CONSTRUCTING INTERDEPENDENCE IN TIMES OF CRISIS

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THE EU'S DISCOURSE ON EU-RUSSIAN ENERGY RELATIONS

BEFORE AND AFTER THE UKRAINE CRISIS 2014

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Abstract

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This thesis compares the EU's discourse on its energy relations with Russia prior to the Ukraine crisis and after it. The discourse analysis is embedded in a Constructivist framework and focusses on the question whether continuities and discontinuities in the discourse indicate a successful or deficient construction of EU-Russian energy relations by the EU. This analysis shows that even though there are discontinuities between the two periods, these do not indicate a major failure in developing a suitable energy strategy. This evaluation is based on the result that the discontinuities found only represent shifts in the emphases on different elements of the discourse. The early discourse therefore already included most of the strategic elements that became necessary to deal properly with Russia and to ensure the EU's energy security once the Crisis broke out.

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1. Introduction

The Ukraine crisis of 2014 took many by surprise in Europe. As a new low in EU-Russian relations, the crisis continues to impose many problems on the EU, many of which are connected to European energy security. While Russia is the main supplier of energy to the EU, Ukraine is an indispensable transit country for the energy trade. Finding a strategy that combines the objectives of ensuring European energy security while maintaining close relations with Ukraine is very difficult. Additionally, the crisis raised concerns on whether the EU is able to evaluate and predict Russia's behaviour correctly. A realistic view on Russia and the ability to understand its behaviour is crucial for the development of a resilient energy strategy and therefore future European energy security.

This thesis therefore strives to evaluate how the EU's energy strategy towards Russia changed before and after the Ukraine crisis. By doing so, this thesis hopes to answer the following two separate but interconnected research questions: To what extent does the EU's discourse on its energy strategy towards Russia display continuities and discontinuities before and after the Ukraine crisis? And do these continuities and discontinuities indicate a success or a failure of the EU's energy strategy towards Russia? The chosen theoretical and analytical framework for this thesis is a discourse analysis that is rooted in a Constructivist framework. By conducting a discourse analysis with a strong focus on the influence of the Ukraine crisis, I gain deeper insights into the history of development of the European energy strategy towards Russia.

In order to answer the two research questions, this thesis first provides – in a literature review – an overview over the existing and most relevant literature on EU-Russian energy relations. This literature review will also point out an existing gap in the research literature which will, at least partially, be closed by this thesis. Then the theoretical framework will be made explicit and the analytical framework will be presented. Subsequently, the actual analysis will be conducted. In order to do so, the data selection and the observed timeframe will be described first. Then the analysis will be split into two parts that individually focus on the timeframe before the Ukraine crisis and the one after it. In the end of this chapter an evaluation of the discovered continuities and discontinuities will take place. The last chapter of this work will present the final results and the conclusions to be drawn from them and the weaknesses and strengths of this analysis. Further possible research question that might arise from this research will end the chapter.

2. Literature Review

In this literature review, I will give a brief overview of the most relevant existing scientific literature on EU-Russian energy relations and the Ukraine conflict. By doing so, I will also identify a research gap in the existing literature.

The literature on EU-Russian energy relations is extensive and diverse. Some authors focus more on the theoretical implications of the interdependence between Russia and the EU, some focus on metadebates revolving around the scientific view on Russia and others on direct explanations for the emergence of the Ukraine crisis or on geopolitical aspects of the relations.

One of the authors focussing on the first aspect is Andrej Krickovic. In his 2015 article,[1] he explains why EU-Russian energy interdependence produced conflict and not peace, as Liberal Interdependence Theory would assume. He argues that energy interdependence specifically creates a security dilemma because energy is a security issue. It is worth noting that this article makes a statement that is crucial for this thesis without citing any sources. "Both sides [Russia and the EU] have come to see their growing dependence on each other as a significant risk […]."[2] This is a mere claim without scientific evidence about core topics of this thesis. The fact that this important statement remains without a scientific source reveals a clear gap in this article on changes within the constructions of EU-Russian energy relations.

Another article[3] framing EU-Russian energy relations as a security issue was written by Nikolay Kaveshnikov. By doing so, the author later also provides solutions that are supposed to improve EU-Russian energy relations. As the author frames the energy trade as an energy security issue, he focusses on solutions that increase security for both actors by increasing the reliability and predictability of their common energy market. This includes ensuring supply security as well as demand security in order to satisfy both actors' needs for stability. But the author also identifies problems that might impede or delay the implementation of these solutions, such as different views on energy security and different market models with different

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[1] Krickovic, Andrej. "When Interdependence Produces Conflict: EU–Russia Energy Relations as a Security Dilemma." Contemporary Security Policy 36, no. 1 (2015).

[2] Ibd., 4.

[3] Kaveshnikov, Nikolay. "The Issue of Energy Security in Relations between Russia and the European Union." European Security 19, no. 4 (2010): 585-605.

regulative practises. In the end, the author expresses modest optimism concerning the future EU-Russian energy relations.

An article[4] by Hiski Haukkala focusses more on the reasons why the EU has failed to anticipate the Ukraine crisis and why it inadvertently contributed to the emergence of the conflict. The author argues here that the Ukraine crisis should not be viewed as a single failure of EU-Russian relations but as a symptom of larger, latent conflict between the two actors. The main problem is the general failure of the EU to evaluate in a strategic manner its own role and that of Russia in the Ukraine and the broader region. This can be seen in the fact that the EU has increased its involvement and influence in this region despite Russian complaints. Now that Russia contests these actions, the EU is not willing to participate in this type of competition.

In another article[5], Haukkala strives to explain why the EU has failed to influence Russia in the desired way. The main reasons for that are the EU's incapability of communicating in a manner that can be understood by Russia and the EU's fragmented actorness which causes confusion in EU-Russian relations. This leads to the phenomenon that Russia does not take the EU, its sanctions or other measures seriously.

Andrew Judge, Tomas Maltby and Jack Sharples deal in their article[6] with a metadebate on the scientific view on EU-Russian energy relations and attempt to challenge reductionist approaches that deal with them. They argue that many approaches dealing with EU-Russian energy relations oversimplify these by framing them as purely geopolitically determined. As an answer to these reductionist approaches, the authors introduce a more nuanced and holistic approach that emphasises the importance of institutions within EU-Russian relations as well as technical and commercial factors instead of focussing exclusively on geopolitical factors. This call for more comprehensive approaches can be understood as an encouragement to conduct a qualitative, non-geopolitics-focused research, like this thesis does.

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[4] Haukkala, Hiski. "A Perfect Storm; Or What Went Wrong and What Went Right for the EU in Ukraine." Europe-Asia Studies, 2016, 1-12.
[5] Haukkala, Hiski. "Lost in Translation? Why the EU Has Failed to Influence Russia's Development." Europe-Asia Studies 61, no. 10 (2009): 1757-775.
[6] Judge, Andrew D., Tomas Maltby, and Jack D. Sharples. "Challenging Reductionism in Analyses of EU-Russia Energy Relations." Geopolitics 21, no. 4 (2016): 751-62.

Tom Casier provides in his article a large narrative about a long period of time for EU-Russian relations.[7] Starting with the end of the Cold War and ending in the year 2016 he identifies three large periods within EU-Russian relations. In the analysis, he relies on two theories from social psychology that help to explain the behaviour of social groups. The first period from 1992 until 2003 is a period of asymmetric cooperation in which the EU is the superior partner 'helping' the former Soviet Union by exporting norms and values. The second period from 2004 to 2013 is a competitive phase in EU-Russian relations characterised by an increase in pragmatic competition. This shift is traced back to the growing Russian dissatisfaction with the EU due to events that went against Russian interests such as the Kosovo military intervention. This dissatisfaction created negative attributions by Russia to the EU and therefore introduced competitiveness to the relations. The third and currently last phase, from 2013 to 2016, is the 'conflict' phase in which both actors left the logic of competition. Instead they entered a perception of negative intention within each other's' actions. These events are a 'radicalisation'. Casier's analysis is in many aspects similar to a Constructivist one. It can therefore be argued that this thesis has a similar framework. But instead of analysing a long period of time and both the Russian and the European constructions, this thesis analyses more immediate changes exclusively in the EU.

The research focus of Critian Nitoiu's article[8] is similar to the article by Casier but it analyses a shorter timeframe. This article deals with the classification of EU-Russian relations within the dichotomy between cooperation and conflict. In this analysis, the Ukraine crisis is seen as a shifting point in which EU-Russian relations turned from cooperation to conflict, but the crisis is seen only as the catalyst for this change not as the cause. Caused was the shift by three tensions that are underlying EU-Russian relations since the end of the Cold War. The first tension is the lack of unified acting amongst the EU's member states which led to incoherence in the EU's actions towards Russia. The second tension is the geopolitical competition between the EU and Russian. The third identified tension derives from differences in the worldviews of Russia and the EU. While the EU has a mostly liberal worldview, Russia acts based on the worldview of a regional hegemon that has the right to exert influence in its neighbourhood. Addressing neither of these three tensions EU-Russian relations are now stuck at an all-time

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[7] Casier, Tom. "From Logic of Competition to Conflict: Understanding the Dynamics of EU–Russia Relations." Contemporary Politics 22, no. 3 (2016): 376-94.
[8] Nitoiu, Cristian. "Towards Conflict or Cooperation? The Ukraine Crisis and EU-Russia Relations." Journal of Southeast European and Black Sea 16, no. 3 (2016): 375-90.

low. Responsibility for the current tensions can therefore be found on both sides, and finding a solution is far from easy.

A perspective that differs significantly from the other articles in this literature review can be found in Jack D. Sharples' article.[9] He analyses the impact of Russian diversification attempts in the gas sector on EU-Russian gas relations. The focus lies here especially on the Russian attempt to develop new Chinese outlet markets for gas. Sharples sees the potential for a fundamental realignment of the Russian energy trade by focussing on Chinese markets as very small. This is mainly due to the comparatively low prices that Chinese consumers are willing or able to pay. The unlikeliness of a fundamental shift in the Russian gas trade is also supported by the past infrastructure projects of Gazprom which increased the path dependence of exporting gas mainly to the EU and neighbourhood countries. The overall impact of the Russian diversification attempts on EU-Russian gas relations is therefore estimated to be nearly insignificant.

The conclusion of this literature review is that, although EU-Russian energy relations themselves have been studied to some extent, there are few analyses focussing on discourses to be found. Many analyses provide rather large narratives for the entire EU-Russian energy relations or for long periods of time. Also, literature dealing with the direct effects of the Ukraine crisis on EU-Russian energy relations is rather scarce. This thesis can therefore help to close this research gap. The next chapter will then start defining the theoretical and analytical framework that is needed for the analysis. By choosing a qualitative method that aims to examine one aspect EU-Russian energy comprehensively the critique expressed by Judge, Maltby and Sharples is taken seriously.

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[9] Sharples, Jack D. "The Shifting Geopolitics of Russia's Natural Gas Exports and Their Impact on EU-Russia Gas Relations." Geopolitics, 2016, 1-33.

3. Theoretical and Analytical Framework

In this chapter, the theoretical and analytical framework of this research will be made explicit. By embedding the research in a theoretical framework, the research is put into context of a scholarly debate and the underlying assumptions that are fundamental for this research design are made explicit. The analytical framework then presents the method with which the actual research will be conducted. By doing so it provides an analytical framework that is also embedded in a scientific discourse and offers a set of established tools in order to answer the research questions: 'To what extent does the EU's discourse on its energy strategy towards Russia display continuities and discontinuities before and after the Ukraine crisis?' and 'Do these continuities and discontinuities indicate a resilience or a failure of the EU's energy strategy towards Russia?'

3.1 Theoretical Framework

For this research, the theory of (social) Constructivism will be the theoretical framework. Emerging as a relatively unnoticed theory in the 1980s, Constructivism is nowadays one of the dominant approaches in the field of international relations. While Nicolas Onuf initially coined the term 'Constructivism', it was Alexander Wendt who brought Constructivism to the level of scholarly recognition it possesses today. By writing an influential article[10], he introduced Constructivism to a larger audience and made it the mainstream theory that it is today.[11] Other important scholars within the Constructivist school of thought are Thomas Risse, Martha Finnemore and Jeffry Checkel. However, this thesis will predominantly use the Constructivism as it was formulated by Wendt.

The basic assumption of the Constructivist Theory is that international relations rely mainly on the social constructions of the actors in international relations. The social construction is a process in which the different actors give meaning to their relations and the material and social world. One important way in which this construction can take place is deliberate communication as it is understood in discourse theory.[12] In the centre of Constructivism is therefore

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[10] Wendt, Alexander. "Anarchy Is What States Make of It: The Social Construction of Power Politics." *International Organization* 46, no. 2 (1992): 391-42.

[11] Jackson, Robert H., and Georg Sørensen. *Introduction to International Relations : Theories and Approaches*. 3rd [rev. and Exp.] ed. New York, NY [etc.]: Oxford University Press, 2007, 162/163.

[12] Risse, Thomas. "'Let's Argue!': Communicative Action in World Politics." *International Organization* 54, no. 1 (2000), 8-11.

not the importance of the material world but the process in which the material and social world is interpreted and constructed.

By focussing on the construction of the world, Constructivism largely rejects explanatory approaches that are very actor-focused and concepts that are mainly structure-focused. Constructivism therefore differs epistemologically from Realism and Liberalism. Within the spectrum of theories that are either very actor-focused or very structure-focused Constructivism takes a stance more or less in the middle between the two poles. Constructivism is therefore ontologically moderate in this aspect.[13] This can also be seen in the assumption that international relations are intersubjective as they are the result of social practices and social construction.[14]

As nearly everything within international relations is a social construction according to Constructivist theory, interests of actors are also constructed. This means that no actor possesses an extensive intrinsic set of fixed interests. Interests are the result of a constant construction that is based on the current identity that an actor possesses. This construction takes place in a process that can be described similar to the socialisation of a human being. Finnemore puts it as follows: "States are *socialized* to want certain things by the international society in which they and the people in them live."[15] The identity of an actor is also the product of a social construction. This construction is also highly intersubjective as it takes place between the actor and its surrounding actors.

Another aspect of Constructivism is that it does not attribute more value or importance to some types actors than it does to other types of actors. Therefore, Constructivism itself is not a state-centric theory. Instead, the relevance of an international actor is constructed. Constructivism therefore allows analyses to take place in state-centric and non-state-centric manners. Constructivist analyses can therefore focus to a freely selectable degree on individuals or large entities such as states.[16]

One of the main advantages of a Constructivist analysis is that it is able to access and embed mechanism that were already formulated in other theories without leaving the Constructivist

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[13] Brummer, *Außenpolitikanalyse*, 52-55.

[14] Wendt, "Anarchy Is What States Make of It", 396/397

[15] Finnemore, Martha. *National Interests in International Society*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2017, 2. Emphasis in original.

[16] See more on the importance of states for the international system and the possibility for a change in their importance in: Wendt, "Anarchy Is What States Make of It", 424.

framework. It is therefore possible to identify constructions and arguments that have been already made in established theories. It is very difficult to disprove Constructivism by confronting it with empirical evidence due to the fact that Constructivism does not largely rely on fundamental anthropological assumptions or law-like assumptions about structures. This is not the case for Realism and Liberalism. Another advantage is that Constructivism can serve as an explanatory framework for nearly every case in international relations due to the absence of defined content of international relations within this approach.

The main weakness of Constructivism is its inability to serve as a predictive theory. This is mainly due to its analytical framework that only describes the process in which different outcomes can emerge. A Constructivist approach is therefore nearly exclusively useful for ex-post analyses. This theoretical disadvantage does not have any negative effects on this research due to the fact that the analysed events lie entirely in the past.[17] As no other IR theory has been very successful in predicting consistently the future, this disadvantage can be neglected.

3.2 Analytical Framework

Discourse analysis is a type of analysis that is used in many different disciplines such as social sciences or humanities with many different scholars participating in a debate about what a discourse is and how a discourse analysis should be conducted. Generally, can discourse analysis be described as follows:

> "[Discourse analysis] considers the relationship between language and the social and cultural context in which it is used and looks at patterns of organization across texts. It considers what people mean by what they say, how they work out what people mean, and the way language presents different views of the world and different understandings."[18]

As already mentioned in chapter 3.1, the significance of discourse is highly compatible with the Constructivist interpretation of international relations. Discourse analysis provides the necessary tools to examine one process that is crucial for Constructivist assumptions. When one assumes that international relations are largely social constructions that partly take place

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[17] See more on the theoretical limitations of Constructivism in Barkin, J. Samuel. "The Limits of Constructivism." In *Realist Constructivism*, 138-53. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010.
[18] Paltridge, Brian. *Discourse Analysis : An Introduction*. Continuum Discourse Series. London [etc.]: Continuum, 2006, 19/20.

via deliberative communication processes, a discourse analysis becomes a reasonable choice as an analytical tool.

The field of discourse theory and discourse analysis is extremely heterogenous and it is not really possible to identify a dominant stream within this field.[19] As the field of discourse theory and discourse analysis is extremely heterogenous and confusing, it is helpful to select a type of discourse analysis that fits well to the given case without arguing against other types of discourse analysis. This research therefore simply follows the argumentation of Senem Aydın-Düzgit who promotes in one article[20] the usage of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) for researches that wish to examine EU foreign policy. In the following paragraphs, CDA will be described and modified in order to customise it according to the given case. Modifying this CDA framework is necessary because the research focus does not analyse EU foreign policy in general but on a policy field that it tightly connected to foreign policy.

Several basic assumptions underlie a CDA. One of them is that social and political topics are constructed and reflected in discourses.[21] CDA is therefore compatible with the chosen Constructivist framework. The second basic assumption of CDA is that power relations are negotiated and performed via discourses. One object for observation in this context can be for example the order in which a discourse is held and constructed. The order in which the single actors within the discourse speak, may constitute and simultaneously reveal the power relations between the different actors involved.[22] This assumption about power and the focus on it is of great importance for this research but it will not play a direct role within the analysis itself. It is more an assumption that influenced and shaped the case selection of this work as it will be described later in chapter 4.

A third axiom that is typical for CDA is the assumption that discourses reflect and reproduce social relations. This means that by discursive means, relations amongst individuals are established, maintained and altered.[23] Using a Constructivist framework allows us to transfer this assumption to the international level, and to change the focus from the relations of individuals

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[19] Laffey, Mark and Weldes, Jutta. "Methodological reflections on discourse analysis." *Qualitative Methods* 2(1) (2004), 28.

[20] Aydın-Düzgit, Senem. "Critical Discourse Analysis in Analysing European Union Foreign Policy: Prospects and Challenges." *Cooperation and Conflict* 49, no. 3 (2014), 354-67.

[21] Paltridge. *Discourse Analysis*, 180.

[22] Paltridge. *Discourse Analysis*, 180/181.

[23] Ibd., 181/182.

to the relations of states. This modification also allows us to narrow down the focus of this research by focussing only on the attempts of one actor to define and shape its relations with other actors. This of course does not exclude the possibility to focus on individuals as well.

The fourth and last basic assumption of CDA is that ideologies are produced and reflected in discourses.[24] In a social context this can be for example the use of stereotypes that are based on ethnicity, gender or class. The use is here embedded in a mostly implicit underlying ideology. For this research, this assumption can be transferred to international relations. Like social interactions between individuals, actors in international relations also make use of ideology in order to justify their actions. These ideologies might be more explicitly expressed than in social interactions between individuals. Using CDA these underlying ideologies can be made visible:

> "Whatever genre we are involved in, and whatever the register of the situation, our use of language will also be influenced by our ideological positions: the values we hold (consciously or unconsciously), the biases and perspectives acquired through our particular path through the culture."[25]

In this specific case, this means that the EU might be following e.g. a liberal or a realist worldview.

The specific tools that can be used in order to conduct a CDA are manifold. It is therefore inevitable to make a choice of tools that narrows down the number different tools used. In order to make this choice explicit, I will therefore list here the main methods that will be used during the analysis.

One method is the analysis of interdiscursivity. Interdiscursivity assumes that discourses are interconnected, which allows the researcher to discover connections that were deliberately or inadvertently made between the discourse that is the object of analysis and other discourses. In the given case, this can for example be a connection to a liberalization discourse as well as to discourses of securitization. But it is also possible to discover a connection between political discourses and academic discourses. This could be, for example, the usage of terms and concepts that stem from a theory of International Relations. Depending on the type

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[24] Ibd., 182-184.
[25] Eggins, Suzanne. *An Introduction to Systemic Functional Linguistics*. 2nd ed. New York [etc.]: Continuum, 2004, 10.

of discourse which is being connected to the main discourse, the researcher can draw different conclusions.[26]

Another method is the analysis of framing. Framing describes the way in which the author of a text choses to describe a certain topic. He or she might intentionally present a topic in a certain way in order to influence the reader's opinion. This type of analysis also pays special respect to the background and foreground in which the discourse is embedded. Background means here the broader context in which the discourse is taking place. The foreground is the emphasis or deemphasis that the author puts on different topics and angels. In the case of EU-Russian energy relations this can be for example a strong reference to the Russian annexation of Crimea or the choice to not mention the annexation in certain contexts.[27]

The particular method used will be chosen during the detailed examination of the sources. Due to the flexible character of CDA it is possible to add methods during the research process when it appears to be useful.

In order to conduct this qualitative analysis, it follows the structure of a qualitative research analysis as it is suggested by Russel K. Schutt. According to this suggestion a qualitative data analysis can be structured using five steps:

1. "Documentation of the data and the process of data collection
2. Organization/categorization of the data into concepts
3. Connection of the data to show how one concept may influence another
4. Corroboration/legitimization, by evaluating alternative explanations, disconfirming evidence and searching for negative cases
5. Representing the account"[28]

Step one and two will take place in chapter 4 while step three can be found in chapter 5. Step four will take place in chapter 6 and step five will end this thesis in chapter 7.

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[26] Wu, Jianguo. "Understanding Interdiscursivity: A Pragmatic Model" *Journal of Cambridge Studies* 6, no. 2-3 (2011), 95-115.

[27] Paltridge. *Discourse Analysis*, 187-189.

[28] Schutt, Russell K. *Investigating the Social World : The Process and Practice of Research*. 7th ed. Los Angeles: SAGE, 2012, 325.

4. Data Selection, Periodisation and Categorisation of Key Elements

As already mentioned, the objective of this research is the analysis of the process in which the EU constructs its energy relations with Russia. In order to conduct this analysis, the data will be selected and the timeframe for the study established. Then, in the end, the key categorisation of key elements will take place.

As it is the intention to examine how the EU sees the energy trade and tries to shape the discourse, it is reasonable to focus on official documents that were released by institutions of the EU. More precisely, it is useful to focus on institutions that are part of the executive branch, which in this case is the functional equivalent of a national government. This includes in particular the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, General-Directorates (DG) and their respective Commissioners (in this case especially DG Energy), and the European Commission including the President of the Commission. The majority of the data will be communication documents from the Commission to the Council or the Parliament, and speeches that were held publicly addressing topics such as the European energy situation in general as well as speeches dealing with EU-Russian energy relations. It would also be possible to include speeches and texts published by the EU Parliament. This, however, will not be done in this research because the focus lies on the EU and its attempts to construct the energy relations with Russia to the outside. Including the Parliament would put the focus on the internal discourse process of the EU. Although part of the executive branch, the Council will also not be included because of its intergovernmental nature. As a result of this selection process 52 items have been chosen for the data set. 24 of these items are from the pre-crisis-era and 28 are from the post-crisis-era. All of these items are either originally in English or the English translations of original documents. For practical reasons, the analysed speeches will be analysed using the speech transcripts, not the actual delivery.

The analysed timeframe was chosen following the pragmatic objective of creating two roughly equally large datasets that are large enough to enable a comprehensive analysis and small enough to keep the analysed data manageable for this type of analysis. As a result of these considerations the set timeframe starts in June 2012 and ends in December 2016. The beginning of the Ukraine crisis is defined for this research as 16th February 2014. Periodization is often difficult. In this case, the date for the outbreak of the Ukraine crisis is based on the first response of the EU towards the Ukraine crisis within the analysed dataset.

In order to make this comparison manageable, it is necessary to develop categories for the two discourses which then can be compared. As the two discourses deal with the EU's general strategy for EU-Russian energy relations it is useful to define categories that are suitable for strategies in general. For this analysis, a strategy will be understood as a *solution concept* for *problems* that have been identified based on the *general construction* of the relations. The following subchapters will therefore analyse the discourses using the three key focus points: 1) General construction od relations 2) Problem definition in past, present and future and 3) Solutions and visions for problems in past, present and future. This categorization will help to evaluate the discontinuities and continuities in a structured way.

5. The EU's Discourse on EU-Russian Energy Relations

In the two following large sections of this chapter, the analysis and comparison of the two[29] discourses will take place. The first subchapter will analyse the first discourse and the second subchapter will analyse the second discourse while simultaneously comparing the first discourse with the second one. By doing so this chapters mainly answers the first research question 'To what extent does the EU's discourse on its energy strategy towards Russia display continuities and discontinuities before and after the Ukraine crisis?' and it provides the fundament for the subsequent chapter which will then answer the second research question.

5.1 The EU's Discourse Prior to the Crisis

General Nature of EU-Russian Energy Relations

General statements about EU-Russian energy relations can be found frequently throughout the selected data. The single descriptions of the relations however vary substantially in their characterization of the energy relations. Not only are the energy relations very differently evaluated, but the focus on different aspects of the relations varies as well. In the following, these attributes of the relationship will be examined more closely: hostile/friendly and symmetric/asymmetric. These attributes do not possess a major analytical importance but they help to structure the analysis. This structure appeared to be useful after a first examination of the data and remained useful as the analysis continued.

On the one side, there are very positive descriptions about the energy relations and about Russia itself as an energy supplier. These statements emphasise the long tradition of energy trade between Russia and the EU. Russia is framed here as a "reliable partner"[30] that can be trusted, due to the historically grown relationship between Russia and the EU. However, the context in which these very positive statements are made reveals that they do not necessarily reflect the EU's true evaluation of Russia as an energy partner. This is due to the fact that they can only be found in introductions of documents that also include, in other chapters and sections, open critique on the unreliability of Russia in the past.[31]

Leaving the few positive statements aside, the EU's view on its energy relations with Russia is not as friendly. In the vast majority of the documents that are reviewed for this analysis, EU-

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[29] There are not really two distinct discourses, but rather two periods of the same discourse. However, for practical reasons I will refer to the two phases in the following as the 'first discourse' and the 'second discourse'.

[30] European Commission, "Russian Federation. Country Strategy Paper 2007-2013", 2013, 3.

[31] E.g. European Commission, "Russian Federation. Country Strategy Paper".

Russian energy relations are described in a matter-of-fact way that emphases mostly utilitarian reasons for the cooperation and that values the relations neither positively nor negatively in the sense that Russia is not perceived as an ally or an enemy.[32] Although the relations are not framed as hostile in their general nature, the EU does refer to problems that have occurred during the past relationship. One problem that is mentioned frequently is the 2009 Ukraine Gas Crisis. This incident however is framed by the EU as an external input that motivates the EU to increase its efforts to improve its energy supply. It is not used to blame Russia directly for any problems in the past.[33] This reveals that although the EU is aware of potential threats coming from Russia, it still tries to improve or at least not worsen EU-Russian relations by diplomatic means. Instead the problems are mostly used to point out difficulties that need to be addressed based on mutual interest. The intentional attempt to frame existing problems in a neutral manner can be found in the usage of terms such as 'challenging' or 'concerning' in order to describe these problems.[34]

Even though the EU clearly tries to frame its energy relations with Russia mostly in a neutral and non-conflictual manner, a different way of expressing concerns regarding Russia's role as an energy supplier for other countries also becomes visible. When evaluating the economic and geo-political situations of countries that are part of the Eastern Partnership (EaP), the EU identifies a high dependence on Russian energy as an indirect threat to the respective countries. The EU expresses here very clearly concerns about dependence in general and about the specific dependence on Russia. It is therefore feasible to argue that the EU did indeed see Russia itself as a potential threat not only to non-EU Post-Soviet countries but also to its own member states.

The construction is conducted even more clearly in terms of framing the power relations underlying EU-Russian energy relations. When describing the relations, the EU often refers to them as being 'interdependent'.[35] Analysed without further context the term 'interdependence' appears to represent an interdiscursivity referring to the concept of interdependence as

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[32] European Commission, "EU-Russia Summit – President Barroso's main messages", Brussels, 2012, 2.

[33] E.g. Öttinger, Günther, "A Transatlantic Energy Revolution: Europe's Energy Diversification and U.S. Unconventional Oil and Gas", Washington, 2013, 4 and European Commission, "European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument. Ukraine. Country Strategy Paper 2007-2013", 2013, 8.

[34] Barroso, José Manuel Durão, "Speech by President Barroso at the Russia-European Union – Potential for Partnership conference: "Moving into a Partnership of Choice"", Moscow, 21st March, 2013, 5 and European Commission, "Minutes of the 2073rd meeting of the Commission held in Brussels (Berlaymont) on Wednesday 29 January 2014 (morning)", Strasbourg, 2014, 22.

[35] E.g. European Commission, "European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument. Ukraine", 6.

it is used in Liberal Theory. In this view interdependence would be a positive factor that creates a pacifying effect within EU-Russian relations.[36] However, put in further context within the texts where the term appears, this positive connotation of the term is deliberately avoided by the EU. This is achieved by describing the interdependence as strongly asymmetric. By frequently pointing out that Russia relies more on the trade with the EU than the EU relies on the energy supply by Russia, the EU not only describes the energy relations as asymmetric but it also frames Russia as the weaker partner.[37] The refusal of a Liberal view on interdependence allows the conclusion that the EU constructs interdependence in this context in a more realist way. The interdependence is therefore seen as a potential future dependence and therefore a potential threat to the EU.

Problem Definition in Past, Present and Future

When it comes to the definition and the framing of problems within EU-Russian energy relations, the EU's discourse is concerned with geopolitical, political/legal, economic and environmental problems. These problems play very different roles within the discourse and they receive different levels of attention. In the following, the construction of these different types of problems will be analysed. It is, however, worth mentioning that the EU itself presents the problem identification in a much simpler way. In EU terms, there are only two key problems that concern EU-Russian energy relations. This is according to the EU a lack of diversification and a lack of competition.[38]

In terms of seeing EU-Russian energy relations in a problematic way that is connected to geopolitical considerations, the EU's discourse on the own relations with Russia is relatively vague and it appears that the EU undertakes the attempt to frame geopolitical problems in a very cautious manner. The only direct mentioning of geopolitical concerns are expressed by stating that Russia uses its energy as a "soft power"[39] tool in order to influence its neighbourhood. This is the clearest expression of geopolitical concerns that could be found in the examined data. Other geopolitical concerns are expressed, as is the case for the general description of

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[36] I am referring here to the liberal mainstream Interdependence Theory in International Relations as it is described in this standard work: Keohane, Nye, and Nye, Joseph S. *Power and Interdependence : World Politics in Transition*. Boston, Mass., [etc.]: Little, Brown, 1977.

[37] European Commission, "EU-Russia Summit", 2.

[38] European Commission, "Commission Staff Working Document Assessment of the 2013 national reform programme and convergence programme for Poland. Accompanying the document Recommendation for a Council Recommendation on Poland's 2013 national reform programme and delivering a Council Opinion on Poland's 2013 convergence programme for 2012-2016", Brussels, 2013, 22.

[39] European Commission, "Russian Federation. Country Strategy Paper", 8.

the relations, in a more indirect manner by describing the geopolitical situations of EaP countries. Here, the Russian dominance in the energy sector is framed in a more problematic manner than is done in the discourse on the EU's own exposure to Russian geopolitical power. During the EU's description of the EaP countries' geopolitical situation in terms of energy security, the EU's discourse uses the expression that these countries "still"[40] rely on to a large extent on Russian energy. The term 'still' has two major implications in this context. Firstly, expresses it that relying largely on Russian gas is a dated situation stemming from a shared Soviet history. This interpretation is based on the fact that this expression is mostly used for descriptions dealing with post-Soviet countries. Secondly, it expresses the EU's desire to change this situation. It can therefore be concluded from the usage of the term 'still' in this context that the EU sees a strong reliance on Russian energy as a major problem that needs to be addressed. This view on the Russian energy resources as a potential threat can be seen in particular in the EU's view on Moldova's and Armenia's geopolitical energy situation that is described by the EU as 'vulnerable'.[41] The usage of the concept of vulnerability reveals here that the EU sees a clear potential political threat in the reliance on Russia in general.

The political/legal problems that are part of EU-Russian energy relations are also described in a relatively cautiously manner. When problems are brought up in the discourse this usually only happens in connection with the mentioning of failed or incomplete attempts to solve these problems. One example for this is the complaint of the European Commission that Russia fails to provide a reliable legal framework that is necessary for a reliable and sustainable EU-Russian energy relationship.[42] This can be found in other documents and speeches as well.[43] The problem definition does not only include the identification of the problem itself but also an implicit accusation towards Russia of being a state that lacks a sufficient rule of law and a functioning judicial system. In this problem area, the EU therefore sees itself very clearly in a superior position and not as the cause of any political/legal problems within the

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[40] European Commission, "European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument. Azerbaijan. Country Strategy Paper. 2007-2013", 2013, 10 and European Commission, "European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument. Moldova. Country Strategy Paper. 2007-2013", 2013, 8 and European Commission, "European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument. Mongolia. Country Strategy Paper. 2007-2013", 7.
[41] European Commission, "European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument. Moldova", 34 and European Commission, "European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument. Armenia. Country Strategy Paper 2007-2013", 2013, 33.
[42] European Commission, "Report from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council and the European Economic and Social Committee. Implementation of the Communication on Security of Energy Supply and International Cooperation and of the Energy Council Conclusions of November 2011", Brussels, 2013, 9.
[43] Barroso, "Speech by President Barroso at the Russia-European Union", 6.

relationship. Instead, it repeatedly frames itself as a role model that can serve as a template for solutions for Russia's political/legal deficits. This view can be interpreted as a reiteration of the general assumption that Russia and the EU are unequal partners in an asymmetric relationship where the EU is clearly the more advanced, more developed and more powerful partner. This finding becomes even more evident when this discourse is compared with the second discourse.

In addition, to the problem of unreliability the EU frames the Russian usage of its energy resources for political purposes as a problem. The EU is especially concerned with the strong leverage that Russia may have on countries that rely to a high degree or even entirely on Russian energy sources. This can be seen for example in the aim of the EU to integrate EU and EaP energy markets. By problematizing this aspect of the Russian energy trade, the EU is once again concerned with the vulnerability of the countries themselves on the one hand and with the general potential of strong Russian influence in foreign counties on the other hand.[44]

Economic problems that the EU identifies within EU-Russian energy relations are closely related to the already mentioned problems. The main concern is in the economic dimension that Russia is capable of influencing the economic development in countries that rely heavily on Russian energy. The concrete problem is here that the EU sees it as potentially dangerous that Russia may raise energy prices rapidly and substantially which it is capable of due to its monopoly in the energy sector.[45] But also, a constantly high level of energy prices as a result of the Russian dominance within the energy sector is problematised. Besides those concrete problems, it is also possible to identify a more general economic problem. This can be seen for example in documents dealing with the economic situation of member states or EaP states. The problem framed in these documents is that relying largely on Russian energy is an indicator for a dated and unmodern economy that is stuck in a Soviet past and fails to adapt to modern standards. The problem is therefore not Russia itself but the lack of economic modernisation in the threatened countries.[46]

Another field in which the EU defines problems is the environmental field. Here, problems are not addressed or mentioned directly within the examined documents. However, although the

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[44] E.g. EU Neighbourhood Info Centre, "Eastern Partnership and Russia", 2013, 7.

[45] European Commission, "Energy Challenges and Policy. Commission Contribution to the European Council of 22 May 2013", Brussels, 2013, 3.

[46] E.g. European Commission, "Recommendation for a Council Recommendation on Poland's 2013 national reform programme", 5.

problems are not directly defined by the EU, it becomes clear that the EU frames environmental issues as a problem within the energy relations with Russia as it proposes increased environmental standards for every actor directly involved in the energy trade with Russia. While specific environmental problems are not directly described or mentioned by the EU, a specific problem is brought up together with environmental issues that can be seen as an environmental problem. This is the problem of inefficient energy consumption which the EU frequently problematises. While this problem itself is often and directly addressed, the EU does not link it directly to environmental, economic or political problems. It is therefore unclear analysing the discourse whether the EU promotes higher energy efficiency for environmental, political, geopolitical or economic reasons.[47]

Solutions and Visions for Future Relations

Within the EU's discourse on its energy relations with Russia there are a lot of solutions presented for current and anticipated problems. Some of those solutions are programmes and measures that are already taking place, some are planned for the foreseeable future and some are visions for a distant future. Instead of analysing the discourse on the different specific programmes themselves, this section will analyse the EU's general discourse that promotes and justifies certain measures which are perceived to be necessary in order to solve problems within the relations. Analysing the discourse on already existing institutionalised solutions such as the Gas Advisory Council or the Early Warning Mechanism is not very useful as the EU generally only mentions these institutions without giving any extensive elaboration.

One approach to improve the energy relations with Russia is the promotion of liberalisation. The liberalisation has two main purposes. The first objective is to achieve a further juridification of EU-Russian energy trade. This juridification does not only aim to make the trade more predictable and secure, it also aims to push back the Russian Government's direct influence within the energy trade.[48] The Liberalisation therefore aims to provide more transparency on the one side and more legal certainty on the other side. The other objective of the liberalisation is to make it easier for entrepreneurs to access the energy market and participate in the

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[47] This criticism of inefficient energy use applies especially for post-Soviet EU member states such as Latvia. See European Commission, "Commission Staff Working Document Assessment of the 2013 national reform programme and convergence programme for Latvia. Accompanying the document Recommendation for a Council Recommendation on Latvia's 2013 national reform programme and delivering a Council Opinion on Latvia's 2013 convergence programme for 2012-2016", Brussels, 2013, 4.
[48] European Commission, "Russian Federation. Country Strategy Paper", 11.

energy trade. It is the expressed hope of the EU to create more competition within the energy market and therefore lower the prices for energy and to improve the supply of energy in general. All in all, the EU expresses very clearly throughout the examined documents that this liberalisation is supposed to take place in a very asymmetric manner. While the EU does not see a significant need for change within the own regulations and practices, it points very directly at Russia as the one in need of action.[49]

Another important approach is the idea of diversification. Diversification in this context refers mainly to the diversification of energy suppliers and types of energy sources and carriers that are consumed as well as to the energy transport infrastructure. This approach is supposed to decrease the dependence on Russia as a main energy supplier. It therefore aims to increase the resilience and to decrease the vulnerability of EU-member states that rely significantly on Russian energy imports. Besides these main objectives, the diversification also aims to diversify the transit countries that are crucial for the transport of energy. According to the EU this diversification is supposed to take place by connecting the EU-states that rely heavily on Russian energy with the energy infrastructure of other countries.[50] Besides these specific solution, the EU's discourse reveals a general desire for convergence with Russia. This convergence does not only include regulatory, technical and economic convergence in the field of energy trade and power generation. It also includes the creation of institutionalised bilateral communication channels. Here the EU nearly exclusively promotes and suggests unilateral convergence that puts Russia in the position of the partner in need of change. In return, the EU offers financial and technical aid for Russia and countries of the EaP as incentives to participate in this convergence project.[51]

As the ultimate vision for a European-Russian energy trade, the EU presents the concept of a common energy marked that is achieved by a very high degree of convergence. This should lead to an institutionalisation of the energy trade and make it transparent, predictable and safe for all parties involved. This vision however is seen by the EU as very difficult to achieve. This is expressed directly by stating that too many yet unknown variables exist which make

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[49] E.g. Öttinger, "A Transatlantic Energy Revolution", 5.

[50] E.g. European Commission, "Assessment of the 2013 national reform programme and stability programme for Finland. Accompanying the document Recommendation for a Council Recommendation on Finland's 2013 national reform programme and delivering a Council Opinion on Finland's 2013 stability programme for 2012-2017", Brussels, 23.

[51] E.g. European Commission, "Commission Staff Working Document Assessment of the 2013 national reform programme and convergence programme for Poland", 22.

predictions at the moment impossible. This estimation can also be seen in the absence of concrete dates and models for the far future. While the Energy Roadmap 2050 is the most future oriented plan that has been publicly presented, it is very clearly expressed that this plan is far from being easily and securely achievable within the currently set period. This can be seen for example in a speech[52] by José Manuel Durão Barroso in which he emphasizes that little progress should also be perceived positively.

5.2 The EU's Discourse After the Ukraine crisis in Comparison

In this section, the second discourse will be analysed, simultaneously comparing it to the previously analysed one. Similarities between the two discourses will not be analysed very elaborately. Instead, they will only be briefly mentioned while the main focus lies on the differences between the two discourses. Differences do not only include changes within the already identified elements but also the addition of elements that did not occur during the first discourse. The structure will be the same as in the previous subchapter.

General Nature of EU-Russian Energy Relations

Following the same structure as the previous subchapter did, this subchapter will also examine the EU's discourse on EU-Russian energy trade with special regard to the general framing of the relations. Using the same categories hostile/friendly and symmetric/asymmetric, this section will analyse the discourse found after the Ukraine crisis and compare this with the discourse before the crisis. Then general other changes that do not fit into the mentioned categories will be analysed in the end of this section.

In the discourse after the Ukraine crisis, general descriptions of EU-Russian energy relations and on Russia as an energy partner did not appear as frequently in the examined documents as was the case in the first discourse. Not only the frequency in which the characterisations appear changed, however. Also, the content of the few existing descriptions changed. While purely positive descriptions vanished entirely, most neutral and negative elements that were mentioned in the previous discourse are reiterated and some are emphasised differently. The most significant change is that the EU in the second discourse openly doubts Russia's reliability as an energy supplier. This does not mean that the EU rejects the reliability and the benevolence of the Russian Federation: it rather frames the Ukraine crisis as a critical test in which

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[52] Barroso, José Manuel Durão, "Statement by President Barroso following the meeting between the European Commission and the Russian Government", Moscow, 2013, 3.

Russia has to prove its general good nature. Despite the tense situation, however, the EU expresses that it is, with some caution, convinced that Russia is willing to act as a partner and not as an enemy, both during the Crisis and within its energy trade with the EU and EaP countries.[53]

The EU's view on the distribution of power and vulnerability within EU-Russian energy relations did not change fundamentally either. However, the emphasis on the asymmetric interdependence is far stronger than in the first discourse. While the framing of the vulnerability of EU-member states and EaP states remains nearly unchanged, the necessity of the energy trade for Russia is framed more elaborately. Here the EU does not only out more emphasis on more the general reliance of the Russian economy on the energy trade with the EU, but also on its lack of alternative outlet markets. In this case, the EU specifically frames China as an unfeasible alternative export destination for Russian energy. The EU points, in this argument, to the incapability of Chinese consumers to pay prices as high as European.[54] Although the description did not change fundamentally, it can still be concluded that the EU increasingly constructs a relationship that is crucial for both partners, but with a stronger vulnerability on the Russian side.

Besides these aspects of EU-Russian energy relations, the EU added several new constituents to this relationship. First of all, it includes Ukraine as a crucial element of EU-Russian energy trade that cannot be treated separately from EU-Russian relations. By framing Ukraine not only as an indispensable transit country but also as a general partner of the EU, the EU makes very explicit that it prioritises Ukraine's well-being as highly as its own. It does so by expressing the intention to deliberately maintain the role of Ukraine as a crucial energy transit country for the EU. By doing so, the EU connects the vulnerability of Ukraine to its own vulnerability, leaving Russia no possibility to cut off Ukraine separately from energy exports to the EU. This connection of geopolitical strategy and EU-Russian energy trade is a clear novelty in the second discourse.[55]

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[53] Barroso, José Manuel Durão, "Remarks by President Barroso following his meeting with the Prime Minister of Estonia, Mr Taavi Rõivas", Brussels, 2014, 2.

[54] European Commission, "Minutes of the 2086th meeting of the Commission held in Brussels (Berlaymont) on Wednesday 21 May 2014 (morning)", Brussels, 2014, 18.

[55] Šefčovič, Maroš, "Keynote speech at the EU Energy Security Conference 2015 organised by European Court of Auditors", Brussels, 2015, 2.

Another (far less surprising) novelty is the mentioning of the Ukraine crisis as an event that has the potential to fundamentally and sustainably alter EU-Russian energy relations and EU-Russian relations in general. For the immediate future, the EU sees no fundamental changes possible, but for the long-term relations, the EU openly debates the possibility to change its energy supply to such an extensive manner that it would not rely on Russian energy imports at all.[56] However, during this internal discussion the EU only debates this option and does not use it as a direct threat towards Russia. This aspect will be more extensively analysed in this subchapter's section on future visions.

Other novelties in the second discourse in comparison to the first discourse are that the EU mentions Gazprom more frequently as an actor instead of addressing Russia in general.[57] It also explicitly focusses on gas imports, within the different types of imported energy carriers.[58] These changes are only mentioned here for the sake of completeness as they are of minor importance. They will not play a role within the rest of the analysis.

Problem Definition in Past, Present and Future

The EU's discourse on the problems identified within EU-Russian energy relations has changed more than that on the general nature of the relations. However, the problems that the EU identified have not changed completely: only the way in which the EU emphasises and addresses these problems differs. Following the same structure as the previous subchapter did, this subchapter will also examine problems that are connected to geopolitical, political/legal, economic and environmental considerations. In the end, new topics that were not part of the previous discourse will be analysed.

The way in which the EU frames geopolitical concerns in the second discourse is remarkably different from the previous discourse. Even though the problems identified remain the same, the EU has clearly sharpened the way in which these problems are framed. While the previous discourse was relatively vague and cautious in the way it problematised Russia's geopolitical

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[56] European Commission, "Commission Staff Woking Document. Impact Assessment. Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council Concerning Measures to Safeguard Security of Gas Supply and Repealing Council Regulation 994/2010", Brussels, 2016, 43/44.
[57] European Commission, "Minutes of the 2083rd meeting of the Commission held in Strasbourg (Winston Churchill building) Tuesday 15 April 2014 (afternoon)", Brussels, 2014, 26.
[58] European Commission, "Minutes of the 2087th meeting of the Commission held in Brussels (Berlaymont) on Wednesday 28 May 2014 (morning)", Brussels, 2014, 24.

use of its energy resources, it became more openly critical about Russia's geopolitical capabilities and the potential will of the Russian government to make use of them. This can be seen, for example, in the fact that the EU openly debates scenarios in which a complete stop of Russian energy imports occurs. But also, the description of the geopolitical situations of EaP countries became more serious and explicit in the way potential threats coming from Russia are framed. Also, the focus lies here entirely on the threat of a Russian interruption of the gas supply. Other minor potential threats such as general Russian influence in energy related companies are not as predominant in the second discourse as they are in the first discourse.[59]

While the geopolitical considerations have clearly gained importance within the problem definition of the EU, the legal/political problems have become less central in the second discourse. Especially the previously very dominant problematisation of Russia as an unreliable partner that produces uncertainty due to its lack of juridification and rule of law nearly vanished in the second discourse. The only instance where the EU directly emphasises the importance of legal frameworks is its emphasis on the Minsk Agreement as a solution for the ongoing crisis.[60] Besides this weaker emphasis on legal/political problems, an entirely new problem appeared in the EU's discourse. This problem, however, does not focus on legal or political problems concerning Russia, but on problems within the EU itself. More precisely, this newly framed problem entails that the EU sees its ability to gather data concerning energy within the EU as too limited, which causes the EU to argue for more collection of information from gas companies. This includes, for example, information about contracts that the gas companies concluded. The reason cited for this inability to gather data is the limited competencies that EU authorities possess. One result of this lack of information is the inability to anticipate supply problems and other potential threats to the European energy security early enough.[61]

Also in terms of framing economic problems related to EU-Russian energy relations, the second discourse differs substantially from the first discourse. Most of the previously relevant economic topics connected to the energy trade now vanished nearly entirely. Concerns about

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[59] European Commission, "Commission Staff Woking Document. Impact Assessment.", 42 and European Commission, "Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee, the Committee of the Regions and the European Investment Bank. State of the Energy Union 2015", Brussels,2015, 11.

[60] Šefčovič, Maroš "The state of play of EU-Russia energy relations", Brussels, 2015, 2.

[61] European Commission, "Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council concerning measures to safeguard the security of gas supply and repealing Regulation (EU) No 994/2010", Brussels, 2016, 10/11.

potential price increases are here replaced by concerns connected to energy security and general geopolitical issues. However, in the field of economic problems there is one new aspect in the second discourse: the debate on the costs of being independent from Russian energy imports. Here the EU internally debates technical and market-oriented options for a medium- or long-term independence from Russia. This option is then dismissed on the basis of economic concerns which stipulate that it would cost too much to become independent from Russian energy, partly due to high investments in new energy infrastructure that would become necessary and partly due to the higher energy prices resulting from more expensive supply sources. This means that the discourse here changed nearly entirely by focussing only on economic aspects of alternatives to EU-Russian energy relations.[62]

The construction of environmental issues related to EU-Russian energy relations seems similar to that of economic problems. In all examined documents that deal with environmental issues, these issues were exclusively mentioned in connection with the idea that renewable energies might allow the EU to become more energy self-sufficient and therefore less dependent on Russia. Besides this mentioning of these issues, no problematisation within the EU's discourse could be found that is primarily concerned with environmental issues within EU-Russian energy trade. In addition, the previously mentioned issue of energy efficiency is connected in the second discourse to the issue of reducing dependence. This means that the rather minor role of environmental issues in the first discourse became even more irrelevant during the second discourse.[63]

While the nature of the main problems on which the EU focuses did not change, the way in which these problems are addressed changed significantly. A narrative found throughout most of the examined documents tries to exert pressure on some member states of the EU by very directly calling out single states for their lack of implementation of the EU's energy strategy. While in the previous discourse, the focus was more on the vulnerability of single member states, the focus lies now on the (lack of) actions that EU-states have undertaken in order to solve these problems. One example is the mentioning of Latvia and Lithuania as states lacking

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[62] European Commission, "Commission Staff Woking Document. Impact Assessment.", 43/44.
[63] European Commission, "Minutes of the 2080th meeting of the Commission held in Brussels (Berlaymont) on Thursday 27 March 2014 (morning)", Brussels, 2014, 17.

diversification and not having done enough according to the EU to diversify their energy sources.[64]

Another novelty in the problematisation part of the discourse is the emphasis on past crises within EU-Russian energy relations in order to trivialize the current crisis.[65] While the EU previously mentioned the Ukrainian Gas Crisis in 2009 from time to time, it now mentions even more crises and does so even more frequently. The EU therefore deliberately attempts to partially and slightly de-problematise EU-Russian energy relations. Furthermore, other phenomena such as the Iran Nuclear Deal or new discoveries of energy sources in the Mediterranean are brought up in order to frame the energy field as generally unpredictable. This, however, does not conceal the alertness and wariness with which the EU is treating Russia within its discourse.[66]

Another new element in the EU's discourse on problem definition revealing their caution is the problematisation and evaluation of the EU's solutions. Here, it is an absolute novelty that the EU identifies potential critical aspects within its own actions towards Russia. One example is the previously mentioned discourse on the affordability of a complete independence from Russian energy.[67] Another example is the general concern of the EU not to isolate Russia and not to initiate too strong punitive measures against the Russian annexation of Crimea.[68] This caution of the EU is entirely new within the discourse. Another aspect of this caution worth mentioning is that the EU expresses this in a very open and direct way by openly mentioning possible negative effects of measures that are being debated, and doubting their effectiveness. This is a very significant difference to the previous discourse in the sense that the EU presents itself in the previous discourse as a clearly superior partner that is in the comfortable position to point out flaws of the other partner without having to identify and solve problems of its own.

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[64] European Commission, "EU BOP Assistance to Latvia Sixth Review Under Post-Programme Surveillance", Brussels, 2014, 16 and European Commission, "EU Energy Markets in 2014", Luxembourg, 2014, 101 and European Commission, "Report from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council", Brussels, 2014, 5.

[65] European Commission, "Memo. Questions and answers on security of energy supply in the EU", Brussels, 2014, 3.

[66] European Commission, "2015 Annual Activity Report. Directorate-General for Energy", Brussels, 2016, 7.

[67] European Commission, "Commission Staff Woking Document. Impact Assessment.", 43/44.

[68] Šefčovič, Maroš, "The state of play of EU-Russia energy relations", Brussels, 2015, 20.

Solutions and Visions for Future Relations

While the discourses on the general nature of EU-Russian relations and the problems within these relations changed moderately, the discourse on the strategy to solve existing and future problems changed more significantly. Although the previous main themes of liberalisation and diversification remain relevant, there are significant changes observable in the emphasis placed on these two themes, as well as in the presentation of new solutions.

Liberalisation was in the first discourse of major importance. This changed in the second discourse. Here, liberalisation can hardly be found as an important approach to improve EU-Russian energy relations. This may be due to the fact that the perceived Russian unreliability changed from a legal unreliability that is the product of an insufficient rule of law to an unreliability that is the product of hostile and illegal military operations in Ukraine. However, while the EU does not directly repeal previous demands to liberalise EU-Russian energy trade, the focus lies clearly on other types of solutions. The only aspect of the second discourse that includes elements of liberalisation is the EU's emphasis on transparency and juridification within the Russian-Ukrainian negotiations concerning the future gas supply of Ukraine and the Ukrainian debt for past gas imports from Russia.[69]

More consistent by far is the EU's discourse concerning diversification. Here the previous urge to diversify its energy sources is still of major importance within the EU's discourse. There are also clear differences observable between the two discourses, however, while both discourses emphasise the importance of reducing the dependence on Russian energy, the second discourse does so in a stronger manner that emphasises the urgency of diversification.[70] One way in which the EU creates this urgency is by pointing out that some member states, here especially Latvia, have failed to diversify their energy sources. By pointing out these failures, the EU does not only increase the pressure on its member states to advance further diversification projects, but it also emphasises the relevance of an old solution which the EU has been promoting for a long time.[71]

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[69] European Commission, "Minutes of the 2090th meeting of the Commission held in Brussels (Berlaymont) on Wednesday 18 June 2014 (morning)", Brussels, 2014, 16.

[70] European Commission, "Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council. European Energy Security Strategy", Brussels, 2014, 19/20.

[71] European Commission, "Commission Staff Working Document. Assessment of the 2014 National Reform Programme and Stability Programme for Latvia. Accompanying the document Recommendation for a Council Recommendation on Latvia's 2014 National Reform Programme and Delivering a Council Opinion on Latvia's 2014 Stability Programme", Brussels, 2014, 20.

Besides this increased pressure on single member states, another aspect of diversification can be found in the second discourse: the increase in concrete debates on potential new energy suppliers. Here, the EU mentions for the first time within the analysed documents directly new sources in the Mediterranean, Qatar, Australia and North America. The second discourse on diversification can therefore be described as framing problems and solutions in a more concrete, more serious and more urging manner.[72]

Besides the two general solutions of liberalisation and diversification, several other, more concrete solutions are new to the second discourse. While the first discourse was more concerned with large middle- and long-term improvements of the general EU-Russian energy trade, the second discourse focusses more on concrete and more immediate measures that the EU may implement in order to maintain its current energy security.

One of the measures presented more prominently in the second discourse is a stress test.[73] This stress test simulated in one scenario a complete disruption of Russian gas imports to the EU and in a second scenario a disruption of gas imports via Ukraine. In the discourse, the test is presented as a direct result of the Ukraine crisis. As a result of this stress test, the EU frames the European energy security as rather safe, while simultaneously and constantly presenting a high degree of cooperation amongst European countries as a solution that might improve the resilience of the EU towards Russian energy threats.[74]

This also introduces another novelty in the discourse, as the word 'resilience' appears frequently during the second discourse while it did not play an important role in the first discourse.[75] The introduction of the term 'resilience' indicates a more fundamental shift in the discourse on EU-Russian energy relations. While the previous discourse was mainly concerned with approaches that improve the efficiency and reliability of EU-Russian energy relations in the future, the second discourse is mainly concerned with approaches that ensure and improve the EU's immediate energy security. Another shift is the change from predominantly

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[72] European Commission, "Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council. European Energy Security Strategy", Brussels, 2014, 16.

[73] European Commission, "Memo. Q&A on Gas Stress Tests", Brussels, 2014.

[74] European Commission, "Minutes of the 2084th meeting of the Commission held in Brussels (Berlaymont) on Wednesday 7 May 2014 (morning)", Brussels, 2014, 11.

[75] E.g. European Commission, "Energy Union Package. Communication form the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee, the Committee of the Regions and the European Investment Bank. A Framework Strategy for a Resilient Energy Union with a Forward-Looking Climate Change Policy", Brussels, 2015 and European Commission, "Energy Union Package. A Framework Strategy for a Resilient Energy Union with a Forward-Looking Climate Change Policy", Brussels, 2015.

presenting future visions for a better cooperation to a focus on immediate reactions to prevent damages and reduce immediate dangers.

Another entirely new approach of the EU is the direct and deliberate connection of the Ukrainian energy situation to the European energy situation. This can be seen in statements by the EU concerning general geopolitical considerations as well as in statements framing its own role in the peace process of the crisis in a very active manner. As already mentioned, the EU explicitly and deliberately connected its own vulnerability towards Russian energy imports to Ukraine's vulnerability. This is a strong change in the way the EU frames Ukraine's role in EU-Russian energy relations. While Ukraine was merely mentioned to be an important transit country in the first discourse, its role gained more importance in the second discourse. The EU establishes this connection expressing the clear intent to maintain Ukraine's role as a central transit country for Russian gas. The EU did so by refusing to present or debate energy infrastructure projects that avoid transiting Russian gas through Ukraine.[76]

Concerning its own role in this crisis the EU chose to present itself as a moderator that mediates between Russia and Ukraine.[77] The EU connects here the stability of Ukraine, the Russian-Ukrainian relations, and its own energy security with each other. It does so by promoting de-escalation and by organising a dialogue between the two countries. This type of deliberate, direct involvement in the Russian-Ukrainian relations is new in the second discourse on EU-Russian energy relations.

Other minor changes and novelties in the EU's discourse are that the EU strives for more competencies in order to collect data from energy companies. This shall provide the possibility for the EU to anticipate future supply problems earlier and more precisely.[78] Also, the emphasis on a unified acting within the EU towards Russia is a novelty within the second discourse. Here the EU emphasises that single-state actions of any EU member state would not be in the interest of any EU state due to a potential weakening of the European position in EU-Russian negotiations.[79]

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[76] Šefčovič, Maroš, "Keynote speech at the EU Energy Security Conference 2015 organised by European Court of Auditors", Brussels, 2.

[77] European Union External Actions Service, "Fact Sheet. EU-Ukraine relations", Brussels, 2016, 4 and European Commission, "Minutes of the 2119th meeting of the Commission held in Strasbourg (Winston Churchill) on Tuesday 10 March 2015 (afternoon)", Brussels, 2015, 15.

[78] European Commission, "Proposal for a Regulation", 10/11.

[79] European Commission, "Minutes of the 2096th meeting of the Commission held in Brussels (Berlaymont) on Wednesday 3 September 2014 (morning)", Strasbourg, 2014, 15.

6. Evaluation of Continuities and Discontinuities

In this chapter, the results of the comparison of the two discourses will be evaluated. By doing so the second research question 'Do these continuities and discontinuities indicate a resilience or a failure of the EU's energy strategy towards Russia?' will be answered. The evaluation will show whether continuities and discontinuities within the two discourses indicate a failure or a success on the part of the EU in constructing its energy relations with Russia in a manner that enables it to cope with crises such as the Ukraine crisis. For this evaluation, a successful construction of relations means that an actor is able to develop a strategy based on a realistic problem evaluation which is rooted in a sound view on the partner. A careful evaluation of the two discourses is necessary because continuities between the discourses might indicate a successful construction as well as an incapability of adaptation, while strong discontinuities can indicate a failure in developing a resilient strategy as well as an adaptiveness to unexpected crises. Continuities and discontinuities therefore do not automatically indicate failures or successes and require a qualitative evaluation. The structure of this evaluation will follow the same structure as the comparison did and therefore focus on the construction of the general relations, the problem recognition and the solutions.

The general European construction of EU-Russian energy relations can be described as largely realistic, but partially too optimistic and potentially arrogant. The most important aspect is here that the EU evaluated Russia's use of its energy resources for geopolitical purposes in a realistic way, as the Ukraine crisis later showed. The EU can therefore not be accused of being too idealistic or credulous. The vanishing of positive descriptions in the second discourse, however, reveals a partially too optimistic view on Russia in terms of estimating the Russian willingness for deep cooperation as too high. Also, the Russian geopolitical ambitions were not estimated correctly by the EU, which led to unrealistic visions of a common future with Russia, characterised by deep and institutionalised cooperation. This too optimistic evaluation of the Russian willingness to engage in European projects also reveals a characteristic of the EU that can be described as arrogance. Especially the emphasis on unilateral convergence by pointing out flaws of the Russian partner vanished entirely in the second discourse which can be seen as an adjustment of a previous flaw in the European construction. However, these inadequacies in the European construction were no major problem for the development of a sound and resilient energy strategy towards Russia, because they did not hamper the development of crucial strategic elements.

Similar to the previous evaluation is also the evaluation of the EU's success in recognising problems and potential problems within EU-Russian energy relations. Whereas discontinuities in the two discourses can be observed, these do not necessarily indicate a failure. This can be seen in the fact that although the EU's focus on different problems changed significantly, all problems becoming important during the crisis had already been identified in the first discourse. Especially the increased focus on Russia's geopolitical use of its energy resources indicates that previous problem recognitions were not far off the mark. Also, the newly conducted stress test cannot be counted as a failure in the problem definition, as it was an immediate reaction of the EU to the crisis that was embedded in the previous problem recognition discourse. Even though the discourses mainly reveal a realistic problem identification, there are also discontinuities between the two discourses that can be seen as a partial failure. This is especially the case of the EU 's focus on legal problems with Russia. Here, not only the political will of Russia to engage in unilateral change was heavily overestimated, but also the focus was also put on problems that are far less important for European energy security than the problems on which the second discourse focusses. It can therefore be concluded that the overall problem recognition of the EU was successful, even though some priorities of the EU were unrealistic due to partially idealistic views on Russia.

While the evaluation of the previous two aspects was relatively simple, the evaluation of the solutions that the EU presented before the crisis and after the crisis is more complex. This is due to the fact that it is necessary to distinguish between actions that are a direct and immediate situational response to the crisis and solutions that indicate a general shift of solutions in the discourse. For example, the presented stress test should not be seen as a failure of the construction because of the discontinuity it represents. Instead it should rather be seen as an action that the EU undertook as a direct response to the crisis which is part of the previously mentioned discourse on diversification. Also, the initiative of the EU to moderate in the conflict between Russia and the Ukraine cannot be seen as an aberration from the previous discourse simply on the basis that it is a new undertaking by the EU.

The connection of the Ukrainian geopolitical situation to the EU's situation, however, indicates a strong change in the two discourses as this is not a short-term reaction to the problems that the crisis creates. This important shift of the EU's discourse, however, can also be understood as a connection of two geopolitical objectives: gaining influence over Ukraine, and energy related objectives. During the conducted discourse analysis, it remained unclear whether this

connection of Ukrainian and European energy interests is based on a larger geopolitical strategy or on a specific energy related strategy. However, it can be argued that this new connection was a continuation of the already existing emphasis on the importance of Ukraine for the European energy security. This can be argued especially in connection with the trilateral mediation that the EU conducted which fits into this type of solution narrative.

One discontinuity within the two discourses, however, is a clear indicator for a partial failure of the European construction of it energy relations with Russia: the aspect of the self-criticism and self-reflection of the EU towards its own energy strategy that is new to the second discourse. Here, the adjustments made cannot be explained by interpreting them as a change that occurred as a response to an extraordinary situation within the already existing strategy. This can be seen in the fact that self-criticism and self-reflection can hardly be described as a response directed to Russia, Ukraine or the crisis. It is rather an indicator for a correction of the own construction based on external events. This argument is supported by the new caution observable within the EU's discourse on punitive measures towards Russia. This finding be summarized hyperbolically by stating that the EU lost its arrogance and presumptuousness towards Russia due to the Ukraine crisis as it was confronted with an opponent that is surprisingly willing to use hard power to pursue its interests.

All in all, however, it can be concluded that the EU's construction and the EU's energy strategy was realistic and practical in its overall conception, and resilient enough to largely survive unexpected crises such as the Ukraine crisis. This statement can also be underlined by the simple empirical fact that the energy trade between the EU and the Russian Federation has not stopped even today.

7. Conclusions

I started this thesis by asking whether the EU's discourse on its energy relations with Russia changed with the events of the Ukraine crisis, and whether these changes indicate a failure of the EU's strategy for its energy relations with Russia. These two questions have been answered, with small exceptions, very clearly during this research: the discourse did indeed change, but only to an extent that does not indicate a failure of the EU's energy strategy towards Russia. Instead, the changes made indicate a general ability of the EU to adapt to new and unexpected crises in a proper manner. It can therefore be concluded that the EU has proven to be able to provide and if necessary to adjust a strategy that ensures a secure energy supply for its citizens even in times of unexpected crises. Whereas the provided energy strategy was largely successful in providing a secure energy supply to the EU, from an environmentalist perspective the EU's actions can still be criticised heavily. As the initially weak emphasis on environmental issues completely vanished during the crisis, the EU can be criticised for not paying enough attention to environmental issues in its discourse on EU-Russian energy relations.

During the research process, the chosen method and the selected theoretical framework provided the right tools to analyse the two research questions in a comprehensive and detailed manner. By choosing a qualitative approach that analyses a rather large dataset, this research does not only provide a clear answer to the central research questions but it additionally provides a detailed descriptive analysis of the EU's overall actions within the energy sector before and during the Ukraine crisis.

This research could not explain and analyse each and every single aspect of the EU's discourse, however. This is especially the case for the observed deliberate connection of European to Ukrainian energy security. It remains unclear whether this connection can be seen, for example, as part of a larger geopolitical strategy or whether it was part of an entirely new aspect of the EU's energy strategy that was developed as a result of the crisis. For this aspect, other approaches that rely on different analytical and theoretical frameworks might be more suitable, for example approaches that focus more on geopolitical concepts such as the concept of hegemony or other types of geopolitical concepts that focus on influence, power or other aspects of international competitiveness.

This finding also leads to the issue of possible future research topics that derive from this analysis. While of course the already mentioned connection of European and Ukrainian energy security by the EU may raise further questions, there are also a variety of other questions that one might want to ask after having read this research. This could be, for example, the question how the Russian discourse on the energy trade with the EU was affected by the Ukraine crisis. This could provide a valuable insight into the Russian modus operandi concerning energy issues, which might allow one to come to a conclusion about the extent to which the European and the Russian discourses are interconnected. Alternatively, a focus on the EU's member states' national discourses using a similar framework as in this analysis might generate valuable results about the relationship of the energy discourse on the European level and the national level. These are just a few possible future research questions that might provide a better understanding of European-Russian energy relations and the EU's energy security.

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