisions were listed, and excessive liberalism was criticized. At the same time, long-term political and economic consequences of the EU's reforms were described only in passing, and the analysis of the possibilities to reconcile the interests of Russian energy companies with legal novelties in the European Union was insufficient.

At the same time, almost all Russian authors emphasised that trade in energy resources should be based on economic factors, and be as depoliticized as possible. Politicization in this connection was understood as the EU's desire to abandon cheaper Russian oil and natural gas (supplied by the already created infrastructure) in favour of more expensive sources and new pipelines or LNG facilities. The fact that the state presence in the energy industry of Russia or the actions of Moscow in the near abroad can also be considered as politicization of the energy sector was overlooked.

Thirdly, the bilateral dialogue between Russia and the European Union, its political agenda, institutional features of their development and its current state was studied. Quite interesting works in this field were written by insiders of relations between Russia and the European Union, participants in various structures of the Energy Dialogue.

Finally, separate attempts were made to use energy relations between Russia and the European Union to construct or test individual theoretical concepts. For example, in this perspective, work was written on the EU's actors, various institutional levels of relations (intergovernmental, transgovernmental and transnational) were identified.