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Master Degree Thesis title: *Russia's role in the development of the 21st century gas sector: economic and geopolitical perspective*

Author: Artem Akhmatulin, IPES

Artem Akhmatulin focuses on the analysis of contemporary trends in the global gas sector. He finds the most significant milestones in the relationship between energy 'producer' and 'consumer' states. The research applies a SWOT analysis of the Russian gas sector.

The author's intention is to "(...) promote a greater understanding of recent trends in the country's gas market, analyze its impact on the global gas industry, and provide an assessment for the future of the country's energy sector." He offers a list of challenges of creating a "gas OPEC", and he concludes that such organization could be founded in the future. He argues, however, that Russia needs to develop its gas sector further, diversify its gas supplies and find new roads for gas transportation. Last but not least, the author focuses on the absence of Russia's "gas strategy"; he argues that "the current state of Russia's gas industry can be characterized as a pre-crisis" (p. 74), which may be discussed further during the Thesis defense.

Artem Akhmatulin covers a wide range of interconnected issues. He divides his Thesis into six major parts: Introduction, four chapters and the Conclusion. His hypothesis states: "Russia, being one of the major exporters of natural gas, uses its energy capabilities to hold a political influence over decisions made in the global community" (p. 14). With no doubt, the best part of Mr. Akhmatulin's thesis is Chapter IV, titled "Development of Russia's Gas Industry" (pp. 65-79). It is an analytical study based on valuable resources.

Even though all chapters could be focused more precisely and questions about the theoretical part of the work remain, Artem Akhmatulin submitted a solid analysis of the subject, he worked independently and based his research on tens of very current specialized articles and books (see pp. 85-90). I suggest to evaluate his Thesis as **excellent (1)** – with regard to the Thesis defense.

Markéta Žídková
Newark, Delaware, January 26 2011