Introduction

There are few subjects as controversial and emotive as the energy relationship between the EU and Russia. On the one side, there are those who argue that the nearly 500 million EU consumers are very fortunate to have Russia as a huge energy provider as its neighbour. On the other side, there are those who argue this is a curse as it allows Russia to ‘blackmail’ European countries by threatening to turn off oil and gas supplies or by offering lucrative deals to European companies in an effort to ‘divide and rule’ the EU. Oil and gas are Russia’s biggest exports to the EU, and Russia is ...
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EU-Russia energy relations are furthermore affected by the regional dimension of gas trade. While oil is traded in a virtually global market, gas is dependent on transport through inflexible pipelines, affording consumer and supplier countries little flexibility and alternatives in terms of trade routes and partners. This reliance on regional transport infrastructure renders the role of the Russian gas giant Gazprom problematic for the EU: Gazprom owns and controls over 90% of Russian gas reserves and infrastructure, hence occupying a virtual monopoly over ownership, production, processing and transportation of Russian gas and its exports (Kirchner & Berk 2010: 864). On Jan 1, 2010 F. Cameron published: The politics of EU-Russia energy relations. Given this dependency and Russia's energy disputes with its neighbours, most EU decision-makers urge the EU to diversify its energy sources especially after Russia has successfully used energy ties to influence NATO (Gomart 2010). Congruous or Conflicting? Great Power Configurations in the Balkans.