

AMERICAN UNIVERSITY OF BEIRUT

RUSSIAN ENERGY DIPLOMACY:
THE CASE OF RUSSIAN-QATARI RIVALRY ON THE
EUROPEAN NATURAL GAS MARKET

by
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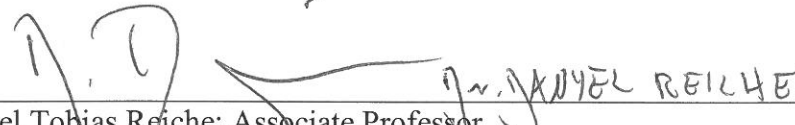
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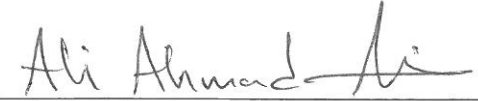
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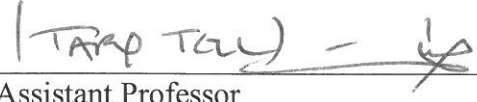
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AN ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS OF

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This work analyses Russia's energy policies in regard to Qatar, who is a natural gas competitor in the European market. Contrary to previous research which studies energy diplomacy from the perspective of energy consumer states and their relations with energy producer states, this paper offers an insight on supplier-supplier relations. In doing so, this study attempts to shed light on the available mechanisms for a producer state to safeguard its market shares and security of demand. By examining Russia's energy diplomacy approach towards Qatar's increasing natural gas exports to Europe, the aim is to characterize Russian energy export strategy through five dimensions of energy diplomacy tools. These tools are engaging in multilateral frameworks, commercial partnerships in the Qatari energy sector, involving Qatar in Russia's energy sector, linking energy deals with arms sales, and military cooperation. Policy evaluation and event analysis is used to assess Moscow's energy diplomacy tactics. The data is collected through interviews which is complemented by official documentation. Based on the analysis, there are signs of Russian use of energy diplomacy in its bilateral relations with Qatar, mainly in multilateral forums and by involving Qatar in its domestic energy sector. The methods held a cooperative character rather than intimidation tactics. Ultimately, these findings provide us with a deeper understanding of how Russian energy diplomacy is employed in the Middle East.

Key words: Energy diplomacy, Energy security, Energy export strategy, Russia, Qatar, Europe, MENA, Gulf, GCC, Natural gas, LNG, Policy Evaluation

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Russia has always played an important role in energy diplomacy due to its vast energy reserves in oil, gas and coal. The economy of Russia is also “heavily dependent on energy as oil and gas account for two-thirds of Russian exports, half of state revenues, and 20 percent of GDP”.¹ In fact, no other great power produce and export energy in the same quantity as Russia does. It is the world’s largest gas exporter, second in oil exports and third for coal exports.² At the same time, no other energy exporter holds the same status and vested interests in international affairs as Russia does. This is contingent on Russia’s legacy as a superpower and its current position as one of the greatest military powers on the global arena, entailing power projections in several regions. Russia’s re-emergence as a great power on the world scene is intertwined with its significance in the global energy trade. High energy prices from the last decade have increased the stability on the domestic front while opening up for greater undertakings in international affairs.³ Likewise, energy became a central foreign policy tool with Vladimir Putin's ascent to power who wrote his PhD thesis on the role of “strategic mineral resources in the development of Russia's economy at the St Petersburg Mining Institute”.⁴ Putin realized that the collapsed Russian economy would benefit from a strong energy industry and has recurrently mentioned that the energy resources are “the

¹ Joseph S. Nye Jr. “Is the American century over?”. John Wiley & Sons. (2015)

² Pami Aalto. ”Russian Energy Diplomacy”, in Encyclopedia of Mineral and Energy Policy (Berlin: Heidelberg, 2016), 1

³ Andrew Monaghan. ”Russia’s Energy Diplomacy: A Political Idea Lacking a Strategy?”. Southeast European and Black Sea Studies 7:2. (2007). 282

⁴ Yuri Barmin, "Russian Energy Policy in the Middle East." Insight Turkey. 19:4 (2017)

basis for rebuilding Russia's internal capabilities and international status.”⁵ The Russian president therefore embarked on rearranging the Russian energy sector into a vertical governance structure that was completely aligned with the Kremlin.⁶ This was concretized with the state's consolidation of the energy sector by nationalizing energy companies under Gazprom, Rosneft and Transneft.⁷ The energy companies saw limitations of foreign ownership and a change in leadership, now with a management that was not only loyal but also had strong personal ties to the Russian president.⁸ Moscow pursued a more aggressive energy policy by renegotiating contracts that translated to higher prices and larger bindings, while also cutting energy supplies to certain markets.⁹ Although a substantial energy supply has enabled Russia to increase their leverage on other state actors, Russian officials have repeatedly stated that the nation will be a “reliable supplier and enhance global energy security”.¹⁰ Other officials such as former Presidential Aide Igor Shuvalov has expressed the need “to retain its image as a reliable supplier while keeping Russia's interests in mind.”¹¹ The Russian Central Bank has warned that GDP growth will lag around two percent, even if hydrocarbon prices reach up to levels of the previous decade.¹² Thus, Russian finances oblige Russian foreign policy to use energy diplomacy in order to secure and maximise energy revenue.

Energy revenue is vital for energy-rich authoritarian states in the domestic context as it helps the state consolidate power as well as in the foreign policy as higher

⁵ Andrew Monaghan. "Russia's Energy Diplomacy: A Political Idea Lacking a Strategy?". (2007). p. 283

⁶ Barmin, "Russian Energy Policy in the Middle East." (2017)

⁷ Goodrich, "The Past, Present and Future of Russian Energy Strategy", Stratfor (February 12, 2013)

⁸ Barmin, "Russian Energy Policy in the Middle East." (2017)

⁹ Goodrich, "The Past, Present and Future of Russian Energy Strategy", Stratfor (February 12, 2013)

¹⁰ Monaghan, Russia's Energy Diplomacy, p. 284

¹¹ Idem. p. 285

¹² Anna Andrianova. "Russia feels growth limits again after short-lived acceleration". Bloomberg. (November 13, 2017)

revenues emboldens foreign policy ambitions.¹³ The Kremlin has understood the value of controlling its energy sector. Moreover, Russia's patrimonial governance system also impinges on the energy sector in the sense that the Kremlin promote the interests of the elite who are close to the president, and simultaneously the prioritized elites are expected to follow state policies. Just as the energy companies are expected to cooperate with the Kremlin, the Kremlin is expected to provide political support for the companies' expansion plans.¹⁴ The Russian population are not always content with the state's close relations with the energy companies, as they see the wealth and benefits flowing to the oil oligarchs instead of being employed to alleviate their poverty.¹⁵ Nonetheless, Russia's energy policy should not be viewed as a streamlined system where the Kremlin and the energy majors are coordinating perfectly, but Russian energy policy includes several conflicting components - not the least in the competition between energy majors. State-owned Gazprom is the leading Russian gas producer and exporter as it holds a monopoly on pipeline exports. The CEO Alexei Miller was appointed by Putin and has therefore a tight relationship with the President. Gazprom's production share has steadily decreased as Novatek and Rosneft have successfully lobbied the Kremlin to loosen Gazprom's monopoly on gas exports and were granted LNG export licences. Novatek, the top private gas producer, has profited on this and is now the leading Russian LNG exporter due to its projects in the Yamal Peninsula. Novatek's prosperity is also explained by its CEO Leonid Mikhelson's successful political navigation, as he keeps close ties with the Kremlin but simultaneously not too close to make Novatek subject of US sanctions. Rosneft's CEO, Igor Sechin, is a close

¹³ Vlad Ivanenko. "Russian Energy Policy and Its Domestic and Foreign Implications." *International Journal* 63:2, p. 263-74. (2008)

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid.

friend to Putin and some have even called him “a second foreign minister” – Rosneft has therefore not been able to skirt US sanctions. Moreover, the Russian state owns a majority in the company and has steered Rosneft towards Russian foreign policy interest areas such as Venezuela and Iraq. Even though Rosneft is the biggest Russian oil producer and focuses mainly on oil, it has in recent years taken a greater interest in the lucrative gas market. All three mentioned energy corporations have been instrumental in the Kremlin’s energy diplomacy as it seeks to transform domestic energy power to foreign influence.

The Russian authorities adopted the policy document “Energy Strategy of Russia until 2030” in 2009, which emphasize on a greater foreign policy entanglement in the sphere of natural resources. The objectives for Russian foreign policy making are to guarantee the security and profitability of state-owned and semi state-owned energy corporations. The language in the document indicates of relatively aggressive and expansionist formulations in order to achieve these aims. The number one priority of Russian energy strategy is to preserve “the necessary level of energy supplies for the European market”.¹⁶ This objective is intended to be reached by increasing oil and gas output as well as intervention in the energy sectors of other producer countries.¹⁷ Moreover, Moscow seeks to establish dominance over the Eurasian energy infrastructure.¹⁸ Russian Energy Strategy has had different impact on the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states. It has increased cooperation mechanisms between Russia and the Arab energy producers but on the other hand, it has framed the producer states as rivals to Russian energy dominance. This has been especially true with Qatar

¹⁶ Ministry of Energy of the Russian Federation. ”Energy Strategy of Russia for the Period up to 2030”. (November 13, 2009)

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ibid.

who has competed and positioned itself as an alternative to Russian gas supply to Europe, Moscow has therefore been interested in enhancing its coordination efforts with Qatar. Further, Russia has intensified its communication and cooperation with Doha in a multilateral framework in addition to acquiring stakes in the Qatari energy sphere and pulling Qatar closer through participation in Russian energy projects, as well as increasing spill-over effects in non-energy sectors such as arms trade and military cooperation.

CHAPTER TWO

BACKGROUND

A. Russian Energy Diplomacy in Europe

The European Union is the world's largest natural gas imports market and the imports come largely from Russia which makes up for 40% of all imports - Norway and Algeria stands for 27% respectively 11%.¹⁹ Even though European gas imports from Russia have declined from 75% in 1990 to 40% in 2017, Russian gas provides 100% of the natural gas demand to some Central and Eastern European countries.²⁰ And despite the tensions, Russia actually increased its gas supplies with 8.7% in 2017.²¹ For Russia, the gas trade with Europe is equally important as it is for the European consumers as around 80% of Russian gas exports are directed to the European continent.²² Moscow has identified the markets where it intends to protect its market shares, which has historically been focused on Eastern Europe, later expanded to Western Europe and now the EU is defined as the main client.²³ Russia's dominance in the European gas market is confronting strategic challenges. As Russian foreign policy has become more assertive, the EU energy policy has grown more cautious. The Russian supply disruptions in its skirmishes with Ukraine in 2006 and 2009 made the Europeans questioning Russia's role as a reliable energy supplier. When the pricing dispute escalated between Ukraine and Russia, Moscow saw it fit to cut the gas supplies in the midst of the winter. The gas that transited through Ukraine to its end destination in West

¹⁹ Eurostat. "From where do we import energy and how dependent are we?". (May 2019)

²⁰ Aleh Cherp. "Energy Security". Energy and Security (March 2015), 360

²¹ Rauf Mammadov. "Russia in the Middle East: Energy Forever?". Jamestown (2018)

²² Natasha Kuhrt. "Russia and the World: The Internal-External Nexus". Routledge (2014)

²³ Barmin. "Russian Energy Policy in the Middle East". (2017)

Europe was seen by Europe as Russian blackmailing which sought to pressure the EU and Ukraine in the price negotiations.²⁴ However, the Russian narrative has insisted that energy was not used as a weapon and that Russia cut off the gas because the contract expired which left Russia without any obligations to supply the gas. Whatever motivations were behind Russia's handling of the dispute, the European Union saw Russia's energy export strategy falling in line with its increasingly belligerent foreign policy and Russian gas started to be perceived as a dangerous weapon that the Kremlin could deploy against dependent EU member states.²⁵ The developments in Ukraine drove the European Union to legislate against Russian gas which culminated in adopting the Energy Packages – with the aim to decrease dependency on Russian energy. The EU shifted its focus to alternatives such as the Southern Gas Corridor (running from the energy rich Caspian basin to Europe), and the increasing its LNG import capacity through constructions of LNG terminals. Russia on the other hand, aiming to keep its stranglehold on the EU, is building two pipelines – NordStream 2 & TurkStream - that will circumvent the Ukrainian transit. Moscow's strategy to undermine European diversification efforts is complemented with other tactics. Blocking alternative pipelines in the abovementioned Southern Gas Corridor is one campaign.²⁶ Another policy is to persuade Central Asian gas producers - Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan - to export their gas through existing Russian networks.²⁷ Russia also perceived the newly found gas reserves in the Eastern Mediterranean as a

²⁴ Mammadov. “Russia in the Middle East: Energy Forever?”. (2018)

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Pierre Noel. “Beyond Dependence: How to Deal with Russian Gas”, London: European Council on Foreign Relations. ECFR Policy Brief, 9, (November, 2008)

²⁷ Andrei Kazantsev. ‘Russian Policy in Central Asia’. *Europe-Asia Studies*, 60:6. (2008) pp.1084–86

potential spoiler for its interests in Europe, which is why Russian gas corporations have expanded their presence in the Mediterranean gas sector.²⁸

European efforts to diversify its natural gas supplies accelerated after the fallout between Russia and the West following the Crimea annexation.²⁹ The oil glut of 2014, the Western sanctions and the severance of diplomatic relations all affected the Russian economy negatively.³⁰ In the backdrop of renewed tensions, Putin recognized that controlling the European gas market was an invaluable foreign policy tool to deploy against Western adversaries. The Russian president therefore sought to solidify EU's dependence and one of Russia's key energy objectives has been to undermine Europe's diversification efforts in the natural gas domain.³¹ European policy initiatives on reducing Russian gas imports and European gas diversification can be expected as long as tensions bubble on the Eastern border. Nonetheless, 2017 saw record quantities of Russian gas in Europe, supplied by Gazprom which has been excluded in Western sanction regimes.³²

The European gas market may face an upsurge in demand as EU seeks to reduce greenhouse gases by phasing out coal and replacing it with renewable energy - but with natural gas acting as a transition phase.³³ Norway, the second largest gas exporter to the EU, is focusing on renewable energy sources and therefore is decreasing investments in gas production.³⁴ According to IEA, Norwegian gas production declines with 1.3%

²⁸ Pavel Baev. "Russia Aspires to the Status of 'Energy Superpower'". *Strategic Analysis*, 31:3, 447-465 (2007)

²⁹ Barmin, "Russian Energy Policy in the Middle East". (2017)

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Mammadov, "Russia in the Middle East: Energy Forever?" (2018)

³² Ibid.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Justine Barden. "Norway's Oil Production Increases, But New Investment Is Declining". *Today in Energy* (October 16, 2015)

annually and could drop with 40-50% by 2025.³⁵ This will put even greater pressure on EU to diversify their natural gas imports. Ageing European nuclear plants and strong public opposition for new nuclear infrastructure will pose as another factor for increasing natural gas imports.³⁶

One of the most dramatic shifts in the natural gas sector started in 2006 with a project in the Parshall Field of North Dakota. The project saw a successful shale gas production which came to revolutionize the gas market as the US became self-sufficient and thereby weaning off its dependency on imports.³⁷ This has freed up LNG for redirection to Europe and it has been assisting the EU in its efforts to protect itself from Russian tendencies of using gas as a political weapon.³⁸ As many countries have followed the North American example of using fracking, Russia has not been able to cope since “Gazprom and Russian Energy Ministry representatives agree that shale gas production in Russia is not economically feasible in the near future as compared to various conventional gas projects”.³⁹ Energy analysts have noted how the shale gas revolution has shaken Russia’s energy policy. At a beginning, Gazprom was determined in keeping their inflexible long-term contracts but with the expiration of many of its contracts, Gazprom finally started to show some flexibility when renegotiating the contracts.⁴⁰ Gazprom’s increasingly humble approach towards its buyers is not unrelated to increasing concerns for tougher competition in the European gas market.⁴¹

³⁵ Jude Clement. “Norway's Natural Gas Problems Help U.S. LNG in Europe”. Forbes. (March 2, 2016)

³⁶ Cherp. Energy Security. p. 360

³⁷ Shebonti Dadwal. ”The Geopolitics of Gas”. Institute for Defence Studies & Analyses. (2017). p. 31

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Tatiana Mitrova. ”The Geopolitics of Russian Natural Gas”. James A. Baker III Institute For Public Policy (February 2014). p. 22

⁴⁰ Charles Ebinger. ‘The Geopolitics of Natural Gas: Where Are We Going?’. Brookings. (November 30, 2001)

⁴¹ Ibid.

B. Russia in the Middle East

The strategical importance of the Middle East is undergoing significant reassessments, resulting in fundamental shifts in the geopolitical outlook. As the US is becoming increasingly energy independent, the Middle Eastern hydrocarbon basin is losing value in American foreign policy calculations. Nevertheless, the vast energy reserves of the MENA still pose great importance for European allies, not to say for the world economy. Long-term trends however indicate that the global economy will be less dependent on conventional energy sources. Another geopolitical development that affects American-Arab relations is the "pivot to Asia" which inclines that American deployment will be relocated farther east. The arriving multipolar paradigm is shifting American foreign policy priorities from subjugation of small and medium powers to containment of great powers. At first sight, this development appears to marginalize the Middle East's centrality in global affairs, but the MENA could easily be reeled back into the centre of geopolitical contest when other great powers step in to capitalize on the vacuum.⁴²

As Russia tries to restore its former national glory and re-establish its dominant position in foreign affairs, a fractured Middle East has been an appropriate testing ground for Russia's hegemonic ambitions beyond its immediate neighbourhood. The Russian narrative seeks to exploit Arab grievances of Western interventionism and Putin has underlined the common interest of respecting state sovereignty.⁴³ Russia also poses itself as a traditional alternative which is attractive to Arabs who fear change,

⁴² Samuel Ramani, "Russia and the Middle East: Diplomacy and Security Russia and the GCC: A Rising Partnership?". Russian International Affairs Council. (March 29, 2017)

⁴³ Vladimir Putin, speech to the 70th Session of the United Nations General Assembly. (September 28, 2015)

both politically and socially.⁴⁴ A case in point is that deals with the Russians are viewed as lucrative for MENA governments since Russian partnerships come without strings attached in the form of political reforms or human rights criteria.⁴⁵ The Kremlin propagates for status quo because it acts as bulwark against international terrorism which is a security concern for Russia, status quo regimes with authoritarian tendencies are in line with the Kremlin's own domestic model, and status quo is also perceived as an obstructive force for increased U.S. socio-cultural influences.⁴⁶ There are other factors that have prepared the ground for closer ties between Russia and the Middle East. They include the low oil price environment that has increased closer coordination, the Arab Spring which put state security in focus and which Russia proved to act as a stabilizing force in Syria.⁴⁷ Moscow's objective is position itself as the power broker in the region, but it also views the region as a springboard to bolster its economic activity in Europe and the Far East meanwhile spoiling China's Belt and Road Initiative that seeks to increase Chinese footprint in both the Middle East and Europe.⁴⁸ Although, Russia's Middle East strategy is viewed to be pragmatic and of a short-term nature, where precision-like excursions are pragmatically deployed to protect Russian interests.⁴⁹ The Kremlin does not view the Middle East holistically, but manage every country separately – a tactic that has led to stronger bilateral ties with competing regional forces.⁵⁰ This flexible approach has also given Russia a greater leeway when managing the regional challenges. However, Russia's transactional relationships, in contrast to the American long-standing alliances, give the image of Russia as

⁴⁴ James Sladden, Becca Wasser, Ben Connable, Sarah Grand-Clement. "Russian Strategy in the Middle East". Perspective, RAND corporation. (2007)

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Mammadov, "Russia in the Middle East: Energy Forever?" (2018)

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Sladden et al. "Russian Strategy in the Middle East". RAND corporation (2007)

⁵⁰ Ibid.

opportunistic. Though the Syria campaign showcased Russia as a great power willing to use force, Russia's floating alignments in the region questions its status as a protective sponsor since Russian force is only used when its immediate interests are threatened - not when its allies are endangered.⁵¹ This perception and mistrust is detrimental to any great power that seeks to establish itself as the regional security guarantor – a main objective for Russia in its bid to outcompete the US in international prestige.

Russia's ambitious revival on the global stage has led to zero-sum game in the Middle East where Moscow aims to undermine American power in the region. However, this does not imply that Russian interests are always at odds with Western goals. Russia complied with Western efforts to intervene in Libya 2011 and it played an important role in the JCPOA agreement with Iran 2015. The major shift in Russia's Middle East policy was the intervention in Syria that marked a change from diplomatic meddling to military involvement.⁵² This endeavour enhanced Russia's stance as a reliable ally and showed the world that the former superpower could shape Middle Eastern events to its advantage.⁵³

The Kremlin has succeeded in expanding its clout in the region through enhancement of bilateral relations. Even though Russia is increasingly becoming a power broker, the Kremlin has been less successful in convincing the Arab public. Putin's has sought to approach the Muslim populations by positioning Russia as the bridge between Europe and the Muslim world, the most obvious tactic has been Russia's entry as an observer in the Organization of Islamic Cooperation.⁵⁴ This strategy has yielded results, Russia's indispensability in Arab affairs is reflected by the fact that

⁵¹ Sladden et al. "Russian Strategy in the Middle East". RAND corporation (2007)

⁵² Nikolay Kozhanov. "Russian Policy Across the Middle East". Chatham House. (February 21, 2018)

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Stephen Blank. "Russia's Middle Eastern Position in 2025". Russia in the Middle East. (November 20, 2018)

Arabs increasingly believe that good relations with Russia is important and that the Arab youth considers Russia the top non-Arab ally.⁵⁵ 64% of the inhabitants in the MENA region believe that Russia has increased its influence in Middle Eastern affairs during the last decade but only 35% views Russia in a positive light.⁵⁶ The approval rates are higher than for Western states but still low when taking in to account that Moscow's reputation has not, unlike Western powers, been tainted by historical imperialistic presence in the region. The fact that 69% of Arabs regards Russia as a threat to Arab stability indicates that present Russian Mideast policies, more so than historical factors, are staining Russia's repute.⁵⁷ The Kremlin's geopolitical play may have increased Russian hard power in the eyes of Arab public, but less so in soft power. The notion of Russia's return to the Middle East is therefore more in concordance with regard to macro geopolitics and less so when it boils down to soft power perceptions on the ground.⁵⁸

C. Russian-Qatari Relations

Qatar and the rest of the small emirates in the Gulf, except of Kuwait, were neglected by Soviet Russia for the most part during the Cold War. It was after the Perestroika that the Russians expanded their network with the GCC which resulted in the initiation of diplomatic relations between Russia and Qatar in 1988 – although without any tangible change.⁵⁹ The relations went from neutral to hostile during the

⁵⁵ “Arab Youth Survey 2018”. ASDA’A Burston-Marsteller.

⁵⁶ Ishaan Tharoor. ”Putin Is Outplaying Trump In The Middle East”. Washington Post (December 12, 2017)

⁵⁷ Zogby Research Services, “Sir Bani Yas Forum - Public Opinion 2017”, 7.

⁵⁸ Florence Gaub. ”Russia’s Non-War on Daesh” in ”Russia’s return to the Middle East: Building sandcastles?”. Issue, Chaillot papers, 146. (July 2018)

⁵⁹ Elena Melkumyan. ”A Political History of Relations between Russia and the Gulf States”. Arab Center for Research and Policy Studies. (December 2015)

Chechen Wars in which Russia accused Qatar for sponsoring the Muslim insurgents.⁶⁰ The hostilities between the two states culminated when the Chechen leader Zelimkhan Yandarbiyev was assassinated by Russian agents who planted a car bomb in Doha, where Yandarbiyev were sent to with the aim of shoring up financial support.⁶¹

Putin redirected the Russian approach towards the Gulf in large, as he sought to establish an economic foothold in the region. The following quote summarizes Putin's perspective: "Russia will act to stabilize the situation in the Middle East, including the Gulf region and North Africa, taking into consideration the influence of the regional situation on the development of the world as a whole. In this context the primary task of Russia will be a return of its strong positions, especially economic, in this rich and important time for our interests in the region".⁶² This was concretized by Putin's official visit to Qatar in 2007, which was arranged partially because Russia sought to create a north-south corridor to the Gulf.⁶³ However, the relations took a sour turn again in 2011 when Qatar supported Islamist insurgents, this time in Syria. Russia, a strong supporter of the Syrian government, lambasted Qatar's involvement in sponsoring the rebels. In turn, Qatari media called Putin "the dictator of the 21st century" and labelled Russia as Islam's worst enemy.⁶⁴ The spat culminated in 2011 with an incident at Doha airport when Russian ambassador Vladimir Titorenko was assaulted by the security guards after he refused to hand over his diplomatic pouch.⁶⁵ Subsequently, Russia stated that it

⁶⁰ Giorgio Cafiero and Theodore Karasik. "Qatar and Russia: What Do They See in Each Other?" Middle East Policy Institute, (October 11, 2017)

⁶¹ Steven Myers. "Qatar Court Convicts 2 Russians in Top Chechen's Death". New York Times. (July 1, 2004)

⁶² Melkumyan. "A Political History of Relations between Russia and the Gulf States". (December 2015)

⁶³ Cafiero and Karasik. "Qatar and Russia: What Do They See in Each Other?" (October 11, 2017)

⁶⁴ Nikolay Kozhanov. "Why Russia seeks to stay neutral in Saudi-Qatar rift". Al-Monitor. (September 1, 2017)

⁶⁵ Melkumyan. "A Political History of Relations between Russia and the Gulf States". (December 2015)

would downgrade its diplomatic relations with Qatar until an apology had been made.⁶⁶ Russian UN ambassador reportedly threatened Qatar with the words, "If you continue to talk to me like that, Qatar will not see the tomorrow" which came after a row at the UN Security Council in discussions regarding Syria.⁶⁷ The Arab Spring surfaced Qatari and Russian opposing strategic objectives even in Libya where Russia criticised Qatar's military intervention and accused Qatar for violating the UN arms embargo.⁶⁸ The two countries still support opposite sides in the Libyan conflict but with the Syrian conflict coming to an end, Russia and Qatar are moving on from their toughest disagreement. In 2013, Russia stopped insisting on an apology from Doha and appointed a new ambassador to Qatar.⁶⁹ Concomitant, Qatar, having one of the world's largest sovereign wealth fund, increased its economic investments in Russia which is much needed for President Putin as he tries to skirt Western sanctions.⁷⁰ The Qatari sovereign wealth fund, Qatar Investment Authority, bought shares for \$500 million in V.T.B, a Russian bank that is sanctioned by the West.⁷¹ QIA's CEO was also awarded a membership in the board of Russian Direct Investment Fund, the SWF of Russia.⁷² Moreover, QIA acquired a 25% stake in St. Petersburg's Pulkovo airport.⁷³ Investments valued up to \$2.5 billion, compared to Saudi's \$600 million, have turned Qatar to one of the largest Gulf investors in Russia.⁷⁴ The Qatari embassy in Moscow estimates Qatari investments

⁶⁶ Melkumyan. "A Political History of Relations between Russia and the Gulf States". (December 2015)

⁶⁷ Albawaba News. "Russia threatens to destroy Qatar?" (February 9, 2012)

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Nikolay Kozhanov. "Why Russia seeks to stay neutral in Saudi-Qatar rift". Al-Monitor. (September 1, 2017)

⁷⁰ Dmitriy Frolovskiy. "Understanding Russia-GCC relations" in "Russia's return to the Middle East: Building sandcastles?", Issue, Chaillot papers, 146. (July 2018). p. 86

⁷¹ Theodore Karasik. "Why is Qatar Investing so much in Russia?" Middle East Institute. (March 8, 2017)

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Nikolay Kozhanov. "Why Russia seeks to stay neutral in Saudi-Qatar rift". Al-Monitor. (September 1, 2017)

in Russia at around \$13 billion.⁷⁵ Doha's financial injections in the Russian economy are although relatively low compared to its investments in other regions such as North America, East Asia and Europe.⁷⁶ Russian-Qatar economic cooperation was institutionalized with the establishment of the Intergovernmental Commission on Trade and Economic Cooperation, and the direct communication line between RDIF and QIA.⁷⁷ The diplomatic relations have also strengthened with the Qatari Emir Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani visiting Moscow in 2016 in which cultural exchange, visa-free travel and trade relations were boosted.⁷⁸ The diplomatic relations were furthered in the Sheikh's second official visit to Russia in 2018 which was reported to exchange expertise on hosting the FIFA World Cup as well as enhancing cooperation in defence, energy and trade.⁷⁹ However, it was also seen as a Qatari strategy to diversify its international relations as the meeting came against the backdrop of the GCC rift. As it fell out of favour in Riyadh, Qatar understood that it had to accommodate other power brokers which resulted in a statement from the Emir hinting that Qatar is finally accepting Bashar al-Assad as part of the Syrian solution.⁸⁰ Qatar's pragmatism in its international relations such as cooperation with Iran, in opposite to Saudi Arabia's more deterministic approach, are similar to Russia's own diversified relationships with Middle Eastern states.⁸¹ Furthermore, Qatari-Russian rapprochement is aligning with Russia's strategic objective of co-opting American allies and becoming an indispensable power broker in the Middle East. The Kremlin is making use of its good relations with

⁷⁵ Gulf Times. "Qatari investments in Russia around \$13bn, says official". (August 05, 2019)

⁷⁶ Dmitry Frolovskiy. "Understanding Russia-GCC relations" in "Russia's return to the Middle East: Building sandcastles?", Issue, Chaillot papers, 146. (July 2018). p. 90

⁷⁷ Cafiero and Karasik. "Qatar and Russia: What Do They See in Each Other?" (October 11, 2017)

⁷⁸ Maxim Suchkov. "Russia, Qatar pushed to compromise. But will they?". Al-Monitor. (January 27, 2016)

⁷⁹ Gulf Times. "Qatar a pivotal partner in Middle East: Russia". (June 16, 2019)

⁸⁰ Gulf Times. "Qatar, Germany in distinct, frank talks on siege". (September 15, 2017)

⁸¹ Leonid Issaev. "Russia and the GCC crisis". Al-Jazeera. (13 June 2017)

both sides of the GCC rift and covertly exploiting the divisions to its own benefit, meaning closer cooperation with the conflicting sides.⁸² Moscow refrained from picking sides and referred to non-interference in sovereign matters, a common Russian policy when dealing with foreign affairs.⁸³ As US President Donald Trump took a firmer stance against Qatar, Putin used it to draw Doha closer to its sphere.⁸⁴ Russia offered to supply Qatar with food in order to overcome the blockade, Russian deputy foreign minister met with the Qatari ambassador on the same day the crisis erupted, and on the following day Putin called the Emir to urge the sides to solve their issues.⁸⁵ The crisis gave the Kremlin an opportunity to pose itself as a mature and well-intending alternative to American peace brokering.⁸⁶

D. Russia and Qatar - Rivals in the European Gas Market

Since the largest gas reservoir, North Field, situates under Qatari waters, the tiny Gulf state have emerged as one of the largest LNG exporters. Qatar's main export commodity is natural gas which makes the gas market highly crucial for Qatari finances and Doha is looking to maintain its market shares as the global gas market increasingly drifts towards a buyer's market due to US shale gas developments. Qatar's has a huge customer base in East Asia which increased its gas demand in the aftermath of the Fukushima nuclear disaster and the majority of Qatari LNG is shipped to the East Asian markets where Qatar sells gas for premium prices, making exports to Europe

⁸² Dmitriy Frolovskiy. "Understanding Russia-GCC relations" in "Russia's return to the Middle East: Building sandcastles?", Issue, Chaillot papers, 146. (July 2018). p. 85

⁸³ Idem. p. 85

⁸⁴ Leonid Issaev. "Russia and the GCC crisis". Al-Jazeera. (June 13, 2017)

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ Cafiero and Karasik. "Qatar and Russia: What Do They See in Each Other?" (October 11, 2017)

commercially less lucrative.⁸⁷ But Qatar is losing Asian market shares to Australian LNG which has ramped up production investments the last decade and has a competitive advantage due to its geographical proximity and thereby lower transportation costs. Qatar's foothold in East Asia is furthered threatened with American LNG coming online and a possible opening of the Arctic Sea Route that would shrink delivery time of Russian LNG.⁸⁸ Moreover, if Asian gas demand stagnates simultaneously with Asian GDP growth then Qatar would be pushed even further to find new markets. Qatar's export strategy had previously focused to increase its exports to the North American market, expected to be one of the main customers together with East Asian importers, but the shale gas revolution made the US self-sufficient in gas and Qatar was therefore forced to redirect its vessels to other markets.⁸⁹ These are reasons why Qatar hasn't confined itself from becoming a major supplier for European energy demands and with American encouragement Qatar has been encroaching on Russia's key market. Deputy U.S. Energy Secretary Dan Brouillette visited Doha in January 2019, where he clarified US intentions of contesting Russian dominance in the European gas market with the help of Qatari LNG supply. The Trump administration vociferously opposed the Nordstream 2 pipeline and the US senate is currently drafting legislation on imposing sanctions on actors involved in the project. In response to concerns of growing dependency on Russia, Qatar has emerged as an alternative source of supply. Qatar is already providing 46% of total EU LNG imports and 30% of Qatari LNG exports are headed towards Europe, and several key European nations rely on

⁸⁷ Giorgio Cafiero & Colby Connelly. "Russia and the Arab Gulf States: Current Energy Variables". Gulf International Forum. (March 19, 2019)

⁸⁸ Eugene Gerden. "Russia Eyes Qatar In Fight for Global LNG Market". Gas Processing News. (August 2018)

⁸⁹ Giorgio Cafiero & Colby Connelly. "Russia and the Arab Gulf States: Current Energy Variables". Gulf International Forum. (March 19, 2019).

Qatari gas.⁹⁰ Nearly a third of British gas supply is received from Qatar.⁹¹ Germany, Europe's largest energy consumer, is planning to build two LNG terminals and has initiated talks on installing an LNG terminal with the cooperation of Qatar Petroleum.⁹² Other significant European importers are Belgium, Italy and France. For Russia, the real concerns began when Qatari supplies started infiltrating Eastern European nations. In 2009, Poland signed a long-term contract with Qatargas and in March 2017, the partners agreed on doubling the volume.⁹³ Doha has also initiated talks with Bulgaria, which has strong incentives to diversify gas imports since it was the country that suffered the most when Russia stopped exporting gas in the 2009 gas dispute.⁹⁴ Russian gas stands for almost all of Bulgaria's gas consumption and 42% of Poland's, which is why Russia views Qatari LNG exports as a geoeconomic threat.⁹⁵

According to US Energy Information Administration, only a fourth of EU's LNG import capacity was utilized in 2017 which implies that there is great potential for Qatar to advance its position as EU's largest LNG supplier.⁹⁶ In September 2019, Qatar bought up 100% of Belgium's regasification capacity for 25 years which will even further increase Qatari gas on the European market.⁹⁷ Russian industry analysts believe that Qatar will export an additional 50 billion cubic meters to Europe – accounting for 5% of

⁹⁰ Steven Wright. "Qatar's LNG: Impact Of The Changing East-Asian Market". Middle East Policy Council 24, no.1 (2017)

⁹¹ Kristian Coates Ulrichsen. "Why Is Qatar Leaving OPEC?". The New York Times (December 10, 2018)

⁹² Christoph Steitz, "Qatar Petroleum In Talks Over Potential German LNG terminal", Reuters (Sep 5, 2018)

⁹³ Kristian Coates Ulrichsen & Theodore Karasik, "How Asian And European Countries Helped Qatar Maintain Sovereignty", Gulf State Analytics (22 April 2018)

⁹⁴ Katerina Oskarsson and Steve Yetiv. "Russia and the Persian Gulf: Trade, Energy, and Interdependence". Middle East Journal, 67:3. (2013)

⁹⁵ Ibid

⁹⁶ U.S Energy Information Administration. "Europe's liquefied natural gas imports have increased lately, but remain below 2011 peak". (October 25, 2018)

⁹⁷ Embassy of Qatar to Brussels. "H.E Qatar's Ambassador Attends Agreement Signing Ceremony Between Qatar Petroleum And Fluxys Belgium". (September 2, 2019)

the EU gas market.⁹⁸ Most likely, Europe will see a substantial influx of Qatari gas in the coming years.⁹⁹ This was underline by Qatari Energy Minister Saad al-Kaabi who stated “we’re going to do more in Europe - you’re going to see”.¹⁰⁰ However, development of new fields and pipeline infrastructure may position cheap Russian gas over Qatari LNG.¹⁰¹ Russian Ambassador to Doha Vladimir Titorenko stated that the planned LNG terminals in Southern Europe are bad for Russian business since it would compete with Russia’s Southern Pipeline.¹⁰² The Russian envoy pointed out that “Russia wants to avoid spending a lot of money on South Stream and then have to compete with cheaper LNG from Qatar.”¹⁰³ There is nonetheless reason for caution since EU recently launched an investigation regarding the destination clause in Qatar Petroleum's LNG contracts. Notwithstanding, the competition between the Eastern Giant and the Gulf Island is expected to toughen as Qatar prepares for an aggressive expansion. In April 2017, Qatar Petroleum announced that they would lift the moratorium on developments in North Field which has been in place since 2005. Subsequently, a range of production projects and international partnerships have been planned in order to cement Qatar’s position as one of the world’s largest LNG supplier.¹⁰⁴ The new flow of low-cost LNG will be competitive and should be of concern for upstream producers sitting on high-cost projects.¹⁰⁵ In December 2018, Qatar stunned the energy world when it pulled out from OPEC after nearly 60 years of

⁹⁸ Kim Shtern. “Qatar competes with Gazprom”. European Dialouge. (24 July 2017)

⁹⁹ Keith Smith. “Russia-Europe Energy Relations”. Center for Strategic and International Studies. (February 2010)

¹⁰⁰ Rania El Gamal, Dmitry Zhdannikov, Eric Knecht. “Exclusive: Qatar shortlists partners for North Field expansion, but says it may go it alone”. Reuters. (September 9, 2019)

¹⁰¹ Keith Smith. “Russia-Europe Energy Relations”. Center for Strategic and International Studies. (February 2010)

¹⁰² Oskarsson and Yetiv. “Russia and the Persian Gulf”. Middle East Journal. (2013)

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ Ulrichsen. “Why Is Qatar Leaving OPEC?”

¹⁰⁵ Howard Rogers. “Qatar Lifts it’s LNG Moratorium”. The Oxford Institute for Energy Studies. (2017)

membership. The Qatari Energy Minister Saad al-Kaabi proclaimed that the country would now redirect efforts toward gas rather than oil in its energy policy.¹⁰⁶ This should be seen in the light of the Qatari aim to expand gas production from 77 to 110 million tons. With Qatar surging in their quest for higher output, the race for European market shares will intensify. In the long run, it is predicted that European gas supply will come from Russian and Middle Eastern sources since they sit on the largest reserves.¹⁰⁷ Meanwhile, Australian gas will be destined for Asian consumers and American reserves will be bound for domestic demand.¹⁰⁸

Another sign of Qatari assertiveness is seen in the activities of Qatar Petroleum International (the foreign investment unit of QP) and the Qatari Investment Authority (QIA). QPI have bought stakes in the energy sectors of diverse countries such as Canada, Brazil and Republic of Congo and the QIA has acquired shares in Royal Dutch Shell and Total.¹⁰⁹ Furthermore, the annexation of Crimea in 2014 and Russia's continued proxy war in Ukraine has stalled Western investments in the energy sector of Russia. The state-owned oil and gas companies have therefore sought other sources for capital and Russian eyes have been fixed on the wealthy Gulf states.¹¹⁰ Another motivation behind the Kremlin's closer energy collaboration is the hope that an intensification of Russian-Gulf relations will undermine American alliances in the region.¹¹¹

¹⁰⁶ Ulrichsen. "Why Is Qatar Leaving OPEC?"

¹⁰⁷ Yuri Yegorov and Franz Wirl. "Energy relations between Russia and EU with emphasis on natural gas". OPEC Energy Review. (2008)

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹ Robert Tuttle. "Qatar's LNG Dominance Challenged". Washington Post. (April 19, 2014)

¹¹⁰ Rauf Mammadov & Theodore Karasik, "Implications of Gulf Sovereign Wealth Funds Investing in Russian Oil Projects". Gulf State Analytics. (June 2, 2018)

¹¹¹ Mammadov. "Implications of Gulf Sovereign Wealth Funds Investing in Russian Oil Projects"

CHAPTER THREE

PURPOSE AND RESEARCH QUESTION

The purpose of this research is to delve into Russian foreign policy in the Middle East with a focus on energy matters. More specifically, the study sets out to analyse Russian use of energy diplomacy in its bilateral relations with Qatar. The span of this work will be confined from the start of Vladimir Putin's ascendancy to the presidency in 2000 and onwards since this period in Russian foreign policy and energy policy have been characterised by its assertiveness. Although, the time frame will be specifically focused from 2009 when the "Energy Strategy 2030" was declared. The aim is to understand Russian interests in the Middle East, focusing on the case of natural gas. Further, the objective is to describe how natural gas is used as a geopolitical tool.

The research question reads as follow: *How is Russia applying energy diplomacy to preserve its natural gas interests in the bilateral relations with Qatar?*

I believe Russia is applying energy diplomacy in order to protect vital economic interests since Russian gas exports to Europe provides the state coffers with a major source of revenue. This well-needed capital helps Russia sustain its ailing economy which in recent years have been crippled by low hydrocarbon prices and Western sanctions. The economic outlook has started to turn the Russian electorate against President Putin whose approval rates hit its lowest number since 2013.¹¹² However, the economic interests in Europe should not be exaggerated and revenue from natural gas cannot be easily translated to domestic spending. This can be distinguished by contrasting the governments promised increase in social spending of \$1.5 billion with

¹¹² Chris Miller. "Can Putin Fix Russia's Sputtering Economy?". Foreign Affairs (March 13, 2019)

Gazprom's \$15 billion profits in 2018's first nine months.¹¹³ By controlling the flow of natural resources to Europe, President Putin has a greater leverage on the West European powers that he views as his adversaries and the East European neighbours that he considers as states that should fall back into the Kremlin's sphere of influence. Another element of the geopolitical dimension is that close cooperation with Qatar can be viewed as Russia snatching an American ally which plays well with Putin's revisionism and anti-Americanism.

It is worth mentioning that the work does not aspire to evaluate whether Russian energy diplomacy has been successful or not, although emphasis will be put whether it has been implemented or remained unmaterialized. The analysis intends to describe the principal policies of Russia's natural gas strategy in relation to Qatar and identify practices of energy diplomacy. President Putin's foreign policy in the Middle East and Russian-Arab relations are fascinating topics, but beyond the scope of this study. I concentrate here on Russian foreign policy from an energy perspective, limited to the Russian-Qatari interactions. Nonetheless, the research will contribute to a further understanding of Russian energy dealings with the countries of the Arab region. In a global context, the purpose is to provide a comprehensive understanding of the geopolitics of natural gas. In a theoretical context, the purpose is to broaden the concepts "energy security" and "energy diplomacy" by highlighting the perspective of producer states.

The findings from this study will seek to extend existing knowledge of energy as a geopolitical tool and it will shed new light on energy as either a source of conflict or a source of cooperation. It will clearly demonstrate why the analysis of Russian energy

¹¹³ Chris Miller. "Can Putin Fix Russia's Sputtering Economy?". *Foreign Affairs* (March 13, 2019)

diplomacy in Qatar is key to unravelling the patterns observed in the geopolitical arena of natural gas. Highlighting how Russia interacts with Qatar can be used to discern the mechanisms behind the geopolitics of natural gas, thus the study will contribute to refining the analysis of energy diplomacy. It will provide new opportunities to shape courses of action and create policies that can help increase energy security in terms of natural gas, a sector that will only grow in significance since the global gas demand grow at nearly 2 % per year and is predicted to be almost triple that of oil in the coming decades.¹¹⁴

In recent years, the issue of Russian energy diplomacy has been addressed by previous academia, but the previous works have tended to prioritize Russian energy diplomacy in regard to the European market, which is by no means unsurprising since Russian influence has historically been stronger in this region. This thesis will emphasize on Russian energy diplomacy in the Middle East, even though Russia's interests are weaker in this region than in its traditional regions of influence, it is believed that Russian power projections are increasing and will continue to do so as the US are withdrawing from the region. The study will exemplify how the use of energy may shed light on issues such as the extent of energy as a Russian geopolitical tool in the Middle East and the relationship between Russia and Middle Eastern energy exporters. The results from this research will contribute to an enhanced understanding of energy diplomacy in the Middle East and hopefully breathe new life into subsequent research on Russian power politics in the Middle East.

The research will have a theoretical significance since it particularly seeks to describe the Russian-Qatari relations which is a supplier-supplier relationship rather

¹¹⁴ Jude Clement. "Qatar Wisely Shifts Even More To Natural Gas". Forbes (December 5, 2018)

than a supplier-consumer relationship. The emphasis on supplier-supplier interactions will enhance the understanding of different aspects of energy security and nudge away the focus on energy security from a consumer perspective, based on security of supply, and instead cultivating research on a producer perspective, based on security of demand. Nonetheless, the study strives to build a bridge between Russian strategy in the Middle East with energy security in Europe by illuminating the links between Qatari gas and the outcomes of the EU energy diversification strategy. In order to explain the geopolitical use of Russian gas in Europe, it is necessary to understand the interplay between Russia and Qatar. Answering this question is not only necessary for explaining and forecasting behavioural patterns, it is also crucial in evaluating how Russia is managing challenges to its competitive position in the European gas market. So, despite the focus on the Middle East the research addresses issues of central importance to those concerned for European energy security, both in academic research and in practical policy evaluation. The implications of this research will be substantive for policymakers seeking to enhance European security of gas supply and it will be substantive for policymakers seeking to understand Russian influence in the Middle East.

This research's importance will be found in geopolitical shifts in the global arena. Russian foreign policy is and will continue to be subject of extensive study. My research will accumulate knowledge to this topic through a narrow emphasis on two core aspects – energy and the Middle East. The thesis will link traditional Russian interests in the European gas market with the recent surge of Russian interests in the Middle East. By exploring the dynamics of the Russian-Qatari rivalry in the European gas market, the research will strike at the cord between European energy security and

Middle Eastern geopolitics. This research will be relevant to scholars that seek to understand Russian energy diplomacy and Russian Middle Eastern strategy, although not confined to only these two aspects. There are four important trends in global politics that this research intertwines in one study, namely: Russia's increasing influence in the Middle East; Qatar's ascent role in regional affairs; Europe's renewed energy insecurity; and the upsurge of natural gas in energy diplomacy. This study is set out to spur research in these four large scale trends. The study will be narrow in its analysis but wide in its significance.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study will rely on two research methodologies, policy evaluation and event analysis. These two methodologies will complement each other since policy evaluation will determine how the analysis will be conducted whereas the content analysis will support the research by deciphering the policies through a framework. The data will mainly be collected through interviews with Russian experts. Additionally, material collection will be retrieved from official documents and press releases in primarily Russian contexts but also from Qatari sources.

A. Policy Evaluation

In the first instance the research will be conducted through a policy evaluative methodology, evaluating Russian energy policy in the Middle East. It will examine the content of the “Russian Energy Strategy 2030” and analyse how Russia implements this strategy in its diplomatic relations with Qatar. By breaking down the extensive strategy into its key components on a smaller scale, the evaluation will be able to sort out what steps the Russian government has taken to improve its energy security and how these steps correlate with energy diplomacy. Since the study focus on the implementation of the strategy rather than the outcome of the strategy, the policy evaluation will be a process evaluation.¹¹⁵ Process evaluation could be defined as an evaluation focused on how a program has been implemented and operated by identifying the procedures

¹¹⁵ TSNE MissionWorks. ‘Process Evaluation vs. Outcome Evaluation’. (June 14, 2018)

undertaken and the decisions made in developing the program.¹¹⁶ Policy process evaluation is appropriate for this type of research because the analysis seek to evaluate a government policy in its implementation process. The outcome evaluation was an alternative, but process evaluation was more in line with the research purpose since this paper seeks to understand what policies of the Russian energy diplomacy have been deployed rather than assessing the impact of these policies. The process evaluation is more suitable for the uncomplete strategy at this stage, thereby not excluding an outcome evaluation methodology in the future. However, the process evaluation limits the understanding of some Russian policies. For example, one common Russian policy is to sign Memorandums of Understandings as a game of optics and never implement the agreements. Process evaluation is limited to the first phase and doesn't evaluate if the agreement is enforced or solely remain ink on a paper. This is the main drawback of process evaluation in regard to this research.

B. Event Analysis

In the second instance the research will be conducted through an event analysis, investigating Russian-Qatari interactions, mainly in diplomatic settings. The events that are the subject of analysis are best defined as “some activity undertaken by an international actor (a nation-state, a major subunit of a nation-state, an international organization) ... an activity which an actor undertakes at a specific time and which is directed toward another actor for the purposes of conveying interest (even non-interest) in some issue. Thus, an event involves (1) an actor, (2) a target, (3) a time period, (4) an

¹¹⁶ Gary Bess. 'Process Evaluation: How It Works'. *American Indian and Alaska Native Mental Health Research* 11:2 (2004). p. 109–20

activity, and (5) an issue about which the activity revolves.”¹¹⁷ In this event analysis, the main actors are Russia and Qatar, while not excluding other state actors that affect the gas trade or the Russian-Qatari relations. Domestic stakeholders such as gas companies will also be analysed in the extent they influence the events. The events that will be studied in this case will be the Russian policies and extract how their actions can be explained by the concepts of “energy security” and “energy diplomacy”. Next, the step is to conceptualize the terms “energy security” and “energy diplomacy” and define their characteristics. Since the concept of “energy security” is more often used for energy consumer states, a key issue will be to specify the variables for producer countries. Likewise, for “energy diplomacy” consumers and producers use different tools, the key issue for this framework will be to specify the variables for producer countries. These variables will thereafter be operationalized in order to single out the key indicators that the framework will be based on. The Russian policies will be measured against the indicators in the model and determine to which extent the Russian policies are exercising energy diplomacy and to which extent the Russian policies are ensuring energy security. By categorizing and assessing the content of the policies and events into the framework, the study will systematically quantify the implementation of energy diplomacy and energy security in Russia’s bilateral relations with Qatar. The challenge with this type of method is the modelling of a framework for the concept of producer energy diplomacy which is yet not well-defined. Moreover, the focus on energy security from a consumer perspective will make it less likely to find an existing framework to reuse; it will likewise be difficult to obtain clear definitions for my own conceptualization.

¹¹⁷ Edward Azar. 'The Issues In Events Research' in Theory and Practice of Events Research. New York: Gordon and Breach Science Publishers. (1975)

C. Interviews

This work is, apart from analysing academic literature and press sources, based on eleven qualitative interviews with experts on Russian energy sector. Seven interviews were made in person and the remaining four were conducted by phone. Those interviews that were conducted in person were part of my fieldwork in Moscow where I was hosted by the Institute of World Economy and International Relations (IMEMO) during the summer 2019. The Russian interviewees are prominent experts in Russian energy diplomacy and MENA relations, and they provide the research with prime knowledge on Russian-Qatari gas diplomacy. The experts come from research institutes and universities. Some interviewees are coming from the private sector where they work in either political risk consultancy or credit rating agencies. Other respondents are public officials and diplomats. The interviewees are as followed: 1) a diplomat at the Russian embassy in Qatar 2) a scholar at Middle East Institute 3) a fellow at the Jamestown Foundation (institute focusing on Russian-Middle East relations) 4) the CEO of Gulf State Analytics (geopolitical risk consultancy firm) 5) an energy analyst at Fitch Ratings 6) the deputy executive director on energy studies at Institute for Energy and Finance (Russian energy institute) 7) the head of research for VYGON consulting (Russian energy consultancy) 8) an expert at Russian International Affaris Council 9) the director of energy department at Institute for Energy and Finance 10) the deputy director at National Energy Security Fund (Russian energy fund) 11) a researcher at Gubkin Oil and Gas Russian State University. The interview method is decided to follow a semi-structure as this allow for flexibility and offers considerable amount of freedom for both the interviewer and the interviewee. Disadvantages with following a semi-structured methodology is the reliability since the questions are not asked in

identical way or follow the same order. Although, the interviews may gauge more information with a semi-structure which, in this case, is more important than the ability to compare answers. The aim with conducting these interviews is to get a broader understanding of the different aspects concerning my research question. The alternatives for this purpose were semi-structured or unstructured interviews. While the unstructured method would have offered a closer bond with the respondents and thereby gaining deeper insight, the semi-structured type will provide formal answers that can be transcribed and used in the research. Moreover, the sampling is conducted together with the expertise of IMEMO, and the experts with most insights have been chosen to take part in the research. To further consolidate a robust material base, snowball sampling is applied in order to exhaust as much information from Russian sources as possible. The drawback with snowball sampling is that the sampling will be skewed towards similar respondents and therefore the perspectives might be similar. However, the primary interviewees are selected on the base of diversity in perspectives, backgrounds and affiliations. Due to the variety in the starting point, the bias of snowball sampling will be defused.

D. Official Documents

Data on the events of Russian-Qatari diplomacy is collected from official documents that are retrieved from chiefly Russian sources but includes Qatari sources as well. The official documents will include public statements made by Russian and Qatari officials. Another useful type of official document is diplomatic communication between the two countries, this will be collected as far as it is accessible. Disclosed minutes and documents from the GCEF meetings will be used as well. Public inquiries

regarding the topic of natural gas will also be a source of information for this research. Speeches by political representatives will be used whenever valuable data can be provided. Additionally, statistics and other data will be gathered from multilateral organizations such as the International Energy Agency. The possible drawback for this type of method is the accessibility for official documents such as diplomatic communication since they can be classified information. Another problem with the official documents is the language barrier since most of them will be in Russian and some might not have an English translation. The official documents that will be retrieved will be in English, either in original or translated.

CHAPTER FIVE

LITERATURE REVIEW

Energy as a geopolitical tool is not a new phenomenon. It has been the cause of war, pacts and political spats throughout the history of mankind. The quest for energy increased with the industrialization's growing energy demand and the quest intensified with the petroleum age's concentrated energy sources. During World War II Japan invaded other Asian countries, mainly Java, to secure oil supply. After the Second World War, USA entered into an agreement with Saudi Arabia primarily to access their huge oil reserves. In 1973 the oil embargo shook the world and the importance of energy diplomacy spiked synchronously with the Brent crude price. Energy and geopolitics have always been intertwined and will continue to do so as long as energy is seen as vital for national security. Securing access to natural resources for importing countries and securing access to markets for exporting countries are guiding states in their assessing of bilateral relations. By using state power and diplomatic influence a state can deliver lucrative contracts for their domestic energy companies. Both concepts of energy security and energy diplomacy are wide concepts; therefore, this analysis will be based on the Russian use of energy diplomacy in the Middle East since that concept is more relevant when assessing Russian energy diplomacy with producer-states.

A. Reviewing the Concept of Energy Security

Energy security is a widely used concept, although scholars have not agreed on a single definition. Goldthau and Sovacool define the double-edged term "*energy security*" as "reliable supply at affordable prices in the case of consuming states and as

reliable demand at sustainable prices in the case of producing states.”¹¹⁸ Most of the literature defines energy security from the perspective of importing countries where energy security has become synonymous with security of supply. The emphasis on the supply comes from the western shock of the oil crisis in the 1970s. The consequences of disruptions in energy supply are perceived as more critical for the world economy than disruptions in demand since only one country (Canada) of the ten largest economies is a net exporter of energy. The consequences are severe on a national level because, in the words of E.F Schumacher, energy is “not just another commodity, but the precondition of all commodities, a basic factor equal with air, water, and earth”¹¹⁹. Thus, security of supply could be seen as more important than security of demand. Nevertheless, the importance of energy demand is a high priority for the producing countries and disruptions can have severe geopolitical implications. National oil companies (NOC) were created in the wake of the nationalization wave during the 1970s and the NOCs have gradually evolved into strong competitors to the international oil companies (IOC). This is manifested in accelerating “state efforts in securing energy supplies or revenues stemming from resource extraction”¹²⁰, by operating energy development projects in foreign countries.¹²¹

B. Reviewing the Concept of Energy Diplomacy

The concept “*energy diplomacy*” is loosely defined as “the way countries give their energy companies a competitive edge in bidding for resources by using the state’s

¹¹⁸ *Idem.* p. 29

¹¹⁹ Andreas Goldthau and Benjamin Sovacool, ‘The Uniqueness of the Energy Security, Justice, and Governance Problem’. *Energy Policy, Modeling Transport Energy Demand and Policies*, 41 (February 1, 2012). p. 232–40.

¹²⁰ Goldthau. “Energy Diplomacy In Trade And Investment of Oil And Gas”. *Global Energy Governance* (2010). p. 28

¹²¹ *Ibid.*

power: consumer countries strengthen their supply situation by diplomatically flanking energy contracts, whereas producer countries use diplomacy to enhance access to markets or reserves”,¹²² according to Goldthau. This definition is supported by Aalto who refers energy diplomacy to the practices and norms by which political institutions and large energy companies cooperate to promote energy trade”.¹²³ Aalto also provides with a minimalistic and self-explaining definition: “energy diplomacy is about the extension of diplomatic practices into energy trade” Although the concept of energy diplomacy could seem self-explaining, it needs clarification since academics have failed to agree on a definition that defines the relationship between energy and diplomacy. As Goldthau put it, “despite a myriad of contributions linking the term to the nexus of energy, foreign policy, and supply security, there is no consensus on what exactly the term energy diplomacy means. A review of current debates on energy diplomacy reveals an assumed strong issue linkage, particularly between energy and development policy, bilateral trade, military aid, and foreign policy in general.”¹²⁴ Goldthau goes on to explain that even though there is no generally accepted conceptualization, a suitable definition would be “the use of foreign policy to secure access to energy supplies abroad and to promote bilateral cooperation in the energy sector”¹²⁵. With the implication that states are the units of analysis and that the energy trade “do not follow an economic logic but rather a political one” since the cost-benefit calculations are directed by national security goals and not economic profit.¹²⁶ In support of this statement, Herranz-Surrallés’ policy paradigm concludes that energy diplomacy defines the problem of energy security as a geopolitical one rather than an economic. The policy

¹²² Goldthau. “Energy Diplomacy”. p. 28

¹²³ Aalto. “Russian Energy”. p. 2

¹²⁴ Goldthau. “Energy Diplomacy”. p. 28

¹²⁵ Ibid.

¹²⁶ Ibid.

goal is national interest instead of economic competitiveness. The policy competences are foreign affairs officials and state-owned energy companies in contrast to state officials from the economic department and private-owned energy companies.¹²⁷

Energy diplomacy is foreign policy strategy used to achieve energy security. Goldthau explains the different energy diplomacy methods a state can use with the aim to increase its energy security. Occasionally consuming and producing nations can use the similar tools to ensure national energy security, rather the means differ depending what access the state in question has in its toolbox. The economic tool could be development-centred where a nation uses development aid and financial assistance to secure return favours, an instrument China is widely believed to have used in Africa, whereas subsidies and preferential energy prices can only be used by producing countries to ensure dependency on their energy. Another tool is diplomatic support which great powers can use to block condemnations in multilateral forums like the United Nations Security Council. Military collaboration is also a widely used instrument which can go both ways, for example energy importing USA has based their alliance with Saudi Arabia on an oil-for-weapons agreement.¹²⁸

C. Russian Use of Energy Diplomacy in the MENA

The MENA region's importance to energy markets has to be reviewed before one try to understand Russia's energy policy in the region. As one of the, if not *the*, energy richest region in the world, MENA sits on more than half of the world's oil and gas reserves and according to OPEC estimations Middle Eastern oil reserves accounts

¹²⁷ Anna Herranz-Surrallés. "An emerging EU energy diplomacy? Discursive shifts, enduring practices". *Journal of European Public Policy*, no. 9. (2016). p. 5

¹²⁸ Goldthau. "Energy Diplomacy". p. 25

for 53,4 percent of global reserves.¹²⁹ Middle Eastern countries control strategic maritime routes for energy transport. Gulf States pose Russia's fiercest competition in the growing energy markets of China and India. The region has a geographical proximity to Europe which is one of the largest energy importers and Russia's most important energy customer. The Gulf houses Russia's main energy rivals – Saudi Arabia for oil and Qatar for gas.¹³⁰ The Kremlin's security assessments clearly state that Middle Eastern hydrocarbons are a threat to Russian interests and one of the stated objectives in Russia's energy policy in the Middle East is to prevent Middle Eastern energy from flowing into Russian dominated markets.¹³¹ For example, in 2009, a Russian National Security Strategy mentions that increasing energy deliveries from the Middle East to Europe is a major threat to Russia.¹³² The Kremlin aims to increase its influence in decisions on the supply of Middle Eastern energy to Europe because that influence can be converted to Russian control over the European energy market and thereby European foreign policy.¹³³ Not only does this strategy provide the Kremlin with a key bargaining chip in its geopolitical negotiations with the EU, it also serves the objective of creating divisions in Trans-Atlantic energy security coordination. Some factions within the Kremlin have lobbied successfully for cooperation mechanisms rather than confrontational policies when dealing with MENA energy challengers since it is believed that coordination with these states can safeguard Russian shares in the European energy market.¹³⁴ The main lines of Russian energy diplomacy vis-a-vis other energy producers are to strengthen communication, promote cooperation and stabilize

¹²⁹ OPEC. "OPEC Share of World Crude Oil Reserves, 2018". Annual Statistical Bulletin. (2019)

¹³⁰ Mammadov. "Russia in the Middle East: Energy Forever?". (2018)

¹³¹ Barmin, "Russian Energy Policy in the Middle East." (2017)

¹³² Yuri Barmin. "The Politics of Oil: How Russia Pursues Its Energy Dream in the Middle East". Alsharq Forum. (February 24, 2017)

¹³³ Mammadov. "Russia in the Middle East: Energy Forever?" (2018)

¹³⁴ Barmin. "Russian Energy Policy in the Middle East" (2017)

energy markets.¹³⁵ Maintaining good relations with all their competitors, and not only traditional allies like Iran, is essential to Russian energy diplomacy. Nonetheless, the security hawks prevent Russian energy diplomacy to pursue cooperation strategies at any cost and drives Moscow to opt for hard power demonstrations.¹³⁶ This duality of pull and push strategies is what characterise Russia's energy diplomacy in the Middle East.

Middle East is also a geostrategic region and can be seen as a gateway for enhanced Russian influence around the globe. After the fallout with the West, Russia has realized that it needs to hedge its partnerships, economically and politically, and has therefore embraced the idea of engaging in the global energy market.¹³⁷ But it is not only Russia who seeks new partners. The Kremlin has been sighting a vacuum in the Middle East as traditional power brokers are disengaging from the area and leaving the regional states seeking for complimentary patrons to increase their state security. For the resource rich states in the region, Russia, also being a resource rich state, is seen as a nation with similar challenges. Both are navigating in a lower price environment and aiming to set a certain price level – a goal that has been at odds with American interests. Russia, with its lengthy experience in energy production inside and outside Russia, has made it a more attractive partner than for example China. Moscow has pursued to emphasize energy relations with MENA countries in order to "bring the region to its area of influence and to drive a wedge between the United States and its traditional allies, especially in Gulf region".¹³⁸ By controlling energy markets through its own energy exports and through allies' energy exports, Russia furthers the objective to

¹³⁵ Li Xing and Ma Yuan. "A Comparative Analysis of US-Russia Middle East Energy Strategy". *Journal of Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies*, 4:3. (September 2010)

¹³⁶ Barmin. "Russian Energy Policy in the Middle East." (2017)

¹³⁷ Ibid.

¹³⁸ Mammadov. "Russia in the Middle East: Energy Forever?" (2018)

increase its bargaining power in dialogues with European hydrocarbon importers.¹³⁹ Russia and the MENA sits on 63% of the world's gas reserves, any coordination in between them would therefore have serious ramifications on the global gas market.¹⁴⁰ The abovementioned examples, on both a global and regional level, illustrate the significance of energy diplomacy for Russian foreign policy objectives - especially for the overall objective of re-establishing Russia's superpower status. Nevertheless, it is worth remarking that not all Russian energy policies are following a strategic approach but are improvised in a lot of cases.

1. Multilateral Cooperation

Equally, energy diplomacy serves the Russian Ministry of Finance and its objectives in strengthening the state economy. More control over the global energy market provides the Russian state coffers with crucial budget revenues. Through energy diplomacy with both producer and consumer states, Moscow can safeguard export markets from competition. However, it is important to note that the price difference between Russian and Qatari gas is a crucial variable when European countries assess whether to import from Russia or Qatar. The Kremlin believes that firm energy cooperation with Gulf producers will result in increased Russian energy security with regards to its European and Asian market shares. Exerting energy diplomacy improves Russia's efforts in stabilizing its finances which is seen as critical for Russian state survival, especially when considering Russian history. Russia's collective memory is tainted by the dissolution of the Soviet Union, a development that was driven by the 1980s oil glut which subsequently saw to the collapse of the Soviet economy. President

¹³⁹ Mammadov. "Russia in the Middle East: Energy Forever?" (2018)

¹⁴⁰ Ibid.

Putin has called the disintegration of the Soviet Union the last century's worst catastrophe and he has vowed to avert the same fate for the Russian Federation. A key objective for Russia's state survival is therefore to stabilize volatile hydrocarbon prices which necessitate control over pricing mechanisms. The Kremlin has understood that controlling energy prices requires coordinating energy supplies with former MENA rivals.¹⁴¹ Thus, *one of Russia's energy diplomacy methods is to collaborate with other states and international organizations that can influence energy supplies and energy prices*. Pursuing coordination with OPEC and other actors who can impact pricing mechanisms is a vital tool for Russian energy diplomacy. In 2018, Russia and Saudi Arabia concluded an unprecedented output cut agreement - the OPEC+ deal. President Putin's increased coordination with Saudi Arabia and OPEC over petroleum supplies signals a shift in Russia energy policy. Soviet Russia was protective over its independent energy policy and thus refrained from ceding decision-making to the oil cartel.¹⁴² After the oil crisis of 1973, the Soviet Union held talks with OPEC but ultimately refrained from blackmailing the West and instead opted to substitute MENA oil in Europe.¹⁴³ Moscow did so not because of good will but because West European countries, unlike East Europe, purchased oil in US dollars and because energy exports could establish a leverage vis-à-vis the West.¹⁴⁴

OPEC is important for Russian gas interests as well since it heavily affects natural gas prices due to the strong price correlation between oil and natural gas. Natural gas has sailed up on the Russian agenda and is now a "high-profile element in

¹⁴¹ Mammadov. "Russia in the Middle East: Energy Forever?" (2018)

¹⁴² Nikolay Zlobin. "The Gulf in the Context of Russian Foreign Policy" in *International Interests in the Gulf Region*. Emirates Centre for Strategic Studies. (2004)

¹⁴³ Barmin. "Russian Energy Policy in the Middle East". (2017)

¹⁴⁴ Ibid.

Russia's Middle East policy".¹⁴⁵ In 2007, Putin stated that "there is no objection to establish a natural gas cartel similar to OPEC as natural gas exporting countries are indeed necessary to coordinate their actions."¹⁴⁶ The Gas Exporting Countries Forum (GECF) was established in 2001 and the first organization charter was adopted in 2008, stoking Western fears that this would soon evolve into a natural gas cartel. Yet the idea of a "gas OPEC" held little substance because of structural challenges in the gas market.¹⁴⁷ Natural gas pricing differs from petroleum pricing because the gas market is based on fixed distribution routes and long-term contracts and thus spot markets, like in oil trade, are not included in the same extent.¹⁴⁸ Even though spot pricing is increasingly used in natural gas trade, a gas oligopoly is unattainable due to the shale gas revolution which has increased the number of gas producing countries and thus ruining the basis for cartel pricing.¹⁴⁹ Russian officials are well aware of the fundamental differences between gas and oil trade which makes it seem improbable that there has ever been an illusion of creating a gas cartel with a price impact equivalent to OPEC.¹⁵⁰ Moscow views the multilateral organization as a forum where gas producing countries can discuss market issues and coordinate gas exports. Against the backdrop of volatile energy markets and an unpredictable future for hydrocarbons, Russia seeks to solidify its market shares by negotiating a division of markets with its competitors.¹⁵¹ One of Russia's strategies is to "attempt to persuade or entice other gas producers to coordinate with Moscow so that they are not tempted to take market share away from Russia in the

¹⁴⁵ Roland Dannreuther. "Russia and the Middle East: A Cold War Paradigm?". *Europe-Asia Studies*, 64:3. (2012)

¹⁴⁶ Barmin. "Russian Energy Policy in the Middle East" (2017)

¹⁴⁷ Cafiero and Karasik. "Qatar and Russia: What Do They See in Each Other?" (October 11, 2017).

¹⁴⁸ Oleg Mityayev. "'Gas OPEC: Is It a Good Idea?'. RIA Novosti. (24 October, 2008).

¹⁴⁹ Ibid.

¹⁵⁰ Barmin. "Russian Energy Policy in the Middle East". (2017)

¹⁵¹ Ibid.

European gas market".¹⁵² In order to coordinate gas supplies, Moscow has stepped up its multilateral efforts with the region's key gas producers – Qatar, Iran, Algeria and Libya. However, scholars have questioned if Russia can influence the policies regarding the vital energy sector of its competitors.¹⁵³

2. Commercial Partnerships

Historically, Russia has lagged behind in partnering with Middle Eastern energy industry. The Soviet Union found it difficult to compete with Western energy interest that had an early foothold in the resource rich countries. The Soviet economic model and its technological delay further decreased Soviet competitiveness in Middle Eastern energy sectors.¹⁵⁴ Western energy corporations still pose more attractive than their Russian counterparts, not least because of the politics that is attached to Russian energy companies.¹⁵⁵ Nevertheless, Soviet Russia partnered with MENA allies in exploration and extraction projects during the Cold War, and around 350 joint projects were implemented in allied countries such as Egypt, Syria, Libya, Algeria, Iraq and Yemen. Putin aims to revive and supersede the achievements of Soviet energy diplomacy.¹⁵⁶ *One of the tools to do so is through partnering in energy exploration, extraction, development and transportation.* Russia recognizes that the globalization of natural gas will toughen the market environment, thus Russian energy diplomacy is emphasizing on "acquisitions of gas assets in geographically well-positioned locations".¹⁵⁷ Russian Energy Strategy 2030 points out that Russia pursues "the goal of mutually beneficial

¹⁵² Dannreuther. "Russia and the Middle East: A Cold War Paradigm?". Europe-Asia Studies. (2012)

¹⁵³ Ibid.

¹⁵⁴ Barmin. "Russian Energy Policy in the Middle East". (2017)

¹⁵⁵ Ibid.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid.

¹⁵⁷ Mammadov. "Russia in the Middle East: Energy Forever?". (2018)

cooperation in the energy industry" and other official documents indicate potential joint projects for the Russian energy sector, not the least in the MENA region.¹⁵⁸ The Kremlin is addressing the challenges of energy competition through a cooperation prism that ensues co-opting Middle Eastern rivals and treating them as "energy partners" – a strategy that includes involvement in energy projects as well as provision of capital and equipment.¹⁵⁹ The short-term goal is to enhance Russian influence in the delivery decisions of the energy projects. By taking a stake in rival projects, Moscow gains influence over export levels but more importantly it can control direction and delivery destinations. These endeavours are strategic in the sense that it undermines European efforts to break dependence on Russian energy and thereby consolidating its market share.¹⁶⁰ Nonetheless, Russia does not always obstruct MENA gas from reaching Europe since there are also incentives for Russian energy interests to export MENA gas as long as it is under Russian control. By supporting MENA energy to reach Europe, Moscow diminishes the lucrativeness of Central Asian/Caspian-European pipeline projects.¹⁶¹ Gazprom stands accused of hoarding up gas exports from Middle Eastern countries and sell that gas in Europe through Gazprom.¹⁶² The strategy aims to maintain Russian controlled gas in Europe and to create a network of bilateral connections between Russia and other gas exporting states.¹⁶³ The long-term objective with participating in joint projects is to increase the Kremlin's political clout in the Middle East and strengthen its leverage in diplomatic negotiations.¹⁶⁴ Nonetheless, one should

¹⁵⁸ Barmin. "Russian Energy Policy in the Middle East". (2017)

¹⁵⁹ Li Xing and Ma Yuan. "A Comparative Analysis of US-Russia Middle East Energy Strategy". *Journal of Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies*, Vol. 4, No. 3. (September 2010).

¹⁶⁰ Mammadov. "Russia in the Middle East: Energy Forever?". (2018)

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁶² Vladimir Socor. "Gazprom on a shopping spree for gas". *Eurasia Daily Monitor*, 5:133. (July 14, 2008)

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁴ Mammadov. "Russia in the Middle East: Energy Forever?". (2018)

not forget that joint projects are not solely about political benefits, Russian energy companies are partnering with foreign energy industries because some projects are believed to have potential for increasing economic profits as well. Furthermore, joint projects are helping Russia to "diversify its export capabilities".¹⁶⁵

The Energy Strategy states that the Kremlin will promote Russian participation in large-scale, international transit projects in the hydrocarbons sector.¹⁶⁶ In the context of this, Moscow went on a diplomatic offensive in Turkey with the aim of constructing a gas pipeline to Europe - without bypassing Ukraine. This resulted in a success for Russian energy diplomats when in 2014, President Putin and President Erdogan signed the TurkStream project. However, the project was halted one year later after Turkish Air Forces downed a Russian aircraft by the Turkish-Syrian border. The relations were restored, and the project was restarted in 2016 after the Russians went out of their way to reconcile with Ankara due to the fact that the joint project is considered a valuable tool for Russia in its bid to control the European gas market. Turkey's dependency on Russian gas most probably influenced Erdogan's decision in 2016 to opt for reconciliation with Putin, and Turkey's centrality for Russian gas interests in Europe most probably drove Moscow to improve its relations with Ankara.¹⁶⁷¹⁶⁸ The joint project has helped Russia to undercut Iranian ambitions of using Turkey as a transit hub to increase its gas sales in the European market.¹⁶⁹ From the perspective of Russian energy diplomacy, TurkStream is a strategic move since it outcompetes rival pipeline

¹⁶⁵ Mammadov. "Russia in the Middle East: Energy Forever?". (2018)

¹⁶⁶ Tracey German. "Pipeline politics: Georgia and energy security". *Small Wars & Insurgencies*, 20:2. (2009)

¹⁶⁷ Martin Russell. "Russia in the Middle East". European Parliamentary Research Service. (November, 2018)

¹⁶⁸ Barmin. "Russian Energy Policy in the Middle East". (2017)

¹⁶⁹ Ibid.

projects, such as the Nabucco-pipeline, that seek to use Turkish transit for gas deliveries to Europe.¹⁷⁰

Russia is also partaking in the exploration of the Eastern Mediterranean gas basin through numerous projects with the principal Middle Eastern countries. The Israeli discovery of the gas fields Tamar and Leviathan in 2009 boosted Russian fears that Mediterranean gas would grab shares in South-eastern Europe. In 2013, Gazprom signed an agreement on the Israeli Tamar field which included financing a LNG facility and the right to export Tamar LNG to Asian markets for 20 years.¹⁷¹ It is important to note that Russia can finance LNG facilities but not produce them since Russia has not been able to develop its own domestic LNG technology – a technology which is mainly limited to Western companies such as Shell, Total and Exxon.¹⁷² Even though Russia is partnering with ENI, Total and Noble Energy in the development of Mediterranean gas fields, the interests are fundamentally diverged because Russia is not interested in pumping the gas to Europe.¹⁷³ Russia also concluded a deal with the Palestinian Authority to develop the gas fields on coast of Gaza.¹⁷⁴ In 2018, the Russian gas company Novatek was awarded a 20% stake in two Lebanese offshore blocks.¹⁷⁵ In Egypt, posed to become the Mediterranean gas hub due to its existing LNG infrastructure, a new law has allowed foreign corporations to use the country's import and distribution facilities in natural gas – an opening Rosneft already exploited by

¹⁷⁰ Barmin. "Russian Energy Policy in the Middle East". (2017)

¹⁷¹ Gazprom Export News. "Gazprom Marketing & Trading signs HOA outlining main terms of LNG offtake from Tamar FLNG project in Israel". (February 25, 2013).

¹⁷² Vladimir Soldatkin and Shadia Nasralla. "Shell exits Gazprom-led LNG project in Russia". Reuters. (April 10, 2019)

¹⁷³ Deutsche Welle. "EU To Cut Gas Dependency On Russia With Israel Pipeline". (April 3, 2017)

¹⁷⁴ Ridvan Urcosta. "Crimean Drilling Rigs Key to Russia's Energy Policy in Syria and the Eastern Mediterranean". Eurasia Daily Monitor, 16:83. (June 5, 2019)

¹⁷⁵ Varsha Koduvayur and Greg Everett. "Russia's Gas Web Ensnares Europe". Foreign Policy. (April 17, 2019)

sending 10 LNG cargoes to Egyptian Natural Gas Holding Company.¹⁷⁶ Russian interests in Egypt was furthered when Rosneft bought a 30% stake in the Zohr gas field, a move which Rosneft's CEO Igor Sechin stated would strengthen his company's standing in the "promising and strategic region".¹⁷⁷

Russian energy projects extend to several other countries around the MENA region. In Algeria, Gazprom has acquired exploration and production licences, but its presence is otherwise limited due to Algeria's restrictive laws on foreign ownership in the energy sector.¹⁷⁸ Algeria has also rejected Russian attempts to increase its influence in the Algerian national gas company Sonatrach. A case in point was Russian-Algerian negotiations in 2006 when Algeria, concerned about its autonomy, declined Putin's offer to scrap Algeria's debt to Russia in exchange for a stake in Sonatrach.¹⁷⁹ Nonetheless, Gazprom succeeded to acquire drilling rights in Algerian hydrocarbon deposits in 2014.¹⁸⁰ In Iran, Gazprom is developing gas fields and vying to invest in a LNG plant which assists Russian efforts in redirecting gas to Asian markets.¹⁸¹ In Iraqi Kurdistan, Rosneft obtained the right to develop a gas pipeline that would connect Kurdish gas fields with the Turkish pipeline network, thereby putting more European destined gas under Moscow's control.¹⁸²¹⁸³

¹⁷⁶ LNG World News. "Rosneft to supply 10 LNG cargoes to Egypt". (March 21, 2017)

¹⁷⁷ Mammadov. "Russia in the Middle East: Energy Forever?". (2018)

¹⁷⁸ Sarah Feuer and Anna Borshchevskaya. "Russia Makes Inroads in North Africa". Policy Watch 2884, The Washington Institute. (November 2, 2017).

¹⁷⁹ Dominique Finon. "Russia and the Gas-OPEC: Real or Perceived Threat?" IFRI. (November 2007)

¹⁸⁰ Dalia Ghanem-Yazbeck and Vasily Kuznetsov. "The 'comrades' in North Africa" in "Russia's return to the Middle East: Building sandcastles?", Issue, Chaillot papers, 146. (July 2018). p. 73

¹⁸¹ James Henderson and Ahmed Mehdi. "Russia's Middle East Energy Diplomacy". Foreign Affairs. (June 20, 2017)

¹⁸² Dmitry Zhdannikov. "Russia's Rosneft clinches gas pipeline deal with Iraq's Kurdistan". Reuters. (September 18, 2017)

¹⁸³ Mariya Petkova. "What did Russia get from its KRG gamble?" Al Jazeera. (April 15, 2019)

3. Involvement of Competitors

Just as Russia involves itself in rivalling energy projects, Russia also opens up their domestic energy projects to its energy rivals. *One type of energy diplomacy is therefore the inclusion of energy competitors in the Russian energy sector.* This strategy has four main advantages from an energy diplomatic prism. First, the recycling of Gulf petrodollars is providing alleviation for the Russian hydrocarbon sector. The European energy companies are careful to get involved in Russian projects since the sanctions legislated by the American Congress are particularly aimed at joint ventures in Russian energy sector.¹⁸⁴ Investments from rich Gulf countries support Russian efforts in circumventing Western sanctions and thereby strengthening Russia's energy sector.¹⁸⁵ Second, energy cooperation pulls the competitors closer which ultimately may lead to fair competition and friendly coordination.¹⁸⁶ Third, letting rivals control a stake in Russian energy projects may also serve to push competitors to open up their energy sectors for Russian companies for example talks on Saudi investments in Russian LNG has prompted Moscow to take an interest in Aramco's IPO.¹⁸⁷ Fourth, bringing along competitors on Russian projects co-opts shareholders to protect and promote Russian gas industry, thereby blurring out hard defined lines of the state actor's energy interests.

With the successful OPEC+ coordination in hindsight, Russian-Saudi energy cooperation has moved into joint ventures in Russian LNG sector.¹⁸⁸ All three Russian gas giants, Gazprom, Rosneft and Novatek have courted Saudi Arabia in varying degrees. Rosneft has been in talks with Saudi energy minister Khalid al-Falih with the

¹⁸⁴ Pavel Baev. "Russia Aspires to the Status of 'Energy Superpower'". *Strategic Analysis*, 31:3, 447-465 (2007)

¹⁸⁵ Mammadov. "Russia in the Middle East: Energy Forever?". (2018)

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid*

¹⁸⁷ Carole Nakhle. "Russia's energy diplomacy in the Middle East" in "Russia's return to the Middle East: Building sandcastles?". *Issue, Chaillot papers*, 146. (July 2018). p. 29

¹⁸⁸ Courtney Freer. "GCC–Russia Relations: Looking beyond Syria and towards Investment". *Middle East Centre Blog, London School of Economics*. (March 28, 2018)

aim of involving Aramco in at least one of Rosneft's LNG projects.¹⁸⁹ In 2017, Gazprom and Aramco inked a MoU for cooperation on LNG projects, which was followed up with an addendum to form a joint coordination committee – proving that opening up its domestic energy sector benefits Russian energy diplomacy since it increases the likelihood of establishing bilateral cooperation with rivals.¹⁹⁰ Novatek, the leading LNG player, signed a MoU with Aramco on LNG exploration, production, marketization and technology.¹⁹¹ Novatek-Aramco goes further than that, the energy companies are negotiating Aramco's possible share purchase of Novatek's Artic LNG-2 project.¹⁹² Through bilateral agreements and selling stakes in domestic projects, Russia has further strengthened the energy cooperation with Saudi Arabia.

4. Arms Trade

The same way energy diplomacy aims to benefit Russia economically, economic cooperation aims to benefit the energy sector. Throughout the region, Russia's economic ties with state actors have resulted in closer political ties and stronger cooperation in energy.¹⁹³ Russia approves sales of military equipment to nurture bilateral energy cooperation.¹⁹⁴ Moscow's efforts to deepen its military and technical ties with the MENA are not seen as the end goal but rather as an "instrument to boost other spheres of cooperation such as oil and gas".¹⁹⁵ By building economic ties with its energy rivals in the area and equipping them with Russian arms, Moscow increases its influence in

¹⁸⁹ Julia Khazagaeva. "Saudi Arabia's energy minister: The benefit of participation in OPEC+ is obvious". Tass Russian News Agency. (June 10, 2019)

¹⁹⁰ LNG World News. "Gazprom, Saudi Aramco to form joint coordination committee". (April 19, 2018)

¹⁹¹ LNG World News. "Novatek, Saudi Aramco ink LNG memorandum". (February 19, 2018)

¹⁹² Simon Watkins. "Here's Putin's Answer To The U.S. Shale Boom". Oil Price. (July 8, 2019)

¹⁹³ Russell, Martin. "Russia in the Middle East". European Parliamentary Research Service. (November 2018)

¹⁹⁴ Goldthau. "Energy Diplomacy". p. 29

¹⁹⁵ Timofey Borisov. "Russian arms exports in the Middle East" in "Russia's return to the Middle East: Building sandcastles?". Issue, Chaillot papers, 146. p. 42 (July 2018)

the decision making process of energy rivals. The Kremlin seeks to become a stakeholder in its competitors and Russia's vast network in arms trade is surely helpful in this matter. Linking arms deals with energy objectives poses another central aspect in Moscow's dealing with resource rich states in the Middle East.¹⁹⁶ Actually, weapon sales do not always precede energy agreements; sometimes the sequence of deals goes the other way around.¹⁹⁷ However, *it is clear that Russian arms trade promotes Russian energy collaboration and is therefore a core strategy in Russian energy diplomacy.* This is not to say that Russian sales of weapons only hold instrumental value connected to the Russian energy sector, because arms trade has been and still is an essential revenue source for the Russian state coffers, thus holding great intrinsic value. Nonetheless, energy and armaments are increasingly correlated and shapes Russian policies towards energy competitors.¹⁹⁸ Differentiating arms sales for intrinsic and instrumental reasons is not always easy but usually Russian arms deliveries to energy producers include an energy diplomatic dimension, albeit to different degrees. A method to distinguish between an economic and an energy rationale is to examine if the arms deals is followed up by energy deals during the same signing occasion or soon thereafter.

Weapons export as a means of energy diplomacy was already put in motion by the end of the last decade, illustrated by Putin's approach in Libya and Algeria.¹⁹⁹ In 2008, Putin cancelled Libya's \$4.5 billion debt to Russia, a debt that was there in the first place due to imports of Soviet weapons, and restarted discussions of supplying the North African country with anti-aircraft defence, jet fighters, helicopters and warships

¹⁹⁶ Stephen Blank. "Russia's Middle Eastern Position in 2025". *Russia in the Middle East*. (November 20, 2018)

¹⁹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid.

valued at several billion dollars.²⁰⁰ In exchange Gazprom gained contracts in Libyan energy fields, was offered to build a Libyan-European pipeline, and discussed the prospects of Gazprom buying up all natural gas and LNG intended for export.²⁰¹ Moreover, Russia and Libya agreed on strengthening coordination in the GECF.²⁰² The Russian arms deliveries to Libya are widely recognized as part of Russian strategy to cultivate cooperation in the energy sector.²⁰³ In Algeria, Putin sought closer gas cooperation with Sonatrach and visited Algiers in 2006 with not only a gas deal on the table but had also prepared the hitherto largest arms package in the post-Soviet period.²⁰⁴ The arms deal of \$7.5 billion was signed in order to make Algiers more lenient for the gas deal which was Putin's main objective with the visit.²⁰⁵ Both Libya and Algeria were courted for a long-time by Russia's arms-for-energy strategists, and it is to be expected that Russia will replicate this type of strategy with both Egypt's president al-Sisi and Libya's strongman Haftar.²⁰⁶

Moscow's ability to deploy the lure of arms sales with the purpose of gaining access to energy deposits is showcased in the Kremlin's policies in conflict-ridden Iraq, where the infamous Russian strategy of playing both sides has maximized Russian advantages in foreign energy policy.²⁰⁷ Both the central government in Baghdad and the Kurdistan Regional Government in Erbil were sold Russian defence equipment as a

²⁰⁰ Oleg Shchedrov. "Russia writes off Libya's cold war debt in exchange for contracts". New York Times. (April 17, 2008)

²⁰¹ Mark Kantz. "The Russian-Libyan Rapprochement: What Has Moscow Gained?". Middle East Policy. (2008)

²⁰² Ibid.

²⁰³ Goldthau. "Energy Diplomacy In Trade And Investment of Oil And Gas". (2010)

²⁰⁴ Victor Yasmann. "Russia: Energy, Weapons Bring Moscow Closer To Algiers". Radio Free Europe Radio Liberty. (March 10, 2006)

²⁰⁵ Ibid.

²⁰⁶ Stephen Blank. "Russia's Middle Eastern Position in 2025". Russia in the Middle East. (November 20, 2018)

²⁰⁷ Ibid.

method for Moscow to be considered in both Arab and Kurdish energy assessments.²⁰⁸ This combination of arms and gas deals has served Russia well and this type of energy diplomacy is predicted to be "repeated on a grander scale in the Middle East".²⁰⁹

Russian-Iranian rapprochement in terms of gas interests are believed to be linked with Russian technological assistance in Iran's ballistic missile program.²¹⁰ Through extensive defence cooperation with Iran, Russia has a preferential position in deals concerning Persian energy. For example, Russia has been offered to finance projects that divert Persian gas away from Europe, such as the Peace Pipeline that would stretch from Iran through Pakistan to China.²¹¹ Russia's strategy of playing both sides is apparent also in the Persian Gulf, where Moscow is mixing weapons and energy trade in its relations with Iranian adversaries – namely Saudi Arabia. In 2017, Russia received King Salman in the first state visit by a Saudi monarch and the summit culminated in a multibillion-dollar joint investment in military and energy trade.²¹²

5. Military Power

As we have seen in the abovementioned methods, energy diplomacy can imply using the energy economic tactics (commercial partnerships and investments) as a means to achieve energy security. Energy diplomacy also entail diplomatic tools (multilateralism) which are used to achieve objectives in the energy sector. It is also clear that energy diplomacy can entail tactics which are a mix of political and economic tools (arms trade). The concept therefore includes methods within the spectre of

²⁰⁸ Stephen Blank. "Russia's Middle Eastern Position in 2025". *Russia in the Middle East*. (November 20, 2018)

²⁰⁹ Ibid

²¹⁰ Goldthau. "Energy Diplomacy In Trade And Investment of Oil And Gas". (2010)

²¹¹ Kozhanov. "Russian Policy". p. 18

²¹² Anna Borshchevskaya. "Will Russian-Saudi Relations Continue to Improve?". *Foreign Affairs* (October 10, 2017)

economic policies and political tools. In this section, energy diplomacy is employing clear cut foreign policy tools to achieve the goal of enhancing the prospects for Russian energy sector. *Energy diplomacy entails therefore a military power dimension where the army is used as energy diplomacy tool.* Military force is one of the strongest foreign policy tools a state possesses, especially states with a strong army. The Russian army holds great hard power which translates to attractiveness for other, less equipped, states. Military cooperation is widely regarded as a Russian method to nurture collaboration in the energy sector. For example, Russia and Venezuela exercised a joint sea manoeuvre in 2008 which thereafter improved their cooperation in the energy field.²¹³ Russian use of military hard power has been fiercely demonstrated in the cases of Georgia and Syria.

The Russian intervention in Georgia during the summer 2008 has been described as a pipeline war, in which the conflict was less about protecting Russian citizen than protecting Russian energy interests.²¹⁴ Georgia is strategically located between Europe and the Caspian Sea region and the Central Asia, which makes the country an important link for connecting the landlocked hydrocarbon reserves of the Caspian Sea region and Central Asia to the European energy market – without transiting Russian territory.²¹⁵ Caucasus, providing a vital route for competing energy export infrastructure such as the Nabucco pipeline, makes the region, in the words of the commander of the US European Command General Craddock, "important for European energy diversification" and thereby of utter interest for Russian energy security of demand.²¹⁶ As mentioned, Moscow has bought up rivalling projects to secure its hold

²¹³ Goldthau. "Energy Diplomacy In Trade And Investment of Oil And Gas". (2010)

²¹⁴ Tracey German. "Pipeline politics: Georgia and energy security". *Small Wars & Insurgencies*, 20:2. (2009)

²¹⁵ Ibid.

²¹⁶ Bantz Craddock. "Statement of General Bantz J Craddock, USA Commander, United States European Command before the House Armed Services Committee". (13 March 2008).

on the European market but it is also clear from the Georgian intervention that the Kremlin does not limit itself to economic means to undermine European diversification efforts - armed conflicts are also viewed as an efficient tool to halt competing energy export infrastructure. Although Russia did not close down or target the existing pipelines that run through Georgia, the conflict was widely seen as a Russian attempt to demonstrate Russian dominance in the region and the political risk in Georgia – thereby undermining the image of Georgia as a secure alternative route for European energy imports.²¹⁷ The US claimed that the actual objective of Russia's intervention was "dismembering Georgia and undermining the Southern Energy Corridor".²¹⁸ In 2015, Russia effectively seized a part of the Baku-Supsa oil pipeline when it moved the borders of Georgian break-away republic South Ossetia to include a part of the pipeline.²¹⁹ This move effectively puts Russia in control over a part of the pipeline, although no disruptions have been reported. Conversely, it is worth noting that the Russian aggression further increased European fears of relying on Russian energy and could therefore increase the pressure of European diversification efforts.²²⁰

Putin's Syria policy was premeditated by possible national and international political advantages, but energy interests also plays a role in Russian bids to cement its presence in Syria. Soyuzneftegaz, a Russian energy company involved in determining policies on Syria, has interests in Syrian hydrocarbon fields.²²¹ Following the liberation of Raqqa in 2017, Soyuzneftegaz restarted the building of Raqqa's North Gas

²¹⁷ Tracey German. "Pipeline politics: Georgia and energy security". (2009)

²¹⁸ Daniel Fried. "US-Russia Relations in the Aftermath of the Georgia Crisis. Testimony of Daniel Fried, Assistant Secretary of State for European and Eurasian Affairs, before the House Committee on Foreign Affairs". Washington DC. (September 9, 2008)

²¹⁹ Andrew North. "Georgia accuses Russia of violating international law over South Ossetia". The Guardian. (14 July, 2015).

²²⁰ Tracey German. "Pipeline politics: Georgia and energy security". (2009)

²²¹ Nikolay Kozhanov. "Russian Policy Across the Middle East". Chatham House. (February 21, 2018)

Processing Plant.²²² In January 2018, Syria signed an energy cooperation agreement with Russia which gave Russian companies exclusive rights to produce Syrian hydrocarbons.²²³ The deal was followed up by Russian energy minister Alexander Novak to announce that Russia has "signed a road map, not only in the field of electricity but also oil and gas, covering the restoration of oil fields and the development of new deposits".²²⁴ Furthermore, Russia pledged to improve the quality of Syrian oil production facilities.²²⁵ The Russian intervention in Syria, just as in Georgia, proves that Russian military hard power can be used to achieve aims vital for Russian energy interests. However, the fact that Russian energy strategy has benefitted from the military interventions, does not imply that Russian energy sector is directly behind the Kremlin's decision to go to war, nor does it imply that energy interests are the sole reason behind Moscow's militarism. It is recognized that Russian calculations include a myriad of motives for bellicose endeavours in both the Syrian and Georgian context. Nonetheless, energy is a part of those calculations and it is acknowledged that the energy factor remains an important part of Russian militaristic assessments.

²²² Mammadov. "Russia in the Middle East: Energy Forever?". (2018)

²²³ Russell, Martin. "Russia in the Middle East". European Parliamentary Research Service. (November 2018)

²²⁴ "Russia Plans To Help Syria Rebuild Devastated Oil, Power Industries". Radio Free Europe Radio Liberty. (February 14, 2018)

²²⁵ Samuel Ramani. "Russia's Eye on Syrian Reconstruction". Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. (January 31, 2019)

D. Summary of the Theoretic Framework

Table 5.1. Theoretic Framework

Type of strategy	Definition	Indicators
Multilateralism	Cooperation within multilateral frameworks.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Engaging in multilateral energy forums. 2. Coordinating energy supplies. 3. Cooperating on energy pricing mechanisms. 4. Communicating and discussing challenges in the energy sphere.
Commercial partnerships	Establishing presence in competitors' energy sectors.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Purchasing shares in competing energy companies. 2. Participating in production and exploration 3. Partnering on exports and transportation infrastructure. 4. Exchanging technological expertise.
Involvement of competitors	Increasing interdependence in the energy industries.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Including foreign energy firms in domestic projects. 2. Selling shares of domestic energy corporations.
Arms trade	Intertwining arms sales with energy deals.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Exporting weapons to energy producing states. 2. Offering arms exports together with energy agreements.
Military power	Using hard power to deter or assist energy competitors.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Intervening with military force to obstruct rivalling energy projects. 2. Deploying army to support energy partners. 3. Collaborating on military exercises to gain preferential energy deals.

Source: by author

CHAPTER SIX

ANALYSIS

A. Multilateralism

In regard to Qatar, Russian energy diplomacy believes that there is potential for deepened coordination with the Gulf emirate.²²⁶ President Putin has stated that both countries “feel the need to harmonize policies in the energy sphere, especially in the gas industry.”²²⁷ Both Russia and Qatar understand that the market dynamics have changed due to the shale revolution, entailing increased competition – particularly from the US.²²⁸ As the natural gas market transforms into a buyer’s market, producer countries are encountering increased limitations. Examples of this are the EU investigations on Russian and Qatari destination clauses; more flexible and shorter contracts; demands for LNG and spot prices.²²⁹ Against this backdrop, Russia has pursued cooperation with Qatar via the GECF.²³⁰ When the Qatari Emir visited President Putin in 2016, both leaders called on greater coordination between the countries within the GECF.²³¹ Through communicating with Qatar in the forum, Russia aims to strengthen coordination, dividing the natural gas market and evade disputes with one of its main competitors.²³² Doha has positioned itself as a potential spoiler for Russian energy export strategy in Europe, which is why Russian authorities have sought to intensify its

²²⁶ Mahdi Amiri. “The Inconsistencies in Russia's Foreign Policy On the Members of the Persian Gulf Countries Council”. *Middle East Political Review*, 3:4. (2014)

²²⁷ Maxim Suchkov. “Russia, Qatar pushed to compromise. But will they?”. *Al-Monitor*. (January 27, 2016)

²²⁸ Dmitri Marinchenko, interview by Alexander Jalil. Moscow. (April 15, 2019)

²²⁹ *Ibid.*

²³⁰ Giorgio Cafiero and Theodore Karasik. “Qatar and Russia: What Do They See in Each Other?”. *Middle East Policy Institute*, (October 11, 2017)

²³¹ Mammadov. “Russia in the Middle East: Energy Forever?”. (2018)

²³² *Ibid.*

interactions with Qatar within the framework of multilateral organisations.²³³ Russia therefore promoted the establishment of GECF which was created in 2001 and institutionalized in 2008.²³⁴ However, tensions between Russia and Qatar was made evident from the start when Doha opposed the plans of transforming GECF into a gas cartel, which was never seen as a realistic idea by the industry, and got the proposal scrapped in the 2007 Doha summit.²³⁵ Russia lost its bid to establish the headquarters in St. Petersburg, which instead was placed in Doha.²³⁶ Qatar has contested Russia's plans to dominate the GECF and the relationship between them has at times been uneasy.²³⁷ For example, Russia attended the Doha meeting in 2011 with a low level delegation and Qatar reciprocated with the same action when the 2013 meeting was held in Moscow.²³⁸ Although both countries understand the value of coordination efforts, the talks haven't been successful mainly because of differing outlooks.²³⁹ Furthermore, Qatar avoids being perceived as too close to Russia which has a reputation for using its gas exports as a political tool and may risk Qatar's credibility.²⁴⁰ Some experts have disputed the notion of disagreements within the GECF, implying that Qatar and Russia are on the same page.²⁴¹ The Russian Embassy in Doha said in an interview, that Russia and Qatar share GECF's "goals and values, and have fruitful cooperation within the Forum."²⁴² Firstly, Qatar and Russia are not squarely on geopolitical issues - unlike in OPEC where

²³³ Mahdi Amiri. "The Inconsistencies in Russia's Foreign Policy On the Members of the Persian Gulf Countries Council". *Middle East Political Review*, 3:4. (2014)

²³⁴ Robert Orttung and Indra Overland. "Russia and the Formation of a Gas Cartel. Problems of Post-Communism". (2011)

²³⁵ Dominique Finon. "Russia and the Gas-OPEC: Real or Perceived Threat?" IFRI. (November 2007)

²³⁶ Alexey Belogoryev, interview by Alexander Jalil. Moscow. (April 11, 2019)

²³⁷ Mahdi Amiri. "The Inconsistencies in Russia's Foreign Policy On the Members of the Persian Gulf Countries Council". *Middle East Political Review*, 3:4. (2014).

²³⁸ Ibid.

²³⁹ Dmitri Marinchenko, interview by Alexander Jalil. Moscow. (April 15, 2019)

²⁴⁰ Giorgio Cafiero & Colby Connelly. "Russia and the Arab Gulf States: Current Energy Variables". *Gulf International Forum*. (March 19, 2019)

²⁴¹ Rauf Mammadov, interview by Alexander Jalil. Beirut (October 29, 2019)

²⁴² Dam Valor, interview by Alexander Jalil. Beirut (October 3, 2019)

Russia has to mediate between Saudi Arabia and Iran.²⁴³ Secondly, dissimilar from OPEC where Russia is not even a member, Russia is a founding member of GECF and this has resulted in a stronger Russian commitment in this forum.²⁴⁴ Thirdly, the two states are aligned in the future vision of the GECF as a platform for cooperation.²⁴⁵ Therefore, there are no “visible disagreements on the geopolitical dynamics or the mentality of the forum”.²⁴⁶ Rather the opposite has been truer, as the founding members try to appease each other with symbolic gestures for example that the GECF was founded in Tehran, based in Doha, and led by Moscow.²⁴⁷ Nevertheless, it has been tough for Russia to coordinate gas supplies with Qatar since other gas producers, primarily non-GECF countries, can increase their supplies and take market shares from both Russia and Qatar – leading to a lose-lose situation.²⁴⁸ The nature of the natural gas market differs from the oil market that it is not yet fully globalized and this is mainly because of pipeline logistics. President Putin recognizes that the pricing mechanisms existent in the oil trading sector is not applicable in natural gas trade, but Putin believes that, in order to defend lucrative gas prices, the oil-based pricing formulas should be preserved.²⁴⁹ Using the oil price as a market price indicator is more profitable than spot pricing, thus it was unanimously endorsed by the GECF and enshrined in the Moscow Declaration.²⁵⁰ Although Qatar profits from oil-pegged pricing, it is a lowest-cost producer and top LNG exporter which provides it with a flexibility that pipeline-bound Russia doesn’t enjoy. The problems this posed for Russia was manifested when the

²⁴³ Rauf Mammadov, interview by Alexander Jalil. Beirut (October 29, 2019)

²⁴⁴ Ibid.

²⁴⁵ Ibid.

²⁴⁶ Ibid.

²⁴⁷ Ibid.

²⁴⁸ Dmitri Marinchenko, interview by Alexander Jalil. Moscow. (April 15, 2019)

²⁴⁹ Vladimir Putin. “Transcript of news conference following the working meeting of the Gas Exporting Countries Forum (GECF) summit”. The Kremlin. (July 1, 2013)

²⁵⁰ GECF. “Moscow Declaration”. The Second Gas Summit of GECF Member States. (July 1, 2013)

decrease in US imports redirected Qatari exports to the European market which adopted spot prices and short-term contracts.²⁵¹ This development resulted in Gazprom refunding \$4.7 billion to its European customers.²⁵² In the Moscow Declaration, the Kremlin was successful in obtaining Qatar's commitment to defend oil-pegged prices and long-term contracts which is pivotal for Russian energy security. However, the LNG share of the market (which equals the globalization of the market) is increasing rapidly and LNG is paving the way, but this process has not been completed.²⁵³ It is therefore too soon to elaborate on the difference between Russia and Qatar since it is up to the market to decide pricing mechanisms for now.²⁵⁴ The transition from oil-pegged prices to spot pricing in the European market is nonetheless a slow process due to Europe's weak intra-market integration of energy infrastructure which excludes landlocked countries from receiving regasified LNG from coastal European terminals.²⁵⁵ It is worth noting that Novatek, which is leading in Russian LNG exports, is adapting to spot prices quicker and thereby "eating on Gazprom's market share in Europe".²⁵⁶

Russian energy diplomacy scored a win on the forum's side-lines in 2011 when Russia together with Qatar and Algeria agreed to cooperate on the European gas market.²⁵⁷ Although, experts have disputed the significance of Russian Memorandum of Understandings in the energy sector which is rather an "old Soviet tool to make agreements for the sake of agreements" as they can be promoted to Russian media

²⁵¹ Paul Saunders. "Russia, Qatar compete in natural gas market". Al-Monitor. (June 11, 2014)

²⁵² Olesya Astakhova and Vladimir Soldatkin. "Gazprom plans \$4.7 bln refund to European customers in 2013". Reuters. (February 8, 2013)

²⁵³ Rauf Mammadov, interview by Alexander Jalil. Beirut (October 29, 2019)

²⁵⁴ Ibid.

²⁵⁵ Ibid.

²⁵⁶ Ibid.

²⁵⁷ Oskarsson and Yetiv. "Russia and the Persian Gulf". Middle East Journal. (2013)

outlets as an image of Russian importance.²⁵⁸ Many of these agreements are never implemented or see very little progress. In the case of the Russian-Qatari-Algerian cooperation on the European market, no joint mechanism has been developed yet.²⁵⁹ At the same occasion, Russia and Qatar discussed Qatar's interest in the Yamal project and acquisition of Novatek shares.²⁶⁰ Another achievement for Russia has been the involvement of GECF as a platform where Russia and Qatar exchange views in order to make the uncertain gas market more certain and more sustainable for producers. The GECF has also provided Russia a forum to discuss common problems and solutions with Qatar, which ultimately enhance its understanding of Doha's vision. The expert talks between Russia and Qatar is now working on improving analytical cooperation and a common vision for the global gas market.

B. Russian Interests in Qatari Gas Sector

President Putin understood that if Qatar loses its premium market in Asia to Australia, then greater Qatari gas flows would be directed towards Europe which is why Russia pursues to become a stakeholder in Qatari gas - thus turning a rival into a partner.²⁶¹ By taking a stake in Qatar's gas sector, Russia will facilitate Qatari gas inflows in Asia and in other markets than Europe.²⁶² Just as Qatar invests heavily in US LNG to increase its leverage on export directions, Russian companies deepen its Qatari presence with the aim to establish cooperation and share market allocations – not to spoil Qatar's market shares.²⁶³ Since then, the Russian-Qatari senior officials meetings

²⁵⁸ Rauf Mammadov, interview by Alexander Jalil. Beirut (October 29, 2019)

²⁵⁹ Ibid.

²⁶⁰ "Russian-Qatari Relationship". Embassy of the Russian Federation in the State of Qatar. (July 2, 2014)

²⁶¹ Oskarsson and Yetiv. "Russia and the Persian Gulf". Middle East Journal. (2013)

²⁶² Alexey Gromov, interview by Alexander Jalil. Moscow. (April 17, 2019)

²⁶³ Maria Belova, interview by Alexander Jalil. Moscow. (April 15, 2019)

have been dominated by cooperation in the gas sector.²⁶⁴ When the Emir of Qatar visited Moscow in 2016, both heads of state emphasized on discussing natural gas cooperation.²⁶⁵ As Qatar's energy companies are nationalized, there has not been room for Russia to purchase shares in the Qatari companies.

Nonetheless, Qatari gas ventures are open for private investments and share-buying, something Russian companies have expressed great interest in.²⁶⁶ In 2011, the then Russian Ambassador to Doha Vladimir Titorenko mentioned that Russia and Qatar were cooperating on 12 major projects which were “set to take the bilateral relations of the world's two largest gas-reserve holders to a new level”.²⁶⁷ Lately, the Russian LNG leader Novatek has fostered better relations with Qatar which can serve as a gateway to LNG markets worldwide.²⁶⁸ Stroytransgaz has prospects of competing for tenders in Qatari exploration blocks in order to establish a permanent foothold in the country's gas sector.²⁶⁹ In the end of the last decade, Gazprom sought to enter LNG joint production projects with Qatar as well as conducting joint exploration projects in the Middle East.²⁷⁰ Gazprom opened its Doha representative office in 2013 which indicates a continuation of Gazprom's increased cooperation with Doha since Qatar raised exports to Europe.²⁷¹ The trends of closer cooperation between Gazprom and Qatar have accelerated coordinating efforts in the European market and other markets.²⁷² In an interview with the Russian Embassy to Doha, a diplomat stated that it is a “regional

²⁶⁴ Oskarsson and Yetiv. “Russia and the Persian Gulf”. Middle East Journal. (2013)

²⁶⁵ Vladimir Putin. “Meeting with Emir of Qatar Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani”. The Kremlin. (January 18, 2016)

²⁶⁶ Oskarsson and Yetiv. “Russia and the Persian Gulf”. Middle East Journal. (2013)

²⁶⁷ Ibid

²⁶⁸ Nicolas Trickett. ” Novatek Aims To Dethrone Gazprom With Qatar Deal”. Oil Price. (April 12, 2017)

²⁶⁹ Oskarsson and Yetiv. “Russia and the Persian Gulf”. Middle East Journal. (2013)

²⁷⁰ “Russian Foreign Policy and the GCC”. Trends Institution. (2016)

²⁷¹ Robert Tuttle. ”Gazprom, Qatar Seek Joint Investments After Opening Doha Office”. Bloomberg. (February 10, 2013)

²⁷² “Russia, Qatar to Discuss Gas Cooperation, Business, Political Issues”. Interfax. (November 2, 2010)

office covering all GCC countries and that Gazprom Group is developing cooperation with the partners in GCC as Gazprom Representative Office in Qatar fully supports and promotes these activities”.²⁷³ More importantly for Russian energy diplomacy, the representative office opens communication channels between Qatar and Russia which is a very important achievement for Putin who aims to have close coordination with other producers.²⁷⁴ The representative office has also led to Qatar offering Gazprom to participate in a tender for gas production.²⁷⁵ Gazprom’s intention with its Doha office was to get “a feet on the ground in order to assess investment options”.²⁷⁶ Subsequently, then Qatari Energy Minister Muhammed al-Sada stated that expansions in Qatar-Gazprom joint investments were underway.²⁷⁷ Around the same time, Qatar also offered Gazprom to participate in LNG projects.²⁷⁸ Qatari Ambassador to Russia Fahad bin Mohammed Al-Attiyah invited Russian companies to invest in Qatari gas deposits which will be expanded in 2020.²⁷⁹ Rosneft has also sought to enter partnerships with Qatar which has resulted in initiating joint investments on energy projects in Kurdistan.²⁸⁰ However, there are currently no Russian companies that are involved in Qatari gas projects, according to the Russian Embassy in Qatar.²⁸¹ It is also worth mentioning that Russian expertise is found in on-shore exploration whereas Qatari exploration blocks are mostly off-shore.²⁸² There is also a mismatch in equipment demand and supply as Russian equipment is cheaper whereas Qatar demands high-

²⁷³ Dam Valor, interview by Alexander Jalil. Beirut (October 3, 2019)

²⁷⁴ Rauf Mammadov, interview by Alexander Jalil. Beirut (October 29, 2019)

²⁷⁵ Oskarsson and Yetiv. “Russia and the Persian Gulf”. Middle East Journal. (2013)

²⁷⁶ Rauf Mammadov, interview by Alexander Jalil. Beirut (October 29, 2019)

²⁷⁷ Oskarsson and Yetiv. “Russia and the Persian Gulf”. Middle East Journal. (2013)

²⁷⁸ Ibid.

²⁷⁹ Sputnik News. “Doha Asks Moscow to Apply for Further Development of Qatari Gas Fields”. (March 25, 2018)

²⁸⁰ Alexey Gromov, interview by Alexander Jalil. Moscow. (April 17, 2019)

²⁸¹ Dam Valor, interview by Alexander Jalil. Beirut (October 3, 2019)

²⁸² Rauf Mammadov, interview by Alexander Jalil. Beirut (October 29, 2019)

quality since it has the finances to avoid risking development problems that come with cheap equipment.²⁸³ Both Gazprom and Rosneft have not been able to invest much and this is believed to be owing to the weak financial status of the companies in the last year. Production costs have increased, especially in Eastern Siberia, since old fields which had been developed during the Soviet period are drying up and the corporations have been forced to finance the development of new fields, although they are receiving government subsidies.²⁸⁴ At the same time, the Russian government has put taxes on natural resource production which used to be confined solely to oil and gas exports.²⁸⁵ On top of this, the Russian rouble has devalued, the sanctions regime has constrained liquidity, the fall of oil prices and the subsidies on the domestic market have all been reasons for the decrease in revenues for the energy majors.²⁸⁶ The Russian companies are therefore lacking in sources and cannot afford to invest abroad the same way they did in recent years.²⁸⁷

Gazprom has partnered with Qatar since 2010 with acquisitions of Qatari LNG as well as leasing vessels for maritime transportation.²⁸⁸ Other objectives for Gazprom has been to build joint trade mechanisms such as LNG cargoes swaps that entails switching cargoes in order to smoothen trade logistics.²⁸⁹ Russia has not been able to sell LNG ships since Rosneft, which is the only shipbuilder in Russia, just started to expand in this sector whereas it faces fierce competition from South Korean shipbuilders operating in Chinese shipyards.²⁹⁰

²⁸³ Rauf Mammadov, interview by Alexander Jalil. Beirut (October 29, 2019)

²⁸⁴ Ibid.

²⁸⁵ Ibid.

²⁸⁶ Ibid.

²⁸⁷ Ibid.

²⁸⁸ Gazprom. "Gazprom inaugurates representative office in Qatar". (February 11, 2013)

²⁸⁹ Rauf Mammadov, interview by Alexander Jalil. Beirut (October 29, 2019)

²⁹⁰ Ibid.

The rapprochement has been even slower in the technology sphere where Qatar has been partnering up with American companies such as Air Products and ExxonMobil.²⁹¹ Russia has a great interest in developing its capabilities in LNG technology but has not been capable of making inroads in cooperating on LNG expertise. Qatar prefers its American partners because of their longstanding partnerships and because it is easier to prolong with trusted and established partners rather than entering uncharted waters.²⁹² Doha also sticks with the American companies because of geopolitics where Qatar prioritize its alliance with the US over Russia – a priority that has become even greater in the face of the GCC crisis.²⁹³ Nonetheless, Qatar wants to maintain healthy cooperation with Russia to offset the impacts from the blockade, which is why Qatar offered Russian companies to participate in Qatari LNG production when the Saudi King visited Moscow.²⁹⁴ However, the fact that Qatar uses American know-how “excludes the possibility for Russia to be involved in technology sharing arrangements, even though Russian companies can participate in producing LNG”.²⁹⁵ While LNG technology is not included in the sanctions against Russia, there is a high risk that it might be included under a new sanction regime.²⁹⁶ Russia is therefore focusing on technological cooperation with Qatar in other aspects, such as petrochemistry where there is much potential for future projects”.²⁹⁷ Qatar has recently realized a “petrochemical complex in Doha which Russia has shown an interest in

²⁹¹ Henning Gloystein and Mark Tay. “Qatar signals LNG price war for market share in Asia”. Reuters (July 5, 2017)

²⁹² Rauf Mammadov, interview by Alexander Jalil. Beirut (October 29, 2019)

²⁹³ Maria Belova, interview by Alexander Jalil. Moscow. (April 15, 2019)

²⁹⁴ Sputnik News. “Qatar Offers Russia to Take Part in Projects on LNG Production – Gazprom”. (October 6, 2017)

²⁹⁵ Alexey Belogoryev, interview by Alexander Jalil. Moscow. (April 11, 2019)

²⁹⁶ Maria Belova, interview by Alexander Jalil. Moscow. (April 15, 2019)

²⁹⁷ Alexey Gromov, interview by Alexander Jalil. Moscow. (April 17, 2019)

learning from”.²⁹⁸ In addition to this, Rosneft struck an agreement with Qatar Foundation to establish a scientific centre for energy research.²⁹⁹

C. Qatari Presence in Russian Energy Sector

Due to the sanctions Russia has been facing, the Russian energy sector is in dire need for financial injections. Russian energy companies as well as energy projects have desperately sought to substitute Western capital and diversification efforts have dominated the agenda. Naturally, Russia has eyed the wealthy Gulf states which have their own reasons to diversify investments - especially Qatar which has been boycotted by some of its neighbours. Although Qatari motivations for energy cooperation with Russia is outside the scope of this research, it is important to highlight the politicized nature of Qatar’s economic presence in Russia’s gas industry. Doha is not investing in Russia because it is commercially profitable, there are other markets that are more lucrative, but Qatar is looking to hedge and balance its global relations and has started to view the Kremlin as a more powerful and important actor since Russia’s incursion in Syria.³⁰⁰ The Qatari Sovereign Wealth Fund’s decision-making process is “highly political and definitely includes geopolitical variables in its Russian investments as economic leverage can serve as a guarantor if Qatar would need Russian help in case Doha feels threatened when regional geopolitics gets messy”.³⁰¹ Qatar has been positive to strengthen the partnership with Russia in terms of energy interests. Qatar’s Envoy to Russia proclaimed that Qatar’s competition with Russia over market shares in Europe will not be based on political motives. The Ambassador has said “We are ... in the space

²⁹⁸ Alexey Gromov, interview by Alexander Jalil. Moscow. (April 17, 2019)

²⁹⁹ Qatar Foundation. “QF and Rosneft Unveil New R&D Hub at QSTP”. (March 28, 2018)

³⁰⁰ Giorgio Cafiero, interview by Alexander Jalil. Beirut. (October 28, 2019)

³⁰¹ Ibid.

of the same commodity and we do want to expand our markets, if that expansion comes within the natural course of economic partnership, then absolutely fine. But if it comes within the context of any political rivalry, then absolutely we will say no to that ... Why try to push somebody out?”³⁰²

As Qatar doesn't possess its own LNG expertise and risk of new sanctions threatens technology exchange, Russian companies have directed their efforts to obtain Qatari investments.³⁰³ Furthermore, Russia have enough technological know-how and is projected to perform the whole LNG cycle in 2-3 years, but Russia needs financial partners in order to realize this.³⁰⁴ However, Qatar's investments in Russian gas sector have been marginal as Qatar's foreign energy investments have been directed toward the American LNG sector, which there are both political and economic reasons for. Qatar aims to increase its economic and thereby political clout in the US as a means to offset the blockading efforts from its neighbours.³⁰⁵ Nonetheless, the US has a promising shale gas sector and with 20 potential projects, in comparison to Russia's mere two projects, Qatar's emphasis on American natural gas makes economic sense as well.³⁰⁶ Nevertheless, Russia offered Qatar a lot of investment prospects in the energy sector during 2010-11 which resulted in a Russian-Qatari committee for gas cooperation as well as a Qatari-Gazprom joint company with the aim to operate Russian gas fields.³⁰⁷ Qatar Petroleum did take interest in the Novatek's Yamal LNG project which started negotiations in 2011. In Russia, Doha's interest was viewed as a means to

³⁰² Polina Ivanova and Katya Golubkova. "Qatari stake in Rosneft paves way for global energy deals: Doha envoy". Reuters. (February 12, 2019)

³⁰³ Alexey Gromov, interview by Alexander Jalil. Moscow. (April 17, 2019)

³⁰⁴ Ibid.

³⁰⁵ Maria Belova, interview by Alexander Jalil. Moscow. (April 15, 2019)

³⁰⁶ Sergey Eremin, interview by Alexander Jalil. Moscow. (April 23, 2019)

³⁰⁷ Oskarsson and Yetiv. "Russia and the Persian Gulf: Trade, Energy, and Interdependence". (2013)

increase cooperation with Moscow.³⁰⁸ However, the talks ended two years later when QP shelved the idea.³⁰⁹ It is believed that Qatar's decision was motivated by the incident of Russia's Ambassador at Doha Airport.³¹⁰ Although, there are reports that it was Russia who was reluctant to include Doha as a participant in the Yamal LNG project, and this is believed to have its roots in Qatar's foreign policy towards Syria and Libya, as well as "Qatar's intensified incursion into the European energy market in 2012".³¹¹ It is difficult to assign responsibility since both countries are non-transparent and have refrained from making statements regarding this.³¹² There are however doubts that Russia would decline Qatari capital and that Russia would push away Qatar because fiercer competition in Europe since Russian strategy is all about co-opting its rivals.³¹³ Nevertheless, the year 2017 saw an upsurge in Qatari capital outflows to Russian energy sector. Qatar invested heavily in Novatek which is an independent natural gas producer and one of the leaders in Russian LNG. According to the Russian Envoy to Doha, "up to \$2 billion were channelled into the development of Novatek projects".³¹⁴ The Russian diplomat also pointed out that "Qatar expresses high interest regarding the Russian ... projects in the sphere of petrochemicals and energy sources."³¹⁵ Russia is often portrayed as only seeking to increase the oil and gas exports but in reality, Russia puts effort in adapting to a low-carbon economy which is why Moscow has sought to develop its petrochemistry industry lately.³¹⁶ As mentioned, Moscow has been impressed by Qatar's progress in petrochemistry and equally, Doha

³⁰⁸ Maria Belova, interview by Alexander Jalil. Moscow. (April 15, 2019)

³⁰⁹ Kim Shtern. "Qatar competes with Gazprom". European Dialogue. (24 July 2017)

³¹⁰ Maria Belova, interview by Alexander Jalil. Moscow. (April 15, 2019)

³¹¹ Oskarsson and Yetiv. "Russia and the Persian Gulf: Trade, Energy, and Interdependence". (2013)

³¹² Rauf Mammadov, interview by Alexander Jalil. Beirut (October 29, 2019)

³¹³ Ibid

³¹⁴ Tass Russian News Agency. "Qatar invests up to \$2 billion in projects of Russia's Novatek – ambassador". (February 20, 2017)

³¹⁵ Ibid

³¹⁶ Alexey Gromov, interview by Alexander Jalil. Moscow. (April 17, 2019)

has taken an interest in Russian petrochemical projects.³¹⁷ Furthermore, the sanctions on Russia have exempted the petrochemistry sector and Moscow has actively sought Qatari, and other, investors to its Far Eastern Petrochemical Company.³¹⁸

The same year, the Qatar Investment Authority bought a 19.5% stake in Rosneft which was one of the largest global energy deals that year. Qatar's purchase of Rosneft assets is believed to have been a strategical move since QIA is generally oriented towards low-carbon investments which Rosneft is not.³¹⁹ For Qatar, who has diminishing interests in petroleum, the buy-up of Russian oil shares is possibly driven by challenging Saudi Arabia's Aramco in the Chinese market - which bore fruit last year when Rosneft passed Aramco as China's largest oil supplier.³²⁰ Moscow permitted Qatar Holding (the foreign investment arm of QIA) to purchase a fifth of the oil company Rosneft and thus giving a competitor state large influence in the Russian energy sector. The deal helped Russia in economic terms as well as in energy diplomatic footings. The Qatari capital injection narrowed the budget gap the Russian state was facing in a time when Russian export value had dropped by 27% due to the low oil prices even though oil production hit record volumes – meaning that the Russian state coffers were in desperate need of liquidity.³²¹ Moreover, the deal had symbolic geoeconomic connotations as it showed that Russia could to evade Western sanctions with Qatar being the first investor after the sanctions were implemented.³²² It is acknowledged that a deal of this calibre cannot be purely commercial without government involvement, and thus the Rosneft deal held political implications as

³¹⁷ Ibid.

³¹⁸ Ibid.

³¹⁹ Ibid.

³²⁰ Gerden. "Russia Eyes Qatar In Fight for Global LNG Market". Gas Processing News. (August 2018)

³²¹ Stasa Salacanian. "Qatar's big oil deal with Moscow". The New Arab. (January 2, 2017)

³²² Mammadov. "Russia in the Middle East: Energy Forever?". (2018)

well.³²³ According to Lilia Shevtsova, an expert at Chatham House, the Rosneft deal “was a very serious commercial deal that hardly could have succeeded without the direct involvement of the Kremlin.”³²⁴ As part of Russian energy diplomacy, the Qatari investment would seem detrimental to Russian energy interest if it wasn’t for the alleged return favour that Russia would be granted a stake in Qatari energy projects.³²⁵ The purchase gave Doha influence in the Russian company and indicated “that the Russian government expects more active assistance from Qatar in its expansion into the global LNG market”.³²⁶ Russia’s invitation for its rival also had a strategical rationale because it was believed that Qatar would further Russian gas interests, not only in Qatar but in Iran as well.³²⁷ Moscow also viewed the deal as a possible step towards trilateral gas projects with Iran and Qatar.³²⁸ Furthermore, Rosneft believed that the Qatari inflow would “allow the Russian giant to diversify geographically into more oil and gas projects in the Middle East”.³²⁹ Likewise, the investment was believed to further collaboration between Rosneft and Qatar in the gas sector even though Rosneft is mainly an oil company. Rosneft has been interested in increasing its LNG exports from Sakhalin which is developed by ExxonMobil, Qatar Petroleum’s closest partner, which “indicated a possible synergy in the deal”.³³⁰ Other theories contradict the Rosneft deal as an instrument of Russian energy diplomacy, considering it more as a move from Rosneft CEO Igor Sechin to control more shares in Rosneft through QIA which has companies that Sechin sits on.³³¹ This theory is supported by the fact that Sechin is

³²³ Stasa Salacanian. “Qatar’s big oil deal with Moscow”. The New Arab. (January 2, 2017)

³²⁴ Ibid.

³²⁵ Kozhanov. “Russian Policy Across the Middle East”, 18

³²⁶ Gerden. “Russia Eyes Qatar In Fight for Global LNG Market”. Gas Processing News. (Aug 2018)

³²⁷ Alexey Gromov, interview by Alexander Jalil. Moscow. (April 17, 2019)

³²⁸ Ibid.

³²⁹ Stasa Salacanian. ”Qatar’s big oil deal with Moscow”. The New Arab. (January 2, 2017)

³³⁰ The Economist. “Qatar builds economic ties with Russia”. (January 9, 2017)

³³¹ Yuri Barmin, interview by Alexander Jalil. Moscow. (April 19, 2019)

sitting on the board of the Chinese company CEFC that was supposed to acquire the shares before their CEO got arrested and QIA came in instead.³³² One expert had a hard time making sense of the deal, saying that this was “one of the most shady deals” he had encountered during his ten years in energy business and that this might have been Sechin, who he describes as an opportunist without business ethics, that played the market in order to increase share prices.³³³ There were a lot of suspicious activity since it was made clear that one Italian bank and two Russian banks, all of them close friends to Sechin, were involved in the funding of the deal. No conclusion on the transactions were ever made, and it is still unclear if Qatar paid for their shares and if they sold them to a Chinese company in the end.³³⁴ The Rosneft agreement was thought to be a start in stronger geopolitical and energy cooperation between Russia and Qatar but has failed to materialize.³³⁵

D. Russian Arms Exports to Qatar

In recent years, the Kremlin has shown an interest in increasing its military-technical exports to Qatar and this is partly attributed to Qatar’s appeal as an energy partner.³³⁶ The Russian interests lay in strengthening its ties with Qatar.³³⁷ The benefits of arms trade between the countries generates a closer defence partnership and may improve collaboration in the gas sector.³³⁸ Russia is seeking to export its sophisticated defence equipment as a means to build bridges with Qatar, in order to “expanding the

³³² Yuri Barmin, interview by Alexander Jalil. Moscow. (April 19, 2019)

³³³ Rauf Mammadov, interview by Alexander Jalil. Beirut (October 29, 2019)

³³⁴ Ibid.

³³⁵ Sergey Eremin, interview by Alexander Jalil. Moscow. (April 23, 2019)

³³⁶ “Russia, Qatar Move Forward on Military Cooperation”. Insight Turkey. (March 1, 2018)

³³⁷ Jeremy Binnie. “Qatar maintains interest in S-400”. Jane’s 360. (March 7, 2019)

³³⁸ “Russia, Qatar Move Forward on Military Cooperation”. Insight Turkey. (March 1, 2018)

gas market worldwide”.³³⁹ After the breakout of the GCC crisis, a threatened Qatar sought to upgrade its defence capabilities and approached Russia early on. In late 2017, the then Russian Defence Minister Sergei Shoigu met with his Qatari counterpart Khalid bin Mohammed Al-Attiyah in Doha where they entered in an intergovernmental agreement on military and technical cooperation.³⁴⁰ At the same occasion, Qatar signed a Memorandum of Understanding and a frame contract for arms trade with the Russian defence export agency Rosoboronexport.³⁴¹ The agreements that were signed in Doha intended to facilitate Russian arms exports to Qatar.³⁴² One expert pointed out that this Memorandum of Understanding doesn’t have real implications and is rather just another example of the remnant Soviet propaganda tool, as claimed by other experts on Russian MoUs in the energy sector.³⁴³ Qatar and Russia entered negotiations on a possible acquisition of anti-aircraft defence system S-400. According to the Qatari ambassador to Moscow Fahad bin Mohammed Al-Attiyah, the discussions were in advanced stages in 2017 and the ambassador hinted that purchases might include “capabilities for land forces as well”.³⁴⁴ Qatar, unlike Turkey who has withstood diplomatic pressure from the White House due to its S-400 procurement, is not a member of NATO and would therefore entail less technological hurdles.³⁴⁵ According to the Russian ambassador to Doha Nurmakhmad Kholov, “Qatar has already negotiated the purchase of AK rifles, grenade launchers and anti-tank missiles from Russia and is expected to take a delivery of Russian conventional arms, including time-proven AK rifles, grenade launchers,

³³⁹ Al Jazeera. “Qatar FM: Doha buying S-400s 'not anyone's business'”. (March 4, 2019)

³⁴⁰ Eric Knecht. “Qatar, Russia sign agreements on air defense, supplies”. Reuters. (October 26, 2017)

³⁴¹ Tass Russian News Agency. “Russia, Qatar sign agreement on military and technical cooperation”. (October 25, 2017)

³⁴² Bilal Khan. “Russia: Qatar interested in the Sukhoi Su-35”. Quwa Defense News and Analysis Group. (March 4, 2018).

³⁴³ Theodore Karasik, interview by Alexander Jalil. Beirut. (November 1, 2019)

³⁴⁴ Tass Russian News Agency. “Qatar plans to buy S-400 Triumf from Russia”. (January 25, 2018)

³⁴⁵ Yarno Ritzen. “Why do countries want to buy the Russian S-400?”. Al Jazeera. (October 8, 2018)

machine guns and Kornet anti-tank missiles”.³⁴⁶ According to the Russian Presidential Aide for Cooperation on Defence Technologies Vladimir Kozhin, the Qatari Air Force is also in talks with Moscow on acquiring Sukhoi-35 fighter jets, stating that “the talks are in progress”.³⁴⁷ These claims are disputed by an expert who said that there were no Russian arms in Qatar’s arsenal and suggested that these statements are part of a Russian disinformation campaign to upset the Americans.³⁴⁸ Furthermore, the S-400 talks were likewise “a game of optics to make it look like Russia is exporting the S-400 to all US allies.”³⁴⁹ However, the Russian envoy to Qatar also said that “as far as the air defence is concerned, the S-400 systems and so on, there are talks about this, but there is no concrete conclusion.”³⁵⁰ Russian defence minister indicated that Moscow was awaiting a bid from Doha, stating that Russia “will consider Qatar’s requests for Russian military equipment as they come in”.³⁵¹ The discussions on S-400 have stagnated and Qatar has indicated that this is because of the sanctions that are in place against Russia, but it is more likely that Doha is not moving forward with the purchase because the “Qataris want to please the Americans”.³⁵² Qatar is a close ally to the US and the diplomatic repercussions might have convinced Qatar to not go through with the purchase. Right after the talks were made known, the US used pressure tactics such as increasement of assets in the al-Udeid US Air Force base which could be seen as a move to bring Qatar closer to its orbit or as a move to make it look like Qatar can be a

³⁴⁶ Russia Today. “Qatar buys range of arms from Russia, discusses purchase of S-400 missiles”. (July 22, 2018)

³⁴⁷ Tass Russian News Agency. “Qatar mulls buying Russia's Su-35 fighter jets”. (March 1, 2018)

³⁴⁸ Theodore Karasik, interview by Alexander Jalil. Beirut. (November 1, 2019)

³⁴⁹ Ibid.

³⁵⁰ Vladimir Soldatkin. “Russia and Qatar discuss S-400 missile systems deal”. Reuters. (July 21, 2018)

³⁵¹ Sergei Lavrov. “Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov’s remarks and answers to media questions at a joint news conference following talks with Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister of the State of Qatar Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al Thani”. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation. (March 4, 2019).

³⁵² Yuri Barmin, interview by Alexander Jalil. Moscow. (April 19, 2019)

future target.³⁵³ Doha is now viewing how Turkey's S-400 acquisition is going to play out and will make a cost-benefit analysis thereafter.³⁵⁴ One expert doubted that Qatar would follow through with the imports since it "doesn't want to misbehave too much towards the US" in the light of the GCC crisis.³⁵⁵ Doha has limited manoeuvre space in its relations with the US and as weapons trade is seen as highly political, Russia has not been able to make progress with this strategy.³⁵⁶

E. Russian-Qatari Military Interactions

Russia's energy export strategy through the prism of military excursions vis-à-vis Qatar entails by no means direct Russian actions against the state of Qatar. Rather, it is a mixture of Russia's earlier practices of military power as part of promoting its energy interests. Some scholars and army experts have partly labelled Russia's incursion in Syria as a pipeline war to defend Russian gas interests.³⁵⁷ In 2009, the Syrian President Bashar al-Assad rejected a Qatari proposal to build a gas pipeline that would stretch from Qatar, through Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Syria and to Turkey where it would finally connect with the European gas infrastructure.³⁵⁸ After heavy pressure from its Russian ally, al-Assad cited that he would not sign any agreement due to his "long-standing relations with Russia and Gazprom".³⁵⁹ Simultaneously, Moscow and Syria approved a pipeline that would transit gas from Iran through Iraq and Syria – believing that Russia would be able to coordinate with Iran on gas flows to Europe.³⁶⁰

³⁵³ Theodore Karasik, interview by Alexander Jalil. Beirut. (November 1, 2019)

³⁵⁴ Ibid.

³⁵⁵ Ibid.

³⁵⁶ Ibid.

³⁵⁷ Rob Taylor. "Pipeline politics in Syria". *Armed Forces Journal*. (March 21, 2014)

³⁵⁸ Mitchell Orenstein and George Romer. "Putin's Gas Attack". *Foreign Affairs*. (October 14, 2015)

³⁵⁹ Mammadov. "Russia in the Middle East: Energy Forever?". (2018)

³⁶⁰ Nafeez Ahmed. "Syria intervention plan fueled by oil interests, not chemical weapon concern". *The Guardian*. (August 30, 2013)

Qatar and the transit states of the Qatar pipeline were all American allies and Russia viewed that project as threatening to Russian energy security.³⁶¹ Saudi Prince Bandar bin Sultan attempted to lure Putin to drop his support of al-Assad with the promise that the succeeding Syrian government would “not sign any agreement allowing any Gulf country to transport its gas across Syria to Europe and compete with Russian gas exports”.³⁶² The energy prism could partly explain why Qatar was so heavily invested in the Syrian Civil War. Qatar’s financial support to the Syrian rebels are estimated to have reached \$3 billion between 2011-13, Doha-based Al Jazeera voiced the Syrian protesters’ grievances and CIA trained Syrian rebels on Qatari land.³⁶³ The Kremlin on the other hand gave diplomatic support to the Syrian government in the UN Security Council and, more importantly, Moscow intervened militarily on behalf of al-Assad. According to this theory, Russia’s objective in Syria would be similar to the type of objective that Russia had in the Russo-Georgian War, where the aim was to spoil a competing pipeline. However, this theory is also controversial since many experts dispute that Russia intervened because of energy interests. Rather, motives for the Kremlin to protect the Syrian government was because of their long-standing relations that go back almost half a century and Syria is one of Russia’s closest ally in the Middle East.³⁶⁴ Moreover, Russia’s naval facility in Tartus is the only Russian military base in the Middle East and the Mediterranean region which for Russia holds a great strategic value.³⁶⁵ Another reason for Russia’s intervention in Syria is the great number of Russian-Chechen jihadists that were fighting on the rebel side, and as their return would

³⁶¹ Stephen Blank. “Russia’s Middle Eastern Position in 2025”. *Russia in the Middle East*. (November 20, 2018)

³⁶² Christina Lin. “Syrian Buffer Zone – Turkey-Qatar Pipeline”. *ISPSW Strategy Series: Focus on Defense and International Security*, 367. (August 2015).

³⁶³ Mitchell Orenstein and George Romer. “Putin’s Gas Attack”. *Foreign Affairs*. (October 14, 2015)

³⁶⁴ Yuri Barmin, interview by Alexander Jalil. Moscow. (April 19, 2019)

³⁶⁵ *Ibid*

pose a domestic threat in Russia – it would be better to fight them in Syria.³⁶⁶ Many experts also dispute the theory of the Qatari pipeline since there are controversies around the feasibility of the project. Laying a pipeline of that length would be costly and with Qatar’s gas exports already directed toward LNG, the project would make little commercial sense.³⁶⁷ The pipeline would also have to overcome political hurdles such as Qatari-Saudi rivalry which at the time of the initiative wasn’t as fierce as now but however was imminent enough to pose difficulties for implementing the pipeline. The pipeline would make Qatar dependent on Saudi Arabia as a transit country and that would not be a preferable option for Qatari energy security.³⁶⁸ It is believed that third countries with an interest in outcompeting Russian gas may have put pressure on Qatar to move forward with the project.³⁶⁹

The rationale of using military power can also be reverse, instead of deploying the army to spoil competitors projects Russia can and have used its military to help other producers develop their energy resources. Since Russian interventions has some form of energy dimension, Russia could also have sided with Qatar in conflicts in order to get on their good side and enhance cooperation. However, they have been supporting opposing sides in several Middle Eastern countries such as in Syria, Libya, and Egypt. There have also not been any joint army exercises, mainly because Qatar is a close military ally to the US. Qatar hosts the al-Udeid US Air Force base which is the largest US military base in the Gulf, a closer military relationship with Russia would therefore pose problems with Qatar’s main security guarantor. Nonetheless, the Qatari Ambassador to Moscow pointed out that the Russian-Qatari military MoU, which was

³⁶⁶ Yuri Barmin, interview by Alexander Jalil. Moscow. (April 19, 2019)

³⁶⁷ Maria Belova, interview by Alexander Jalil. Moscow. (April 15, 2019)

³⁶⁸ Alexey Grivach, interview by Alexander Jalil. Moscow. (April 22, 2019)

³⁶⁹ Ibid.

signed in October 2017, opened up for collaboration between the secret services of Russia and Qatar.³⁷⁰ Furthermore, the Ambassador said that the same military cooperation agreement “opened a path for Russia and Qatar to interact in defence sphere, including deliveries of hardware, training of soldiers and officers, maintenance of weapons and, of course, cooperation of special services.”³⁷¹ According to one expert, this agreement is not active and has failed to be implemented.³⁷² There are no evidence of Qatari military personnel in Russia, in contrast to the many Emiratis who visit Russia for military training and schooling.³⁷³ Although Russia is not officially taking sides in the GCC rift, the Kremlin’s foreign policy is more synched with the Emiratis and Saudis on security issues which is exemplified in the Libyan and Egyptian contexts. Russia is leaning more towards the United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia which was further exemplified with Putin’s latest visits to Riyadh and Abu Dhabi.³⁷⁴ From a Russian perspective, creating synergy on security issues with Qatar would be beneficial as it would have spill-overs on the gas sector.³⁷⁵ Nonetheless, Russia are not ready to give up on strategical objectives in order to appease Qatar for unconfirmed benefits in energy matters.

³⁷⁰ Russia Today. “Qatar buys range of arms from Russia, discusses purchase of S-400 missiles”. (July 22, 2018)

³⁷¹ Ibid.

³⁷² Theodore Karasik, interview by Alexander Jalil. Beirut. (November 1, 2019)

³⁷³ Ibid.

³⁷⁴ Ibid.

³⁷⁵ Theodore Karasik, interview by Alexander Jalil. Beirut. (November 1, 2019)

CHAPTER SEVEN

RESULTS

The analysis has provided for policies and events that support the notion that Russia is engaging with Qatar in multilateral forums. To begin with, Russia promoted the establishment of the GECF and was successful in lobbying Qatar to join as a founding member. This is a clear sign that Russia has pursued to include Qatar in a multilateral framework with the aim to open communication channels with its competitor. There has been reports of disagreement between the states because of differing outlooks on the format of the GECF, however more reliable expert sources have rejected this notion and stated the contrary - that both states are aligned in their vision of the forum and that they have cooperated well within this framework. In coordination of energy supplies, this has not been applicable in the context of GECF since the nature of the industry doesn't allow for any mechanisms of production and supply control. Likewise, price coordination mechanisms are not applicable in the same extent in the gas market as in the oil market since it is not yet fully globalized and since it is moving towards a buyer's market. Although, as the market is becoming more globalized it is important to examine the discussion whether to defend the status quo of oil-pegged prices or to accept spot pricing, even though the buyers will ultimately decide on the pricing in the future. Russian energy diplomacy has been employed to defend oil-pegged prices which was made clear in the Moscow Declaration. Finally, Russian energy diplomacy has successfully intensified communication and improved cooperation with Qatar on common challenges within a multilateral framework.

Russian energy diplomacy has sought to advance on commercial partnerships by becoming a stakeholder in Qatari gas industry. The Russian strategy of purchasing shares in competing companies has not been applicable with Qatari gas companies since they are state-owned. Nevertheless, gas ventures in the form of production and exploration have been on the table and as shown in the analysis, there are signs of interest from Russian companies to increase its participation in Qatari ventures. However, the former Ambassador's statement of 12 partnerships has not been confirmed and is likely to be Russian propaganda, according to one expert. Even though Qatar has offered Russian corporations to participate in tenders, these are likely to be cordial invitations rather than genuine interest since none of them have been realized and this is due to a mismatch in what Qatar demands and what Russia can supply – most evident in the cases of exploration expertise (off-shore/on-shore) and production equipment (price/quality). The weak financial status of the Russian companies also impedes expansions in Qatari gas production and exploration. For transportation cooperation, Rosneft's ships have not been met with any interest from Qatar, although Gazprom has made minor progress in leasing vessels, swapping cargoes and buying Qatari LNG for further export. In regard to technological partnerships, Russia has not had the capabilities to compete with Qatar's established partners in LNG technology. However, Russian energy diplomacy has made minor scores such as petrochemical cooperation and the establishment of a Rosneft research centre. In conclusion, there have been a lot of intentions which indicates Russian interest to deploy this type of energy diplomacy tool, however there have been few examples of implementation. The issue in this section has been to assess whether Russia's interests in Qatari gas sector are motivated by economic or political variables.

The same issue has reoccurred in the category of Qatari participation within Russian gas sector. There are difficulties in determining whether the events have been part of Russian strategy to form closer cooperation with Qatar or if they are simply driven by economic benefits. This tool is not solely motivated by profits as it also increases interdependence between the Russia's and Qatar's gas industries which led to a reduction in risks as well as unhealthy competition. The Rosneft deal is one of the most crucial events to understand Russian energy diplomacy towards Qatar, but the non-transparent nature of the deal has made it difficult to discern the motives behind the investment. There is the economic rationale of Russia closing its budget gap at the expense of Qatari influence in its energy sector. Although, there are also reports of Russia potentially gaining return favours in Qatari gas industry and increase its presence in other Middle Eastern gas sectors. However, there has not been concrete records to confirm Russian advances in Qatari gas sector during the three years since the deal. The most reliable sources point out that the Rosneft deal was a scheme of Sechin to increase share prices and his own stakes in the company, this should have nonetheless improved relations between Rosneft and Qatar - but has largely failed to materialize. Otherwise, Russia made tangible progress in achieving Qatari investments in Novatek projects. It seemed like the relationship would further develop with the Yamal project but that ended - most probably on Qatar's initiative. For the future, there is potential for Qatari investments in Russian petrochemistry industry, especially in the Far Eastern Petrochemical Company.

The Kremlin has attempted to bring Qatar closer through weapon sales and the S-400 talks have been indicative of Russian objectives in strengthen its relationship with Qatar, which would entail expanded cooperation in the energy sector. However,

Russian energy diplomacy has not made any concrete progress in this area and the few discussions on the table are most likely just a “game of optics”, as experts are affirming. Russia has not been able to apply the weapons-energy nexus with Qatar as it has with other MENA countries, especially North African countries. This is because these states have been old Soviet allies where Russian arms exports are established and as these weaponries need maintenance, Moscow has been able to link arms trade with energy interests. Furthermore, this Russian strategy has been difficult to implement as Qatar is trying to stay on a good footing with the Americans. Notwithstanding, Russia might have better success in the future if Qatar untangles itself from the current situation. But for now, Russian energy diplomacy is focusing on multilateralism and investments.

Russian energy diplomacy in the aspect of using military power has been rather absent in the context of its relations with Qatar. The pipeline theory of Russian motives to intervene in Syria is rejected unanimously by experts and should not be given much attention. Furthermore, there has not been any significant military cooperation or common military exercises between Russia and Qatar. The fact that this type of tool is not deployed says a lot about the constraints and limitations of Russian energy diplomacy. The first factor is the Russian military’s active participation in regional conflicts which inevitably puts it at odds with some regional powers. Russia’s hard power is actually acting as a repellent rather than attraction in this case. Other great power with less aggressive security policies such as China wouldn’t face this type of constraint. Secondly, Russian hard power is not strong and attractive enough to snatch US allies and stir a bandwagoning effect. Russian military power as an energy diplomacy strategy has therefore landed in between being too bellicose, yet not forceful enough.

CHAPTER EIGHT

CONCLUSIONS

This paper has sought to conduct a policy evaluation and event analysis of Russia's bilateral relations with Qatar in the context of their competition on the European natural gas market. In order to measure Russian deployment of energy diplomacy, policies and events in the Russian-Qatari relations have been examined. The aim has been to trace indicators of energy diplomacy in its different forms: exchanges in multilateral settings; economic interventions in Qatar's energy sector; inclusion of Qatar in Russian domestic energy sector; trade relations in the defence equipment industry; and military interactions in the form of divergences as well as cooperation. The different events and policies are categorized in these five classifications and will in this section be discussed to which extent they have been part of Russian energy diplomacy. The case of Russia's interactions with Qatar demonstrates that the Kremlin deploys some forms of energy diplomacy towards another producer state, this was especially clear in the form of multilateral engagements and obtaining Qatari investments in its domestic energy sector. Employment of energy diplomacy could be somewhat be detected in Moscow's interest of Qatari gas sector, but these initiatives met difficulties in the implementation process. However, Russia might however be able to conduct small Qatari onshore projects in the future. In the forms of arms trade and military power, Russian energy diplomacy were minimal. In sum, the analysis proved that the Kremlin has an interest and intention of using energy diplomacy in its bilateral relations with Qatar but has failed to convert this into reality. This might depend on Russia's weak leverage over Doha, Qatar's reluctance to entangle itself with Russia, and Qatar's

strong alliance with the US. The paper set out as an attempt to fill the gap in the literature on energy diplomacy in the case of producer-producer states. In that sense, this research has shed light on the different types of energy diplomacy that can be used in these relationships.

Nonetheless, there has been difficulties with finding conclusive evidence to confirm or disprove whether Russian policies, except for the strategy of multilateralism, have been part of a broader energy diplomacy strategy or if the policies have been motivated by commercial and geopolitical variables. Business partnerships, foreign investments and arms trade hold commercial value, while military cooperation, arms trade and foreign investments increases Russia's geopolitical status. Further research should discern how much Russia's cooperation with Qatar is driven by its interest in protecting its market shares or whether Russian-Qatari rapprochement can be explained by Russian interests of co-opting a US ally, increase its foothold in the Gulf, or coordinating regional conflict resolution with Qatari peace brokers. It was also made clear that Russia energy export strategy emphasize on pure business methods such as adapting to short-term contracts and lower prices. As mentioned in the analysis, the price difference between Russian and Qatari gas is a crucial factor when Europe determines to import gas, and this variable will dictate the trends of Europe's natural gas market even more than Russia's efforts in energy diplomacy. The subject of Russian energy diplomacy demands further research, especially when considering the interactions with other Gulf producers. Russia's pivot to the Gulf is a forward-leaning topic and the energy dimension is a vital subject to study further in order to understand Russia's general approach to the region. The results of this research also highlight the importance of multilateralism and as Putin has broken with Soviet policy of

disengagement in multilateral energy organization, future research should explore Russian engagement with major hydrocarbon producers such as Saudi Arabia in these frameworks. Another aspect when assessing Russian-Gulf energy relations is the significance of investments and increasing interdependence between the states' energy industries, which has surged in importance in recent years due to financial constraints in Russian energy sector. Even though the Russian-Qatari energy relations held few examples of arms trade and military cooperation, it would be worth exploring how Russian-Emirati energy relations have evolved in the light of stronger cooperation in these two areas. It would be in place to study the perspective of Qatar, and other GCC states, to assess Gulf exertions of energy diplomacy as well as to understand motivations for energy cooperation with Russia. Another dimension which was outside the scope of this study but should be considered for future examinations is the domestic rivalry dynamics within Russian energy industry. It would therefore be recommendable to further analyse the competition between the energy majors of Gazprom, Novatek and Rosneft on foreign natural gas markets.

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