Projects of Traditional Energy as an Instrument of Political Influence: Case of Russia

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Abstract. The paper is devoted to the study of traditional energy projects as an instrument of political influence in the foreign affairs. In the contemporary international politics, the importance of natural and mineral resources is actualized. These resources are not only an item of international trade in the world economy, but also it is a bargaining chip in the political bargaining between states. Approaches to the study of political influence are considered, as well as the role of traditional energy in foreign affairs is revealed. Projects of the largest resource-extraction companies in Russia are highlighted. The authors show that these projects are used by the Russian leadership as an instrument of political influence in various macro-regions of the world. Resource-extraction companies are used as geopolitical instrument to consolidate position of Russia and its allies. At the same time, the problem of searching options for "restructuring" the model of extensive extraction and export of raw materials is especially important on the way of the economy transformation into a model of integrated development. There is the pyramid of enclaves of wealth according to the fact that the Russian economy is developing between the poles of economic fragmentation and political-administrative centralization.

1. Introduction
The contemporary world development is characterized with the several interweaving processes. Firstly, the process of globalization is associated with the erosion of national economic borders, the strengthening of the interdependence of macro-regions, the unification of cultural, religious and political dimensions. On the other hand, the localization process is sustainably maintained including the presence of separatism in the certain regions of the world and an increase in the local differences interest. One may note that separatism is revealed in the industrialized democracies, for instance in Spain, Great Britain and Canada, as well as in the countries with emerging markets (e.g. China, India, Russia). Secondly, in the context of global-local interaction [1] the importance of political instruments for lobbying and upholding national economic interests on the global markets of raw materials, high technologies and services is increasing. There is a close integration of the economic and political spheres of interaction between local and global actors. It is crucial to note that the importance of various political instruments for protecting and lobbying economic interests is articulated on the different levels of the world trade. Political instruments include, inter alia, regulatory and administrative instruments. Regulatory instruments include regulations determining market access, establishing mandatory requirements for products and processes, supervisory procedures, preferences. The group of administrative instruments includes measures of prohibition, permission, and coercion.
At the same time, the global markets of raw materials and intermediate products reveal the importance of production processes linked with the extraction and export of natural and mineral resources. National and multinational corporations representing narrow interest groups that operate on these markets and are involved in the process of spreading the influence of national governments through obtaining exclusive rights to participate in the natural and mineral resources projects. Projects related to the traditional energy (e.g. oil, natural gas) act as a tool of influence, which is used to extract energy rents. In this context, it is important to note that the authors distinguish between the problem of using political instruments as a way of impact on economic processes, and the problem of implementing projects in the field of traditional energy, which act precisely as an instrument for exerting political influence in the context of foreign affairs.

The case of Russia, which is one of the countries holding leading position in the extraction and exporting natural and mineral resources in the world, is of particular interest within the framework of the study. Fuel and Energy Complex of Russia plays a significant role in the development of the country. Nowadays it forms the basis and will form the basis in the foreseeable future for the formation of the public budget.

The structure of the study is characterized with the posed problem of the relationship between traditional energy, political influence as a process that ensures energy rents extraction, and the projects of natural and mineral resources extraction, primarily hydrocarbons, in which Russian resource-extraction companies and business groups are involved. In this regard, in the first section authors define approaches to study political influence; the second section is devoted to the consideration of traditional energy and its role in the foreign affairs; in the third section authors analyze traditional energy projects in which Russian resource-extraction companies are involved; the fourth section revealed the institutional framework in which traditional energy and political influence are complementary assets, which are the most lucrative sources of rents for economic and political actors in the contemporary Russian economy.

The aim of the study is to highlight the role of traditional energy projects as an instrument of political influence of the Russian leadership in the contemporary foreign affairs.

2. Political influence: definitions and approaches to study

From Thucydides to the present day power remains one of the key concepts in the study of politics including the sphere of international relations. R. Dahl defines the power as “... a successful attempt by A to get B to do something he would not otherwise do” [4]. The term ‘attempt’ refers to power as behaviour and such ‘attempt’ should create a ‘desired effect’. Thus, it is defined as a relation between people. In modern political analysis, R. Dahl explains to ‘Power as a kind of influence’. There are seven forms of influence such as persuasion, power, force, coercion, manipulation, inducement, and authority [5]. In society, one tries to influence others through different means. Power is generally acquired through coercion. Thus, coercive influence becomes power. Persuasion is a distinct political process by which one tries to convince another. It possesses a special moral standing as well as respects the autonomous decision-making processes of others [6]. Manipulation is a pervasive kind of influence which manifests in various aspects of life, such as politics and in both intimate and professional relations.

The concept of coercion “destroys free choices” while manipulation provides choice [7]. The notion of coercion deprives the autonomy of individuals. It forces state, transnational organizations or private actor to do something in a particular way, and possesses some pain or cost to the target. It can manifest either compliance or deterrence. Today, in International Politics, one state coerces another state beyond traditional military tools such as economic sanctions, cyber operations, drones, etc. In addition, coercive tools in one domain (economic sanctions) may create influence in another zone (military capability). The concept of inducements refers the policy of the carrot and incentives. Under the inducements policy, one country seeks to provide subsidies, reduces tariffs, and stops negative sanctions. For instance, Russia has extensively used the ‘Petro-carrots’ in its foreign policy.
carrots refer Russia’s energy influence in two specific ways: first, by subsidizing its allies, and second, by selling hydrocarbons to its enemies at a global market price [8].

The nature of power relations between two actors is asymmetrical i.e. someone one will be at the top while someone will be at the bottom. It denotes that the application of power in one area leads to its decline in another area. In other words, in any relational system, the “quantity” of power exist [9]. There is a close connection between the concept of power and influence [10]. In short, power is defined as a special kind of influence. The notion of power and influence are commonly considered as indistinguishable. Fundamental changes are taking place in the International Politics, especially on the concept of power. The changing nature of international politics has re-emphasized the concept of power. It emphasizes on the intangible forms of power, such as technology, natural resources, institutions, and education [11]. Today, the state’s coercive military capabilities are not the sole source of power and influence. It is derived through networks of economic, political, and security interactions involving states as well as non-state actors. Energy has been a key strategic tool in creating international influence [12].

Throughout the history, there have been reciprocal influences between market and state of one another. The realists argue that energy resources are closely associated with power just because it creates political influence. Due to limited source of traditional energy, it occupies a key role in international diplomacy. R. Gilpin and S. Strange argue that the economic factor protects national security which creates state’s political influence. Today, both national security and economy have become interlinked [13]. For instance, Russia sought to restore its political influence in Eastern Europe through the economic cooperation (Russian energy companies) rather than focusing on Slavic identity. S. Strange had broadly elaborated linkages between the economy and political power. She noted two kinds of power i.e. structural and relational [14]. Relational power is a conventional and old fashioned which refers “power of A to get B to do something they would not otherwise do”. By contrast, structural power is the “the power to shape and determine the structures of the global political economy”. In other words, structural power sets the agenda and choices of others. S. Strange identified four key structures of power: knowledge, finance, production and security.

Political influence is tightly linked with traditional energy, because it is one of the crucial sources of power, coercion, manipulation, and inducement in the contemporary world economy. Traditional energy defines different channels of interaction between states as well as between non-state actors in the globalized world. Next section highlights the role of traditional energy in the foreign affairs.

3. Traditional energy and its role in the foreign affairs
The notion of political influence has been linked with the realist school of international relations theory. The Realist school assumes that the international competition for energy resources may create the zero-sum situation due to the scarcity of energy resources. A. Korin and G. Luft pointed out in the following words: “Realists point out that through history, certain commodities, and in particular energy commodities, minerals, water and food have had a strategic value beyond their market price and as such they have been repeatedly used as tools of foreign policy by exporters and have been among the prime catalyst of armed conflict” [15].

The Copenhagen school believes that in an anarchist nature of the international system, each state seeks to achieve energy self-sufficiency. States seek to engage in the energy sector through the transit of energy resources. This interaction leads to a dependency relationship, which creates a kind of political influence. In asymmetric independence, foreign trade facilitates the military power of a state (the supply effect) as well as works as a source of power in itself (the influence effect) [16]. The role of energy has become crucial in growing global state interdependency. The liberal theory argues that deepening economic engagements create a mutual dependence which diffuses the tensions between the two states [17]. Liberals believe that the globalization process increasingly diluted the monopoly of power relations. However, it fails to explain why do states “weaponize interdependence” for strategic advantage [18].
Energy is playing a key role in shaping the state’s external affairs in international politics. Over the years, it has constituted an important source of political influence as a bargaining chip in international diplomacy. The geopolitics of energy is not merely a matter for the great powers, and even smaller nations are as active in their quest for power and control [19]. Every country uses its natural resources in the most effective way to strengthen its position in the international politics. For instance, in the year 1973 oil as a strategic commodity is explored by the oil rich authoritarian countries as a political instrument against the states which supported Israel [20]. After the Yom Kippur war, all energy-rich countries (Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Iran, Iraq, United Arab Emirates, and Qatar) decided to use energy exports as a tool against those states which supported Israel. In response to this, oil supplies were stopped in countries such as the United States, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom, Canada, and Japan.

In an interdependent nature of International Politics energy resources have emerged as a potent force in shaping the political power of a nation-state. In addition, to control energy resources might be a major factor in escalating tension between the two states. In the 1990-s, Russia’s willing to use energy as a tool was clearly visible in the Ukrainian case. Russia’s energy foreign policy based on two basic theoretical premises, i.e., use of coercive tactics as well as following a softer diplomacy like appeasing countries to get the deal in its favour [21]. Regarding the price negotiations, Russia has promoted the tact of uncertainties and irregularities closer to the Kremlin’s sphere of influence [22]. Since the mid-2000-s, the ruling group in Russia started to consolidate power by controlling Russian oil and gas production through the state. Ministry of Energy of the Russian Federation viewed energy as a kind of “geopolitical tool”. Russia’s energy exports substantially enhanced its revenues, which established its special status and detached from the framework of European mutual dependence [23]. The energy issue in Russia’s foreign policy is complex, especially on EU. Supply disruptions were used by Moscow as a political leverage in the bargaining process over the volume and prices of natural gas [24]. European countries are sensitive to Russia’s disruptions policy of gas supply. Nowadays, Russia seeks to establish its monopoly to enhance its regional political and security interests [25]. Moscow adopted some tactical position such as price hikes or discounts, supply disruptions in order to advance its geopolitical motives. Gas pipelines have emerged an effective political weapon in the hands of the state.

This study provides a theoretical framework for explaining traditional energy (oil, natural gas) projects as an instrument of political influence in the foreign affairs. In this context, it is crucial to explain how Russia has explored its energy resources as a political tool in its foreign policy. Russian resource-extraction companies are more than the profit-driven actors. These are considered as a tool to execute the political agenda of Russia. The next section reveals the energy projects of the largest Russian resource-extraction companies that have political meaning.

4. Traditional energy projects of the Russian resource-extraction companies

To select the largest Russian resource-extraction companies the ranking of Expert-400 Business Journal is used, which is the commonly recognized and reliable ranking of the largest Russian companies and business groups. Authors decided to review energy projects of three top companies from the ranking according to their revenues (see table 1). These companies are the key economic actors of export and raw materials sector that is the foundation of the Russian economy.

| Rank- ing | Company/Business Group | Industry | Revenue (mln. Rubles) |
|-----------|------------------------|----------|-----------------------|
| 1         | Rosneft                | Oil      | 8 238 000             |
| 2         | Gazprom                | Gas      | 8 224 177             |
| 3         | Lukoil                 | Oil      | 8 035 889             |

Source: [26].
Sustainable existence of the export-raw materials sector in the Russian economy is one of the most important aspects of the Russian large companies’ activities on the domestic market because they are the main actors who carry out significant quasi-public obligations on the territories of their economic activity [27] and they guarantee the filling of the public budgets. In this sense, the export and raw materials sector play a special role in the Russian GDP producing, as well as in the structure of the Russian export and in the redistribution of public budget resources within the country. That is why resource-extraction companies are interested in strengthening their competitive advantages on the global markets of raw materials and low added value commodities to increase their revenues.

Russian state-owned companies Rosneft and Gazprom and state-affiliated company Lukoil have played a crucial role by providing hard currency tax revenues and control over the country’s most lucrative rent flows [28]. Nowadays, Gazprom project Nord Stream 2 enables Moscow to increase the amount of natural gas, which exports directly to Germany and other European Union member states (bypassing Ukraine and other transit countries). It will reduce gas transit through Ukraine, which lead to declines in transit revenues. On the other hand, Turkish Stream gas pipeline illustrates Russia’s strategy to strengthen its position in supplying gas to the Balkans. It has reduced Moscow’s dependency on the Ukrainian transit routes. Thus, Moscow seeks to counter the non-Russian natural gas export to the European Union.

Russia’s state oil giant Rosneft has engaged with the Indian oil companies in the areas of production and refining. Rosneft has agreed a deal for Indian companies to join the Vostok Oil project in the Russian Arctic. Both countries started talks on India’s participation in the Vostok Oil project in Siberia. Recently, Rosneft signed a contract with Indian Oil Corporation Limited to supply up to 2 million tonnes of oil to New Delhi through the Novorossiisk port. In addition, India has some joint projects with Rosneft such as Sakhalin-1, Taas-Yuryakh, Far East LNG, and Nayara Energy [29]. India’s Oil Company, ONCE, has bought a 20% stake in the Sakhalin-1 group from Rosneft. Sakhalin-1 includes members from four countries such as India’s ONGC Videsh Ltd., United States’ ExxonMobil, Japan’s SODECO, and finally Russia’s Rosneft.

Moscow used Rosneft as a geopolitical instrument to consolidate its position as well as support to the Maduro regime in Venezuela. This world’s largest oil reserves country received loans from Rosneft, which is used to leverage soft power with Russian foreign policy. Rosneft has risked several billion dollars in Venezuela in loans and joint venture investments. At the same time, Rosneft supplies Venezuela’s imports of gasoline, which is essential to run the Venezuelan economy. In 2019, Rosneft became the first Russian company exempted from paying value-added and export taxes in Venezuela. Rosneft invested in economically risky projects by offering Russia in geopolitically important regions. Within this context, Rosneft has emerged as a key actor for deeper political and military engagement. Rosneft, however, faced difficulties to conduct the economic activities in Venezuela. Due to the intense sanctions, Rosneft announced that it would end its activity in Venezuela, selling all assets [30].

Lukoil Group is involved in implementation of oil and gas exploration and production projects in the Middle East and Central Asia, West Africa, and Central America. Central Asian countries are represented with Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan. Central Asian countries were always of special attention for the Russian leadership because of strategic value of this macro-region and due to the interaction with China. In Kazakhstan Lukoil joined to several projects. Karachaganak project is one of the world’s largest oil and gas condensate fields. The field is developed in accordance with the Final Production Sharing Agreement effective for a period of 40 years. The Kumkol field is located in the Kyzylorda region. Parties to the project include: Lukoil - 50%, China National Petroleum Corporation - 50%, and the field is developed on the basis of a subsoil use contract [31]. In Uzbekistan Lukoil is involved in the development of the Kandym group of fields, which is one of the company’s top priority projects. The key facility of the Kandym project is 8 bcmpa gas processing complex, one of the largest in Central Asia.

One may note that Lukoil has also gas and oil projects in the different countries, e.g. in Iraq, Egypt, Cameroon, Nigeria, Ghana, and Mexico. Company’s top priority is the implementation of new projects in order to increase production volumes. At the same time, Russian leadership in the person of the
President of the Russian Federation supported the development of new projects of the company in the Russian Federation and abroad. In particular, Lukoil intends to develop its assets in the strategic regions of the Caspian and Baltic, as well as invest in foreign projects, including West Africa.

Traditional energy projects of the Russian resource-extraction companies demonstrate that these companies are involved in the process of political-economic interaction in the different macro-regions of the world. This fact means that traditional energy is not only the source of revenues for these companies but it is the source of influence of political leadership. One may say that traditional energy and political influence are the main assets of the Russian economic and political elites that guarantee rents extraction.

5. Traditional Energy and Political Influence: Complementary Assets of the Russian Political Economy

In contemporary conditions associated with the prices fall for many export commodities and raw materials, as well as restricting access for the Russian resource-extraction companies to financial sources and technologies within the framework of the imposed sanctions the problem of searching options for "restructuring" the model of extensive extraction and export of raw materials becomes especially important on the way of its transformation into a model of integrated development leading to the emergence and spread of positive externalities in all sectors of the economy through the multiplier effect. The actuality of this problem is due to the fact that Russian economy can be characterized as dual enclave economy. Dual enclave economy is based on the granting of certain privileges and preferences to entrepreneurs and representatives of business groups affiliated with the authorities. This option is associated with the formation of highly productive export-oriented sector isolated from the rest of the economy and represented by enterprises in the extractive and intermediate industries. Development of this sector does not create incentives for the modernization of other branches of economy. Granting privileges for representatives of enclaves of wealth serves as a source of negative externalities leading to the deformation of incentives for entrepreneurs from other sectors of the economy.

In the Russian economy enclaves of wealth are controlled not by foreign multinational corporations (MNCs), but by national state-owned companies and state-affiliated private companies and business groups [32]. Despite the fact that I.P.O. of these companies are on the international financial markets and that there is presence of foreign MNCs among them, their controlling stakes remain in the ownership of either the Russian state (e.g. Gazprom, Rosneft) or private integrated business groups (e.g. Lukoil) in the core of which there are the "scattered holdings". This fact means that there is a group of individuals ("appointed oligarchs") at the end of the chains of legal entities often located in "off-shores".

Export-resource enclaves of wealth are embedded in a specific system, which is characterized with complicated interweaving of added value chains and chains of value redistribution. The specificity of these relations is due to the fact that formal institutions are modified by informal norms. During the bargaining businesses get access to the various benefits and other forms of "protectionist" support, which have an individual character. The centralized redistribution of financial resources leads to the emergence of additional enclaves of wealth. These enclaves do not have any competitive advantages on the economic markets, but they emerge as an unintended consequence when federal and regional authorities implement public projects/programs aimed at reducing resource dependence and transferring the economy to innovation development path.

The emergence of the pyramid of enclaves of wealth [33] is due to the fact that the Russian economy is developing between the poles of economic fragmentation and political-administrative centralization. Ruling group is the ultimate source of political resource. Administrative, and to a lesser extent political, bargaining is carried out within the framework of the unified vertical of power. Russian business is embedded in this vertical of power at various levels. As a result, in Russia fragmented economic markets are intertwined with centralized and integrated political-administrative market. The role of political resource is to create favorable conditions for access to economic resources. In Russia political resource grants access to natural and mineral resources that form competitive advantages.
foundation of the Russian economy is the export-resource sector, which is a key source of incomes those scraped from the global economic markets. In this case, access to political-administrative market and individual political resource allows monopolizing access to natural and mineral resources and forming favorable modes of its usage. Russian business groups and companies sell their products on the global economic markets. These markets were the most important source of technologies and financial resources, especially until recent times. Thus, the specifics of position of the Russian companies and business groups that control export-resource enclaves of wealth is a combination of exclusive advantages, obtained domestically due to the high status within the vertical of power, and fairly firm competitive pressure within the global economy.

6. Conclusions
The study takes a critical perspective on the role of traditional energy in the foreign affairs. It has discussed the role of traditional energy and its corresponding effect on the political influence. Resource abundant states used their natural and mineral resources, especially oil and natural gas, as a source of political influence to bargain with other countries. The findings of the study are the following.

Traditional energy has been a key strategic tool in expanding sphere of geopolitical influence. For Russia, traditional energy is viewed as a strategic commodity, which provides a foundation for expansion of political influence. The study strongly believes that an asymmetric energy relation creates political influence in an era of global state interdependency. This study refutes the liberal philosophy, i.e. economic linkages create a mutual dependence which dilutes the monopoly of power relations. For instance, Russia’s economic linkages with European Union did not defuse the political standoff during the Crimean crisis. Despite the complex interdependency between Russia and Ukraine (Ukraine’s energy dependence on Russia and the Russia’s transit dependency on Ukraine) political standoff remains intact between both states.

Today, a fundamental shift has taken place in the balance of power. Economic security determines the state’s place in the global power system. A country’s economic capacity provides the source of military capability as well as determines its capability to exert political influence. Being a leading country in the extraction and exporting of natural and mineral resources, Russia used its oil and natural gas as a political leverage in its foreign policy, especially on EU. EU’s substantial dependence on Russia provides a leverage to obtain political gains. In addition, the state’s military capabilities are no longer the sole source of political influence. Natural resources of a country are an important variable of state power.

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