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REPRESENTATION OF THE EU-RUSSIAN ENERGY RELATIONS: COVERAGE OF THE NORD-STREAM PIPELINE'S CONSTRUCTION IN GERMAN QUALITY MEDIA

РЕПРЕЗЕНТАЦИЯ ОТНОШЕНИЙ ЕС-РОССИЯ В ОБЛАСТИ ЭНЕРГЕТИКИ: ОСВЕЩЕНИЕ СТРОИТЕЛЬСТВА ГАЗОПРОВОДА «СЕВЕРНЫЙ ПОТОК» В НЕМЕЦКИХ КАЧЕСТВЕННЫХ СМИ

Despite the current deep crisis in Russia-EU relations joint energy projects between Russia and the European Union (EU) are still highly important, especially taking into account the constantly growing energy necessities in Europe. It is obvious today that the Nord Stream Pipeline from Russia to Germany – the first direct gas pipeline connecting Russian gas fields to the European consumers without mediation of the third countries – was an example of successful cooperation, which no longer happens since the beginning of the Ukrainian crisis. The construction of the Nord-Stream Pipeline began in the 1990s and the first branch of the pipeline was launched in November 2011. Meanwhile the support and opposition to the building of the pipeline was reflected by public debates as well as on the pages of leading media sources in different countries. This article provides an analysis of media coverage of the EU-Russian energy relations such as they were represented by German quality press in articles covering the construction of the Nord Stream pipeline. The media analysis allowed to make a number of conclusions on the balancing between "German" and "European" prism of coverage, its objectivity, the importance of the stylistic means and the linkage between gas and moral in Russian-EU relationship.

Несмотря на глубокий кризис в отношениях между Россией и Евросоюзом, взаимодействие в области энергетики продолжает играть важную роль – особенно учитывая возрастающие потребности европейских стран в энергии. Сегодня, после начала украинского кризиса, очевидно, что газопровод «Северный поток» – первый газопровод, напрямую соединивший газовые месторождения России с европейскими странами-потребителями без посредничества третьих стран – надолго останется наиболее крупным и успешным проектом сотрудничества. Реализация проекта Северо-европейского газопровода (в дальнейшем получившего название «Северный поток») началась еще в 1990-х годах, а первая ветка газопровода была запущена в ноябре 2011 года. За это время дискуссии между сторонниками и противниками проекта нашли место на страницах ведущих изданий многих стран. В этой статье анализируется освещение в немецкой качественной печати отношений в области энергетики между РФ и ЕС и строительства «Северного потока». Анализ медиатекстов позволил сделать ряд выводов относительно паттернов освещения, объективности, роли стилистических средств и увязывании вопросов морали и газовой энергетики в диалоге РФ-ЕС.

Keywords: media representation, Energy, Russia, EU, Germany, media, media language

Ключевые слова: медиарепрезентация, энергетика, Россия, Евросоюз, Германия, СМИ, язык СМИ

1. Introduction

Finding out about how the media are covering energy issues is a rewarding field for a researcher interested both in mass communication and political studies. In fact, due to the cross-disciplinary character of an eventual investigation, energy relations are not so well researched from the perspective of media coverage despite their being one of the core aspects of international relations, especially in case of Russian foreign policy [1, p. 85 – 100].

Meanwhile, issues of energy policy are an essential part of public discourse and often make the front pages of the newspapers, to become a hot topic of conversation not only on the political arena, but also in everyday life. Even being quite difficult to understand, lying as it does in both the political and economical fields, energy policy affects electricity prices and thus concerns everyone. This is one of the reasons why media coverage of power economy is highly politicized (as it was found in our investigation), even if it is published on the economic and business pages of most newspapers.

It should not be overlooked that energy policy and power economics remain difficult topics not only for ordinary readers and scholars, but also for journalists. Just to report on them at all requires specific knowledge, as well as understanding of technical aspects of the subject, together with a lack of eye-catching images, it's not conducive to simple presentation. Many elements of energy policy, such as energy efficiency or investment security, are challenging to express in straightforward terms via spoken language, while using visualisation is considerably hard.

At the same time, the interest in energy issues will not diminish during the coming decades. According to different forecasts, including those of experts of the International Energy Agency and the World Economic Forum, world energy demand will continue to increase while the role of fossil fuels – carbon, oil, gas – will not decrease. [2, p. 52; 3, p. 12] The Russian Federation will remain an

important player in the world energy market and may even become by 2035 the leading world producer of natural gas. [3, p. 121] From this viewpoint an analysis of media coverage of the energy dialogue between Russia and other countries is of immediate interest.

In this multi-level media analysis of the media coverage of Russian-EU energy dialogue by German quality media, a special focus was placed on the press representation of the development of the Nord Stream gas pipeline. This pipeline has become one of the most ambitious projects of the Russian foreign and energy policies of recent decades. It is the largest offshore pipeline in existence, and the first direct connection between the Russian Federation and the EU. The pipe routing and details of the project were widely covered by the German Press; including aspects of national interest (gas pipeline leading to Germany) and international interest (concerning Russia as a strategic partner of Germany).

2. The methodological framework

As our object of study we chose the media coverage of gas energy relations between Russia and the EU, with the case study of Nord Stream coverage. In the empirical part of the study we aimed to carry out a qualitative analysis of press articles in order to identify patterns of the representation and journalistic practice signaling a fluctuation in the patterns. In this article we only describe the essential filters used for data selection.

For our investigation we chose articles from the center-right daily newspaper *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, the liberal daily *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, and the largest federal weekly *Der Spiegel*. All three are examples of leading German quality media. These are two largest socio-political newspapers and a top weekly (in terms of circulation and citedness in the quality press market). Each of the three has a foreign desk and all have Moscow-based correspondents. In addition, in the case of Germany, where about 90% of population regularly read the written press [4, p. 8], press analysis is representative.

To explore the coverage of this subject we analyzed more than 200 articles within the period of investigation which stretched over 9 years from 1.12.2002 till 01.12.2011. It starts with the official presentation of the project by Gazprom and lasts up to the opening of the first line of the twin pipeline. During this time the destiny of the project was questioned by public opinion and national authorities in different countries, whilst the development of the project had to overcome managerial and reputational difficulties and was accompanied by several international crises.

In order to select the articles for investigation we used the following conditions: first, the article should mention "*Nord Stream*", then, it should mention "*EU/Europe/European*" (these two criteria were applied automatically while searching through the press archives bases), and finally, the subject matter of the article should concern energy policy or economics. In addition to that, we only looked at inhouse articles reflecting the news policy or the position of the papers and of their journalists. The texts which just repeated news agency information were not selected, and neither were the articles contributed by invited authors, interviews, nor letters from readers.

3. Results

3.1. Macroanalysis

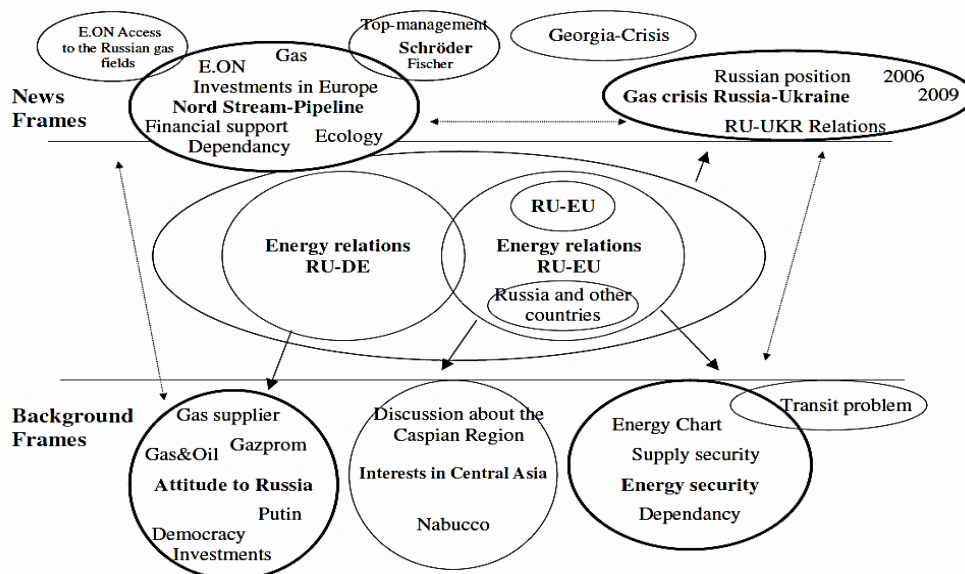
In general the media coverage was wide-ranging, comprehensive and professional, putting the arguments pro (supply stability, cooperation) and contra (high costs, ecological risks, critics of the itinerary, critics of lack of the political dialogue). Journalists quoted the supporters of the project – German, Russian and EU authorities - as well as their opponents, typically from the Baltic States and Poland. The most difficult period of the project development from 2005 to 2010, when the risks were widely discussed in different countries and were threatening the financing, was covered carefully.

At the same time, the journalists were systematically simplifying and accentuating the news and arguments. Thus, even though almost every fact or dynamics in energy policy has its political and economic dimension, most articles – 77% of them – were clearly labeled as "politics" (31%) or "economics" (46%). The over-representation in favour of the "economics" pages remained during the whole investigation time excluding the periods of crisis in Russian-Ukrainian relations (especially January 2006 and 2009).

While covering construction of the pipeline, most journalists were concentrated on a number of topics, among which we can distinguish some news and background frames (see image 1). Most of the articles covered primarily the construction process itself, possible ecological risks or dependence of the future construction on political decisions and financial support. They also covered the political news and events related to the pipeline construction (such as the gas crisis between Russia and the Ukraine or the nomination of the German Ex-chancellor for the post of the head of the shareholders' committee of Nord Stream AG), to the gas sector (such as negotiations about access of the German E.ON group to the Russian gas fields) or to Russian international policies (such as the Russian-Georgian crisis). Complementarily journalists referred to the internal or external Russian situation (Russian role as energy supplier, the role played by Vladimir Putin, investments climate and

democracy development, civil liberties situation), Russian-EU rivalries in Central Asia and energy security issues.

Image 1. Framing of the EU-Russia energy relations while covering Nord Stream pipeline construction (in selected articles)



Source: composed by author

In most of the articles we could observe that the news were covered from the points of view “we = Germans” or “we = Europeans”, hence international analysis was presented through the frame “Russia-Germany” or “Russia-EU” (see Image 1). The difference can be easily seen while observing how the Nord Stream pipeline was explained: in the Russian media this pipeline was more often presented as the pipeline from Russia to Europe, and in the selected articles it was mostly indicated as pipeline “from Russia to Germany” (even with the filter of selection, which was the presence of the words “EU/Europe/European” in every case!).

A qualitative analysis of the importance of the EU (as main player, as secondary player or only as reference in every selected article) showed that even if the European Union plays an important role in 83% of texts, the prism “EU-Russia” instead “Germany-Russia” is used only in 28% of articles. That’s fairly understandable: German readers first of all get from the media information about the importance of the news for Germany, and only then – even if regularly - for the EU as a whole. It is also interesting, that the gas crisis in Russian-Ukrainian relations, which didn’t directly touch German consumers, was covered through the prism of “EU-Russian” relations, which made the Germans feel involved.

The allocation of these viewpoints also explains why German media criticize the dependence on Russian gas (common for all the European Union, so “our = European problem”) but avoid attacking the Nord Stream pipeline (“our success” = “German success”).

3.2. Microanalysis

The microanalysis of media coverage is of particular interest, especially the words and stylistic means use analysis (use of adjectives, definitions, comparisons, metaphors) in the description or analysis of the pipeline project and the energy dialogue. The use of words can create a positive (for example, safe, understandable) or negative (dangerous, non-comprehensible, aggressive) image.

3.2.1. Industry terms.

One can expect that coverage of energy policy would incline towards the domain of economics, and to be studied with domain-specific energy and economics terms and concepts. This is partly true, especially for the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, in which attention to the economy is stronger than in the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* or *Der Spiegel*. Often journalists explain or give definitions for specific terms. They also use them in wordplays; for example *Druck* “pressure”- in pipes and in politics.

At the same time journalists often prefer to replace professional vocabulary with common spoken language. For example, the natural gas can be not only “*eingespeist*” fed into or “*gepumpt*” pumped, more often it is “*geliefert*” delivered (as are goods), “*gebracht*” brought, “*geführt*” conducted, “*gegeben*” given. In German use of words, the gas can be also an active subject : it can “*fließen*” flow

or "kommen" come, "Karriere machen " take the road to success/ embark on a successful career and is connected to power and values:

Manche Biegung nimmt russisches Gas auf seinem langen Weg von Sibirien nach Deutschland und Mitteleuropa. Da müssen Flüsse, Seen und in der Ostsee gelegentlich auch Wirtschaftszonen anderer Länder umgangen werden. [5] ("On its way to Germany and Central Europe, Russian gas takes many detours. It must bypass rivers and lakes, and in the Baltic Sea occasionally also the economic zones of other countries")

Erdgas hat in den zurückliegenden Jahrzehnten eine steile Karriere zurückgelegt. [6] ("Natural gas has embarked on a highly successful career in the past few decades")

Erdgas ist Macht. [7] ("Natural gas is power")

Der Kreml wollte den Ukrainern zeigen, dass man mit Demokratie nicht heizen kann. [8] ("The Kremlin wanted to show to the Ukrainians: Democracy does not provide central heating").

3.2.2. Comparisons.

These also play an important role in creating an image. For example, in a comparison loaded with criticism of the civil liberties situation in Russia, Russia is named *Energiepartner, das einer Art Saudi-Arabien mit Atomraketen nahekommt* "Energy partner which comes close to a kind of Saudi Arabia with nuclear missiles" [9].

3.2.3. Figures of speech.

Thematic metaphors are important for modelling the needed perception of a text. After the discourse analysis of selected articles, we marked out 11 thematic fields: *War, Battle, Game/Sport, Stage/Show, Market, Health/Illness, Relationship, Road/Way/Space, Nature, Food, Objects* (see Table 1). Assimilation of energy or economics terms in the context of the energy policy coverage to actions, objects or patterns belonging to these eleven fields allow journalists to describe the news in a simple, lively and graphic manner. Generally we assumed that metaphors are used more often in texts with political than economics orientation (which correlates with more frequent use in *Der Spiegel* than in *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*).

Figures of speech are used to describe events and occasions (*Gaskrieg "gas war"*), geopolitical areas (*großes Spiel auf dem globalen Marktplatz "great game in the global marketplace"*), protagonists (for example, Europeans as *Gasgeiseln* – literally "gas hostages" of energy dependency), political and economic news (*Gasprom brach jenen Preis poker vom Zaun "Gazprom unleashes Poker pricing"*), energy resources – gas and oil (*strategische Ressourcen "strategy resources", außenpolitische Waffe "foreign policy weapon"*) and the outcomes of negotiations (*großer «Deal» "big deal"*). Journalists can invent the metaphors themselves or repeat them after the politicians (for example, the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* quotes Russian vice-prime minister who qualified the politics of the Ukraine as a "gas siege" [10]).

A similar model of thematic categories (applied to the case of German political life) was developed by the Russian scholar Kornilaeva. She assumes that binding the news to the topics of *War, Conflict, Competition* intensifies the emotional perception of the news coverage [11].

Table 1. Example of use metaphors by thematic categories in the selected articles

War	Angriff "attack", Brisanz "explosive force", Expansion, Front, Offensive, sich wappnen "be forearmed", torpedieren "torpedo", Vormarsch "advance"
Battle	Streit "fight", Triumph, Wetteifern "compete", Zangengriff "double lock", In die Knie zwingen "to force to knees"
Game/Sport	auf etwas setzen "score", ausspielen "play off", Bluff, Endspurt "finish", Eskapade, Punktesieg "points win", Spielball "play thing", Spielführer "team captain", Weltmeister "world champion", Wettrennen "foot race"
Stage/Show	Duett, Kulissen, Schlüsselrolle "key role", Solotour, Szenario
Market	bevorzugt behandeln "give preferential treatment", Deal, Handelshaus "trading house"
Health/Illness	Adern "veins", Diagnose, Kranker "invalid", Lebenszeichen "vital sign", Patient, Pille
Relationship	Bindungen "ties", Ehepartner "spouse", Schwester "sister", Tochter "daughter"
Road/Way/Space	Auf der Strecke bleiben "keep the wayside", Gigant, Meilenstein "milestone", Schritt fuer Schritt "step by step"
Nature	Kraken "octopus", Mammut, Mond "moon", Oase "oasis"
Food	Durst "thirst", Magen "stomach", schlucken "swallow"
Objects	Diebstahl "thievery", Instrument, Kette "kettle", Netz "net"

Source: composed by author

We came to a conclusion that in covering the subject of energy relations, the use of thematic

figures of speech allows journalists to:

1. Simplify and "colour" the specific business or political negotiations, make them more spectacular and interesting (using fields of *War, Battle, Game, Show*):

"*Wer spielt falsch? Für beide Konfliktparteien im Gasstreit steht viel auf dem Spiel*" [12]; ("*Who plays false? Both parties are playing for high stakes*")

2. Simplify the representation of modern high-tech commercial and economic systems (fields of *Market, Road*):

Die beiden Energieträger machen etwa sechzig Prozent des russischen Exports aus, füllen bei hohen Preisen die Staatskasse reichlich. [13] ("*Both energy sources make up about 60% of Russian exports and with high prices amply contribute to filling the state treasury*").

3. Show how important energy issues are for the readers – as a prime necessity (field *Illness/Health, Food*) or as a power attribute:

Gas ist das ideale politische Druckmittel, da Verbraucher am Ende einer Pipeline hängen wie ein Kranker am Tropf. Europa ist dabei ein besonders anfälliger Patient, da sein Gasdurst stetig steigt. [14] ("*Gas is an ideal means of political pressure, as consumers are hanging at the end of a pipeline as a sick man on a drip. Europe is a particularly vulnerable patient, because its thirst for gas is increasing steadily.*")

4. Simplify the energy topic representation (fields *Nature, Objects, Relationship*).

Especially interesting are the metaphors connected to military topics. These figures of speech were often used during the gas crises between Russia and the Ukraine. Curiously, the notions of *Krieg* "war" or *Gaskriege* "gas war" were used during that time in quoting marks as well as without them. The German scholar Klaus Krippendorf explains that the war and weapon conflict metaphors are pertinent when "there is something to lose and to gain" [15, p.90]. "The cost of victory" in the EU-Russian energy dialogue is related first of all to energy security. That's how gas becomes compared to a *Waffe* "weapon", and the Nord Stream pipeline is presented as *Gewinn* "gain".

However, in the case of Russian-German relations, allusion to armed conflict is particularly strong. Der Spiegel writes outspokenly: "*In times of high gas prices, the primal fear of Russian power is awakened: a fear of war, that Russian state-owned corporations in a more or less distant future could threaten to make the West cold. With a simple push of a button. To enforce even higher prices. Or a policy, which suits Moscow*" [16].

Thus, going onto the thematic field of "war" journalists allow themselves also to use the allusion of the Second World War. This is shown by such headlines as *Die Russen kommen* "The Russians are coming", *Die Russen kommen nicht, sie sind schon da*, "The Russians are not coming, they are already here", *Russen vor Gottland* "The Russians have reached Gottland". These examples show flashbacks which are still strong among the Germans (as well as among the Russians). In psychology it could be related to an "implicit" or "collectively-semantic memory" [17, p.32] – a memory or an allusion to a historical event which some people hadn't lived through. The coverage of the dynamics of energy dialogue reflects in this sense not only the latest news, but also the longstanding history of cooperation and competition between Russia and Germany, as well as between the Soviet Union and the West. Confidence and cooperation should be restored carefully step by step after the decades of confrontation in the XX century: it sometimes seems that progress in this process is hindered by media rhetoric.

It is interesting, that as soon as the gas conflicts with the Ukraine passes, the media rhetoric softens. War metaphors are replaced by *Sport, Stage/Show* ones. This trend is especially easy to notice in articles of the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*.

4. Concluding Remarks

It is generally observed that in the selected articles the EU-Russian energy dialogue was covered in a wide, regular, objective and all-round manner. At the same time, Russian-European relations were mostly covered as a secondary subject or viewpoint besides the German-Russian relations.

Even during the worst months of the Russian-Ukrainian gas conflict and regardless of the political orientation of the media source, the Nord Stream pipeline project itself was covered in a neutral or positive way, while the criticism was addressed to Russian authorities and to the European dependence on Russian energy supplies in general.

An important part in media coverage of energy issues constituted the use of words and figures of speech. Their choice became more stringent during the difficult phases and softened as soon as the pipeline project developed. The analysis of the use of words shows that in certain articles the importation of Russian gas was related to the situation with democracy and human rights in Russia. This gives evidence that economic cooperation was already then politicized not only by politicians, but also by media, in this case the German media. This trend was at that time often criticized by Russian diplomats and supporters of *Realpolitik*. Beyond that, this shows the differences between the official moderate or friendly position of German authorities and scholars of those days, and the rather critical

position of German media. At times one feels that the media might try to be more even-handed and, as well as referring to statements by representatives from business and political arenas, also to quote national and international academic experts.

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