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## Politicization of Global Energy Supply: Historical and Contemporary Context

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**Abstract.** The ongoing confrontation between Russia and the West over the conflict in Ukraine has revealed another, and unprecedented, example of the politicization of global energy supply. The politicization of energy supply represents an important phenomenon in international relations, which still lack a proper theoretical elaboration. This article aims to comprehensively examine and typologize the main manifestations of the politicization of global energy supply both in history and in modern international relations, with a special focus on the ‘energy confrontation’ between Russia and the West, provoked by the conflict in Ukraine. Theoretically, the research is based on the existing conceptual elaboration of the term ‘politicization,’ as well as on the vision of international relations by proponents of social constructivism and political realism. It relies on the methods of historical, system and comparative analysis, as well as the method of analogy. The author concludes that the politicization of energy supply is an integral attribute of international relations in the last half century. It can be hidden or open, moderate or extreme. The extreme form of politicization of energy supply, in contrast to the moderate one, involves the use of ‘energy weapons’ for political purposes, which equates it to an energy war. Energy wars can be limited or full-scale; unilateral, bilateral or multilateral. The conflict in Ukraine has provoked an open and extreme politicization of energy supply, which took the form of a full-scale, bilateral energy war after the start of Russia’s special military operation. The United States and its allies, seeking to influence the Russian policy towards Ukraine, have used ‘energy weapons’ to the fullest, and Russia has responded in kind, albeit on a limited scale.

**Key words:** energy supply, energy weapon, energy war, sanctions, conflict, Russia, West, USA


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## Политизация мировой энергетики: исторический и современный контекст

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**Аннотация.** Противостояние, в котором оказались Россия и Запад из-за конфликта на Украине, явило всему миру очередной, причем беспрецедентный пример политизации мировой энергетики. Политизация

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энергетики — важное явление в международных отношениях, которое пока не получило должной теоретической проработки. Цель исследования — комплексное рассмотрение и типологизация основных международных проявлений политизации энергетики как в истории, так и в современных международных отношениях с особым фокусом на «энергетическом противостоянии» России и Запада, возникшем в ходе конфликта на Украине. Теоретически исследование опирается на существующую концептуальную проработку термина «политизация», а также видение международных отношений сторонниками социального конструктивизма и политического реализма. Применяются методы исторического, системного и сравнительного анализа, а также метод аналогии. Автор приходит к выводу, что политизация энергетики, будучи неотъемлемым атрибутом международных отношений за последние 50 лет, может быть скрытой или открытой, умеренной или крайней. Крайняя форма политизации, в отличие от умеренной, предполагает применение «энергетического оружия» в политических целях, что приравнивает ее к энергетической войне. Энергетические войны могут быть ограниченными или полномасштабными; односторонними (безответными), двусторонними или многосторонними. Конфликт на Украине спровоцировал открытую и крайнюю политизацию энергетики, которая после начала специальной военной операции (СВО) приобрела форму полномасштабной, двусторонней энергетической войны. США и их союзники, желая повлиять на российскую политику в отношении Украины, применили в полной мере свое «энергетическое оружие», и Россия ответила тем же, правда, в ограниченном масштабе.

**Ключевые слова:** поставки энергоресурсов, энергетическое оружие, энергетическая война, санкции, конфликт, Россия, Запад, США

**Заявление о конфликте интересов.** Автор заявляет об отсутствии конфликта интересов.

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## Introduction

The politicization of energy supply is one of the key international problems of our time as well as in history. The confrontation between Russia and the West, provoked by the conflict in Ukraine and intensified after the start of Russia's special military operation in Ukraine, has further exacerbated this problem, which currently has no proper theoretical elaboration, although it is periodically addressed in scientific publications. The aim of the research is a comprehensive analysis and typology of the main historical and modern manifestations of the politicization of energy supply, with a special focus on the 'energy confrontation' between Russia and the West that arose during the conflict in Ukraine.

Theoretically, the research is based on the existing elaboration of the concept of politicization, as well as on the vision of international relations developed by the proponents of social constructivism and political realism. The research methodology includes the methods of historical, system and

comparative analysis, as well as the method of analogy.

## The Concept of Politicization

The concept of politicization is a prevalent one in scientific discourse, with researchers examining its manifestation in a wide range of fields, including economics, trade, energy, international institutions, culture, religion, ethnicity, science, history, art, the media, human rights, etc.<sup>1</sup> According to existing definitions,<sup>2</sup> politicization can be interpreted as a process in which some phenomena, spheres and

<sup>1</sup> Scherrer C. P. Violent Conflict: Contemporary Warfare, Mass Violence and Genocide — Dataset 1985–2005, Typologies, and Trends // Encyclopedia of Violence, Peace, & Conflict / ed. by L. Kurtz. Academic Press, 2008. P. 2331–2382. <https://doi.org/10.1016/B978-012373985-8.00237-3>. See also: (Borovsky, 2008; Danilov, 2010; Tcherniavskaya, 2013; Lebedev, 2015; Borisova, 2018; Yefanov, 2021; Sassi, 2023).

<sup>2</sup> Kay D. A. The Functioning and Effectiveness of Selected United Nations Systems Programs. St. Paul: West Publishing Company, 1980. See also: (Wells, 1987, pp. 1–23; Palonen, 2003; Bobba & Hubé, 2021).

institutions of social (including international) interaction that are inherently non-political, begin to be seen from a political perspective, in the context of a struggle for power within a single state or at the international level. Consequently, politicization is capable of distorting those social phenomena, spheres and institutions that it affects, making their participants to take into account and even prioritize certain political factors.

From a theoretical point of view, politicization as a social process is more in line with social constructivism. As the concept of securitization, developed by representatives of the Copenhagen School, is at the center of social constructivism, an important question is how securitization and politicization are related as concepts. Securitization is seen by social constructivists as a process in which certain issues, phenomena, or actors are politicized and begin to be conceived by states, a group of states or other international actors as a threat to their security. At the same time, the securitization process develops in line with a well-established algorithm (Buzan & Wæver, 2003).

The question of whether securitization and politicization are one and the same or two different processes has already been raised in the international scientific community.<sup>3</sup> Based on the accumulated theoretical knowledge, it seems more correct to consider securitization and politicization as two different, but at the same time interrelated processes (Bourbeau, 2011), as the securitization of an issue, phenomenon, or actor necessarily implies their politicization (Buzan & Wæver, 2003). In other words, it can be assumed that politicization is an essential attribute of securitization.

Realism sees international relations purely through the prism of politics and the struggle for power, and, as a result, it considers all

non-political spheres of international interaction (economics, finance, trade, energy, etc.) solely in terms of power or weakness of states, and even their ‘weapons.’<sup>4</sup> Thus, two conclusions can be drawn. The first is that politicization, if it takes place, confirms the relevance of realism or the fact that politics can determine the development of various (if not all) spheres of social relations. The second is that politicization is actually the process of transforming a non-political issue into the field of politics or into the realm of realism.

The question of whether it is necessary to determine a clear algorithm for the actor’s actions towards the audience within the politicization process (similar to that revealed by the Copenhagen School for securitization) remains open, the task of identifying various types of politicization is undoubtedly important and relevant. For comparison, there has long been a typology of inflation in the field of economics. Thus, according to the form of its manifestation, inflation can be both open and hidden. Based on its pace or level, inflation can be moderate, galloping and hyper high (Andrianov, 2010).

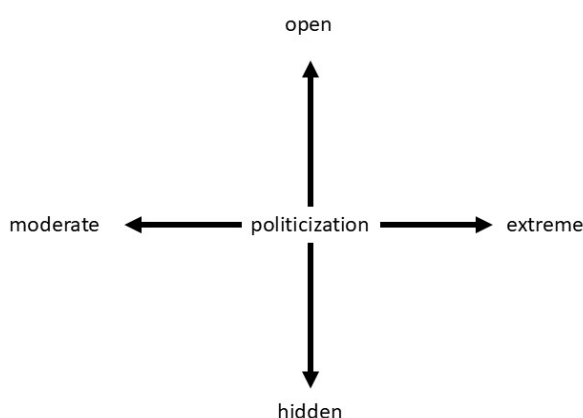
By analogy with inflation, politicization, as of its form of manifestation, can be both *open* and *hidden*. If politicization is open, states or other actors openly display it in documents, speech acts and actions. If politicization is hidden, states or other actors do not publicly associate themselves with it. Unlike inflation, politicization cannot be quantified. Nevertheless, it is acceptable to differentiate it into *moderate* and *extreme*.

In cases where a state or a group of states, seeking to achieve its political goals, uses non-military resources as ‘weapons’ (oil, gas or grain supplies; technology exports; mass media, etc.), it is permissible to talk

<sup>3</sup> Bourbeau P. Securitization // *International Encyclopedia of the Social & Behavioral Sciences* / ed. by J. D. Wright. Elsevier, 2015. P. 395–399. <https://doi.org/10.1016/B978-0-08-097086-8.96056-2>

<sup>4</sup> Lobell S. E. Structural Realism. Offensive and Defensive Realism // *The International Studies Encyclopedia* / ed. by R. A. Denemark, R. Marlin-Bennett. Wiley-Blackwell, 2010. P. 6651–6669. <https://doi.org/10.1093/acref/9780191842665.001.0001>. See also: (Borovsky, 2023; Luft & Korin, 2009).

about an extreme form of politicization of the sphere of international relations in which it takes place (for example, energy, trade, information space). Based on the famous saying of Carl von Clausewitz, “War is nothing but the continuation of policy with other means,” expressed in his major work *On War* (Zotkin, 2019), extreme manifestations of politicization should be associated with trade, energy, technological and other wars waged outside traditional battlefields. Such wars can be limited or full-scale; unilateral (or unrequited), bilateral or multilateral. Accordingly, politicization that does not involve the use of trade, energy,<sup>5</sup> technological, information and other similar ‘weapons’ should be regarded as moderate (Figure).



**The typology of politicization**

Source: compiled by Yu.V. Borovsky.

### Politicization of Energy Supply in the History of International Relations

Before the outbreak of the conflict in Ukraine in 2014, and even more the beginning of the Russian special military operation in Ukraine in 2022, a few cases were generally associated with the politicization of energy supply in the international community. One of

the ‘biggest’ of them is related to the highly politicized reaction of the Persian Gulf oil exporting countries to the Western support for Israel in the Yom Kippur War (October 6–25, 1973). This led to a 70% increase in the oil price, a 5% monthly reduction in oil production and the imposition of an embargo on oil supplies to the United States, the Netherlands, Portugal and South Africa, accused of supporting Israel during the war (Yergin, 2023, pp. 634–663; Skorokhodova, 2021, pp. 44–102; Makarov & Chupilkin, 2021).

The actions taken by the Persian Gulf oil exporters in 1973–1974 can be considered a manifestation of both open and extreme politicization of energy supply in the form of a full-scale,<sup>6</sup> but at the same time unilateral energy war, as there were no retaliatory actions by Western countries against the Persian Gulf oil exporters. A little later, in November 1979, the United States, in response to the Islamic Revolution in Iran and directly to the seizure of the US embassy by Iranian students in Tehran, not only severed diplomatic relations with the emerging Islamic Republic of Iran, but also imposed an embargo on the supply of Iranian oil to the US market in order not only to punish, but also to undermine the new government in Tehran (Yergin, 2023, pp. 727–731). In this case, it is also appropriate to speak of the open and extreme politicization of energy supply in the form of a unilateral and limited energy war.

It is noteworthy that since the 1970s, the problem of energy security has always been present in the international context and discourse, necessarily viewed in terms of politicized actions of states, and international energy relations have been certainly interpreted in a political way. In other words, since the 1970s, states have seen energy supply as an important foreign policy leverage with which they can either encourage or coerce other states,

<sup>5</sup> Zhiznin S. Z., Abdrasulov N. K. Modern Energy Wars and Crises: Threats to Peace // *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*. July 27, 2023. (In Russian). URL: [https://www.ng.ru/energy/2023-07-27/100\\_energy27072023.html](https://www.ng.ru/energy/2023-07-27/100_energy27072023.html) (accessed: 16.09.2024).

<sup>6</sup> Because of the scale and very wide range of measures taken.

both consuming and supplying energy, to adopt appropriate political and other actions (Skorokhodova, 2021; Borovsky, 2022, pp. 11–49; Golunov, 2021; Venn, 2002; Yergin, 2011, pp. 264–284).

The collapse of world oil prices provoked by Saudi Arabia in the mid-1980s is studied not only through the prism of intense international competition for sales markets, and changes in the global oil market due to the formation of exchange spot trading (Skorokhodova, 2021, pp. 182–212; Yergin, 2023, pp. 807–834). Some experts attribute this collapse to a ‘joint political action’ by Washington and Riyadh targeting Moscow (Laurent, 2008, pp. 182–212; Borovsky, 2022, pp. 252–253). If we accept this hypothesis, which is based on quite convincing evidence, the deep drop in world oil prices in the mid-1980s can be interpreted as an extreme, but at the same time hidden politicization of the global energy supply. In other words, Saudi Arabia, as part of an undeclared, limited energy war with the USSR, could, in a secret and unilateral manner, and at the alleged request of the United States, use oil supplies as a ‘weapon,’ hoping to weaken the Soviet state politically and expecting at the same time to get concomitant economic benefits.

Another case that, according to the West, vividly demonstrates the politicization of global energy supply, deals with the repeated interruption of Russian gas supplies to Ukraine in January 2006 and 2009, as well as in June 2014. Interpretations of these incidents in the West and in Russia radically differ. Moscow insists that it was forced to take such an exceptional measure for purely commercial reasons, namely Kiev’s categorical refusal to buy Russian gas on market (or close to market) terms, as well as to pay off gas debts.<sup>7</sup> The

United States and the European Union (EU), on the contrary, see a political intent in such supposedly unnecessary steps by Russia — a desire both to punish Ukraine for its pro-Western course and to encourage it to take into account Russian political interests.<sup>8</sup> Thus, in the eyes of the West, Russia secretly used its ‘energy weapons’ for political purposes, and if it is so, that is nothing more than another manifestation of the hidden and extreme politicization of energy supply. Based on the proposed typology, the described actions of Russia towards Ukraine can be also called a unilateral and limited ‘energy war,’ if the Western vision of incidents is accepted.

The politicization of global energy supply is manifested not only within high-profile international events such as crises, conflicts or disputes. Strong political alliances or ‘special relationships’ can be built on the basis of energy supply. During the Cold War, such ‘special relations’ were binding the United States and the Persian Gulf oil-exporting monarchies, including notably Saudi Arabia (Simonia, 2005; Skorokhodova, 2021), as well as the USSR and the countries of the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (COMECON). In the 21st century, this practice has been adopted by China, which has begun to actively build relations under the ‘energy + politics’ formula with a number of oil and gas exporting countries, including Russia, Turkmenistan, Iran, Saudi Arabia, Venezuela and Angola. Russia and Germany attempted

uuid:3e2ad362-0bec-478a-89c1-3974c79363b5 (accessed: 20.09.2024); Russian-Ukrainian Gas Conflicts. The Dossier // TASS. June 16, 2014. (In Russian). URL: <https://tass.ru/info/1128520?ysclid=m74pbkhc59578799889> (accessed: 20.09.2024).

<sup>8</sup> Pirani S., Stern J., Yafimava K. The Russo-Ukrainian Gas Dispute of January 2009: A Comprehensive Assessment // Oxford Institute for Energy Studies. February 2009. URL: <https://ora.ox.ac.uk/objects/uuid:3e2ad362-0bec-478a-89c1-3974c79363b5> (accessed: 20.09.2024). See also: (Sakwa, 2010; Henderson, 2016; Grigas, 2017; Rodríguez-Fernández, Carvajal & Ruiz-Gómez, 2020).

<sup>7</sup> See: Pirani S., Stern J., Yafimava K. The Russo-Ukrainian Gas Dispute of January 2009: A Comprehensive Assessment // Oxford Institute for Energy Studies. February 2009. URL: <https://ora.ox.ac.uk/objects/uuid:3e2ad362-0bec-478a-89c1-3974c79363b5> (accessed: 20.09.2024).

to establish similar relations in the 2000s and 2010s, but without success (Borovsky, 2022).

It is not uncommon for fossil energy resources to be supplied to political and ideological allies at low or subsidized (with respect to the market conditions) prices. This practice is typical, for example, of Russia in relation to Belarus (Borovsky, 2022), and of Venezuela in relation to Cuba and some other Caribbean countries.<sup>9</sup> However, an exporting country may, on the contrary, inflate energy prices for states that are politically disloyal to it or follow a 'wrong' political course. Russia was often accused of such a practice in the past, because it allegedly inflated gas prices for some Eastern European countries, including Poland and Bulgaria, although Moscow has strongly denied such accusations.<sup>10</sup>

Based on the proposed typology, international relations based on the 'energy + politics' formula, as well as politically motivated energy supplies at low (subsidized) or inflated prices, can be considered as manifestations of a moderate and at the same time hidden politicization of energy supply, since states accused of such practice do not publicly associate themselves with it.

Both during and after the Cold War, the United States and other Western countries regularly imposed 'energy sanctions' for political purposes. Such sanctions have mainly targeted oil and gas exporting countries, which, in the eyes of the West, have been following the 'wrong' political course. Over the past decades, Iraq, Venezuela, Iran, Syria, Libya, Sudan, as well as the USSR and Russia, have become the

targets of Western energy sanctions.<sup>11</sup> This 'unfriendly practice' can be interpreted in different ways. In cases where Western energy sanctions are mostly aimed at weakening an 'undesirable' oil and gas exporting country, it is more appropriate to speak of a moderate politicization of energy supply (for example, restrictions imposed on Iraqi oil exports after the Gulf War). When, on the contrary, the West's energy sanctions are seen as 'weapons,' and they are designed not so much to weaken as to impose some kind of political action or even overthrow an 'undesirable regime' in a particular exporting country, it is more correct to associate with them an extreme politicization of energy supply and limited energy wars (for example, the harsh sanctions imposed on Venezuelan oil exports after the 2018 presidential elections, rejected by the West) (Borovsky, 2023; Semenov, 2022).

Finally, the politicization of global energy supply has often been associated with the fourth energy transition, which implies the substitution of fossil fuels by renewable and other carbon-neutral energy sources. It is allegedly about the tacit and veiled intention of importers of hydrocarbons represented by Western countries to devalue the key status of oil and gas in the global energy supply and thereby deprive the leading non-Western oil and gas exporters (countries of the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), Russia, etc.) of their formidable 'energy weapons' in the form of embargoes and non-market price gouging. At the same time, the current climate agenda, which is inextricably linked to the fourth energy transition, risks becoming highly politicized in the near future. This will happen if a state or a group of states start using carbon (or green) duties (or taxes) and sanctions as political 'weapons.' It is no coincidence that in October

<sup>9</sup> Goldwyn D. L., Gill C. R. Uncertain Energy: The Caribbean's Gamble with Venezuela // Atlantic Council. July 2014. URL: [https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/07/Petrocaribe\\_RDO\\_18.pdf](https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/07/Petrocaribe_RDO_18.pdf) (accessed: 20.09.2024).

<sup>10</sup> Kramer A.E. Gazprom Faces Effects of Politics on Its Bottom Line // The New York Times. April 22, 2015. URL: <https://www.nytimes.com/2015/04/23/business/international/gazprom-faces-effects-of-politics-on-its-bottom-line.html> (accessed: 22.09.2024).

<sup>11</sup> Sanctions Programs and Country Information // Office of Foreign Assets Control. U.S. Department of the Treasury. URL: <https://ofac.treasury.gov/sanctions-programs-and-country-information> (accessed: 24.09.2024). See also: (Borovsky, 2023).

2021, the Russian President Vladimir Putin called climate protection a common task of mankind, but urged the countries of the world not to use the climate agenda as “a tool to promote their own economic and political interests.”<sup>12</sup> At the moment, the problems of the fourth energy transition and actions to combat climate change have not yet gone beyond the moderate politicization of energy supply.

### **Politicization of Energy Supply in the Context of the Conflict in Ukraine**

After the outbreak of the crisis in Ukraine in February 2014, Western countries, led by the United States, provided the world with a new example of the open and extreme politicization of energy supply in the form of a limited and unilateral energy war. Accusing Russia of annexing Crimea and supporting separatists in Donbas, they openly but with restraint used ‘energy weapons’ against the Russian state in order to force it to respect the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine.<sup>13</sup> Consequently, all the Russian leading energy companies lost access to long-term financing from Western financial institutions, and serious restrictions were imposed on trading in their securities. All ongoing and future projects on the Russian territory related to oil and gas exploration and production in deep-sea areas, the Arctic shelf, as well as in low-permeability reservoirs, including shale formations, were also sanctioned by the West (Sidorova, 2016; Vaganova, 2022). As a result, the Russian energy industry experienced a negative impact, but it was clearly limited, since the energy sanctions imposed by the West did not

significantly affect the current Russia’s oil and gas production and exports, and were more likely to have a long-term impact.

Following the start of Russia’s special military operation in Ukraine in February 2022, the politicization of global energy supply, due to the efforts of the United States and its allies, has reached an unprecedented level in history. Seeking to force Russia to abandon its ‘aggression’ against Ukraine, as well as inflict a strategic defeat on it, the United States, together with its allies, once again used ‘energy weapons,’ but this time they did it on a full scale,<sup>14</sup> even risking undermining the stability of not only its own energy supply system, but also the global one (Chen et al., 2023).

First, a total or near-total embargo was imposed on the import of Russian fossil energy resources in relation to the Western markets. Second, burdensome financial, transportation and other difficult-to-overcome barriers were created to the supply of Russian oil, petroleum products and liquefied natural gas to alternative markets, including the imposition of price caps. Third, for various reasons, including the war in Ukraine, sanctions, and ‘acts of terrorism at the state level’ (This refers to the explosion of the Nord Stream – 1 and Nord Stream – 2 gas pipelines in September 2022),<sup>15</sup> the gas transport infrastructure connecting Russia and Europe has almost ceased to function. Fourth, Western governments strongly recommended that their national energy companies to leave the Russian market, which they overwhelmingly did (Borovsky, 2023; Chen et al., 2023; Batzella, 2024).

It is hardly worth disputing the fact that Western countries are most to blame for the politicization of energy supply in the period after February 2022. However, the politicization of energy supply, even on a limited scale, can

<sup>12</sup> Russian Energy Week International Forum Plenary Session // The President of Russia. October 13, 2021. (In Russian). URL: <http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/66916> (accessed: 23.09.2024).

<sup>13</sup> Trainer J., Lokker N., Taylor K., Certan U. Sanctions by the Numbers: The Russian Energy Sector // Center for a New American Security. April 4, 2024. URL: <https://www.cnas.org/publications/reports/sanctions-by-the-numbers-the-russian-energy-sector> (accessed: 23.09.2024).

<sup>14</sup> Ibid. See also: (Vaganova, 2022).

<sup>15</sup> Putin Called the Undermining of the Nord Streams Terrorism at the State Level // Izvestia. October 11, 2023. (In Russian). URL: <https://iz.ru/1587758/2023-10-11/putin-nazval-podryv-severnykh-potokov-terrorizmom-na-gosurovne> (accessed: 25.09.2024).

definitely be seen in Russia's response. In March 2022, President Vladimir Putin signed a decree on Russia's payments for gas with 'unfriendly countries' in rubles.<sup>16</sup> Due to the expected refusal of Poland and Bulgaria to use the Russian currency for payments, *Gazprom* stopped supplying gas to these two countries, which became another reason to accuse Russia of using 'energy weapons' for political purposes.<sup>17</sup> In May 2022, Moscow refused to supply gas via the Yamal — Europe pipeline running through Belarus to Poland and Germany. In July 2022, *Gazprom*, due to maintenance work, unexpectedly stopped pumping gas through the Nord Stream – 1 gas pipeline for a relatively long period of time.<sup>18</sup> As a result, the European Union saw Moscow's political interest in a sharp drop in Russian gas exports to European consumers.<sup>19</sup> In addition to the above, the actions of the Russian armed forces, which have regularly launched missile attacks on Ukraine's energy infrastructure, supplied and financed by the West, can also be seen as a manifestation of the politicization of energy supply.

Thus, after the start of Russia's special military operation in Ukraine, which provoked extremely harsh Western 'energy sanctions' and Russia's retaliatory actions, the world has

witnessed an unprecedented open (primarily regarding Western actions) and extreme politicization of energy supply in the form of a full-scale bilateral energy war.

At the same time, the crisis in Ukraine has not only intensified, but also accelerated the process of forming a multipolar world order, which in the not-too-distant future should replace the outgoing unipolar one. This essentially political process has also affected the energy sector.

Firstly, since December 2016, a new format of cooperation between oil exporting countries, called OPEC+, has been in existence and has been developing. It brought together, in an *ad hoc* mode, 12 member states of the oil cartel, as well as 11 independent oil exporting countries, including Russia, Brazil and Mexico. Formally, OPEC+ (as well as OPEC) is designed to maintain stable oil prices in the interests of its members.<sup>20</sup> However, there is also an unspoken political solidarity among the states involved in OPEC+, which are concerned about both the growth of tight and shale oil production in the United States, and the declining global demand for oil due to the decarbonization of energy supply, which is being intensively promoted by the West.

Secondly, with the entry of the leading OPEC member countries (Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Iran) into the BRICS, energy cooperation within this interstate association, which also includes Russia, Brazil, India, China, South Africa, Egypt and Ethiopia, has every chance of reaching to a new level (Mastepanov, 2024). Given that BRICS is one of the main symbols of the emerging multipolar world, the hidden politicization of its energy agenda should not be excluded.

<sup>16</sup> Putin Signed a Decree on the Sale of Gas for Rubles to Unfriendly Countries // RBK. March 31, 2022. (In Russian). URL: <https://www.rbc.ru/politics/31/03/2022/6245aafb9a7947e20b83407a> (accessed: 15.09.2024).

<sup>17</sup> Tsoleva T., Koper A. Europe Decries 'Blackmail' as Russia Cuts Gas to Poland, Bulgaria // Reuters. April 27, 2022. URL: <https://www.reuters.com/business/energy/gazprom-says-it-halts-gas-supplies-poland-bulgaria-payments-row-2022-04-27/> (accessed: 15.09.2024).

<sup>18</sup> Lawson A. 'Gas Blackmail': How Putin's Weaponised Energy Supplies Are Hurting Europe // The Guardian. July 15, 2022. URL: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/jul/15/gas-blackmail-how-putins-weaponised-energy-supplies-are-hurting-europe> (accessed: 16.09.2024). See also: (Laryš, 2024).

<sup>19</sup> Kaveshnikov N. Y. The European Union's Response to the Energy Crisis of 2022 // RIAC Policy Brief. 2023. No. 42. (In Russian). URL: <https://russiancouncil.ru/activity/policybriefs/reaktsiya-evrosoyuza-na-energeticheskii-krizis-2022-g/> (accessed: 16.09.2024).

<sup>20</sup> Saudi Arabia, Russia, Iraq, the United Arab Emirates, Kuwait, Kazakhstan, Algeria, and Oman Extend Voluntary Cuts // OPEC. September 5, 2024. URL: [https://www.opec.org/opec\\_web/en/press\\_room/7369.htm](https://www.opec.org/opec_web/en/press_room/7369.htm) (accessed: 25.09.2024).



Thirdly, Russia faced with extremely harsh ‘energy sanctions’ from the West, in fact, felt the solidary support from many non-Western countries. India, China, Türkiye and a number of other non-Western oil importing countries actually helped Russia avoid the collapse of its oil industry by agreeing to increase imports of Russian oil in an extremely short time,<sup>21</sup> including through ‘unconventional’ supply chains. Russia’s OPEC+ partners, including Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, promptly switched to the markets from which Russia was forced to leave, and at the same time freed up niches for it in non-Western oil importing countries, primarily India and China.

Thus, with regard to the OPEC+ format, the growing political and energy component of the BRICS, as well as the tacit assistance to Russia from a number of non-Western countries in overcoming western ‘energy sanctions,’ we can definitely talk about a hidden and at the same time moderate politicization of energy supply.

### Conclusion

The politicization of energy supply has been an integral attribute of international relations for the past fifty years. It can be hidden or open; moderate or extreme. Extreme politicization of energy supply, in contrast to moderate, involves the use of ‘energy weapons’ by a state or a group of states for political purposes, which equates it to an ‘energy war.’ ‘Energy wars’ can be limited or full-scale; unilateral, bilateral or multilateral.

<sup>21</sup> Perkins R. Interactive: Global Oil Flow Tracker // S&P Global. January 8, 2025. URL: <https://www.spglobal.com/commodityinsights/en/market-insights/latest-news/oil/072122-interactive-global-flow-tracker-recording-changes-russian-oil-exports> (accessed: 14.01.2025).

History and the present provide many examples of the politicization of energy supply in various forms. For example, the open and extreme politicization of energy supply can be seen in the actions of the Persian Gulf oil exporters in 1973–1974, as well as in the ‘energy sanctions’ imposed by the West against Russia after the beginning of the Russian special military operation in Ukraine in 2022. These two examples can simultaneously embody a full-scale ‘energy war,’ albeit unilateral in the first case and bilateral in the second.

The politicization of global energy supply has been manifested not only within high-profile international events such as crises, conflicts, and disputes. The politicization of energy supply in a hidden and moderate form can be associated with ‘special relations’ within the formula ‘energy + politics’ (USA and Saudi Arabia, Russia and China, etc.); oil and gas supplies at politically subsidized or inflated prices (Russia — Belarus, Venezuela — Cuba, etc.); the international cooperation in the OPEC+ format, as well as the de facto tacit assistance to Russia in overcoming Western ‘energy sanctions’ by many non-Western countries (India, China, etc.).

The conflict in Ukraine has provoked an open and extreme politicization of global energy supply. After the start of Russia’s special military operation in Ukraine, it reached an unprecedented scale, as Western states decided to fully use their ‘energy weapons’ against Russia, risking undermining not only their own energy supply system, but also the global one. As a result, the world witnessed another ‘energy war’, which in 2014–2022 was unilateral and limited, and after February 2022 it turned into a bilateral and full-scale one.

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