



# Russian Energy Policy vis-à-vis Europe: Natural Resources as a Means of Foreign Policy

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The dissolution of the Soviet Union left Russia without efficient military power and with a tumbled-down defense industry that are critically important to support its resurfaced superpower ambitions. This obstacle could be overcome by substituting military power with the economic one through domination as the leading energy supplier. Establishment of governmental control over the energy sector became a key element of the Russian domestic policy that would convert the energy resources into the instrument of the state's power. All major energy transportation routes between Russian energy producers and European consumers are in possession of the former Soviet republics. Russia has become heavily dependent on these countries as energy transit intermediaries. To ensure consistency of the energy supply flow and to lessen Russia's reliance on the transit states, Russia is seeking ways to diversify energy transportation routes to Europe. Russia is willing to pay a significantly higher cost for a complex construction of new pipelines that bypass intermediaries. The establishment of Russian monopolistic control over energy flow to Europe might be converted into a regional political dominance. Threatening the possibility of abrupt energy disruption and price manipulation could become an efficient tool of state power to achieve Russia's political objectives.

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