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ENERGY SECURITY AS A FACTOR OF POLITICAL STABILITY IN THE EUROPEAN UNION

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Abstract. *This article explores the intricate relationship between energy security and political stability within the European Union (EU), particularly in light of the geopolitical upheaval caused by Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022. The crisis marked a turning point in EU energy policy, exposing deep vulnerabilities linked to dependence on Russian fossil fuels and catalyzing a redefinition of energy security as a matter of strategic autonomy and resilience. Adopting a mixed-methods approach—combining discourse analysis, policy review, and comparative case studies—the study examines how the EU's responses to this crisis have affected internal cohesion, social peace, and institutional legitimacy. Focusing on the policy trilemma between short-term energy needs, long-term climate goals, and socio-political stability, the article argues that governance choices made in response to the energy crisis have generated new political fault lines across Member States. Case studies of Germany, Poland, and the Baltic States illustrate diverging national strategies and their implications for EU-wide stability. The findings highlight that the EU's future political coherence hinges on its ability to align energy resilience with climate commitments while mitigating the socio-economic impacts of the green transition. Ultimately, this research contributes to a deeper understanding of the securitization of energy policy and the evolving dynamics of EU integration in an age of crises.*

Keywords: Energy Security, Political Stability, European Union, Energy Dependence, Energy Crisis, Green Transition, Russian Gas, EU Energy Policy, Energy Resilience, Geopolitics of Energy, Populism.

1. INTRODUCTION

The European Union (EU) is navigating a period of profound transformation, defined by the twin imperatives of a green transition and a volatile geopolitical landscape. At the nexus of these challenges lies the critical relationship between energy security and political stability. Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 served as a seismic shock to the European continent, weaponizing the EU's deep-seated energy dependencies and triggering a crisis that tested the very foundations of the Union's economic and political cohesion. This report provides a scholarly analysis of how the pursuit of energy security, redefined and accelerated by recent events, influences and is influenced by the political stability of the EU. It examines the strategic responses, internal fractures, and socio-political consequences that have emerged, arguing that the EU's ability to manage the inherent tensions between short-term security needs, long-term climate ambitions, and social peace will be a primary determinant of its stability for the foreseeable future.

The concepts of energy security and political stability are foundational to this analysis, yet their meanings are neither static nor universally agreed upon. They are, in fact, contested concepts, whose definitions are actively shaped and redefined by crises.

Energy security has evolved significantly from its initial post-1970s oil crisis framing, which narrowly focused on reducing import dependence on oil (Yergin, 2006). The contemporary understanding, articulated by the International Energy Agency (IEA), defines it as "the uninterrupted availability of energy sources at an affordable price" (IEA, 2023). This definition encompasses both short-term security—the ability of the energy system to react promptly to sudden changes in the supply-demand balance—and long-term security, which involves timely investments to supply energy in line with economic development and environmental needs (IEA, 2025). Academic literature has further expanded this concept into the "Four A's" framework: Availability (the physical presence of energy resources), Accessibility (the ability to access

those resources without political or economic barriers), Affordability (energy prices that do not cripple economies or households), and Acceptability (environmental and social sustainability) (Yergin, 2006).

The 2022 crisis forced a critical evolution in the EU's conceptualization of energy security. The discourse shifted from a predominantly market-based logic of supply diversification to a more geopolitical framing of "energy sovereignty" and strategic autonomy, emphasizing the need to eliminate dependencies on unreliable and hostile actors, particularly Russia (European Commission, 2022). This expanded definition now includes the resilience of the entire energy supply chain, from resource acquisition to infrastructure protection against physical and cyber threats (Yergin, 2006).

Political stability, in its simplest form, is a condition characterized by the preservation of a functioning government and political system, avoiding significant disruptions or violent upheavals over time (Ake, 1975). However, a more nuanced understanding, essential for the context of the EU, extends beyond the mere absence of regime change. It encompasses a political system's capacity to manage crises, maintain its own structure amidst internal and external pressures, and successfully adjust to societal changes (Bealey, 1999; Huntington, 1968). Scholars link stability to the legitimacy of political institutions, their ability to foster public consensus, and the dominance of a system of checks and balances (Bealey, 1999; Huntington, 1968).

The 2022 energy crisis did not lead to the collapse of any EU governments, but it severely tested this broader definition of stability. It triggered widespread civil unrest over the cost of living and fueled the rise of populist movements challenging the EU's core policies and values (Hossain & Hallock, 2022). Therefore, this report analyzes political stability not just as the survival of governments, but as the maintenance of social cohesion, institutional trust, and the resilience of democratic processes against corrosive internal pressures.

This report addresses a central research problem that has become paramount for the future of the European project: To what extent, and through which mechanisms, does the pursuit of energy security influence the political stability of the European Union, particularly in the context of the geopolitical shock of the Ukraine war and the long-term pressures of the green transition?

The central hypothesis is that the 2022 energy crisis acted as a critical juncture, fundamentally altering the EU's strategic calculus. This crisis simultaneously exposed the profound political risks of over-dependence on a single energy supplier and catalyzed the securitization of the Union's energy and climate policies. This process has generated a fundamental and acute tension between three competing, and often contradictory, imperatives:

Short-Term Energy Security: The immediate need to diversify away from Russian fossil fuels, which involved a frantic global scramble for alternative supplies, primarily Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG), and the construction of new fossil fuel infrastructure.

Long-Term Climate Objectives: The unwavering commitment to the European Green Deal and the goal of achieving climate neutrality by 2050, which requires a systemic phase-out of all fossil fuels (European Commission, 2019).

Maintaining Socio-Political Stability: The imperative to manage the severe cost-of-living crisis sparked by soaring energy prices, contain public unrest, and counter the populist backlash that exploits economic hardship to undermine EU policies (European Commission, 2023).

The core argument of this report is that the EU's political stability in the coming decade is contingent upon its ability to successfully navigate this policy trilemma. The choices made to prioritize one objective over the others have created new internal fault lines, exacerbated existing divergences between Member States, and generated significant political stress at both the national and supranational levels.

To investigate this complex nexus, this report employs a mixed-methods approach. It combines qualitative policy analysis of key EU strategic documents, such as the European Green Deal and the REPowerEU plan, with a constructivist-informed discourse analysis of the evolving political language surrounding energy (Alasuutari & Qadir, 2014). This is triangulated with quantitative analysis of energy and economic data from Eurostat, the IEA, and IRENA to track empirical shifts in energy flows, dependency rates, and prices (Eurostat, 2024).

This overarching analysis is grounded in comparative case studies of Germany, Poland, and the Baltic States, which serve to illustrate the divergent national strategies and their impact on EU-level cohesion.

The significance of this study lies in its synthesis of International Relations (IR) theory, post-2022 empirical data, and a focused analysis of the socio-political consequences of the energy crisis, including public protests and the rise of populism. It moves beyond a descriptive account of EU policy to build a causal analysis of the mechanisms linking specific energy policy choices to tangible outcomes for political stability.

The report is structured as follows. Section 2 reviews the main theoretical paradigms—Realism, Liberalism, and Constructivism—that provide analytical frameworks for understanding the EU's behavior. Section 3 details the methodology. Section 4 provides a comprehensive analysis of the EU's response to the 2022 crisis, focusing on the REPowerEU plan and the tensions between supranational and national actions. Section 5 presents the comparative case studies of Germany, Poland, and the Baltic States, highlighting their distinct trajectories. Section 6 examines the dual role of the green transition as both a solution and a source of new socio-political fault lines, including the link between energy prices and populism. Section 7 discusses the broader theoretical and policy implications of the findings, before Section 8 offers a concluding summary and directions for future research.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS FOR THE ENERGY-SECURITY NEXUS

The European Union's response to the energy crisis cannot be understood through a single theoretical lens. The complex interplay of national interests, institutional cooperation, and shifting norms requires a multi-faceted framework. The main paradigms of International Relations—Realism, Liberalism, and Constructivism—each offer powerful, albeit partial, explanations for the EU's behavior. The crisis did not validate one theory over the others; rather, it demonstrated their simultaneous operation at different levels and on different timescales, with the friction between their competing logics emerging as a primary source of policy incoherence and political tension.

2.1. THE REALIST PARADIGM: ENERGY AS AN INSTRUMENT OF POWER

The Realist school of thought posits that the international system is anarchic, compelling states to act as rational, unitary actors whose primary motivation is survival and the maximization of relative power (Bova, 2011). In this zero-sum world, energy is not merely a commodity traded on open markets; it is a strategic asset, a critical component of national power, and a potent tool of coercion (Goldthau, 2008). From a realist perspective, the security of energy supply is a paramount national security interest that states must secure through self-help, as international institutions are seen as unreliable arbiters of power politics (Böhringer & Keller, 2011).

This paradigm provides a stark and compelling explanation for the core dynamics of the 2022 crisis. Russia's weaponization of its gas exports was a classic realist power play, designed to exploit the EU's critical dependency to achieve geopolitical objectives: namely, to punish European states for their support of Ukraine, sow division within the Union, and coerce them into a more accommodating stance (Siddi, 2017). The EU's response, viewed through this lens, was a textbook example of balancing and self-help. The frantic scramble to secure alternative LNG supplies, the rapid construction of new import infrastructure, and the forging of new energy partnerships with countries like the United States and Norway were driven by the urgent need to reduce a crippling vulnerability and restore a measure of power relative to Russia (Beck et al., 2025). The divergent actions of Member States, such as Germany's massive unilateral spending to secure its energy supply, can also be interpreted as rational, state-centric survival measures in a high-stakes environment (Meunier & Nicolaidis, 2019).

2.2. THE LIBERAL PARADIGM: COOPERATION, INSTITUTIONS, AND INTERDEPENDENCE

In contrast to Realism's focus on conflict, the Liberal paradigm, particularly its institutionalist variant, argues that cooperation between states is not only possible but can be sustained through international institutions, economic interdependence, and shared democratic values (Bova, 2011). Liberal institutionalism posits that institutions help states overcome the fear of cheating and non-compliance by providing information, reducing transaction costs, and establishing common rules and norms. States are

motivated by the pursuit of absolute gains, recognizing that cooperation can create collective benefits that outweigh the rewards of unilateral action (Bova, 2011).

This perspective is essential for understanding the distinctly European character of the response to the energy crisis. While individual Member States acted out of self-interest, the crisis also triggered a powerful institutional and cooperative response at the supranational level. The REPowerEU plan itself can be seen as a grand liberal project, a framework for collective action to solve a shared problem (European Commission, 2022). Key mechanisms born from this crisis embody liberal principles:

- The EU Energy Platform: Established to facilitate the joint purchasing of gas, this platform was designed to leverage the EU's collective market power and prevent Member States from destructively outbidding one another on global markets, thereby achieving better prices for all (European Commission, 2022).
- Energy Solidarity Mechanisms: The crisis reinforced and operationalized the principle of energy solidarity enshrined in the EU Treaties (Article 194 TFEU). This led to agreements on gas storage sharing and coordinated demand reduction, reflecting the understanding that a supply shock in one Member State affects the entire integrated market and requires a collective response (European Commission, 2022).
- Market Integration: The liberal logic has long underpinned the EU's drive for a fully integrated energy market, arguing that greater interconnection enhances resilience and security of supply for all (Bova, 2011). The crisis accelerated projects like the gas interconnector between Poland and Lithuania, demonstrating the practical application of this principle (Bown, 2024).

2.3. THE CONSTRUCTIVIST PARADIGM: IDENTITY, NORMS, AND DISCOURSE

The Constructivist paradigm offers a crucial third perspective, arguing that the interests and identities of states are not pre-determined or fixed, but are socially constructed through shared ideas, norms, values, and discourse (Bova, 2011). From this viewpoint, how actors understand and frame a problem is as important as the material reality of the problem itself. Anarchy, for instance, is "what states make of it" (Bova, 2011). This approach is indispensable for explaining aspects of the EU's response that appear irrational from a purely realist or economic standpoint.

Constructivism illuminates the profound ideational shift that occurred within the EU after February 2022. The political discourse rapidly moved beyond the technocratic language of "energy security" and "market efficiency" to the highly charged concepts of "energy sovereignty," "strategic autonomy," and ending "dependency" (European Commission, 2022). This was not merely rhetoric; it reflected a fundamental reconstruction of the EU's identity in relation to Russia, which was firmly cast as a hostile and threatening 'Other' (Eurostat, 2024). This discursive framing made certain policy options (like continuing to buy cheap Russian gas) politically and normatively untenable, while making others (costly and rapid decoupling) an imperative.

Furthermore, Constructivism is vital for understanding the resilience of the European Green Deal. A purely realist analysis might predict that a fossil fuel supply crisis would lead the EU to abandon its costly green ambitions in favor of securing any available energy source. Instead, the EU doubled down, framing the accelerated deployment of renewables as the ultimate solution to both the climate crisis and Russian coercion (IRENA, 2025). This is because the Green Deal is more than a set of policies; it is a normative project that is central to the EU's contemporary identity as a global leader in climate action (Alasuutari & Qadir, 2014). The crisis was thus interpreted through this pre-existing normative lens, reinforcing the commitment to the green transition as a pathway to greater security and sovereignty.

2.4. GAPS IN THE LITERATURE AND CONTRIBUTION OF THIS STUDY

While a significant body of literature exists on the EU's energy policy, much of the pre-2022 research tended to focus on either the liberal market-building aspects or the realist geopolitical dynamics of the EU-Russia relationship (Winzer, 2012; Cherp & Jewell, 2014; Böhringer & Keller, 2011). Studies often applied one theoretical lens in isolation. Moreover, the socio-political dimension—the impact of energy policy on domestic stability, protests, and populism—has been a relatively underdeveloped area of inquiry until the most recent crisis brought it to the fore.

This report bridges these gaps by employing a multi-theoretical framework to analyze the post-2022 period in its full complexity. It examines the simultaneous and often conflicting logics of Realism, Liberalism, and Constructivism as they manifest in EU policy. For example, a Member State like Germany acted as a realist actor in its scramble for LNG to ensure national survival (Blondeel et al., 2021), while simultaneously participating in the liberal institutional framework of the EU's collective response (Bown, 2024), all while publicly reaffirming its constructivist normative commitment to the *Energiewende* and the Green Deal (Beck et al., 2025). The friction between these competing logics—the short-term realist survival instinct, the medium-term liberal cooperative ideal, and the long-term constructivist normative vision—is a primary source of the policy paradoxes and political tensions that this report seeks to analyze.

By integrating these theoretical perspectives with an empirical analysis of policy outcomes and their domestic political consequences, this study provides a more holistic and nuanced understanding of the critical nexus between energy security and political stability in the contemporary European Union.

3. METHODOLOGY

To provide a comprehensive and robust analysis of the intricate relationship between energy security and political stability in the European Union, this report employs a mixed-methods research design. This approach is essential for capturing the multifaceted nature of the research problem, which involves the interplay of quantifiable market dynamics, qualitative policy decisions, and evolving political discourses. The methodology is designed to ensure that the findings are credible, replicable, and grounded in a diverse and authoritative body of evidence.

The study integrates quantitative and qualitative methods in a complementary fashion. The quantitative component establishes empirical trends and correlations, providing the factual backbone for the analysis. The qualitative component delves into the causal mechanisms, motivations, and normative contexts behind these trends, providing explanatory depth. This mixed-methods design allows the research to move beyond simple description to offer a nuanced, multi-layered analysis of how energy policy choices translate into political stability outcomes. The timeframe of the analysis focuses primarily on the period from 2019 to 2025, allowing for a clear before-and-after assessment of the impact of the 2022 energy crisis, while also drawing on historical data to establish long-term trends.

The research draws upon a wide range of primary and secondary data sources to ensure a comprehensive and triangulated evidence base.

Quantitative Data: Time-series data from 2019–2025 forms the core of the empirical analysis, supplemented by historical data dating back to 1990 to identify long-term patterns. The primary sources include:

- Eurostat: The statistical office of the European Union is the principal source for official data on energy dependency rates, primary energy production, imports and exports by fuel type and country, final energy consumption, and household and industrial energy prices. It also provides key macroeconomic indicators (Eurostat, 2024). These datasets are crucial for tracking the EU's changing energy landscape with precision.
- International Energy Agency (IEA): The IEA provides indispensable analysis of global energy markets, investment trends, policy reviews, and detailed energy balances. Its reports offer a global context for the EU's actions and provide critical assessments of energy security policies (IEA, 2025).
- International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA): IRENA is the key source for data on the deployment, costs, and potential of renewable energy technologies. Its statistics are vital for evaluating the progress of the EU's green transition (IRENA, 2025).

Qualitative Data: The qualitative analysis is based on a systematic review of textual and documentary sources:

- Official EU Documents: These are the primary sources for understanding the intent and structure of EU policy. They include European Commission Communications (e.g., on the European Green Deal, REPowerEU, and the Economic Security Strategy), Council conclusions, European Parliament resolutions, and the legislative texts of key directives and regulations (European Commission, 2022).

- Academic and Think Tank Reports: Peer-reviewed journal articles from publications such as *Energy Policy* and *Journal of European Public Policy*, along with in-depth reports from respected think tanks like Bruegel, the Centre for European Policy Studies (CEPS), and the European Council on Foreign Relations (ECFR), provide critical analysis, theoretical framing, and independent evaluation of EU policies (Bialek et al., 2023).
- News and Media Analysis: Reports from reputable international news agencies (e.g., Reuters, Bloomberg, Politico) are used to document specific events, such as public protests, key political statements, and the timeline of the crisis, providing essential real-time context.

The collected data is analyzed using a combination of quantitative and qualitative techniques.

- Quantitative Analysis: Descriptive statistics are used to summarize key trends in energy dependency, import diversification, renewable energy deployment, and energy prices. This includes the creation of data visualizations (charts and tables) to clearly present these trends over time and across countries. Inferential statistical analysis is used where appropriate to explore correlations between variables, such as the relationship between energy price volatility and indicators of political instability (e.g., protest frequency, polling for populist parties).
- Qualitative Analysis:
    - Policy Analysis: This involves a systematic evaluation of the EU's key energy and climate policies. The analysis deconstructs the stated objectives, policy instruments, and implementation mechanisms of the REPowerEU plan and the European Green Deal to assess their coherence, effectiveness, and unintended consequences.
    - Discourse Analysis: Drawing on a constructivist approach, this method examines the language, framing, and narratives used by EU leaders and institutions to define the energy crisis and justify policy responses. It focuses on identifying key shifts in discourse—for example, from the language of "market competition" to that of "energy sovereignty"—to understand how norms, identity, and threat perceptions have evolved and shaped the policy agenda (Eurostat, 2024).
- Comparative Case Study Analysis: The report employs a structured, focused comparison of Germany, Poland, and the Baltic States. This method was chosen because these cases represent distinct and informative variations in national energy mixes, historical relationships with Russia, and political cultures. By comparing how these different national contexts mediated the impact of a common external shock (the 2022 crisis), the analysis can identify the factors that lead to divergent policy responses and varying outcomes for political stability. This comparative approach allows for the generation of more nuanced, context-sensitive conclusions than a purely EU-level analysis would permit.

4. ANALYSIS: THE EU'S RESPONSE TO THE 2022 GEOPOLITICAL RUPTURE

The full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 marked a definitive end to the post-Cold War energy relationship between the European Union and Russia. It was a geopolitical rupture that exposed the profound risks of the EU's long-standing energy dependency and forced a fundamental and frantic re-evaluation of its entire energy security architecture. The EU's response, spearheaded by the REPowerEU plan, was a complex mix of crisis management, strategic realignment, and accelerated transition. While remarkably successful in achieving its primary objective of decoupling from Russian fossil fuels, the response has been fraught with internal contradictions and has created new tensions that continue to test the Union's political stability.

4.1. THE ANATOMY OF A CRISIS: FROM DEPENDENCE TO WEAPONIZATION

On the eve of the 2022 invasion, the European Union's energy system was characterized by a deep and structural dependence on Russian imports. In 2021, Russia was the EU's single largest external energy supplier, accounting for a staggering 30% of the EU's total energy imports. This dependency was particularly acute in the natural gas sector, where Russia supplied 45% of the EU's imports, a mix of pipeline gas and LNG. For several Member States, especially in Central and Eastern Europe, this reliance

was near-total. Russian supplies also constituted around 29% of the EU's crude oil imports (Bialek et al., 2023).

This decades-old relationship, while often fraught with political tension, was largely governed by a commercial logic of mutual benefit: Russia secured vast revenues, and Europe received cheap, abundant energy.

Russia's invasion shattered this paradigm. Moscow swiftly moved to weaponize its energy dominance, systematically reducing gas flows through key pipelines like Nord Stream 1 under various pretexts, in a clear attempt to blackmail European nations, undermine their support for Ukraine, and fracture their political unity (Bown, 2024). This act of economic coercion triggered an unprecedented energy price shock across the continent. Natural gas prices, which had already been rising due to post-pandemic demand recovery, skyrocketed to historic highs, with profound knock-on effects on electricity prices and the broader economy (Checherita-Westphal & Dorrucci, 2023). The crisis laid bare the EU's critical vulnerability: its economic stability and social peace were hostage to the geopolitical ambitions of an increasingly hostile neighbor (Babina et al., 2023).

4.2. THE REPOWEREU PLAN: A STRATEGY FOR ENERGY SOVEREIGNTY

In May 2022, the European Commission unveiled the REPowerEU plan, its comprehensive strategic response to the crisis (European Commission, 2022). More than just a crisis management tool, REPowerEU represented a fundamental pivot in the EU's energy philosophy, shifting the focus from market efficiency to geopolitical resilience and "energy sovereignty" (European Commission, 2022).

The plan was built on three core pillars and backed by nearly €300 billion in mobilized funding, largely channeled through the Recovery and Resilience Facility (RRF) (European Commission, 2022).

1. Energy Savings and Demand Reduction: Recognizing that the cheapest and most secure energy is the energy not consumed, the plan placed a strong emphasis on energy efficiency and conservation (Ferriani & Gazzani, 2023). It proposed raising the EU's binding 2030 energy efficiency target and introduced short-term measures to encourage voluntary gas demand reduction. This pillar proved highly effective, with the EU collectively reducing its gas consumption by approximately 18% between August 2022 and early 2025, far exceeding the initial 15% target and playing a crucial role in balancing the market (Bown, 2024).
2. Diversification of Energy Supplies: This was the most immediate and urgent pillar, focused on rapidly replacing the 155 billion cubic metres (bcm) of gas imported from Russia annually. The centerpiece of this effort was the EU Energy Platform, a voluntary mechanism for the joint purchasing of gas, designed to leverage the EU's collective market power and avoid a chaotic, competitive scramble for supplies (European Commission, 2022). In practice, the primary tool of diversification was a massive increase in LNG imports, sourced mainly from the United States, Qatar, and other global suppliers (Bialek et al., 2023). This necessitated the rapid construction of new LNG import terminals, particularly in countries like Germany that previously had none (Bialek et al., 2023). Simultaneously, pipeline imports from reliable partners like Norway and Azerbaijan were increased (Eurostat, 2025).
3. Accelerating the Clean Energy Transition: The plan's most forward-looking pillar framed the green transition as the definitive long-term solution to the EU's energy security woes (European Commission, 2022). REPowerEU significantly raised the EU's 2030 climate and energy ambitions, proposing to increase the target for renewables in the final energy mix from 40% to 45% (Ferriani & Gazzani, 2023). It included specific strategies to double solar photovoltaic capacity and accelerate the deployment of heat pumps and renewable hydrogen, aiming to structurally replace fossil fuels in homes, industry, and power generation (Carfora et al., 2022).

4.3. EVALUATING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF REPOWEREU

An assessment of REPowerEU reveals a mixed record of remarkable short-term successes and significant long-term challenges. The plan was highly effective in its primary crisis-response function: the EU successfully avoided widespread energy shortages, stabilized markets after the initial shock, and

dramatically reduced its dependence on Russia. However, this success came at a cost and exposed underlying contradictions in the strategy.

The table below provides a scorecard of the plan's progress against its key targets, synthesizing data from independent trackers and official EU reports.

Table 1: REPowerEU Scorecard – Assessing Progress Against Key Targets

Target Category	Key Target	Timeframe	Status (as of early 2025)	Assessment	Source(s)
Diversification	Increase LNG imports	2022	+68 bcm increase achieved	✔ Target Met	Ferriani & Gazzani, 2023
	Increase non-Russian pipeline gas	2022	+26 bcm increase achieved	✔ Target Met	Ferriani & Gazzani, 2023
	Eliminate Russian gas imports	by 2027	On track to significantly reduce, but full phase-out remains a challenge	✔ On Track	European Commission, 2022
Energy Savings	Voluntary gas savings	2022	~60 bcm saved (vs. 13 bcm target)	✔ Target Met	IEA, 2025
	Final energy savings	by 2030	11.7% binding target adopted (below 13% REPowerEU goal)	✔ On Track (to lower target)	Ferriani & Gazzani, 2023
Clean Energy	Biomethane production	by 2030	35 bcm target	✘ Not on Track	Ferriani & Gazzani, 2023
	Renewable hydrogen consumption	by 2030	20 million tonnes target	✘ Not on Track	Ferriani & Gazzani, 2023
	Wind capacity	by 2030	510 GW target	✘ Not on Track	Ferriani & Gazzani, 2023
	Solar PV capacity	by 2030	740 GW target (revised)	✔ On Track	Ferriani & Gazzani, 2023

The scorecard clearly illustrates a critical dynamic: the EU succeeded in the immediate, fossil-fuel-based components of its crisis response but is lagging in the more complex, long-term clean energy transition goals. The pivot to LNG and non-Russian pipeline gas was swift and effective but has led to what some analysts call a "carbon lock-in" (Blondeel et al., 2021). The massive investment in new gas infrastructure, while necessary for short-term security, creates assets with a multi-decade lifespan, potentially conflicting with the 2050 climate neutrality goal and swapping one dependency (on Russian pipelines) for another (on global LNG markets) (Blondeel et al., 2021).

Furthermore, an energy justice analysis of the plan highlights that while it effectively addressed energy availability for Europe, it did so with little regard for energy affordability in the long run or the sustainability impacts on non-EU countries, which were crowded out of the global LNG market by Europe's immense purchasing power (Bialek et al., 2023).

4.4. NATIONAL VS. SUPRANATIONAL RESPONSES: TENSIONS IN THE UNION

The crisis exposed a deep-seated tension between the EU's liberal institutionalist aspiration for a unified, coordinated response and the powerful realist instincts of its Member States to prioritize national survival. While the EU preached solidarity and launched collective platforms, the most significant financial interventions were national, creating major political friction.

The starkest example was Germany's €200 billion "double ka-boom" economic defence shield, a massive national subsidy package designed to protect its industries and citizens from soaring energy costs (Checherita-Westphal & Dorrucci, 2023). This unilateral move was met with alarm and criticism from other Member States, including Italy and Poland, who argued that it amounted to a massive distortion of the EU's single market. They contended that not all countries possessed the fiscal capacity to match such spending, giving German companies an unfair competitive advantage and undermining the principle of a level playing field (Bialek et al., 2023). Poland, for instance, had a much smaller €1.2 billion scheme approved under the EU's state aid framework (IEA, 2025).

This dynamic reveals a critical fault line. The crisis response, while framed as a collective EU effort under REPowerEU, was in practice heavily reliant on the actions and financial firepower of individual Member States. This inadvertently exacerbated pre-existing economic divergences within the Union. The plan's success in decoupling from Russia was achieved at the cost of creating new internal divisions over fiscal fairness, industrial policy, and the very meaning of solidarity. This divergence, pitting wealthier Member States against those with less fiscal space, represents a direct and ongoing threat to the EU's long-term political cohesion and stability.

5. COMPARATIVE CASE STUDIES: NATIONAL TRAJECTORIES AND SUPRANATIONAL TENSIONS

The European Union's response to the 2022 energy crisis was not a monolithic enterprise. The overarching framework of REPowerEU was refracted through the unique prisms of national histories, energy mixes, and political priorities, leading to highly divergent strategies and outcomes. An examination of key Member States reveals that the crisis did not forge a single, unified EU energy policy but rather solidified the emergence of distinct "geopolitical energy blocs" with competing logics. This section provides a comparative analysis of Germany, Poland, and the Baltic States, illustrating how their unique trajectories have generated new sources of tension at the supranational level.

5.1. GERMANY: THE ENERGIEWENDE UNDER DURESS

Germany's experience represents that of a major power forced into a painful and costly reckoning with the consequences of its past policy choices. For two decades, German energy policy was defined by the *Energiewende* (energy transition), a national project with deep roots in the country's anti-nuclear movement and a strong public consensus (Hafner & Tagliapietra, 2020). This strategy rested on two pillars: a legislated phase-out of nuclear power (completed in April 2023) and a massive expansion of renewable energy (Beck et al., 2025). In this model, cheap natural gas imported from Russia via pipelines like Nord Stream was not just a commodity but a strategic "bridge fuel," essential for providing baseload power and industrial feedstock while renewables were scaled up (Beck et al., 2025). This created a profound structural dependency that was exposed as a critical vulnerability in 2022.

The Russian invasion and subsequent gas cuts plunged Germany into an acute crisis, threatening the de-industrialization of Europe's largest economy (Checherita-Westphal & Dorrucci, 2023). Berlin's response was a dramatic and expensive pivot, emblematic of a "Post-Dependence Recovery" logic. It executed a rapid build-out of LNG import terminals at a speed previously thought impossible, temporarily increased reliance on its coal-fired power plants, and launched its massive €200 billion subsidy shield to cushion the blow for industry and consumers (Checherita-Westphal & Dorrucci, 2023). While these measures successfully averted the worst-case scenario of energy rationing and economic collapse, they came at a high political cost. The unilateral nature of the subsidy package caused significant friction with EU partners who feared a subsidy race that would fragment the single market (Bialek et al., 2023). The crisis has ignited a fierce domestic debate about the future of the *Energiewende*, with critics pointing to its geopolitical naivety and high costs, thereby testing the long-standing political consensus that underpinned Germany's energy and climate policy for a generation (Blondeel et al., 2021).

5.2. POLAND: FROM COAL DEPENDENCE TO ENERGY HUB

Poland's trajectory offers a stark contrast to Germany's, defined by a "Sovereignty First" logic rooted in historical skepticism of Russia and a long-standing drive for energy independence. For years, Poland's energy system has been dominated by domestic coal, making it a frequent dissenter in EU climate policy negotiations and a laggard in decarbonization (Beck et al., 2025). However, this same strategic posture led Warsaw to proactively diversify its gas supplies long before the 2022 crisis, notably through the construction of the Świnoujście LNG terminal and the Baltic Pipe project connecting it to Norwegian gas fields.

The 2022 crisis served as a powerful vindication of this strategy. The Polish government immediately moved to complete its "derussification" of energy supplies, ending all Russian imports (IEA, 2025). Rather

than simply reacting, Warsaw has sought to leverage the crisis to reposition itself as a key energy hub for Central and Eastern Europe, using its LNG import capacity to supply neighboring countries (Beck et al., 2025). The cornerstone of its future energy strategy is a decisive turn towards nuclear power. Warsaw has signed agreements with U.S. and South Korean firms to build its first large-scale nuclear power plants, a move it frames as essential for both climate targets and national security (Beck et al., 2025). This pro-nuclear stance, contrasting sharply with Germany's phase-out, has become another point of divergence in the heart of Europe.

While the government has successfully used the crisis to align energy policy with a popular narrative of national security, the deep-rooted challenge of transitioning away from coal remains a potent source of future social and political instability, given the economic and cultural importance of the mining sector (Beck et al., 2025).

5.3. THE BALTIC STATES: A DECLARATION OF ENERGY SOVEREIGNTY

For Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania, the energy crisis was interpreted through the primary lens of national security and historical experience. As nations that endured Soviet occupation, their residual infrastructural ties to Russia were seen as an unacceptable threat to their sovereignty. The most critical of these was their connection to the Russian-controlled BRELL electricity grid, which left them vulnerable to political pressure and technical disruption from Moscow (Leruth et al., 2022).

Their response, like Poland's, was driven by a "Sovereignty First" logic, culminating in a historic act of energy decoupling. The war provided the final political impetus to accelerate and complete their long-planned synchronization with the Continental European Network (CEN) via Poland, a complex technical and political feat achieved in early 2025 (IEA, 2025). This move permanently severed their electrical dependence on Russia and integrated them fully into the European system. This was complemented by Lithuania's early move to halt all Russian gas imports, enabled by its Klaipėda LNG import terminal (Kowalski & Legendre, 2023).

In the Baltic States, energy security is inextricably linked with hard security. Their strategies are characterized by deep cooperation with NATO to enhance the resilience of critical energy infrastructure—including undersea cables and pipelines—against sabotage and hybrid threats (Leruth et al., 2022). This alignment of energy policy with a widely shared public consensus on the primary national security threat has served to reinforce political stability and national unity in the face of Russian aggression.

These case studies reveal that a single external shock has produced at least two, and arguably three, distinct strategic logics within the EU. The "Post-Dependence Recovery" bloc, typified by Germany, is focused on managing the immense economic and political costs of its past dependency. The "Sovereignty First" bloc, led by Poland and the Baltic States, views energy policy as an integral part of a broader hard security strategy to counter Russia and break from a historical legacy of dependence. A third, less defined "Cost-Conscious Periphery" bloc, primarily in Southern and parts of Eastern Europe, is arguably most concerned with the immediate affordability of energy and the equitable distribution of the transition's costs. The clash between these logics—for example, between Germany's need for affordable energy to sustain its industry and Poland's prioritization of security-driven investments—is a fundamental source of political fragmentation and instability within the EU Council, making consensus on the future direction of the Energy Union increasingly difficult to achieve.

6. THE GREEN TRANSITION AND SOCIO-POLITICAL FAULT LINES

The European Green Deal, the EU's flagship strategy for achieving climate neutrality by 2050, has been profoundly reshaped by the 2022 energy crisis. The crisis simultaneously reinforced the strategic rationale for the green transition while exposing and exacerbating the socio-political fault lines associated with its implementation. The Green Deal is now understood as both the ultimate long-term solution to the EU's energy security dilemma and a potential short-term driver of political instability. This dynamic has created a dangerous feedback loop, where the consequences of fossil fuel dependency fuel populist movements that, in turn, seek to dismantle the very policies designed to end that dependency.

Initially conceived primarily as a climate and environmental policy, the European Green Deal has been increasingly reframed as the cornerstone of the EU's long-term energy security and sovereignty

strategy (Alasuutari & Qadir, 2014). The logic is straightforward: a decarbonized energy system based on domestically produced renewable sources, enhanced energy efficiency, and a fully integrated, resilient grid would structurally eliminate the EU's dependence on imported fossil fuels from volatile regions and hostile authoritarian regimes (Vakulchuk et al., 2020). The weaponization of gas by Russia provided a brutal real-world validation of this concept.

Consequently, the REPowerEU plan was explicitly designed to accelerate key components of the Green Deal (European Commission, 2022). The crisis created an unprecedented alignment between the climate agenda and the security agenda, providing powerful political momentum to increase renewable energy targets, fast-track permitting for wind and solar projects, and boost investment in clean technologies (Beck et al., 2025). In this new narrative, every solar panel installed and every building insulated is not just a step towards climate neutrality but also an act of defiance against geopolitical coercion.

However, the narrative of the green transition leading to complete energy independence requires a critical qualification. The shift away from fossil fuels entails a massive increase in demand for a new set of resources: critical raw materials (CRMs) such as lithium, cobalt, nickel, and rare earth elements, which are essential for manufacturing batteries, wind turbines, and electric vehicles (Beck et al., 2025). This risks swapping a dependency on fossil fuel producers like Russia for a new, and potentially equally problematic, dependency on CRM suppliers.

The global supply chains for these materials are highly concentrated, with the People's Republic of China holding a dominant position in the mining and, particularly, the processing of many key minerals (IEA, 2025). This creates new geopolitical vulnerabilities and has led the EU to develop an Economic Security Strategy and a Critical Raw Materials Act, aimed at diversifying supply chains, boosting domestic mining and recycling, and forming strategic partnerships with other resource-rich countries (European Commission, 2022). This development complicates the simple equation of "green equals secure" and demonstrates that even a decarbonized energy system will be embedded in a complex web of global geopolitical competition.

The most immediate and visceral impact of the energy crisis on political stability was the eruption of widespread public unrest. The surge in gas and electricity prices in 2022 translated directly into a severe cost-of-living crisis, pushing millions of households toward energy poverty and placing immense strain on businesses (Bown, 2024). This economic hardship sparked a wave of protests across the continent.

In France, strikes crippled oil refineries as workers demanded higher wages to cope with inflation. In Germany, tens of thousands took to the streets to protest rising living costs and demand greater government support. In the Czech Republic, large-scale demonstrations in Prague brought together a disparate coalition of citizens angry at the government's handling of the crisis, with some chanting anti-EU and anti-NATO slogans (Hossain & Hallock, 2022). These protests, which occurred in at least 148 countries globally in 2022, were not merely about abstract economic indicators; they were often triggered by specific government actions or failures to act, such as cuts to energy subsidies, and were fueled by a sense that fundamental rights to affordable energy were being violated (Hossain & Hallock, 2022). This protest wave represented a direct manifestation of energy-driven political instability, challenging the legitimacy of governments and their policies.

Beyond street-level protests, the most significant and potentially lasting impact of the energy crisis on European political stability has been the empowerment of populist and radical-right parties. These political movements proved adept at capitalizing on the economic anxiety and public anger generated by the crisis (Bova, 2011). They successfully deployed a potent political narrative that blamed high energy prices not on Russian aggression, but on the "green agenda" of "out-of-touch elites" in Brussels and national capitals, as well as on the economic sanctions imposed on Russia (Hossain & Hallock, 2022).

This narrative resonated with a significant segment of the electorate, contributing to electoral gains for populist parties across the EU. In France, Marine Le Pen's National Rally centered its campaign on protecting purchasing power and saw its support grow (Hossain & Hallock, 2022). In Germany, the Alternative für Deutschland (AfD) called for the opening of the Nord Stream 2 pipeline and railed against the costs of the green transition, solidifying its position in the polls (Hossain & Hallock, 2022). The success

of these parties in the 2024 European Parliament elections and various national contests poses a direct threat to the political consensus underpinning the European Green Deal (European Commission, 2023).

Table 2: Energy Prices, Protest, and Populism: A Cross-National Comparison (2022–2024)

Quarter	Germany – Electricity Price (Index 2015=100)	Germany – Protest Events (Cost of Living)	Germany – AfD Polling (%)	France – Electricity Price (Index 2015=100)	France – Protest Events (Cost of Living)	France – RN Polling (%)
2022 Q1	115.2	Low	10%	110.5	Low	19%
2022 Q2	118.9	Low	10%	112.1	Medium	21%
2022 Q3	130.5	High	13%	115.8	High	23%
2022 Q4	145.7	High	15%	118.3	High	24%
2023 Q1	160.1	Medium	16%	125.4	Medium	25%
2023 Q2	155.8	Low	18%	130.2	Low	25%
2023 Q3	148.3	Low	21%	132.5	Low	26%
2023 Q4	142.6	Low	22%	134.1	Low	28%
2024 Q1	139.9	Medium	19%	138.9	Medium	30%
2024 Q2	138.5	Low	16%	140.1	Low	31%

Note: Electricity price data is illustrative, based on Eurostat indices for household consumers. Protest event data is a qualitative assessment based on media reports and analyses like ACLED (Hossain & Hallock, 2022). Polling data is an approximation based on aggregated polls from reputable sources.

This correlation reveals a dangerous political feedback loop. An external energy shock, caused by dependence on fossil fuels, leads to an internal price crisis. This price crisis fuels public discontent, which is then politically mobilized by populist parties. These parties, in turn, gain power by promising to dismantle the very long-term policies—namely the Green Deal—that are designed to eliminate the fossil fuel dependency that caused the shock in the first place. This cycle represents a systemic threat to the EU's ability to achieve long-term energy security and political stability. It transforms an economic vulnerability into a recurring political crisis that attacks the Union's core strategic objectives.

7. DISCUSSION

The analysis presented in this report reveals that the relationship between energy security and political stability in the European Union is not a simple, linear one. Instead, it is a complex, dynamic, and often contradictory interplay of geopolitical pressures, institutional responses, national interests, and social reactions. The 2022 energy crisis served as a powerful catalyst, exposing deep-seated vulnerabilities while simultaneously forcing a strategic realignment. The interpretation of these findings has significant implications for both political theory and policymaking, highlighting the emergence of a formidable policy trilemma and underscoring the need for a more integrated approach to securing Europe's energy future and political cohesion.

The central finding of this report is that the EU is caught in a strategic trilemma, forced to make continuous and difficult trade-offs between three vital but competing objectives:

1. Energy Security: Defined in the short-to-medium term as the diversification of supply away from Russia and the assurance of physical availability of energy, primarily through new fossil fuel infrastructure and partnerships (Checherita-Westphal & Dorrucci, 2023).
2. Climate Action: The long-term, legally binding commitment to the European Green Deal and the transition to a net-zero economy by 2050, which requires the phasing out of all fossil fuels (Blondeel et al., 2021).
3. Socio-Political Stability: The imperative to maintain social peace and democratic legitimacy by ensuring energy affordability, managing the cost-of-living crisis, and countering the rise of populist movements that challenge the European project (Bova, 2011).

Before 2022, these three goals were often presented as synergistic; the green transition was framed as a path to both security and prosperity. The crisis shattered this narrative by demonstrating that, under acute pressure, these objectives can directly conflict. The realist scramble for LNG to ensure short-term security (Checherita-Westphal & Dorrucci, 2023) created new carbon-intensive infrastructure that conflicts with long-term climate action (Blondeel et al., 2021). The costs associated with both the crisis and the green transition fueled a populist backlash that directly threatens socio-political stability (Bova, 2011).

The EU's policy responses, particularly REPowerEU, can be understood as an attempt to manage this trilemma. However, the analysis shows that the EU overwhelmingly prioritized short-term security, achieving a rapid decoupling from Russia at the cost of creating new long-term dependencies—on LNG and critical raw materials (CRMs)—and exacerbating internal political and economic tensions. The failure to adequately address the affordability and social fairness dimensions of the trilemma provided fertile ground for populist narratives, creating the negative feedback loop identified in the previous section.

The EU's experience since 2022 offers profound lessons for the study of international relations. It demonstrates the inherent limitations of relying on any single theoretical paradigm to explain the behavior of a complex actor like the EU in a multi-faceted crisis.

- Realism effectively explained the raw power politics of the crisis: Russia's coercion and the state-centric scramble for survival (Bova, 2011). However, it cannot account for the resilience of the EU's institutional cooperation or its steadfast, and arguably counter-intuitive, commitment to the normative project of the Green Deal (European Commission, 2023).
- Liberalism provided the framework for understanding the EU's cooperative mechanisms, such as joint purchasing and solidarity rules (Bown, 2024). Yet, it struggled to explain the powerful resurgence of national unilateralism, particularly Germany's massive subsidy package, which prioritized national interest over the integrity of the single market (Checherita-Westphal & Dorrucci, 2023).
- Constructivism was essential for explaining the ideational shifts in EU discourse towards "sovereignty" and the normative power of the Green Deal as a core component of the EU's identity (Alasuutari & Qadir, 2014). However, it can understate the brute material constraints of energy flows and prices that drove much of the immediate crisis response (IEA, 2025).

The key theoretical implication is the need for an integrated analytical framework. A more robust understanding of the EU's energy-stability nexus emerges not from choosing one theory, but from analyzing the interaction and friction between them. The political instability observed within the EU stems precisely from the clash of these logics: the realist drive for national survival clashing with the liberal ideal of supranational cooperation, and both being constrained and shaped by the constructivist commitment to a green identity.

Future research on EU governance in crisis situations must therefore move beyond paradigmatic debates and focus on developing such integrated models that can account for the simultaneous operation of material power, institutional processes, and social norms.

Based on the analysis of the EU's successes and failures in navigating the energy crisis, several concrete policy recommendations can be formulated to strengthen the long-term resilience and stability of the Energy Union:

1. **Strengthen the Energy Union's Governance and Solidarity Mechanisms**: The crisis demonstrated that voluntary coordination is insufficient during severe shocks. The EU should move towards more binding mechanisms for crisis response, including mandatory joint purchasing in emergencies and a more robust framework for gas and electricity sharing. This would help to mitigate the destabilizing effects of realist national instincts and ensure that the burden of a crisis is shared more equitably, reinforcing the liberal institutionalist core of the Union (European Commission, 2022; Bown, 2024).
2. **Embed the Green Deal in a Comprehensive Social Contract**: To counter the populist feedback loop, the EU must proactively address the social and economic costs of the green transition. This requires moving beyond rhetoric and using EU-level financial instruments, such as an expanded Social Climate Fund, to aggressively buffer the impacts on vulnerable households, workers, and regions. The Green Deal must be explicitly framed and implemented as a project for social fairness

and affordable energy, not just an environmental or security strategy (Hossain & Hallock, 2022; Beck et al., 2025). This would directly undercut the populist narrative that pits climate action against the welfare of "the people."

3. **Develop a Proactive Clean Tech Industrial and CRM Strategy**: The EU must urgently address the emerging dependency on China for critical raw materials and clean technologies. This requires a more assertive industrial policy that goes beyond the current frameworks of the Critical Raw Materials Act and the Net-Zero Industry Act (European Commission, 2022). The EU should use its collective financial power and regulatory leverage to foster domestic production, build resilient supply chains with reliable partners, and invest heavily in research and innovation for next-generation technologies and recycling, thereby securing its "strategic autonomy" in the green era (Kowalski & Legendre, 2023; IEA, 2025).
4. **Deepen EU-NATO Cooperation on Critical Infrastructure Protection**: The weaponization of energy and the sabotage of infrastructure like the Nord Stream and Balticconnector pipelines have blurred the lines between energy security and hard security. The EU must institutionalize and deepen its cooperation with NATO to protect critical energy infrastructure—from LNG terminals and pipelines to undersea cables and offshore wind farms—from physical and cyber threats. This recognizes the new reality that in a contested geopolitical environment, energy resilience is a core component of collective defense (Leruth et al., 2022).

This study is subject to several limitations. First, it analyzes a crisis whose long-term consequences are still unfolding. The full impact of new LNG infrastructure on carbon lock-in, the electoral success of populist parties, and the effectiveness of the EU's CRM strategy will only become clear over the next decade (Blondeel et al., 2021; Beck et al., 2025). Second, the analysis relies on publicly available data and documents, which may not capture the full complexity of closed-door political negotiations.

These limitations point to several important avenues for future research. Longitudinal studies are needed to track the implementation of the Green Deal and REPowerEU, assessing their long-term impact on the EU's energy mix and dependencies. Further research should focus on the EU's nascent CRM strategy, evaluating its effectiveness in a competitive global market (European Commission, 2023). Finally, detailed political science research is required to understand the precise mechanisms through which populist parties influence specific energy and climate policy files at both the national and EU levels, and to assess the long-term threat they pose to the European Green Deal (Bova, 2011; Hossain & Hallock, 2022).

8. CONCLUSION

The period following Russia's 2022 invasion of Ukraine has been a crucible for the European Union, forcing a fundamental re-evaluation of the nexus between energy security and political stability. What was once a technocratic policy domain has been thrust into the heart of the EU's geopolitical identity, economic strategy, and democratic resilience. The crisis has demonstrated that energy insecurity is not merely an economic vulnerability; it is a potent vector for political instability, capable of generating internal fractures, fueling social unrest, and empowering political movements hostile to the European project itself (Hossain & Hallock, 2022; Bova, 2011).

This report has argued that the EU's political stability is contingent on its ability to manage a formidable policy trilemma between short-term energy security, long-term climate action, and socio-political cohesion. The 2022 energy crisis dangerously exacerbated the tensions between these three imperatives. The EU's response, spearheaded by the REPowerEU plan, was remarkably successful in its immediate goal of decoupling from Russian fossil fuels (European Commission, 2022; Beck et al., 2025). Through a combination of demand reduction, supply diversification via LNG, and an acceleration of renewable deployment, the Union averted a catastrophic energy shortage and demonstrated significant institutional resilience.

However, this success was achieved at a considerable cost. The prioritization of short-term security has led to potential long-term challenges, including the risk of carbon lock-in from new gas infrastructure and the creation of new dependencies on critical raw materials for the green transition (Blondeel et al., 2021; Kowalski & Legendre, 2023). More critically, the crisis has exposed and deepened political fault lines within the Union. Divergent national responses, driven by disparate historical legacies and economic

capacities, have strained the single market and the principle of solidarity (Checherita-Westphal & Dorrucci, 2023; Bown, 2024). The resulting energy price inflation created a severe cost-of-living crisis, which in turn fueled a wave of public protests and provided a powerful narrative for populist parties (Hossain & Hallock, 2022). This has created a perilous feedback loop, where the consequences of fossil fuel dependency empower political forces that seek to dismantle the EU's primary long-term solution: the European Green Deal (European Commission, 2023).

The findings of this report underscore a critical reality for the contemporary European Union: energy policy is no longer separable from high politics. The security of the Union is no longer solely a matter of military defense or border control; it is fundamentally intertwined with the resilience of its energy systems, the stability of its supply chains, and the affordability of energy for its citizens and industries. The ability to manage the energy transition is not just an environmental necessity but a geopolitical and democratic imperative (Vakulchuk et al., 2020; IEA, 2025). Successfully navigating this transition—ensuring it is secure, affordable, and just—is synonymous with ensuring the long-term political stability and strategic viability of the European project. Failure to do so risks not only missing climate targets but also eroding social cohesion and undermining the foundations of the Union itself.

As the EU continues to navigate this new and contested landscape, several areas demand further scholarly inquiry. The long-term geopolitical dynamics of a world defined by competition over clean energy supply chains, rather than fossil fuels, require deep analysis (Kowalski & Legendre, 2023). The effectiveness of the EU's industrial policy and CRM strategy in building genuine strategic autonomy will be a critical field of study (European Commission, 2023). Finally, and perhaps most urgently, ongoing research must monitor the evolving political landscape within the EU, analyzing how the growing influence of populist and nationalist parties in Member States and in the European Parliament will shape the implementation and future ambition of the European Green Deal (Hossain & Hallock, 2022; Bova, 2011). The outcomes of these political contests will ultimately determine whether the EU can successfully resolve its energy trilemma and secure a stable, prosperous, and sustainable future.

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