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Energy as a Weapon in a New Generation of Warfare and Its Influence on National Defense Capability: Overview of the Ukrainian Case

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Abstract

Uninterrupted functioning of a nation's energy infrastructure, while providing energy supply to consumers, is required for the stable development of any country. A government which cannot secure stability of its energy supply, could be removed from power by their own nation. Under some conditions, it could also seriously undermine a country's capability to resist pressures of foreign adversaries. Could the "energy" be used as a weapon to subdue the country?

Throughout its independent history, Ukraine faced several attempts by Russia to use energy as a tool to return Ukraine under their control. Several times, Russia halted the normal functioning of gas, oil and power networks in Ukraine in order to achieve its objectives in its relations with Ukraine, as well as with the European Union.

Although some energy policy experts repeatedly stressed this aspect, a large part of the Western political elite and industry experts had preferred to interpret the facts exclusively in economic terms without taking into consideration the political reasons of such behavior. However, the Russian aggression against Ukraine in 2014 has had a huge impact on the understanding of the nature of a new generation of warfare and the role of "energy dimension".

Incorporating the "energy dimension" into its hybrid warfare concept gave Russia additional tools to influence Ukraine. The political and economic pressure used by Russia up until 2014 was enhanced by targeted physical actions against energy infrastructure. In addition, there was an informational campaign against the Ukrainian government focusing public attention on the problems in the energy industry and energy supply disruptions.

Destruction, seizing, and looting of energy infrastructure, along with cyber-attacks, political, economic and psychological pressures have become the main set of tools of the Russian's strategy against Ukraine, demonstrating that damaging energy sources and critical energy infrastructure is an effective non-military tool of warfare.

The learned lessons in Ukraine prove that protection of critical energy infrastructure should be included in the national defense policy. At the same time, it stresses that the establishment of Public Private Partnerships (PPPs) and civil-military cooperation are essential for ensuring continuity of government and energy supplies.

Biography

Oleksandr Sukhodolia graduated from the Department of Electrical Power Engineering and Automatics of the National Technical University of Ukraine in 1994. He earned his PhD in Electrical Engineering in 1999 from the National Technical University of Ukraine. He also earned his Doctor of Public Administration degree in 2007 from the National Academy of Public Administration of Ukraine.

He has extensive experience in energy security and public service. Between 1998 and 2003 he served as Head of the Department and Deputy Head of the State Committee of Ukraine on Energy Conservation. Between 2007 and 2011, he served as the Deputy Head of Energy Security Department at the Secretariat of the National Security and Defence Council of Ukraine.

Oleksandr Sukhodolia became a finalist of the USA Fulbright Visiting Scholar Program in 2011-2012. He worked on energy security issues at the Institute for European, Russian, and Eurasian Studies at George Washington University.

In 2001 – 2011 he taught Energy Efficiency and Energy Policy at the Energy Saving and Energy Management Institute, the National Technical University of Ukraine. In 2013-2016 he was a professor of Energy Security Policy at the National Academy of Public Administration.

Since 2012, he joined the National Institute for Strategic Studies of Ukraine. Oleksandr Sukhodolia is currently the Head of Energy Security and Technogenic Safety Department. His research interests focus on national and energy security, energy policy, energy markets, and critical energy infrastructure protection.



Dr. Oleksandr Sukhodolia

