

Russia's Security Strategy in Its Vital Space
"A Reading of the Geopolitical Use of Energy in the Ukrainian Crisis "
الاستراتيجية الأمنية لروسيا في محيطها الحيوي "قراءة في التوظيف الجيوبوليتيكي للطاقة في الأزمة الأوكرانية"



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Date of transmission: 28/04/2025 date of acceptance: 26/05/2025 date of publication: 01/06/2025

Abstract: This study aims to shed light on the inherent relationship between the security strategies adopted by the Russian Federation over time in its biosphere and the geographical elements that formed the geopolitical background governing Russia's orientations towards the countries constituting this region. Ukraine represents a prominent node in the Russian security architecture in the region. From the point of view of the Russian decision-maker, it represents the most prominent defensive fortress that must be protected by all available means. The use of energy as a geopolitical tool gained particular importance during the Ukrainian crisis, as Russia used it to counter any attempts to compromise its national security.

The study concludes that the geopolitical use of energy in the Ukrainian crisis from 2003 to the present day has enabled Russia to win several key battles against Western countries. But at the same time, this employment has contributed to Russia's loss of its position as a primary and reliable energy supplier to Russia's neighbours and Western countries. This has led these countries to search for other energy suppliers to secure their energy needs.

Key words: Energy Geopolitics; Ukraine Crisis; Vital Space; Energy Security.

ملخص: تهدف هذه الورقة البحثية الى إبراز العلاقة الكامنة بين الاستراتيجيات الأمنية التي تبعتها روسيا الفدرالية على مر العصور في محيطها الحيوي، وبين العناصر الجغرافية التي شكلت الخلفية الجيوبوليتيكية التي تحكممت في توجهات روسيا تجاه الدول المكونة لهذا المجال، وتبرز أوكرانيا كعقدة أساسية ضمن الهندسة الأمنية الروسية للإقليم والتي تعتبر بالنسبة لصانع القرار الروسي حصن الدفاع الأخير يتوجب حمايته بكل الأدوات المتاحة، ويبرز توظيف الطاقة جلياً كسلاح جيوبوليتيكي حاسم استعملته روسيا خلال الأزمة الأوكرانية لصد كل محاولات تقويض أمنها القومي.

ولقد خلصت الدراسة الى أن التوظيف الجيوبوليتيكي للطاقة في الأزمة الأوكرانية منذ 2003 الى يومنا هذا، مكن روسيا من حسم الكثير من المعارك الأساسية ضد الدول الغربية، ولكن وفي ذات الوقت، فقد ساهم هذا التوظيف الى فقدان روسيا مكانتها كمورد أساسي وموثوق للطاقة تجاه الدول الجوار الروسي والدول الغربية، الأمر الذي أدى بتلك الدول الى البحث في مصادر أخرى للطاقة لتأمين حاجياتها من الطاقة.

الكلمات المفتاحية: جيوبوليتيك الطاقة، الأزمة الأوكرانية، الفضاء الحيوي، أمن الطاقة.

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Introduction:

The Russian security strategy in its regional area is determined by the interaction of a set of factors, the most important of which is the element associated with strategic thinking driven by geopolitical factors, where common history, religion, languages, nationalities, mix to form a special perception of Russian decision-makers since the tsarist era through the Soviet era, to the current Putin's leadership, as the common vision of the majority of Russian leaders for the Eurasian space formed the most important elements guiding Russian foreign policy towards political units located in this region, especially Ukraine, as the latter was considered for long historical periods as a fortress

The importance of energy as a crucial geopolitical factor within the Russian security strategy is highlighted, as the latter does not hesitate to use it, as a geopolitical weapon, whenever it feels threatened by Western circles, and this use increases whenever the threat is imminent and close to its biosphere. In this context, the Ukrainian crisis (2013-2025) witnesses how Russia is using this weapon in an unprecedented manner, in order to prevent Ukraine from rapprochement with Western countries.

Based on the above, this study analyses the importance of energy in the strategies adopted by Russia to confront the threats it faces the study also aims to:

1. Clarifying the difference between energy as an economic resource and as a geopolitical weapon.
2. To put the light on the importance of energy in international relations, especially for both exporting and importing countries.
3. Demonstrate the risks of using energy as a weapon in inter-State relations.
4. Understanding the Russian security strategy and its relation with the issue of energy co-operation.

The research question of this study can be defined as follows : **How has Russia been able to use energy as a geopolitical weapon in its regional space in order to preserve its national security?**

This question is followed by a set of sub-questions, the most important of which are:

1. What is the relationship between the security strategy and its constituting geopolitical elements?
2. What is the place of Russian biosphere and Ukraine in the Russian security strategies?

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3. To which stand, could be considered as success, the use, by Russia, of the energy as a deterrent geopolitical weapon during the Ukrainian crisis?

In order to analyse this issue, the study employs the geopolitical analysis approaches, to comprehend the relationship between Russia's biosphere and its security strategy. This enables the deconstruction of Russia's security doctrine, which evidently combines hard power and the utilisation of economic instruments, particularly the energy weapon, of which the Ukrainian crisis is a prominent manifestation.

In order to address the different elements of the problem, the study was divided into the following elements:

The first Topic: An introduction to the concept of Russian security strategy and its relationship to the geopolitics of vital space.

The first requirement: The relationship of the strategy to Russia's geopolitics.

The second requirement: The significance of Eurasian geopolitics according to the theoretical theses.

The second Topic: The Russia-Ukraine challenging

The first Requirement: Introduction to the Russian-Ukrainian Crisis.

The second Requirement: The Challenges of Russian Rise for Ukraine's Security.

The third Requirement: Russian Escalation in Ukraine 2014-2024.

The third Topic: Russian Use of the Energy Weapon in the Ukrainian Crisis.

The first Requirement: The Implications of Ukraine's Energy Dependence on Russia.

The second Requirement: Using Russia's Gazprom to deepen Ukraine's Dependence Research.

The first Topic:

An introduction to the concept of Russian security strategy and its relationship to the geopolitics of vital space.

Strategy is one of the most important branches that are taught in various security institutes and schools, and aims to show the relationship between the different elements that make up the State and the plans that governments and nations develop in order to achieve their main goals.

The first requirement: The relationship of the strategy to Russia's geopolitics.

Eurasia and the former Soviet Union's territory were considered for a long period of time as an important global center for the international relations, due to the strategic importance of this space, which stems primarily from the ability of the Eurasian region to employ its geopolitical components in a flexible and effective manner, for Admiral **Pierre Cellérier**, There is a relationship between geopolitical and strategic elements, through his discussion of the relationship between the two concepts, as he says: **"Strategy must deeply understand the factors upon which geopolitics is based"**¹.

This leads us to realize the great importance of geography in determining national policies, as the interaction of geography with politics is what determines the nature of the strategy that countries must follow. Successive Russian security policies have always been influenced by the nature of the geopolitical situations and conflicts that Russia's geographical surroundings have known. Therefore, geopolitical motives cannot be separated from the political compass that determines the strategic directions and choices of the Russian State throughout the ages, as Russian leaders, since the era of Nicholas I, have always tried to define sensitive geographical areas or pivotal areas based on the geopolitical keys they represent.

Throughout its ancient and modern history, Russia has been influenced by its geographical location. Most of the empires that ruled Russia sought to exploit geopolitical aspects and employ them in their security strategies that secure their protection and superiority. Consequently, the idea of **"the struggle for survival or the survival of the fittest"** was formed². This is the idea that has dominated the Russian strategic mind to this day, which explains the permanent synchronization between the steady rise of Russian power at a stage of European history with its adoption of an expansionist strategy, and this is clearly the case with Russia during the current Putin era, which usually searched for geopolitical justifications to achieve its own goals³, as Ukraine, with its vast

1 Beaujeu-Garnier Jacqueline, **Célérier (Pierre), Geopolitique and Geostrategy**, 1955 [compte-rendu] ,Geographical Information, 195620-3,p. 123

² Klaus Dodds, David Atkinson, **Geopolitical Traditions**, a century of geopolitical thought, first published 2000 by Routledge, London, 2000, 3-15.

³ Beaujeu-Garnier Jacqueline, **Op.cit.** p. 123.

* A German geographer and ethnologist, author of Political Geography and considered the founder of modern geography. He is best known for coining the term **" living space"**.

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territory connected to the West, constituted the most important expansionist spaces that Russia sought.

The second requirement: The significance of Eurasian geopolitics according to the theoretical theses.

Friedrich Ratzel*'s theses have build up the scientific basis for confirming the role of political geography in determining the expansionist policies of States, representing States as natural beings that experience what other living beings experience, in terms of growth, expansion, and adaptation. In this regard, Ratzel believes that the State is a living being, but it is **"an being rooted in the soil"**¹, meaning that the State is linked to the environment to which it belongs, and is affected by the nature of geography and vital s pace, as well as the nature of human society and its cultural components. Ratzel's proposals have contributed to understanding an important part of Russian expansionist thought, especially in Ukraine.

Mackinder Helford's contributions also moved in the same direction, as his so-called Heartland Theory gave great importance to the region in determining the strategy of States, thus intersecting with Ratzel's theses in establishing organic justifications for the relationship between geography and politics, and extending to the security strategy that States must follow², that is, **Mackinder** Linking the status of the State and the region in which it exists, in terms of its centrality or peripherality, and the security strategy emanating from it.

From this standpoint, Ukraine and the regions located to the west of Russia and its neighbours have been a continuous target for all the security strategies that Russia has adopted throughout the ages, as the region is considered, according to its geopolitical vision, the centre of the world, or what was expressed by...**Mackinder** In term "**Heartland** According to which Eurasia was considered the center of this world, Despite the immunity enjoyed by this island and this heart, it remains stuck in the strategies of the permanent struggle to control it, which Mackinder summarized in the following results³:

- ✓ Whoever controls Eastern Europe controls the heart of the world.
- ✓ He who controls the heart of the world, controls the world island.

¹ Alexander Dugin, **Friedrich Ratzel: The State as a Physical Organism**, Foundations of geopolitics,.2019.

² Frederic Lasserre, Mackinder, the models and the new route to the Soie: unil crash?, **Notes strategies reseau strategic analysis**; Queen's University; August 27, 2020.PP 1-9.

³ Beaujeu-Garnier Jacqueline, **Op.cit.**p. 124

✓ Whoever controls the World Island controls the entire world.

In this context, he sees **Mackinder** The geopolitical importance of Eurasia has made it a global space that attracts international conflicts and external polarization. When addressing the issue of polarization, it is necessary to emphasize the major role played by the Soviet Union after the end of World War II, in terms of its total control over the security engineering process in this region and the imposition of its complete geopolitical logic on it, as it rejected all attempts to link this region to the Atlantic powers, especially the United States of America....as the main competitor to the former Soviet Union and to Russia's security, which was confirmed by the US Secretary of State during the era of President Bush Sr. **Colin Powell**(2001-2005) At one of the Davos economic conferences, he said: **“The United States, after using force to liberate Western Europe, used the economy through the Marshall Plan to stay there”**¹.

This clarifies the strategic importance that the United States attaches to Europe, as it used military force to liberate it, and also supported it economically through the Marshall Plan, realizing its geopolitical importance on the one hand, and protecting it from any Soviet expansionist desire on the other hand, in line with the United States’ policy, which is based to this day on the strategy of containing the Russian threat and limiting its effects to its narrow geography².

He confirmed **Nicholas Spykman** one of the most important theorists of American geopolitics during the two world wars emphasized the importance of Eurasian geography in his theory called: **"Rimland"**, which makes all the geography surrounding Russia to the west the heart of the global geopolitical dynamic, as he considered that controlling the Eurasia region opens a wide scope for controlling the world, and although **Spykman** he drew his ideas from the works of **Mackinder** however, it differs from it in its assessment of the importance of the two regions, as it considers the region **Rimland** more important than the area it represents **Heartland**, because **Rimland** according to him, it includes countries with very large demographic and industrial capabilities (Russia, the Arab region, Afghanistan, Iran, China, Southeast Asia...), compared to the countries located in the region. **Heartland** most of the historical conflicts were between **Rimland** and the forces of the sea, and from it

¹ Al-Baidar Center for Studies and Planning;Book Review, "Soft Power, The Means To Success In World Politics, by Josephs Nye Jr", **Public Affairs**, PP3-10

²Gerard Bossuat, "Laide America to France après la seconde guerre mondiale", **Revue d'histoire**, n°.9, Jan. - Mars, 1986, pp. 17-35.

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he sees that he is the one who controls **Rimland** controls **Heartland** therefore, whoever controls Eurasia and then Asia controls the rest of the world, and this seems to be the heart of the strategy that Russia wants to apply to the Ukrainian situation.

Although both Spykman and Mackinder agreed on the importance of the European region, they differed on identifying its most central regions. While Spykman focused on the Eurasian landmass, Mackinder had a purely Atlantic's orientation, describing the United States as the natural ally of the region's countries, based on his interpretation of the hostility many of the region's countries harbored toward Tsarist or Soviet Russia.

The second Topic:

The Russia-Ukraine challenging relationship and its impact on the Russian security strategy.

Russia's regional neighborhood, or the so-called near enemy, represented by all the countries surrounding it to the west and south, has been a vital area that Russia has continuously sought to subjugate to its influence, and Ukraine has always been the cornerstone of this space.

The first Requirement: Introduction to the Russian-Ukrainian Crisis.

Tensions between Western countries and Russia escalated when US President George Walker Bush resurrected the missile defence system project and installed it in Hungary and the Czech Republic, which Putin considered a direct threat to Russian national security. Tensions increased with the changes in the political structure of some former republics of the Soviet Union, especially Georgia in 2008 and Ukraine in 2013. Russia intervened directly in these countries to express its rejection of European influence in those regions and its inability to accept any future expansion of the EU in its vital space.

In this regard, Putin declared at the Munich Security Conference in 2008 that the expansion of NATO mainly targets Russia's interests, and Russia saw this expansion as an attempt to encircle it strategically and thus impose a policy of *fait accompli* on it. The expansion of NATO is aimed at creating a rift between Russia and its geopolitical sphere, especially as NATO has not hesitated to conduct military manoeuvres with several countries in the Baltic region and the Black Sea. The expansion also aims to drive a wedge between Russia and its geopolitical space, especially since NATO did not hesitate to carry out military manoeuvres with several countries in the Baltic region and the

Black Sea, and Russia understood this as provocative steps through which Russia's reaction is being sensed.

Section One: Russian Intervention in Georgia

Russia intervened militarily in Georgia (South Ossetia) between 1993 and 1995, against the backdrop of the dispute between Georgia and Abkhazia (the province inhabited by a Russian majority), under the pretext of protecting the Russian minority. Its intervention caused the destruction of Georgia's infrastructure, about 40% of its electrical and energy facilities, including some pipelines that transport energy to Europe from Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan, which caused the flow of gas to Europe to fluctuate.¹

Russia intervened in Georgia, again, in 2008, to overthrow the **Mikheil Saakashvili** Pro-Western regime. This intervention caused the destruction of part of the energy pipelines coming from some Central Asian countries that pass through Georgia towards Europe, in a message directed at Western countries, that the goal behind the strikes is to prevent reforms that have created discord among citizens of Russian origin², and that Russia respects its energy commitments to the European Union, but at the same time will not hesitate to use force if it's vital interests are threatened again. Also, after the success of "The Rose Revolution" that overthrew the regime loyal to it³, Russia has reconsidered the energy privileges (preferential prices, post-payment) that it granted to Georgia.

Back to Russia's targeting of energy supply channels passing through Georgia to European Union countries, other Russian messages can be learnt, the most important of which are:

✓ In the future, Russia will not allow its vital interests to be compromised, especially those within its vital sphere, and will not hesitate in the future to intervene in any neighboring country to protect its interests, which is what happened in Moldova and Ukraine later on.⁴

✓ Russia will not accept NATO's moves and maneuvers, and will respond in kind, as happened when Russia deployed a series of different missiles, such as Grad missiles as well as S-300 and S-400 missiles on its common border with the European Union. This is considered a direct threat to European security.

¹Liana Jarvalidze, "Georgie and the Energy Trait after the Conflict with Russia in August 2008", **Outre Terre**, n° 27, 2001, pp. 303-312

²Michel Lincoln, "Compromising Democracy: State Building in Saakashvili's Georgia", On: <http://www.doiabs.com>, see: 02/20/2019.

³Jeremy D.Cordon, "Russia's foreign policy", **Paterson Review**, vol. 08, 2007, pp.81-95.

⁴Liana Jarvalidze, **Op.Cit**, PP.303-312.

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✓ Russia will not threaten European economic interests, especially energy supplies. In order to demonstrate its goodwill, Russia accepted the ceasefire in Georgia at the initiative of the European Union during the French presidency¹.

Russia's intervention in Georgia was a warning to the European Union and NATO; Russia demonstrated that it has very formidable destructive and interventionist capabilities and that it will not allow its vital interests in the field of energy and Russian minorities within its strategic area to be threatened. The Russian intervention in Georgia was violent despite the US military presence in the Black Sea, and regardless of the fact that Georgia is a close ally of the European Union, and that Russian escalation remains possible whenever its interests are compromised, even if the intervener is the European Union (EU).

On the other hand, Russia has demonstrated its political rationality, represented by Putin's regional orientation (the use of force as a minimum deterrent), by not compromising European energy interests. This shows that Russia does not want to sever relations with the EU and that it attaches great importance to maintaining joint economic relations even during intractable crises between the two parties. Oddly enough, Russia itself contributed to the resumption of electricity production in Georgia after its intervention, reflecting Russia's new pragmatic approach.

Section Two: Intervention in Moldova

Putin considers the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS)) to be a vital Russian sphere par excellence, one that must be linked to the Russian geopolitical sphere. The process of regrouping the CIS according to a new organizational doctrine requires two tools:

✓ **Rough tool:** Which relies on military force against anti-Russian regimes within this area.

✓ **Flexible tool:** Which relies on a policy of economic incentives and privileges, especially in the energy sector.

Moldova, located in the heart of Russia's vital sphere, appears to have been one of the most important strategic obstacles to building trusting relations between Russia and the West. Moldova has sought rapprochement with European countries since 2007, within the framework of the expansion that included Bulgaria and Romania. Given the importance of the region to Russia, it has been keen to have its forces in the Transnistria's region. A region Inhabited

¹ **Ibidem.**

by a Russian majority, and of great strategic importance as a gateway to Europe, and also having a proximity to Ukraine.¹

It seems that Moldova, located in the heart of the Russian biosphere, constituted one of the most important strategic obstacles to building trusting relations between Russia and the West, as Moldova wished to rapprochement with European countries starting in 2007, within the framework of the expansion that included both Bulgaria and Romania, and given the importance of the region to Russia, it was keen to have its forces present in the **Transnistrian** region with a Russian majority, and as the region is of great strategic importance as the gateway to Europe, also considering its proximity to Ukraine.²

Due to Moldavia's dependence on Russia in the field of energy (100% in the field of gas), Russia has exercised great influence in this country, especially through the Gazprom company, which has huge investments in the field of energy in the country³, and has received Russian financial and economic privileges to resist European temptations, and at the European-Russian summit held on 09 December 2004, Russian differences emerged with its European counterparts over the European neighborhood policy towards Moldavia as a common geopolitical sphere. Russia considers Moldavia to be a country that falls within its biosphere and the EU cannot subject it to any joint agreement without Russia's consent, as Russia saw that the expansion of the European Union towards the Russian borders aims to expand NATO membership in the future, and to encircle and besiege Russia geopolitically.

Accordingly, Russia cut off gas supplies to Moldova for more than two weeks in January 2006, and raised gas prices to the international level, forcing the Moldovan side to pay immediately, in escalating steps against the European presence in Moldova and the Baltic States.⁴ Russia rejected all forms of European rapprochement with Russia's neighboring countries (the Baltics, the Caucasus, and the Crimean Peninsula), and Russia also refused to engage in the

¹Dov Lynch, **voisinage commun ou nouvelle ligne de front, the carrefour de la Moldavie**, Paris: Ifris, April 2005, p. 03.

²Paul D. Quinlan, "Moldova Under Lucinschi", PDF, p86, On: <http://demokratizatsiya.pub/archives/10-1Quinlan.PDF>, see: 20-01-2025.

³ Paul D. Quinlan , " Moldova Under Lucinschi" ,PDF ,p86,On : <http://demokratizatsiya.pub/archives/10-1Quinlan.PDF>, see: 01-03-2025.

⁴Laure Delour, "Le Voisinage Entre L'union Européenne et la Russie: Nouvelle Ligne De Marcation", **Revue Internationale et Stratégique**, (n°.72, 2008), pp.209-218.

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European Union's neighborhood policy¹, and held on to its geopolitical cards in the region, blocking any European security strategy that excluded it.

The second requirement: the Challenges of Russian Rise for Ukraine's Security

Baltic States, and Ukraine, have viewed Russia as a major threat to their national security, particularly since President Putin assumed power in 2000. This phenomenon can be attributed to Russia's close proximity to the country and the apprehensions engendered by Vladimir Putin's authoritarian inclinations. Historical geopolitical considerations have thus dominated global considerations, and Russia's renewed rise in Eurasia represents one of the most significant security challenges, potentially posing direct threats in the near future to the stability of the Baltic region in general and Ukraine in particular. This assertion is particularly salient in the context of Russia's historical perspective, as it has long regarded Eastern Europe as a region within its sphere of vital influence, dating back to the Tsarist era. Consequently, the likelihood of its resurgence in the region remains significant, as evidenced by Russia's persistent incursions into the European regional security complex.

Several opinion polls conducted by various official scientific bodies in Ukraine since 2015 have revealed that the majority of Ukrainians surveyed believe that future threats to the Ukrainian government revolve around Russia and its regional policies. This sentiment is shared by many peoples in the region, extending into Central Europe, as a result of repeated Russian intervention on these countries' borders.

At the same time, studies emanating from some independent scientific bodies also revealed the extent of the differences in views that are regularly monitored within Ukrainian society, as surveys showed that Ukrainians are divided into two sections, one pro-Russian and another whose loyalties have changed to move closer to the West, specifically the United States and Western countries, and the perception of the threat always contains a great deal of subjectivity, as well as imagination and is linked to propaganda and information processing by the media, while Western media focused on Russia as an expansionist power that wishes to re-annex Ukraine to it, Russian media circles focused on what.

¹Dov Lynch, **Op.Cit**, p.06.

Map No. (1): Shows the countries and organizations that pose a threat to these countries.

Perception de la menace en Europe (2015)

« Quel pays dans le monde selon vous représente la plus grande menace sur votre pays ? »



Source: <http://geoconfluences.ens-lyon.fr/informations-scientifiques/a-la-une/carte-a-la-une/menace-ressentie-par-les-europeens>

The map shows the orange-colored countries that view Russia as a major and persistent threat to their national security. Ukraine is among those countries that view the Russian Federation, since Putin's rise to power, as the most significant source of security threats facing them.

The First section: Ukraine in Russian Geopolitical Doctrine: "Points of Contact with the West".

The geopolitical importance of eastern Ukraine has been a constant source of concern for Russia since the time of Tsarist Russia. This phenomenon can be attributed to a multifaceted set of factors, including but not limited to the ideological and personal interests that shape this particular orientation. Consequently, Russia considers eastern Ukraine to be an integral part of its national territory, as it is one of the most important pillars of the Russian theory of vital space. It is clear that the strategic depth and supreme interests of the Russian Federation can only be ensured by preventing any hostile power from exercising control over the nation.

In this regard, the Russian theorist close to the authorities, Alexander Dugin, believes that the basic law of geopolitics is the recognition of the duality reflected in the geographical composition of the planet Earth and in the historical pattern of civilizations. These dualities express themselves in the

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confrontation of **telocratia** (land power) and **thalassocracy** (sea power). The nature of this confrontation leads to the confrontation between the commercial civilization (Carthage, Athens) and the civilization with military prestige (Rome, Sparta).

In other words, the dichotomy of “democracy” and “ideology” clearly refers to the Old Russian geopolitical doctrine based on land expansion into neighboring regions and geographical spaces, relying on land power.

In other words, the dichotomy of “democracy” and “ideology” clearly refers to the Old Russian geopolitical doctrine based on land expansion into neighboring regions and geographical spaces, relying on land power.

It is clear that the rise of Vladimir Putin to power in 2000 restored Russia's lost prestige, after the decline it experienced following the collapse of the Soviet Union (especially between 1990 and 2000). This return, which was called the systemic doctrine, adopted the necessity of restoring Russia's lost glory, and re-subjecting the Russian vital space to control once again. Russia, through its foreign policy, is reviving the geopolitical importance of the Ukrainian space and the space according to the equation proposed by **Mackinder** in his theory about "**Heartland**", where he believes that whoever controls the Ukrainian region can control "**Heartland**" and from there the rest of the world.¹ This is a result of the geopolitical factors that abound in the region.

Russian geopolitics is based on an important element, namely the priority of land over sea and air, and that the mightiest empires were nourished through land expansion rather than sea expansion, so the Eurasian space, especially Ukraine and its borders with the West, represents the most important space for the establishment of the Great Russian Empire, and the importance of the Ukrainian space for Russia falls into several reasons, the most important of which are:

Ukraine has historically represented a point of contact where Ottoman or Western military campaigns directed against Russia were broken, whether during the Ottoman, Austro-Hungarian, British or French empires, or during the two world wars with the Nazi campaigns².

¹Tom Harper, "Towards an Asian Eurasia: Mackinder's heartland theory and the return of China to Eurasia, Tom Harper", Cambridge Journal of Eurasian Studies, (n°1 2017), On: <https://doi.org/10.22261/CRZXUW>, see 12-12-2024.

² Stéphane François & Adrien Nonjon, **Op.cit.** PP 1-12.

Ukraine represents an impregnable fortress and a strategic depth against any potential aggression against Russia, especially in light of the development of long-range weapons and missile technologies.

Ukraine is Russia's geopolitical bridge to the West, with two important roles; The first: is to enhance cooperation and trade exchange, especially with Germany and to a lesser extent with France¹, and the second: Ukraine may represent a Russian pressure card in the case of negotiations with Western powers, especially the United States of America, on a range of regional and international issues, and this was clearly demonstrated in the aftermath of the trade-off of Russian withdrawal from Syria in exchange for the United States abandoning support for the Ukrainian resistance.

The second section: Russia and the dilemma of belonging "between Western and Eastern civilizations"

The thinker says F. Dostoevsky on the duality of Russian affiliation: "In Europe we are Tatars, in Asia we are Europeans"² Therefore, the problem of Russian cultural affiliation has become one of the most important dilemmas for contemporary Russian politicians, through the question: How can one get closer to Europe while preserving Russian identity? This dilemma, however, is absent when it comes to Ukraine, where the West considers Ukraine a predominantly Western country. Accordingly, this duality has become more prominent after Russia adopted a set of economic reforms aimed at liberalizing its market, while maintaining State control over strategic areas, particularly in the energy sector and the military-industrial sector.

The decline of Russia's power during the rule of **Boris Eltsine** led the West, led by the United States, to believe that Russia is finished and is nothing more than one of two theses, the first thesis: The first thesis is that Slavic Russia has Western origins and values, which qualify it to become one of the actors within the Western civilization system, in the face of other Eastern civilizations, especially the Islamic civilization, as proposed by Samuel Huntington in his book on the clash of civilizations³, in which case Russia should submit to the West, while the second thesis is that Russia is finished: The second thesis is that Russia ended with the end of the Soviet Union and does not have the capabilities

¹Group d'autour, **La Politique Etranger de la Russie et l'Europe: Enjeux d'une Proximité**, Bruxelles: PIE2004, p. 16.

²Thomas, Gomart, "What place for Russia in Europe?", **Questions internationales**, n°.27, Sep. Oct.2007, pp.42-48.

³ Samuel Huntington, **The Clash of Civilizations**, Foreign Affairs; Summer 1993; 72, 3, ABI/INFORM Global),PP. 22.

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to compete with the United States of America. This is consistent with the arguments of Francis Fukuyama in his book *The End of History and the Last Man*¹. This thesis is in line with the idea that all global parties are rearranging and forming themselves around a new archetype, dominated and led by the United States of America, including Russia.

The Russian-Western rapprochement and American support for Putin within the framework of the so-called war on terror in the Caucasus (Chechnya) contributed to proving the validity of these hypotheses at a temporary stage, as the terrorist threat for Russia represented a strategic priority in determining Russian geopolitical alliances.², especially during the period from 1999 to 2007, which also witnessed a significant recovery in economic exchanges between Russia and Western countries, followed by a relative and noticeable calm on the Ukrainian border.

In all his speeches, Putin emphasizes the specificity of Russia's sovereign democracy³, which rejects Western dictates and does not accept any interference in its internal affairs, indicating that Russia has a deep connection to its ancient past and derives its conviction and principles from its internal interest, as the Russian system is based on a special democracy according to the systemic model, i.e. force, order, and security. In other words, Russia has a doctrine that blends well and balanced between politics and military power, i.e. each serves the other and both are at the service of the Russian geopolitical doctrine, and this doctrine has allowed it to maintain its continuity even in the face of growing Western threats throughout ancient and modern times.

The Russian historian **Lev Gomeliev** believes that the Eurasian ethnic map has the same cultural qualities and characteristics, and the Russian element represents an important part of it, not as a mere branch of the Eastern Slavs, but as a special component formed as a result of the Turkish-Slavic assimilation. Russian civilization was formed as a result of the Turkish-Slavic ethnic intermingling and the forest-plain alliance, which gives it its historical essence and cultural specificity, and the right to command and control the Eurasian space, including the Ukrainian geographical entity.

¹ See: Francis Fukuyama's, **The End Of History and the Last Man**, The Free Press a Division of Macmillan, Inc. New York, 1992.

²Laurent Arthur Du Plessis, **La Troisième Guerre mondiale a Commencé**, (Paris: Jean-Cyrille Godefroy, 2002), p. 261.

³ Thomas Gomart, **Op.Cit**, pp.42-48.

It is evident that there is a considerable challenge in distinguishing between Russian foreign policy and the theoretical foundations of contemporary Russian geopolitics. Furthermore, it is difficult to analyze Russian foreign policy independently of its response to Western globalization. This is because Russia pursues a pluralistic or non-polar project, in which each power controls its own biosphere. The new Eurasians, as espoused by Alexander Dugin, seeks to embody this ideology. Dugin's geopolitical perspective posits that Ukraine constitutes a geopolitical space belonging to Russia. He further asserts that the West, particularly the United States¹, is cognizant of this geopolitical dynamic, owing to the divergent strategic interests that characterize Greater Russia and the United States. In this context, Ukraine emerges as a geopolitical space.

From this standpoint, Russia presents itself as a regional geopolitical power independent of the West and necessary to achieve regional balance in the Eurasian region and the Euro-Atlantic space. In this context, the significance of Ukraine is underscored within the broader Russian geopolitical agenda, which aims to revive the lost Russian Empire. Notably, President Vladimir Putin's personal perspective plays a pivotal role in this equation, as he perceives Ukraine as an integral component of Russia's strategic depth. According to this perspective, certain regions must be annexed, and control and domination must be exercised over those areas that are deemed challenging to annex. In this regard, Alexander Dugin's position can be summarised as follows: The present paper sets out the argument that Russia's geopolitical and strategic independence is an urgent priority. This is not determined by the return of the regions that were lost during the rule of the Russian predecessor, which constituted Russia's "**Near abroad**" security cordon. The argument is made that Ukraine must be returned to the Russian camp, no matter the cost, and this is best achieved by severing ties with NATO sponsorship².

The issue of regrouping the Eurasian space under Russian hegemony or supervision is dictated by Russia's fears that this space could be regrouped by hostile Western powers (the United States or the European Union), or by Islamist powers like Turkey, which would limit Russia's mobility and isolate it from its vital sphere. The idea of a clash between Russian geopolitical interests oriented westward and European geopolitical interests oriented eastward poses

¹ Alexander Dugin, "Gratter Europe: The Fourth Political Theory", on: <http://www.4ptsu/ar-carte>, see: 09/01/2025.

² Alexander Dugin, **Op.Cit.**

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itself as an important variable in determining the form of the conflictual relationship between Russia and the West. This has been manifested through a series of regional crises (Western recognition of Kosovo, Russian intervention in Georgia and Ukraine, attempted assassinations of former Russian agents in European countries), pushing the relationship toward aggression despite the major common interests between the two parties.

In his annual address in 2007, Putin affirmed that the era of Russian decline was over, declaring: **"The era of foreign intervention in Russia is over"**, meaning that today's era is one of equality in relations between Russia and the West, and Russian military spending has been a fundamental pillar of Russia's geopolitical superiority (about 3.9% of GDP in 2015, and will be about \$126 billion in 2025, or 32.5% of government spending¹).

This is a staggering increase in just a decade, coinciding with the expansion of NATO and the rise of anti-Russian forces, particularly in the Baltic and Caucasus regions, with Russia's intervention in Ukraine starting in 2014, and with the clear vision that Russia is at the centre of Western hostility towards Russia, and the failure of the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement signed between Russia and the European Union on 24 June 1994 to reduce that hostility².

Russia has revived its expansionist ambitions towards the regions overlooking the warm water outlets, given Russia's lack of them. Accordingly, Dugin believes that Russia will not become complete from a geopolitical point of view unless it expands towards the regions with warm seas, and this necessarily passes through complete control over the strategic port of Sevastopol in the Crimean region under Ukrainian sovereignty³.

Russia's expansion into warm regions is taking place through two windows: the Turkish window, by forging strategic relations with Turkey and exploiting its exclusion from the European sphere to draw closer to it. This was crowned by the establishment of the "Russian-Turkish High-Level Strategic Cooperation Council" in 2012, and through the Ukrainian window, where the crisis with the pro-Western Ukrainian government represented a golden opportunity for Russia

¹ SPIRI, **Op.Cit.**

² Nadejda Arbatova, "Russie-UE après 2007" : **le Débat Russe**, paris: IFRI Centre Russie, 2007, p.4.

³ Alexander Dugin, **Op.Cit.**

to consolidate its geopolitical presence by re-strengthening its military position, particularly in the strategic port of Sevastopol¹.

This is to prevent it from being geopolitically encircled through the expansion process carried out by NATO towards its borders, which would make Russia exposed to NATO forces in terms of security, and this would result in a crisis of confidence between Russia and Western countries².

Russia has accused Western countries and the United States of involvement in supporting the opposition against the Russian presence in Georgia, Estonia and Ukraine. In the face of the escalation of the situation in Ukraine, Russian forces intervened in 2014 in the Crimean Peninsula. After a popular referendum supervised by Russia, it was decided to annex Crimea to Russian territory.³ Russia demonstrated its geopolitical superiority and the weakness of Western tools at that time in confronting Russia.

The second requirement: Russian escalation in Ukraine 2014-2024

The Ukraine region has been a key security dilemma for Russia throughout the ages in its relationship with the West, as it has always been an area of disagreement and confrontation over the right to belong to one of the two sides.

Section One: Ukrainian as a field for Russian-Western conflict

Ukraine is considered a cornerstone of Russia's geopolitical doctrine due to its strategic importance, its status as a key contact point with NATO, and its status as one of the most important energy transit routes to Europe. Accordingly, Russia is cautiously approaching the political transformations taking place in Ukraine.

Ukraine constitutes the backbone of Russia's strategy in confronting security threats emanating from the West. Despite the ideological and intellectual differences among Russian elites following the end of the Cold War and the State of uncertainty in which Russia was, Russia's elites united around the view that Russia could not reaffirm its greatness except by ensuring that Ukraine remained within its dominant sphere of influence. Ukraine's problem with Russia lies in the civilization dimension to which Ukraine belongs; western Ukraine (west of Crimea) belongs historically, culturally, and religiously to

¹ Alain Vigier, "Nouvelle Crise Pétrolière or Nouveau Chapel of the Marchés Pétroliers", **Economie et Politique**, (n°.724-725, Nov-Dec 2014), p.03.

² Nadejda Arbatova, **Op.Cit**, p.06.

³ Isabelle Facon, "Que Vaut L'armée Russe? ", **Politique Etrangère**, Printemps, 2016, pp. 151 - 163.

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Western civilization, as the Ukrainian peoples in those regions see their geopolitical interests as congruent with Western interests.

So consider **Gennady Andreyevich Zyugan** the leader of the Russian Communist Party believes that Russia is culturally and ideologically different from the West. To protect itself, it must develop a defensive doctrine based on restoring its influence in its central Eurasian region, to protect itself from the dangers coming from the West. On this basis, the former Soviet space represents Russia's natural space and its historical geopolitical foundation.¹

Ukraine represents a key point of contact between the West, which has ambitions to integrate Ukraine into the NATO security system, based on socio-cultural data, while Russia is exploiting its geopolitical superiority in the region during the Soviet era and the Russian minorities in Crimea to justify its claim to Ukraine's vital space.

Dugin believes that the dispute between Russia and the West is not only governed by strategic differences (land powers versus sea powers), but also by fundamental cultural opposition.² It is natural for differences of cultural and civilizational dimensions to arise between Russia and the West, and they may be embodied in reality through geopolitical competition in Ukraine and the Crimean Peninsula.³

At the beginning of the second millennium, Russia did not see the issue of accumulating Ukrainian debts owed to Russia or the issue of Ukraine's theft of natural gas that passes through its territory as a threat to its strategic interests, either on the economic level since Russia has huge gas reserves, or on the geopolitical level as long as Ukraine is subject to its influence, but the political transformations it witnessed after the arrival of Putin and his desire to restore Russian glory, which put Ukraine at the centre of the Russian strategic project, no longer a place for technical and commercial negotiations, to be replaced by pressure, threats and direct interference, the main witness being.

Russia would not have given a propaganda character to economic agreements that do not rise to strategic importance from the point of view of many economic experts, if not for the geopolitical importance that Russia attaches to these countries, especially Ukraine, which represents Russia's last fortresses in the face of Western influence, based on the premise that 'the

¹ Andrei P Tsyganov, Mastering Space in Eurasia, **Russia's Geopolitical**, vol.36, 2003, pp.119-122.

² Alexander Dugin, "Gratter Europe: The Fourth Political Theory", **Op.Cit.**

³ Laurent Arthur Du Plissise, **Op.Cit.**, p.162.

politics of countries lies in their geography' according to the geopolitical knowledge, where the relationship between the politics of countries and their geographical position is clear¹. **Jean Gottmann**, a French geographer of Ukrainian origin, believes that the importance Russia attaches to Ukraine explains well the relationship between politics and the Russian biosphere through the **theory of division***, which governs Russian behaviour towards Ukraine as the latter is part of its geographical divisions to which Russian national security extends.

Section two: Background to the Russian-European escalation following the Ukrainian crisis:

The arrival of Viktor Iouchtchenko to power in Ukraine following the Orange Revolution in November 2004 and the rapprochement with the West was one of the most important reasons for the change in Russian policy towards Ukraine, as the European Union sought to create a common area that includes all of : Azerbaijan, Armenia, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine², which raised the fears of Russia, which saw the move as a prelude to joining these countries to NATO, and this made Russia review its policy towards Ukraine, including the energy privileges obtained by Ukraine (selling natural gas at \$50 per thousand cubic litres instead of \$230 for the same amount for European countries).

Russia accused Ukraine of supplying more than the agreed-upon amount from these channels and reselling it to other European countries at a higher price.³This prompted Russia to raise the price allocated to Ukraine, and in addition, it stopped supplies to Ukraine on January 1, 2006, which harmed some European Union countries that supply through Ukraine.⁴.

Russia has been able to exploit the identity demands of the Russian element present in Ukraine, especially in the Donetsk region and the Crimean Peninsula, which has a Russian majority, by exploiting the mobilization of ethnic minorities within Ukraine within the framework of its conflict with

¹ Duroselle Jean-Baptiste, Gottmann Jean, La Politique des Etats et leur géographie, [compte-rendu]", **Revue française de science politique**, N° 2-4,1952,pp. 831-833.

²Jean Gottmann, "The Politics of États and the Geography", Paris, **Politique Etrangère**, vol. n°4, hiver 2007, pp. 920-944.

* The division theory is based on the fact that countries have a specific area, which they consider part of their national security, based on geographical and cultural data..

³Céline Bayou. **Ukraine/Russie. Dimension Gazière of Conflit**, Paris: Fondation De la Recherche Stratégique, 2015, pp. 02, 03.

⁴Liana Jervaldize, **Op.Cit.**, pp.303-312.

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Ukraine and the European Union.¹Before that, Ukraine did not seem to be a country suffering from identity conflicts.

Section three: The repercussions of the Ukrainian crisis on the European Union's energy security

Ukraine's importance is highlighted as the most important corridor for Russian natural gas to Europe, as Ukraine represents a corridor for approximately 80% of Russian exports to European countries. As shown in the map below.

Map No. (3): It shows that about 80% of Russian gas towards Europe passes through Ukraine.



Source: <https://blog.mondediplo.net/2011-01-19-Gazoducs-la-Russie-al-assaut-du-Sud-europeen>

Hence, the importance of Ukraine to the European Union as a strategic energy corridor is highlighted. This explains the impact on European supplies due to the successive crises between Moscow and Kiev from 2009 to the present day, which is pushing the European Union to negotiate with Russia to secure its energy supplies.²Ukraine disrupts the supply of Europeans from the pipelines that pass through its territory whenever Russia imposes energy sanctions on Ukraine.

The EU's energy security strategy appears powerless against Russia's strategic flexibility. The centralized nature of the Russian system, personalized by Putin, allows him to make fateful decisions quickly and unexpectedly, including the decision to intervene in Ukraine in 2014 and 2022. Meanwhile, Western bureaucratic and institutional complexities appear to be an obstacle to

¹Céline Bayou, **Op.Cit**, pp.10,11.

² "Transit du gaz russe via l'Ukraine : des progrès à Bruxelles mais toujours pas d'accord", On :<https://www.lefigaro.fr/flash-eco/transit-du-gaz-russe-via-l-ukraine-des-progres-a-bruxelles-mais-toujours-pas-d-accord-20190919> See:13-10-2024.

adopting an effective energy strategy. Putin expressed Western impotence when he Stated: **"Our Western friends actively and effectively supported the Orange Revolution in Ukraine, and we are closely monitoring the developments there at all times. This country still faces a great deal of problems. If you want to support what happens there in the future, you will have to pay a price for this support. What are we obliged to pay?"**.

Accordingly, Russia has employed all its cards in Ukraine in order to preserve its interests, including the energy card, and the West must bear the responsibility for supporting any government hostile to Russia in Ukraine. Ukraine's importance to the West is highlighted by the fact that it represents its energy security related to supply routes, so it is forced to take this into account in its relations with Russia.¹The European Commission's 2014 report Stated that European dependence on Russian gas was as follows: "Six EU member States depend on Russia as their sole external supplier of natural gas imports, three of which rely on natural gas to meet more than a quarter of their energy needs. Energy supplies from Russia accounted for 39% of EU natural gas imports, equivalent to 27% of EU natural gas consumption from Russia in 2013."

The Russian company Gazprom confirmed that 86 billion cubic meters of natural gas directed to Europe passed through Ukrainian transport networks in 2013.²This clearly demonstrates that Russia is using Gazprom in its conflicts with the European Union, as the company does not hesitate to exaggarately raise energy prices for the EU during regional crises.

We conclude that the fragility of European energy dependence on Russia is very large, given that most EU countries are affected by the sanctions imposed on Russia by the United States, as Russian supplies decrease and energy prices rise in Europe in light of the high dependence on Russian supplies, weak European productivity, and Russia's monopoly on European energy supplies, and this dependence is likely to increase as European consumption continues to rise, which explains Russia's intention according to the 2020 energy strategy document to increase its exports to Europe to about 210 billion cubic meters³, which enhances European energy vulnerability..

¹ John Robert, **After the War the southern corridor: In Russian Energy Security and Foreign Policy**, London: 2011(, p.186.

² Pascal Marchand, "Le Conflit Ukrainien, des Enjeux Géopolitique et Géoéconomique", **éco Géo Revue**, 2014, pp.12-14. .

³ Cathine Lucalelli, **Op.Cit**, pp.25,26.

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The Ukrainian crisis has become clear after the Ukrainian government abandoned the partnership agreement with the European Union a few days before it was due to be signed.¹ On the European weakness in dealing with the Russian move, as it was unable to deter Russia and prevent it from interfering in Ukraine², although Ukraine was one step away from entering into a strategic partnership with the European Union.³

Despite the arrival of **Volodymyr Zelensky's** pro-Western government, which attempted to evade the commitments made by its predecessors, it failed to repel the Russian aggression in 2022? The Russian intervention resulted in the destruction of approximately 70% of Ukraine's infrastructure, as well as approximately 60% of its energy facilities, including power plants and energy corridors, including some pipelines that transport energy to Europe from Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan. This has made the flow of gas to Europe highly volatile, forcing Europeans to turn to other, more expensive international markets, thus weakening the competitiveness of their affected economies.

The third Topic:

Russian Use of the Energy Weapon in the Ukrainian Crisis.

Russia encourages the establishment of a new international order based on economic and political polarity, in line with Russia's geopolitical ambitions to end Western hegemony, with the need to distribute international influence in accordance with the economic situation and the new geographical distribution, so that it includes pivotal countries on each continent, including Russia.

The first Requirement: The Implications of Ukraine's Energy Dependence on Russia.

The energy fragility of Ukraine and its surrounding countries has been one of the most important strategic approaches employed by the Russian administration in its confrontation with the West during the Ukrainian crisis. This is in light of the lack of energy resources in the countries surrounding Russia and Eastern Europe, which rely heavily on Russian energy imports, particularly natural gas. Therefore, the energy security challenge in the countries surrounding Russia is linked to a set of basic indicators:

¹ Philippe Lefort, "La Crise Ukrainienne Ou le mal Entendue Européen", **Politique Etrangère**, été 2014, pp.119-121.

² James Sherr, **Op.Cit**, pp.9-20.

³ Liana Jarvalidze, "La Géorgie et le Traite Energétique après le Conflit Avec la Russie en Aout 2008", **Outre Terre**, n°27, 2001, pp. 303-312.

✓ of hydrocarbons (gas and oil), and international energy powers, represented by Russia or OPEC countries.¹

✓ Rising fuel prices in international markets are weakening the competitiveness of Western economies in the face of emerging economies such as China, India, and Turkey, whose growth rates have doubled.

✓ Russia's constant use of energy as a weapon in its crises with its neighbors (the Ukrainian crisis between 2005 and 2014, the Belarusian crisis in 2006, and the intervention in Georgia in 2007) has led to fluctuations in energy supplies to Western countries.

✓ Geopolitical conflicts in the Middle East and Gulf region are contributing to fluctuations in global energy production, forcing Europeans to rely more heavily on a more stable Russia. This reinforces European energy dependence on Russia.²

The figures reveal the extent of the weakness of European energy production, which has always placed it under Russian pressure. According to 2017 statistics, the combined reserves of European countries amounted to approximately 5.4 thousand barrels. Britain's reserves were estimated at approximately 2.30 billion barrels, while Norway's reserves amounted to approximately 790 thousand barrels.³As for production, the figures indicate a continuous decline in oil production in the European Union countries. Production has been declining since 2010 until 2017. This is attributed to the depletion of oil fields on the one hand and the weak production and profitability of some countries on the other, especially Britain, whose production declined from 84.7 thousand barrels in 2005 to 46.6% in 2017.⁴With the high cost of production compared to Russian oil, it was forced to stop about a third of the 330 exploration stations active in oil production⁵.

The weak European production is offset by high oil consumption, which in 2005 amounted to 725.5 million tons.⁶The European Union countries maintained an upward trend in oil consumption, reaching approximately 731.2 million tons in 2017. Germany occupied the European lead in oil consumption with

¹Jan Horst Keppler, **Energy security in Europe, principles and measures**, IFRI, Paris: 2007, pp. 1-16.

²Jan Horst, **Op.Cit**, pp.1-16.

³BP, **Statistical Review of World Energy**, edition 2018. p.12.

⁴BP, **Statistical Review of World Energy**, **Op.cit**, p.16.

⁵Kiran Stacey, "Royaume-Uni, Petroleum: Finishing Partie de Mer du Nord", **Courrier International**, Paris: 1990, 03-03-2016..

⁶BP, **Statistical Review of World Energy**, 2005, p.12.

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approximately 199.8 million barrels annually, while the consumption of the second European country, France, reached 79.7 million barrels annually.¹

This is what the following table shows:

Table No. (01): shows: Oil production for EU countries (in million tons)

2017	2016	2015	2014	2013	2012	2011	2010	Year
73.8	75.2	71.70	67.20	68.50	72.90	81.60	93.40	Production Unit: million tons

Source: The table was prepared by the researcher based on the following sources :BP, **Statistical Review of World Energy**, edition 2011-2013-2015-2017.

The European Union countries depend heavily on external oil supplies, with the percentage ranging from 40 to 70% for some countries, while it reaches 100% for some countries such as Germany, the largest European economy, and Russia, North Africa, and the Gulf countries represent the main suppliers of oil to European countries².

As for natural gas production, there is also an imbalance between natural gas production and general consumption in the European Union. While the European Union produced about 120.1 billion cubic meters of natural gas in 2015, its consumption of the same material amounted to about 402.1 billion cubic meters. In 2017, production amounted to about 118.7 billion cubic meters, while consumption amounted to approximately 512.6 billion cubic meters. Germany holds the European lead in natural gas consumption, with approximately 90.2 billion cubic meters, according to 2017 statistics.³The European Union countries depend heavily on Russian gas.

Therefore, Russia can use energy weapons against Ukraine and the European countries that support it in its war against Russia.⁴This is exactly what it did when it pressured former Ukrainian President **Viktor Yanukovych** to withdraw from signing the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement with the European Union countries, when Russia cut off its natural gas supplies to Ukraine in the winter of 2014. The fact that the countries surrounding Russia, specifically Ukraine, Belarus, Moldova, and Georgia, are completely dependent on Russian energy supplies makes them constantly vulnerable to persistent Russian threats to cut off gas, which threatens their energy security.

¹BP, **Statistical Review of World Energy**, 2017, p.12.

²Jan Horst Keppler, **Op.Cit**, p.4

³BP, **Statistical Review of World Energy**, 2017, **Op.Cit**, pp29-28..

⁴Dov Lynch. **Op.Cit.**, pp.14-16.

Russia is doing the same with European countries, as Russia is exploiting the issue of the urgent need for energy for European countries and the lack of consistency in their positions regarding the Ukrainian regional security crisis, where it is exploiting European differences regarding the strategy it adopts towards Russia. In this regard, Russia has sought to use energy as a card to support and attract European parties calling for adopting a security policy independent from the United States of America, as it believes that this serves its strategic interests.¹Russia relies on two factors for this:

The first is Russia's strategic superiority in the Eurasian sphere, which has its foundations, the most important of which relate to Russia's historical role during the Soviet era, and the national extensions in the Western Eurasian region through the Russian minorities present there (Ukraine, Belarus, Estonia, Moldova, etc.).²

The second factor is related to global energy security, as Russia's position has improved as one of the world's largest producers of energy (oil and gas).

In order to strengthen its energy influence over the countries surrounding Russia, Russia prefers to negotiate with these countries bilaterally rather than through joint frameworks, exploiting the bilateral differences between European countries in order to impose its control. Russia focuses on Germany, France and Italy, as it believes that these countries are more flexible in negotiations. France, for example, views the Russian role as a positive role, achieving a balance of power and European strategic interests in the face of American influence, and this serves Russia's interests in the vital Eurasian sphere.³

Map No.(2): Shows Russian power lines passing through Ukraine.

¹Thomas, Gomart, **Op.Cit**, pp.42-48.

²Vincent Dautancourt, "Russian minors in Estonia: unity and diversification", Paris: **Hero Dote**, vol. 128, pp. 73-83.

³ Chiara Lovotti, Eleonora Tafuro Ambrosetti, **How Doe The European Union Perceive Russia's Role in The Mena Region?**, Government of Catalonia, European Institute of the Mediterranean, p.70.

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Source: <https://blog.mondediplo.net/2011-01-19-Gazoducs-la-Russie-al-assaut-du-Sud-europeen>.

Putin believes that Western countries took advantage of the period of decline in Russian power after the collapse of the Soviet Union to expand NATO to include countries within its vital sphere of influence, which harmed Russia's geostrategic position. Therefore, Russia is exploiting its energy influence to restore the balance of power in its favor.¹ In order to strengthen the dependence of the countries surrounding Russia on its energy sources, Russia offers a set of economic advantages, whether related to reducing energy prices, or by granting attractive privileges to some Western companies operating in the field of exploration and refining in Russia. It also tries to obstruct projects aimed at establishing energy pipelines from other countries in which Russia is not a party.

This is what prompted the countries surrounding Russia to think about the necessity of securitizing energy sources, by following two strategies: **the first:** diversifying sources of supply and reducing Russian energy imports, **the second:** encouraging alternative renewable sources such as nuclear energy.²

The second Requirement: Using Russia's Gazprom to Strengthen Ukraine's Dependence Research.

Russia knows how to use its giant energy companies to strengthen its economic and energy influence in Ukraine, and in this regard we find 'Gazprom' the most influential company in the field of Russian foreign policy, as after Putin came to power in Russia, he renationalized Gazprom, and exploited the rise in global energy prices to strengthen Russia's regional role, by making energy a strategic pillar in the service of Russia's foreign policy goals,

¹Annie Jafalian, **La Russie, Puissance Énergétique: De L'arme Politique Aux Logiques De Marché**, Bruxelles: Bruylant Edition, 2010, pp. 07-10.

²Jan Horst, **Op.Cit**, pp.4-6.

so Putin has controlled Gazprom as a strategic tool for extending Russian influence in its vital area. Since coming to power, Putin has controlled Gazprom as a strategic tool for extending Russian influence in its vital sphere, and has exploited the energy revenues to modernize the Russian army¹. Putin attributes the failure and collapse of the Soviet Union to the imbalance between military power and the requirements of modernization.

The contemporary military industry relies on modern technologies, which in turn require funding for research and studies that contribute to the modernization of the Russian army. This funding comes from energy. In this regard, Gazprom represents the most important giant company that can be relied upon to achieve this. Vladimir Putin chose this company as the largest company, as it controls approximately 90% of Russian gas production, which represents approximately 23% of global production.²

Gazprom has risen to global prominence by contributing significantly to numerous investment projects outside Russia, particularly in Ukraine.³ It has become clear that Gazprom has become the economic arm of Russian geopolitics, through which it has concluded numerous political and military deals, whether by supporting pro-Russian regimes or toppling anti-Russian regimes in Ukraine.

The company's strategy is based on a set of activities that strengthen Russia's energy position in its regional neighborhood, particularly in Ukraine. The most important of these activities are:

- ✓ Purchase of several shares in major Ukrainian energy companies.
- ✓ Using a commercial strategy based on selling energy in exchange for future payment, this gives it an advantage over other exporting countries.
- ✓ Relying on energy pipelines, which are less expensive to transport gas than ships or trains.
- ✓ Selling Russian gas within Russia at a price lower than its cost, in order to encourage foreign investment and contribute to building Russian infrastructure.⁴.
- ✓ Working to maintain Ukraine's energy dependence on Russian gas. Some studies indicate that Ukraine's overall dependence on external energy sources

¹ Thomas, Gomart, "Vladimir Poutine ou les avatars de la politique étrangère", **politique étrangère**, N° 68, Avril 2003, pp.789-802.

² Jean François, "Gazprom la Russie et l'Europe Entre Dependance Mutuelle et Méfiance Reciproque, Comprendre", **Les Enjeux Stratégique**, March 2011, pp. 02-04.

³ Catherine locatelli, "Les Strategies D'Internationalisation of Gazprom: a Geopolitical Problem?," **Revue Géographique de L'est**, vol. 50, 2016, p. 08.

⁴ Catherine Locatelli, **Op.Cit.**, pp.32-46.

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amounts to about 85% to 90%, with its dependence on Russian gas accounting for about 75% of this percentage. This strengthens Russian influence in Ukraine.

✓ Russia's importance also lies in its geography, as its vast area makes it almost the only country that shares a common border with the Baltic States and Crimea. Thus, even the transfer of energy from Central Asian countries such as Kazakhstan and Turkestan necessarily passes through Russian territory.¹.

✓ To maintain its leadership in supplies, increase productivity and speed of product delivery compared to other exporting countries, and also to ensure the security of its supplies in the event of any crisis or conflict with a transit country for Russian gas transport channels.².

Based on this, it is clear that Ukraine's energy security is dependent on Russian exports, given its near-total dependence on Russian energy supplies, on the one hand, and the influence Russian companies enjoy in Ukraine's energy sectors, on the other. This makes any crisis arising from either side unfavorable to Ukraine, as confirmed by the recent crisis and Russian intervention.

Conclusion:

Russia's capacity to influence neighboring countries through the deployment of a range of instruments with significant geopolitical ramifications, with the energy weapon being a primary element, is well-documented. This capacity is further compounded by the utilization of military intervention, which is intended to thwart any Western endeavors' to expand into the Russian biosphere. It is noteworthy that the West has acknowledged Russia's influence in the region, particularly given the geographical, cultural, and historical proximity of the Baltic region and Eurasia to Russia.

This acknowledgement is consistent with geopolitical logic. Economist **Jean Tirol** hypothesizes that the establishment of the Euro-Soviet, extending from Saint Petersburg to Dublin, signifies Russian aspirations for dominance on the European continent. The fate of the region, in particular Ukraine, has been subject to the logic of major understandings and divisions of influence by the great powers. However, a shift in US leadership, accompanied by a change in US President Trump's policies towards the region, has the potential to alter the nature of the geopolitical attraction, compelling Ukraine to submit to bargaining. Ukraine's decision to submit to Russian bargaining can be attributed to the

¹ **Ibidem.**

*Russia seeks to increase its exports to this region by 2020 to 20% of its gas production, according to a Russian news agency in 2005.

² Catherine Locatelli, **Op.Cit.**, pp.32-46.

Europeans' inability to provide the necessary support to Ukraine in the face of the Russian military machine from outside the Atlantic organization led by the United States.

This demonstrates the primacy of regional geopolitical considerations over economic interests, and that economic interests are secondary to national security in the context of international relations.

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