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Policy networks in European–Russian gas relations: Function and dysfunction from a perspective of EU energy security

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ABSTRACT

This paper analyzes why formation of policy networks, which is an effective tool of European policy in different spheres, have lost significant part of its positive functions from the point of view of guaranteeing European energy security in case of European–Russian gas policy networks. This can be explained by the absence of effective international regime in gas trade as well as by failed transition to democracy, market economy and rule of law in Russia. As a result of this, German, Italian and French leaders involved into European–Russian gas policy networks face serious moral, legal and political dilemmas.

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1. Introduction: European–Russian gas policy networks as a practical and theoretical problem

Promotion of policy networks within EU and network-based contacts outside of EU is considered as a positive phenomenon both in the theoretical literature and in the EU's practical policy (Boerzel and Heard-Laureote, 2009; Peterson, 2003). Promoting network contacts, especially, on the interorganizational level (both between EU and non-EU state organizations and non-state organizations), has always been part of EU integration strategy as a part of the policy of EU enlargement (Peterson, 2003, pp. 17–18) and, later, as a part of policy of partnership in the “Wider Europe”. However, in accordance with another, much more critical approach to networks, within existing extensive body of literature on European energy security policy network connections in European gas trade with Russia are usually considered from critical perspective, as a source of the “export of corruption” (Kupchinsky, 2009a; Valasek, 2009, p. 37; Smith, 2008), reason of political contradictions in formation of single European external energy policy (Baran, 2007, pp. 141–142; Smith, 2008, pp. 12–14; Janeliūnas and Arunas, 2005; Kovacovska, 2007), Moscow's perception of gas trade as an instrument of Russian influence (Rutland, 2008b), etc. In this paper I would address this contradiction and analyze why network dealings with Russia in the sphere of gas deals become so problematic. It has many important practical aspects because the cases of networking on gas issues with Russian elites, in which some European leaders (such as Schroeder, Berlusconi, Chirac and Sarkozy) and two Russian gas transportation projects (the Northstream and the Southstream) have been involved, are a special concern for European and international mass-media and public.

The aim of this paper is to explore positive and negative functions of networking (formation of highly personalized gas policy networks) as a specific type of strategy that has developed in European–Russian gas trade. Formation of gas policy networks is analyzed as a result of combination of some specific domestic Russian and international factors. So, this paper contains an interdisciplinary case study combining the approaches of both Post-Communist studies and IR (especially, studies of international aspects of energy security). Such analysis of formation of international policy networks involving elite groups from democratic and non-democratic countries can pose a huge interest for development of energy security studies. Study of different elements of European energy security policy towards Russia and of the role of network connections within them is

practically very important now since EU Common Foreign and Security policy and, to a much greater extent, external energy policy (A European strategy, 2006) are still under construction. Different disputes with Russia (such as crises of gas transportation through Ukraine) have a major influence on this process since they are one of the main factors promoting development of a single EU energy security policy. Moreover, Russian energy security challenge is one of the best manifestations of internal contradictions inside European energy security policy (Wood, 2009; Westphal, 2006; Manners, 2002).

From conceptual point of view this paper is based on the growing literature introducing elements of network analysis to IR and security studies (Hafner-Burton et al., 2009). The networks involving among many other actors European and Russian leaders are analyzed in this paper as gas policy networks. This gives me an opportunity to capitalize on a big literature on the role of policy networks in European governance (Boerzel and Heard-Laureote, 2009; Peterson, 2003), although this literature should be adapted to very specific Russian case (total political control of Kremlin, concentration of resources, personalization of power, etc.). This literature is also useful since it includes analysis of positive and negative aspects of networks as opposed to other, more traditional types of policies (Benz, 1995). Potential negative functions of networks both in domestic and international issues have also become a special focus of analysis in negative social capital theories (Putnam, 2000; Bolin et al., 2004; Berman, 1997; Trigilia, 2001).

The main hypothesis that will be explored in this paper is that function of risk reduction was originally expected from European–Russian gas policy networks. However, specificity of development of Post-Communist Russia including personalized authoritarian political regime, highly centralized control over gas sector and the absence of rule of law by defining specific character of international network connections have revealed especially many “dark” aspects of networks in this specific case. Understanding these specific risks of gas policy networks can help European politicians to better avoid them.

So, below, I will first analyze why gas policy networks have appeared as a way of reducing risks in European–Russian gas relations because more traditional approaches (to use international regimes or to build up European power in energy security sphere) have failed to guarantee Europe from the risks. Second, I will analyze the literature on international aspects of network governance in Europe paying special attention to potential negative functions of networks. Third, on some concrete cases I will study positive and negative functions of policy networks in European–Russian gas trade paying special attention to specific for Post-Communist Russia reasons that made “dark side” of networks to develop in this specific case. Assessment of positive and negative functions of gas policy networks will be done on the basis of “wider” interpretation of European–Russian energy security problems, which includes not only economic, but also political and international issues (Noël, 2009b, p. 1.).

2. Why neither institutional, nor power-based European policies towards Russian gas have not produced effective minimization of risks?

Politicization of gas issues in European–Russian relations has created the situation of very high risks in gas trade (Noël, 2009b). Crises in Russian–Ukrainian gas trade that affected European market in 2006 and 2009 have been especially important for aggravation of political risks (Bahgat, 2006, p. 962). Typically, according to the argumentation of neoliberal scholars in IR (Keohane, 1982) such risks are solved through development of international regimes (institutions and organizations). However, in international relations due to their anarchical nature, *supply for international institutions and organizations can in many cases not meet demand* (Keohane, 1982; Kindleberger, 1974). Most clear unavailability of institutional solution in European–Russian gas trade becomes, when the failure of Energy Charter Treaty (ECT) as an international regime that can potentially regulate European–Russian gas trade is taken into consideration. Russia signed ECT in 1994 but never ratified it. Ratification of ECT by Russia was originally officially considered as a problem of what Europe will give in return and was linked to discussion of the Transit Protocol to the ECT (Grivach and Denisov, 2008). The main Russian argument was that Europe proposes to Russia the norms that do not work in EU itself because envisaged by the protocol to the Charter regime regulate only transit issues and EU territory is considered by it as a single entity (Nuzhna li Rossii, 2006). One of the most important trade-off issues was the provisions requiring third-party access to Russia’s pipelines (Dempsey, 2006) and this would destroy the control of state-controlled Russian gas monopoly Gazprom over gas transportation from Central Asia. No wonder that Gazprom was the main lobbyist of decision not to ratify ECT (Medvedev, 2006), while all other key Russian energy companies and official bodies, in principle, agreed to its ratification.

However, there are also very deep structural reasons of failure of the ECT regime linked to Russia’s failed transition to democracy, rule of law and market economy. YUKOS affair is usually considered as a key point of specific evolution of political and economic regime in Russia under Putin (Sakwa, 2009). According to the article 45 of the ECT foreign investors are guaranteed from confiscation of their property by the state. By signing the Treaty Russia accepted provisional application of the Treaty pending ratification to the extent that the norms of the ECT are consistent with Russia’s constitution, laws and administrative regulations. So, at present it has created the basis for internationalization of YUKOS affair, which is considered in such international courts as Permanent Court of Arbitration in the Hague and by the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg.

Russian leadership tries to avoid any legal obligations that can influence hearing on YUKOS in international courts. In August 2009 Russia informed the Depository of Energy Charter that it will not become a party to the document. This decision was mostly prepared by Putin, a head of Russian government, which contradicts traditional interpretation of the 1993 Constitution giving all responsibility for key foreign policy decisions to the president. Putin also has intensively commented on Energy Charter in his international contacts (Putin ne vidit smysla, 2009) and on Khodorkovsky’s affair in his domestic

discourse (Putin pobil, 2009). According to president Medvedev's position Russia can not sign ECT, which it sees as not reflecting the interests of energy producing states. However, in April 2009 president Medvedev has proposed a new international treaty (Konceptualny podhod, 2009), which, according to official Russian position, is more balanced in relation to the interests of energy producing states. From the European point of view this document is quite vague and it refuses from a heritage of existing ECT based on extensive international talks.

As a result of ECT dispute now there is no way to diminish political risks in European–Russian gas trade by institutional means. Therefore, Europe has to act towards Russian gas not as “normative”, but as “normal” power. So, a “power-based” strategy towards Russian gas, which is more close to realist perspective in IR, inevitably becomes important for Europe. Some of them are purely economic, some of them come from the sphere of energy geopolitics, some are purely political and even military. But they all have one thing in common – they are all based, in some or other respect, on the idea of “power”. “Power” can be understood in this context as either making Europe less vulnerable for the threat of Russian gas supply disruption, or development of any types of instruments to pressurize Russia on energy security issues.

There are some economic means to diminish “market power” in relations between the seller and the buyer (Bohi and Toman, 1996, p. 12). Diversification is one of the most obvious solutions for such cases (Stirling, 1998; Frondel and Schmidt, 2008). It can include construction of additional pipelines, increasing the role of liquefied natural gas (LNG), application of shale gas technology developed in the USA, replacing oil and gas with renewable resources, and even nuclear renaissance or increased coal consumption. Some other technical or financial measures can be added to this like creation of strategic reserves, more intensive energy-saving or creating countervailing buying power for major foreign gas corporations. Another type of proposed economic solution of energy problems with Russia is development of single European gas market (Noël, 2009a).

The second type of power-based approach to Russian gas is represented by the discourse of energy geopolitics concerned with control over resources or access to them (Goldthau and Witte, 2009, p. 374), according to which external supply routes should be diversified. It includes such gas transportation projects as Nabucco and Transcaspian gas pipeline from Turkmenistan (Baran, 2007, pp. 134–137).

Third, there is purely political approach based on the idea that Europe should speak with one voice in order to improve its position towards Russia (Valasek, 2009, p. 38; Grant and Valasek, 2007).

There are also institutional ways to diminish Russian power, this time, equalized with Gazprom's power (Lucas, 2008). Gazprom is now severely affected by the legislative measures undertaken by European authorities. On the 19 September 2007 the European Commission has approved the third legislative package of measures directed at liberalizing energy market (Directive 2009/73/EC). On the 22 April 2009 European Parliament has approved this package. Most negative for Russia and Gazprom is the provision according to which national regulator has the right to prevent control of transmission system by operator controlled by “a person or persons from a third country”, if its market entry would jeopardize the Member State's or the EU's security of supply. This directly prevents Gazprom from investing in gas sector in some European countries, which has been its long-term strategy.

Fourth, there is purely military approach to energy security. The problems with Russian gas are widely discussed from military perspective in NATO. But this military alliance is not designed to deal with energy security issues (Valasek, 2009, p. 37).

There is one, general disadvantage that characterizes all power-based strategies towards Russia: as Andrew Monaghan has noticed, it can further promote emerging security dilemma in European–Russian energy relations (Monaghan, 2006). Both sides will try to diversify their energy relations and to build up their own security understood as a zero-sum game with the partner. As standard security dilemma situation in IR shows, both sides can even be involved into the spiral of conflict and, as a result, have a situation, when political risks significantly grow. And, finally, as discussions of energy security issues in NATO show this can even create new additional problems for USA since it will be heavily involved into these new potential spirals of conflict due to Transatlantic solidarity. Therefore, in order to diminish political risks by some form of coordination of international actors' positions (and even to get some competitive advantages over the other actors) some European actors are trying to use policy networks in gas relations with Russia.

3. European–Russian deals in gas sphere based on networking: why and how dysfunctionalities have appeared?

Russian political, economic and administrative system is characterized by very specific combination of factors including high degree of crime and corruption, weak judicial system and low legal culture. Very low recent rankings of Russia in different cross-country indexes are good indicators of this. High actual centralization of political life and economic resources under Kremlin's “vertical of power” negatively influences European energy security (Heinrich, 2008). Deficit of legality and absence of property right guarantees are especially important characteristics of contemporary Russia affecting all aspects of Russian internal economic life (Sergeyev, 1998; Ledeneva, 1998, 2006; Varese, 2001; Volkov, 2002). This is especially important in the situation of specific fusion of state power and wealth that emerged in Russia (Rutland, 2008a), especially, after Khodorkovsky's affair (Sakwa, 2009).

Networks, especially, informal ones, and connected to them phenomena (blat, etc.) have been playing a very important role in governance in both Soviet Union (Easter, 2000) and Post-Soviet Russia (Sergeyev, 1998; Hughes et al., 2002; Ledeneva, 1998, 2001, 2006). According to analysis of Victor Sergeyev (1998) in Post-Soviet Russia the absence of rule of law, or more concretely, of effective property protection and guarantees of fulfilling contracts have created the situation when key

agreements are made and guaranteed through interpersonal networking. In the situation of high centralization of political and economic power interpersonal networking with the highest authorities is of especially high value. This is a specificity of doing business in Russia that can not be ignored by European companies and European leadership.

In this situation of low legal guarantees and well developed informal connections economic deals of external actors with Russian state-controlled companies like Gazprom take some premodern characteristics that are well known to the historians of IR. According to Hendric Spruyt (1994) in the premodern period traders often had to operate outside of the borders, where effective institutions (for example, established by imperial authorities, such as “Pax Romana”) didn’t function and the absence of international regime meant that they should rely on self-help. In this case they had to establish personal connections with local rulers. “...

merchants must strike deals with local lords (or kings) to obtain local protection and trading privileges. Unger terms this set of arrangements “overlord-peddler” agreements. The overlord offers the trader landing rights, unobstructed passage, and protection in exchange for certain fees or taxes. In, essence, traders must strike deals themselves, deals that are ad hoc and subject to defection by the local lord... It was unknown whether the other party would respect the terms of the bargain.” (Spruyt, 1994, p. 535; Unger, 1987).

As a result, the merchants often used different network connections based on kinship or common culture (Curtin, 1994).

Importance of network connections in Russia is also increased by specific tradition that goes back to the Soviet political culture to personalize key strategic relations of Russian leaders with their counterparts by describing them as a “friendship”. The highest status of Soviet treaty with foreign partner was a treaty on “friendship and cooperation” and the leaders that signed such treaties were always portrayed by official propaganda as “personal friends” of Soviet leaders. This was accompanied by all consequent gestures like kissing and passionate embracing. Also, Soviet nomenclatura type of solidarity (Voslensky, 1984), was often extended to such “friends”. That included even “privileges” including the possibility of using personal connections for bypassing different “formalities” of law (Kordonsky, 2006, Ledeneva, 1998). Continuity in this sphere was most vividly manifested in Boris Yeltsin’s desire to portray his relations with all key European leaders as “personal friendship”, which was accompanied with all old-style Soviet behavioral attributes of such friendship. Putin and Medvedev (who both did not, even in the case of low-ranked KGB officer Putin, belong to old Communist nomenclatura) also, to some extent, follow this old tradition.

In Europe contemporary Russian leaders still try to interpret as “personal friendship” relations with their German, French and Italian counterparts. In this case “personal friendship” on gas issues can be interpreted as development of specific personalized policy networks through which gas deals are made. Old EU member-states, in general, consume 68% of Russian gas, and the bulk of this gas is purchased by three countries: Germany, Italy and France (Noël, 2009b). So, the efforts of Russian leaders directed at formation of “friendship” fully correspond with the importance of European country for export of Russian gas. These efforts also, in many respects, correlate with potential size of gas market, but with some notorious exclusions. For example, attempts of Russian leaders to form the same type of personalized networks with UK leaders, although it can be very useful for gas trade, for example, within the framework of Nordstream project, have completely failed. There are many reasons why UK leaders did not have so many incentives to network with the Russians on gas issues: availability of North sea gas, much higher rate of Transatlantic solidarity as compared to France, much lower role of overall economic connections with Russia as compared to Germany, British mass-media is more skeptical towards Russian leadership, series of scandals, including poisoning of Litvinenko, etc. This negative example underlines importance of policy networks in European–Russian gas trade.

It is very important to understand that for the leadership of key continental countries of “old Europe” establishment of personal “friendship” with Russian leaders on gas issues has both positive and negative characteristics, function and dysfunctionality.

On the one hand, it is the most effective way to guarantee national and, to the extent, to which they coincide with common EU interests, European energy interests in dealing with Russia. It is also a way to diminish risks and avoid possibility of falling into a spiral of confrontation on energy security issues by coordinating positions with Russian leadership. So, this is just a “carrot” that is missed both in institutional and “power-based” types of European strategies towards Russia.

On the other hand, there are specific moral, legal and political dilemmas that such network-based ad-hoc deals involve. A moral dilemma appears because European leaders have to cooperate with the regime which is more and more considered in Europe as not democratic and corrupt. This moral aspect has been most clear in case of Schroeder. A legal dilemma appears, when specific culture of illegality that dominates in Russian domestic economic and political deals is spread on Europe. It, as I will shortly show below on the cases of Schroeder and Berlusconi, can involve some conflicts of interests and legally questionable moments. Finally, political dilemma appears because some network-based gas deals may contradict the interests of other European nations (or EU as a single entity), transatlantic solidarity or solidarity of European nations with some NIS having aspirations for EU and NATO membership. Such type of criticism is directed, for example, against some recent deals between Sarkozy and Russian leadership.

The best known and most publicly criticized case of personal relationships turned into network-type connection used for energy purposes is that of former German prime minister Gerhard Schröder. “Strategic partnership” between Berlin and Moscow during the period of SPD’s government headed by Schröder had many reasons: importance of cooperation with Russia for German economy, feeling of gratitude to Russia for peaceful re-unification of Germany, historical and cultural ties, traditional sympathies of German socialists to the East, etc. Schröder cultivated close personal ties with Vladimir Putin seeing

this as a good addition to the ties between the countries. These personal relations were amplified by the fact that Putin due to his work in the KGB period speaks German fluently and knows the culture of this country well. In his public speeches, especially, after resigning from the post of chancellor, Schroeder has always tried to be as friendly to Russia as it is only possible. He was very critical of recognition of Kosovo's independence by European countries (Schroeder, 2008). After Russian-Georgian war Schroeder said that he is "completely opposed to demonizing Russia" (Serious mistakes, 2008) and that in the future multi-polar world Russia will be very important for Europe. In 2004 and 2006 Schröder and his wife Doris adopted two Russian children (Victoria and Gregor) from Putin's home city St. Petersburg.

This personal position was closely linked with gas issues. Schröder has always been a strong advocate of the Nord Stream project. The agreement to build the Nord Stream was signed just before the elections that doomed SPD's government. Before Schroeder's stepping down as a Chancellor, German government gave guarantees to cover 1 billion Euro of the Gazprom's debts associated with the project (Buck and Benoit, 2006) (this guarantee has never been used). After that Schröder accepted Gazprom's nomination for the post of the head of the shareholders' committee of Nord Stream AG. This policy of Schroeder was widely criticized by his German political opponents, transit East European countries (Schroeder attacked, 2005) and American press (Gerhard Schroeder, 2005). Managing director of the Nord Stream AG, Matthias Warnig started his career at the Stasi (East German intelligence service) and he allegedly had personal connections in this period to Vladimir Putin (Kupchinsky, 2009b).

Angela Merkel, who knows Communist system and Russia very well due to her own personal experience, distances herself from the position of Schroeder. She tries to take into account Russian interests in all issues, including gas, and her relations with Putin and Medvedev are good, they are even personalized and characterized by certain degree of mutual trust, but they can not be described as close personal friendship. Probably, under current circumstances this type of personal strategy can be considered as the optimal one since it gives an opportunity to coordinate positions with Russia on gas issues and, at the same time, to effectively avoid different dilemmas of too close personal connections.

Cooperation between Rome and Moscow is characterized by a strong gas dimension. Italy is one of the key consumers of Russian gas and this market can significantly grow. Such key for Russia and personally for Putin gas transportation project as the South Stream has been initiated by Gazprom together with Italian energy corporation ENI (Geropoulos, 2007). And contradictions between South Stream and Nabucco projects are one of the deepest divisions on Russian gas affecting contemporary Europe. Even comparatively high degree of corruption inside political system in both Italy and Russia can serve as one of the stimuli for inter-elite networking.

Prime minister of Italy Silvio Berlusconi has very strong personal connections with Russian leadership. Some elements of gas deals based on personal contacts have been criticized by his political opponents and the press and allegations of corruption were involved. In October 2005 Gazprom and ENI denounced an agreement signed in May 2005 about direct retail sales of Russian gas to Italian final consumers. The reason was that some members of Italian parliament accused Berlusconi of having personal interests in this deal. The intermediary firm that was involved in the deal (Central Italian Gas Holding) was allegedly linked to Berlusconi's former business partner (Reznik, 2005; Grib and Miklashevskaya, 2005; Osetinskaya, 2005).

Moscow's attempts to establish personal contacts with Italian leadership are not restricted to Berlusconi. Former Italian Prime Minister Romano Prodi just before stepping down from this position, received an offer from Gazprom to chair South Stream AG (as it was in the case with Schröder). This offer was politely declined (Dempsey, 2008).

For French leadership strategic partnership with Russia is not only a good economic opportunity, but also a possibility to turn Europe into a real global superpower by realizing de Gaulle's vision of this continent stretching "from the Atlantic ocean to the Urals".

Special relations with Russian leadership were established already by president Mitterand. Jacques Chirac has had a strong personal interest to Russian culture. He even translated from Russian to French a poem of famous Russian writer Puskin "Yevgeny Onegin". Personal connections with Russian leadership were perceived by Chirac as a good way of establishing strategic partnership and there was even some kind of informal French–German competition over who wins a struggle for the position of "the best friend" of Russian leaders (and it was no wonder that Germany with more opportunities for economic cooperation was usually a winner). Strategic cooperation with Russia was clear in the case of forming French–Russian–German alliance in the UN directed against American invasion of Iraq. And it was widely criticized by American mass-media alliance, in which France, not Russia was the most active player.

Different scandalous situations involving networks linked to energy issues started to regularly appear in French–Russian relations already from the period of Mitterand's presidency. There was a criminal scandal ("Angolagate", a scheme in which Russian arms were illegally exchanged on Angola's mineral wealth, including oil) with the son of Mitterand and other members of French elite, in which Russian connections were involved (Vaksberg, 2005). As a former head of French interior ministry, who was sentenced by French court on Angolagate case, said presidents Mitterand and Chirac were well informed of all the details of the deals (Charles Pasqua, 2009). According to the statement of a key figure and intermediary in the scheme Arkadi Gaidamak, Chirac and Villepin were also informed of his role in freeing French hostages in Bosnia and Chechnia, where Russian secret services were involved (Chirac et Villepin, 2009). Gaidamak is an Israeli citizen with strong personal network connections in France, Russia and Angola, who was allegedly linked simultaneously to French and Russian intelligence services.

New French president Sarkozy before the election positioned himself as a person, who is very critical of Russian leadership. He strongly criticized previous policy towards Moscow as an unprincipled *Realpolitik*. However, after he has become a president he immediately changed his attitude (Jauvert, 2008). Already during the summit of G-8 in 2007 Sarkozy did a lot in order to establish good personal relations with Putin. In the period of Russian–Georgian military conflict in the August of 2008 his diplomacy based on personal contacts with Putin and Medvedev was highly instrumental in stopping the open

phase of the conflict. That was important from the point of view of European energy security because the conflict threatened the functioning of three key gas and oil pipelines from Caspian sea region to Europe (Baku–Tbilisi–Erzurum, Baku–Tbilisi–Ceyhan, Baku–Supsa). It was also used in order to further develop personal network connections, especially, with Medvedev. Sarkozy has even seen himself as, potentially, “new Thatcher” with new Gorbachev. After the Russian–Georgian conflict France has refused to sell to Georgia some military equipment, including a warship that Tbilisi wanted to purchase before the war (Jauvert, 2008). However, during the visit of president Medvedev to France in March 2010 the sale of four Mistral-class assault ships worth about \$2 billion was, in principle, agreed. This decision was heavily criticized in the USA and also by such EU member-states as Poland, Latvia and Lithuania because such ships can significantly boost Russia’s capability to organize an amphibious assault in case of a new conflict resembling that with Georgia (Crumley, 2010). Gas interests were intensively involved into this Russian–French rapprochement. During Medvedev’s visit a memorandum was signed between Gazprom and Gaz de France (GDF) Suez giving it 9% of shares in the Nord Stream project. Gas supplies for GDF Suez via the Nord Stream can reach 1.5 billion cubic meters annually from 2015.

German, Italian and French cases are showing specific function of networking in gas sphere involving European and Russian leaders. Such contacts can provide a good tool of coordinating positions of actors and diminishing risks in energy security sphere. However, they also show that such contacts with Russia, which is characterized by very specific domestic system and foreign policy, can make European leaders to be involved into different morally and legally questionable actions. Personal “friendship” with Russian leaders can also create many different political problems for intra-European and trans-Atlantic solidarity.

4. Governance through policy networks in Europe and specificity of European–Russian gas policy networks

Since networks can channel exchange of resources and information, have functional link with trust and can reduce transaction costs (Coleman, 1990) they can also be used, in principle, for the purpose of risk reduction (Boerzel, 1998). Empirical attempts of some European leaders to use networks for reducing the risks in gas trade with Russia correspond to this theory. However, how good networks perform this function depend on many specific circumstances. In this part of the paper I will shortly analyze a literature on the role of networks in EU governance in order to explain specific character of European–Russian gas policy networks and the reason why they do not play the role of risk reduction well.

The role of networks in the sphere of policy analysis has been especially extensively discussed by the authors considering *policy networks* as a specific form of governance (Boerzel, 1998; Boerzel, Heard-Laureote, 2009; Peterson, 2003) including its international dimension. Making and implementing international decisions in Europe have been especially extensively scrutinized from this point of view. It should be taken in account that the theory of policy networks is still developing and, therefore, there are lots of critical discussions of the concept itself and of its use (Thatcher, 1998; Christopoulos, 2008). However, practical importance of networks in EU governance is underlined by the fact that some authors even think that EU can be most adequately conceptualized as a form of governance by networks (Kohler-Koch, 1996, 1999; Ansell, 2000; Schout and Jordan, 2005), in which allocation of values is negotiated between state and non-state actors, while others conceptualize EU as a system of governance in networks (Peterson and Bomberg, 1999), where governmental actors dominate, but networks are still highly important. Comparative study of Europe and the USA shows that quasi-federal nature of EU is especially conducive to governance by policy networks (Peterson and O’Toole, 2001; Peterson, 2003, p. 9).

Policy networks are defined as networks of actors, “who take an interest in the making of a certain policy and who dispose of resources (material and immaterial) required for the formulation, decision or implementation of the policy, form linkages to exchange these resources” (Boerzel, 1998, p. 259). The structure of such networks determines the exchange of resources between the actors and, therefore, it determines actors’ behavior (Windhoff-Heritier, 1994, pp. 85–88). Most of policy networks in Europe “have diverse memberships, extending to public and private, political and administrative, and ‘European’ and national (and often international and sub-national) actors” (Peterson, 2003, pp. 1–2). Therefore, policy networks in Europe can easily involve the actors outside of Europe, which, as I would argue, happens in case of gas policy networks.

Policy networks “do not directly serve for decision-making but for the information, communication and exercise of influence in the preparation of decisions. Besides, networks reduce transaction cost in situations of complex decision-making as they provide a basis of common knowledge, experience and normative orientation. They also reduce insecurity by promoting the mutual exchange of information” (Boerzel, 1998, p. 262).

Policy networks have been usually described as a particular form of governance in modern political systems that are characterized by high degree of differentiation (Kenis and Schneider, 1991; Kooiman, 1993; Mayntz, 1993; Jordan and Richardson, 1983). Modern societies have lots of different functions attributed to different organizations of different nature (governmental, non-governmental, etc.). It is very hard to combine the activities of these organizations into any coherent policy by traditional means. Therefore, networks can be a solution to coordination problems typical of modern societies (Boerzel, 1998, pp. 260–261). As a result, governments have become increasingly dependent on cooperating with the actors outside of their hierarchical control, including the actors that are situated outside of respective national borders.

Policy networks that emerge from such cooperation are different from hierarchy and markets as two traditional forms of governance (Kenis and Schneider, 1991; Marin and Mayntz, 1991; Kooiman, 1993; Mayntz, 1993). Networks can help to avoid some dysfunctionality that are characteristic of both markets and hierarchy (Boerzel, 1998, pp. 260–262). In the cases, when hierarchical or institutional coordination is impossible, for example, in interactions across organizational and national borders, actors can employ network coordination, which then can serve as a functional equivalent to institutions or hierarchy (Scharpf, 1993).

However, network solutions to the problems of coordinating positions of international actors can also pose some problems. Networks can have their own structure of conflict and their specific coordination problems (Benz, 1995). They are also often not exposed to democratic control and therefore suffer from a lack of legitimacy (Benz, 1995). Arguments about negative functions of network solutions are close to a growing body of literature on the “dark side” of social capital (the capacity of a person or group to utilize social relationships to mobilize resources embedded in a network structure (Lin et al., 2001)). The problem of negative social capital was most clearly posed by Robert Putnam (2000). This problem appears as a result of the contradiction between bridging and bonding functions of networks (Bolin et al., 2004), i.e. if networks by bonding help to consolidate a homogeneous group opposing it to all other groups (deficit of bridging), then we have a negative social capital. In terms of formal network analysis a structural hole in network configurations will appear. In this case a consolidated group characterized by strong trust of those who belong to it is opposed to the society in general. Strong network links in the absence of effective institutions such as democracy or rule of law can also lead to negative results. From political point of view this “dark side” of networks was studied on the example of the collapse of Weimar republic in Germany (Berman, 1997). From economic viewpoint it was analyzed as the problem of unproductive use of networks in the absence of strong institutional structures (Trigilia, 2001). “Hence, networks themselves create a dilemma: on the one hand, they perform functions necessary to overcome the deficiencies of bargaining systems, on the other, however, they cannot fully take the place of formal institutions because of their own deficiencies” (Boerzel, 1998, p. 263.).

I would argue that in case of attempts to use networking in energy deals with Russia networks show very specific characteristics many of which are close to “the darkest” ones. This is in many respects a result of failed transition to democracy, rule of law and free market economy in Russia. First of all, networks in European–Russian gas relations are not interorganizational networks that include both governmental and non-governmental actors as it happens in EU. Since the Kremlin jealously defends gas issues from all independent economic and civil society actors (Heinrich, 2008), de facto only governmental or quasi-governmental agents like Gazprom are important for forming policy networks. Since power in Moscow is highly centralized policy networks involving Russian actors are very hierarchical. Because of centralization and personalization of power in Russia success of networking should be necessarily based on personal relations with Russian leaders. And it also means that dynamics of such personal relations is more important than interorganizational relations. The fact that power in Moscow since 2000 moves to the offices, where Putin is, can serve as a proof of prevailing mode of governance outside of official channels. So, European–Russian gas policy networks should be considered as more interpersonal than interorganizational. Network connections between European and Russian business and governmental organizations that are also involved into gas policy networks are of second importance as compared to network connections between European and Russian leaders.

These highly hierarchical, personalized and characterized by very high degree of exclusion of outsiders international policy networks are especially vulnerable from the point of view of negative aspects of networks. By definition due to the very nature of political regime in Russia they suffer from the absence of democratic control and democratic legitimacy. Because they bond together small elite Russian and European groups they also oppose them to all other groups promoting a conflict of interests between those involved into these networks and the outsiders. Usually, these networks are not even visible for larger public because transfer of resources through them can be done very secretly. The existence of these networks usually becomes visible for everyone when there are discussions of energy security issues in Europe and some politicians or organizations involved into them start to defend Russian interests, or when there are scandals involving conflicts of interests.

These policy networks are also conductive to negative outcomes due to combination of the absence of effective international regime regulating gas issues in European–Russian relations and the absence of rule of law inside Russia. So, network connections in this case are absolutely disengaged from any norms, domestic or international.

Finally, these policy networks in themselves contain a very specific structural dilemma: should Russia be considered as absolute outsider for Europe, or it should be somehow integrated into it even without formal membership. *Since Europe is in many respects governed by networks and policy networks have played a very important role in the process of EU enlargement (Peterson, 2003, pp. 17–18), development of policy networks with Russian participation means some form of integration of Russia into Europe.* However, gas policy networks are very ambiguous from this point of view. They are very peripheral to the process of negotiations on EU's decisions in the sphere of energy security. They involve elite groups and organizations from some key member-states shortcutting other member-states, democratic institutions and EU bureaucracy. These are networks formed with the power that has very different political and economic institutions than Europe itself, a power, which is not a part of EU or NATO. Many additional problems also arise because such type of networks joins purely economic matters with very sensitive political and foreign policy affairs. Due to all these factors, such policy networks can enormously increase divisions inside Europe and Euro-Atlantic community.

5. Conclusion: importance of understanding both function and “dark side” of European–Russian gas policy networks

European–Russian gas relations are characterized by very high political risks. The most obvious way of reducing risks, which is establishment of international organizations and institutions, is unavailable in the case of Russian gas because of dispute over Energy Charter Treaty (ECT) regime. Power-based European policy towards Russian gas also does not completely solve the problem of high risks because energy security dilemma deepens as a result of this policy. Therefore, in order to diminish risks a form of coordination of international actors' positions through formation of gas policy networks with Russian

leadership is practiced by some European actors. This corresponds to European tradition to positively assess the role of networks in EU governance.

However, networking involving European and Russian leaders as a type of strategy by its very nature has specific deficiencies. These “dark sides” are already hidden in the nature of governance by networks itself and they are strongly amplified by failed transition to democracy, market economy and rule of law in Russia. As a result of this network contacts with Moscow can involve key European leaders and other European actors into different morally and legally questionable actions. Personal “friendship” with Russian leaders can also create many different political problems for intra-European and trans-Atlantic solidarity. But if, under current circumstances, personal connections with Russian leaders should be practiced in order to diminish risks, better understanding of potential dangers of networking with Russian elite helps to avoid some of them, as the case of Angela Merkel proves.

Analysis of positive and negative functions of international gas policy networks, especially, those involving elite groups from democratic and non-democratic countries can pose a huge interest for development of energy security studies. So, this junction of network studies and energy security studies seems to be a new promising and practically very important field of research.

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