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# Russian Influence on Europe's Energy Security. A Geopolitical Analysis

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ABSTRACT

The current research paper focuses on the geopolitical aspects of the Russian control over the energy security of Europe with a special focus on the interdependence of natural gas resources, strategic position, and policy change after the war in Russia-Ukraine. Europe has been long dependent on the provision of Russian oil and gas over the decades so as to build a complicated relationship between economic interdependence and vulnerability of strategy. In a process known as pipeline diplomacy, price manipulation, and supply shocks, especially during the 2006, 2009 and post-2014 crises, Russia proved that it could use energy exports as a geopolitical tool.

The 2022 Russia-Ukraine war was a decisive moment, and it was literally a game changer in the realization of the energy strategy of Europe. European Union countered that by diversifying, increasing the liquid natural gas (LNG) infrastructure, expediting the use of renewable energy, and the REPowerEU project to decrease reliance on Russian fossil fuels. In this paper, the operation of Russian energy policies as a form of influence is analyzed, the effectiveness of the EU countermeasures are evaluated, the long-term consequences of such actions on European strategic autonomy, transatlantic relations, and the world energy markets are determined.

The research contends that although Russia traditionally has had an important leverage in the energy security of Europe, the present twist in geopolitical matters hastened the structural adjustment of Europe towards the process of diversification and decarbonization. However, new weaknesses, including the LNG market

competition and lack of infrastructural capacities, still influence the further development of energy-security environment.
**Keywords**: Russian foreign policy; European energy security; geopolitics of energy; Russia–Ukraine war; energy interdependence; energy weaponization; REPowerEU; gas diplomacy; strategic autonomy; energy diversification

## LITERATURE REVIEW:

The Russian influence on the energy security of Europe has become one of the most important geopolitical discussions of the modern sphere of the scholarship of International relations. The beginning of the academic literature has largely viewed the EU-Russia energy relations through the lights of economic dependence. Europe according to the analysts at the Center of Strategic and International Studies depended on the Russian natural gas and in turn Russia was heavily dependent on the European export revenues and the reliance of both European countries on the natural gas prices provided by Russia suggested that both countries were in some kind of strategic equilibrium whereby both countries had a motivation to maintain stable trade relations. This led to the interpretation of energy cooperation as the stabilize pillar of the European post-Cold War order as opposed to the vulnerability pillar.

A study by an Oxford Institute of Energy Studies carried out supported the interpretation by separating the issue of physical energy security risks and geopolitical discourses. Researchers stressed that such long-term contracts, investments into infrastructure, and integration of the market reduced the risk of intentional breach of the supply. In this context, Russia was considered as a reasonable business player as an inseparable part of the world energy markets. To a large extent based on the liberal institutionalist theory, this scholarship focused on the role of economic interdependence and institutional structures, particularly in the European Union, in reducing the risks and enhancing cooperation amidst the politically tense situation.

Nevertheless, repetitive transit conflicts between Russia and Ukraine in the middle of 2000s started to change the academic views. The European consumers were exposed to systemic weaknesses due to the disruptions in supply, which was tied to the reliance on the pipeline and the lack of diversification. The idea of asymmetric interdependence became a matter of doubt among scholars as to whether it provided Moscow with a political advantage. Whereas a few researchers argued that price disagreements and contractual disputes were the reason behind disruptions, some researchers saw them as an indication of strategic pressure. It was a gradual transition in debate toward less economic explanation of energy relations and increasingly toward geopolitical explanations.

In the year 2014, after the annexation of the Crimea, the securitization of the energy policy became even more apparent. The European Union increased the pace of diversifying routes, building reverse-flowing abilities as well as increasing the liquefied natural gas (LNG) infrastructure. Nevertheless, there were still high levels of imports of Russian gas, which is indicative of the rigidity of energy systems.

According to analysts, although the country was experiencing political tensions and sanctions, economic connections were still intact, showing how difficult it was to de-link well-established networks of energy relationships. Historians who studied this era began to focus on the concurrent existence of the political confrontation and the ongoing interdependence, insinuating that the interdependence ceased to be mutually restraining and have taken an asymmetrical form instead.

The invasion of Ukraine that was full-scale in 2022 also signified a paradigmatic breakthrough in the literature. The conflict is largely understood in a post-2022 scholarship as a structural turning point in the European energy strategy. The significant decrease in the pipeline gas supplies that was accompanied by unprecedented fluctuations in prices added to the worries on the vulnerability to energy. The REPowerEU program by the European Commission was also an indication of an intentional move towards strategic decoupling. Researchers introduce REPowerEU as taking into account emergency diversification, increased deployment of renewable resources accelerated, and improved energy efficiency initiatives. The European Union aimed at transforming its energy architecture, instead of finding a way of containment.

The research published in the open access on the platform like Research Gate and arXiv discusses the decarbonisation scenarios that do not involve Russian gas imports. These commentaries believe that these are geopolitical shocks that have enhanced the energy transition in Europe that fulfills security needs, attaching them to climate targets. The literature also tends to discuss the development of renewable energy not only as an environmental policy but as a strategy to decrease the foreign dependence. This is a big shift in conceptualizing energy security literature and involves a mixing up of resiliency in geopolitics and sustainability.

Meanwhile, researchers warn to be very careful about diversification as it creates additional weaknesses. Greater dependence on LNG makes Europe vulnerable to international market and competition especially by Asian demand centres. The restricted infrastructure, regasification capacity and distribution of supply in the member states are still enduring problems. Therefore, the reliance on Russia is no more; nevertheless, energy security issues still exist; however, it has been restructured in a new international system.

The conceptual frameworks that support this literature are expressions of the debates of the general area of International Relations. The realism offers one of the main prisms to understand the Russian strategy in energy policy as the tool of power. In the realist approach, strategic resources, when under control by the state, augers the bargaining status of the state in an anarchic international system. Asymmetric interdependence enables the dominant supplier to have control over the relying consumers. According to the realist theorists, changes in the volume of gas surfow flows and structure manipulations demonstrate the ways in which energy could become leverage in the most general geopolitical games.

Liberal interdependence theory on the contrary focuses on the shared expenses of economic disturbance. Previously experienced EU-Russia relations were

often referred to as models of complicated interdependence as a result of which the relationship between the states supported each other cooperation through trade interdependence. Liberal scholars argue that it was constrained by long term contracts and mutual economic interests to exclude long term coercion. However, critics claim that the situation in 2022 and later shows the instability of economic interdependence when the issue of security take the center stage. The energy trade disintegration indicates that interdependence does not necessarily avert conflict in geopolitics.

The third growing theoretical approach is incorporating the energy transition theory and the political aspect, geopolitics. According to scholars, the spread of renewable energy sources changes classical power relations based on fossil fuels. Renewable resources are spread all over the territory as compared to natural gas, which allows minimizing the concentration of supply power. The initiative by Europe on renewable capacity is thus viewed as a tactical move directed at structural independence. The energy transition transforms into the instrument of redefining the system of power relations in the international system.

Recent scholarship is also looking at the shift in the strategy of Russia towards the Asian markets. With the waning European imports, Russia increased the exportation of oil and gas to other customers. Analysts point out that even though European dependence is less than before, the global energy interdependence still exists in the form of reoriented trade flows. This change makes the achievements of sanctions more difficult to analyse and the multipolarity of the modern energy politics more evident. Market adaptations instead of isolating Russia by putting it in another region have shifted flows across borders.

There are gaps even with all the research done. The debate on the issues of whether the Russian energy policy can be understood as active coercion or rather as a response to geopolitical pressure is still rather limited. In addition, the sustainability of the diversification strategy in Europe in the long term is not clear especially in terms of affordability and sufficiency of infrastructure. There are also intra-European differences in the exposure and implementation that should be given additional comparative analysis.

On the whole, it is evident that the literature reflects the development cycle of optimism on mutually beneficial interdependence up to identification of structural vulnerability and strategic change. The war that happened in 2022 speeded up a process of redefining the concept of energy security as an economic instead as a core geopolitical question. A combination of a realist perspective, a liberal perspective, and an energy transition perspective substantially, scholars introduce a multidimensional perspective on the issue of Russian impact on energy security in Europe.

## INTRODUCTION

The connection between Russia and Europe in the energy field has traditionally been one of the main features of geopolitics in the post-cold war era. The European Union has been over decades depending on the imports of Russian oil

and natural gas in order to fuel its own industrial output, electricity generation and domestic consumption. By the end of the 2010s, Russia was providing a significant share of European Union natural gas and crude oil imports, which established the high-density networks of pipelines, long-term contracts, and economic bonds. This source of energy connection was frequently depicted as a win-win situation: Europe acquired comparably cheap and uninterrupted supplies, and Russia relied upon the markets in Europe to have export revenues that played a vital role in the national budget. Market analysts at the Center of Strategic and International Studies and Oxford Institute of Energy Studies described such an arrangement as a kind of strategic interdependence that is institutionally and logically embedded in markets.

Nevertheless, the asymmetries of structure were present below this account of mutually benefiting. The systems of energy in Europe had become very dependent on Russian pipeline systems and its alternatives and diversification mechanisms were limited to many member states especially those in Central and Eastern Europe. The repetitive nature of transit conflicts and pricing disputes showed weak points to this framework as it would lead to question why energy reliance would be turned into political capital. However, energy security lost its economic nature and became a strategic matter in the European policy discourse over time. In 2014, the annexation of Crimea made further discussions on the geopolitical risk of being informed by dependence on Russian energy exports more urgent, which led to progressive diversification of the energy supply system and regulation.

The Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2022 was a pivotal point in changing the energy situation in Europe due to being full-scale in scope. Sudden cuts in gas supplies, unprecedented fluctuations in the prices and the halt of the large-scale pipeline projects shook the belief in the stability of the energy relationship. The crisis highlighted the degree to which the degree of energy interdependency might turn out to be a liability when it comes to facing a geopolitical challenge. In reaction, the European Commission proposed the REPowerEU program, which will contain a detailed plan to eliminate dependence on Russian fossil fuels by diversification of supply, a faster adoption of renewable energy sources and improved energy efficiency. This change was an indication not only of a short-term repositioning but a transformation in the European energy policy.

The changing crisis has sparked a new scholarly and policy concern over the geopolitics of energy. The conception of the Russian energy policy in terms of the power policy is becoming more widespread among scholars as the means of controlling the strategic resources and utilizing it as a leverage in the international system that is anarchic and thus cannot be seen as a tool of power. Simultaneously, others also stress the persistence of global energy markets in that Russia has been looking to explore alternative export markets whilst Europe has been exploring the importation of liquefied natural gas and renewable energy development. The ensuing restructuring of the trade flows indicates more inclination in the global energy politics than merely the trimming down of relationships.

In this research paper, the influence of Russia on the energy security in Europe is analyzed according to geopolitical perspective. It attempts to examine the

development of energy interdependence to become a means of strategic vulnerability, the manipulation by Russia of its status as a major supplier and the reaction to the perceived coercion and risk by the European Union. The paper discusses the historical background of EU-Russia energy relations, how the idea of energy as the geopolitical tool is conceptualized, and how the Russia-Ukraine war has led to a reorganization of structures. Having combined the lessons of the realist, liberal and energy transition theories, the paper hypothesizes the degree to which the European diversification and decarbonization policies increases its strategic autonomy in the long-term.

The theme that the work is arguing is that even though Russian dominance over the energy security of Europe has historically played an important role by virtue of structural dependence and the asymmetry of infrastructure, the geopolitical cataclysm of 2022 has only spurred a fundamental shift in the European energy policy. However, acquiring the shift of Russian supplies presents some new types of vulnerability that are connected to the global LNG markets, infrastructural limitation, and volatility in the market. To comprehend this changing environment, it is important to put energy security in the broader context of the geopolitical dynamics where economic interdependence, power politics and structural transformation overlap.

## II. Historical Foundations of Russian-European Energy Relations

The origins of Russian-European energy relations could be located back to the late Cold War period, but it became prominent to be institutionalized after the fall of the Soviet Union in 1991. The major post-Cold War situation placed Russia and Western European countries in a situation where they faced deep economic and political changes. Russia sought an expansion of export earnings to bolster an already weak economy, and it was the need of the European states to have dependable and relatively low-cost energy sources to continue industrialization and integration into the European Union; as a result, energy co-operation became one of the key elements of post-Soviet economic involvement.

In the late 1990s and early 2000s, the business of natural gas speeded up at the form of long-term contracts between Russian manufacturers and mostly Gazprom and European energy corporations. Those associated with the Center of Strategic and International Studies have described this as a time of practical interdependence: Europe was becoming more and more dependent on Russian gas being pumped in by massive systems of Soviet pipeline networks, while Russia was heavily relying on European markets as sources of hard-currency profits. Much of the matter of cooperation in the energy sector was based on the activities of energy exports and thus the participation of two economies in the area. This structural interdependence was further cemented with the investments in infrastructure which tied Russian gas fields to the consumption zones of Europe physically.

The foundation of this relationship was made up of the pipeline system. The Druzhba pipeline that was built in the Soviet period was one of the biggest oil infrastructures which linked Russia to Europe. Druzhba, which literally means friendship, became one of the longest oil pipeline systems globally with the oil of

Russian fields being pumped to Central and Eastern Europe including Poland, Germany, Hungary, and Slovakia. It remained active after 1991 and this situation itself was a symbol of energy cooperation surviving together with expanded geopolitical changes. Oil trade across Druzhba demonstrated how the oil business infrastructure of the Soviets conditioned the economic geography of the post-Cold War, entrenching the Eastern European countries along Russian supply networks.

Even better strategically consequent was natural gas infrastructure. Over the decades most Russian gas exports to Europe passed through the pipeline system of Ukraine and as a result, not only was there economic dependency, but also political vulnerability. Ukraine was collecting transit fees, whereas the European states were dependent on continuous flows across Ukrainian territory. A transit conflict in the middle of the 2000s revealed the flimsiness of this arrangement and mentioned how geopolitical conflicts would disrupt supply chains. All these events fueled the European discussions on diversification and other paths.

Russia responded to transit vulnerability by developing new pipeline projects, which would avoid the countries of transit. The Nord Stream pipeline that was drilled through the Baltic Sea between Russia and Germany was one of the biggest changes in the gas flow geography. Nord stream minimized the use of some countries including Ukraine and Poland as a form of transit since it provided direct association between Russian manufacturers and Western Europe buyers. The advocates posed the initiative as a commercially logical initiative to improve the reliability of the supplies; opponents expressed this move as having geopolitical repercussions due to the undermining of the transit states and the increasing level of reliance on the Russian gas by Germany. The Nord Stream controversy highlighted the two-fold nature of commercial and strategic features of energy infrastructure.

In the same spirit, the Turkish stream pipeline was constructed to channel the Russian gas through the black sea to Turkey and directly to Southern and southeast Europe. TurkStream was created following the failure of the previous pipelines projects like the South stream due to the regulation and political conflict between the South stream and the European Union. Through Turkey, Russia was able to switch flows thus diversify its export routes and even retain influence on the Southeast European markets. These infrastructural plans were indicative of larger Russian plans to reduce risks of transit while pulling together its position as a leading supplier.

In the 2000s and 2010s, the reliance of the European continent on the Russian gas became even stronger in spite of political tensions. According to analysts at the Oxford Institute of Energy Studies, the long-term contracts and the price formulas based on oil, as well as integrated pipelines systems, developed path dependencies in the European energy markets. Infrastructure projects are very capital intensive and durable as it makes it expensive and difficult to diversify quickly. As a result, despite the annexation of Crimea in 2014 and the introduction of sanctions, the percentage of Russian gas imports in the EU remained large.

The historical development of the Russian energetic encounter with Europe is thus a stratified institutionalization process of infrastructuralization. The

traditional pipelines of the Soviet era preconditioned the increase of the volumes due to the economic cooperation after the era of the Cold War and the further development of infrastructure systems like Nord Stream and TurkStream changed the direction of the transit trajectories and strengthened the power of the dependencies. This intricate system of pipes and contracting generated self-enriching interests and unequal weaknesses.

Geopolitically speaking, there is no way to separate infrastructure development and strategic calculation. Transit revenues, political leverage and regional influence are determined by the pipeline routes. Russia mitigated the risk of disruptions to transit and decreased the bargaining power of Kyiv by developing parallel routes that avoided Ukraine, to the extent that these routes facilitated such disruption in Western Europe and the need to impact consumers of Western Europe. At the same time, the range of flexibilities in the short run in Europe was limited by the use of fixed pipeline systems, which complicated the process of diversification. The outcome was a much intertwined but politically delicate energy relationship.

To conclude, the history of development of Russian-European relations in the energy field is marked by the growth of interdependence on the basis of the presence of a large system of oil and gas supply. Partnership relations after the Cold War entailed economic pragmatism and strategic calculation and became the main element of the European energy system. Druzhba, Nord Stream, and TurkStream, in addition to enabling trade, also left their mark on the geopolitical alignments and power lines across the continent, thus predetermining the significant upheavals and reconsiderations of the post-crisis strategic plans.

## III. Conceptualizing Energy as a Geopolitical Tool

This increasing role of energy as a factor in international politics has prompted the development of ways of understanding oil and natural gas as components of wider power networks than as economic goods. Debate on whether energy is a geopolitical weapon or a win-win trade good in the context of Russian-European relations has dominated most of the literature produced in the modern era. This debate has been shaped by the development of more general trends in International Relations theory, specifically between realist views of power and liberal views of interdependence.

### Sanctions, Energy Weaponization and Political Leverage

Energy weaponization is an idea that can be defined as the purposeful utilization of energy sources, energy pricing, accessibility to infrastructure, or operational control, aimed at reaching political goals. To coexist, realist people see states involved into an anarchic international system where power and endurance prevail. The asymmetrical interdependence between the supplier and consumer makes strategic resources like natural gas instruments of leverage especially when the asymmetrical interdependence exists. Muscovite pre-eminence as an energy provider helped establish a structural advantage in the situation of Russia and Europe, especially to states strongly reliant on imports of pipeline gas by Moscow.

According to scholars who are affiliated to the Center of Strategic and International Studies, energy leverage works better in situations when there are

limited alternatives of supply and when there are inflexible infrastructure. The pipeline systems are long term investments that cannot easily be diverted in the short term thus exposing the consumers to high vulnerability. Pricing formula control, volume of supply and transport routes are high, boosting buyer power of supplier formations. The risk of disruption itself is enough in this situation may produce political impact without resorting to prolonged cutoffs.

The liberal interdependence theory is however a counterargument. Since Russia would have used European markets to export its products to earn very high revenues, it would have been very expensive to Moscow itself, should deliberate disruptions to the supply be employed. According to the factors highlighted by analysts of Oxford Institute of Energy Studies, the sphere of energy trade is encircled by the contractual commitments and prolonged commercial rationale. In the perspective of this, the disruptions can be commercial differences and do not include planned geopolitical extortion. According to the liberal argument, the interdependence theory limits weaponization by increasing the economic rupture of escalation.

The sanctions regimes after the annexation of Crimea in 2014 and the 2022 invasion of Ukraine added complications to the latter. Financial blockades against financial institutions, energy initiatives and technology transfers brought with them mutual economic compulsion. Reacting to this, the Russian cutbacks on the supply of gas to some of the European countries was largely seen to be a retaliatory tactic. The interaction of sanctions with supply manipulation is an example of the ways energy can be used as a part of greater economic statecraft strategies, which combine coercion, signalling and negotiation.

Energy weaponization does not only make an outright cut of supply. It can be also in the form of differentiated pricing, renegotiation of a contract, decision regarding the infrastructure or even discriminatory delivery. These strategies are working in a gray zone between market adaption and political compulsions and therefore attributing and intent is difficult to determine. It is because of this ambiguity that a continued scholarly discussion on the degree to which Russian energy policy is systematic geopolitical strategy or reactive to external pressures has continued to occur.

**Russia Gas Politics in the History of Past Disputes (2006, 2009, 2014).**

The gas disagreements between Ukraine and Russia that occurred in the mid-2000s are often quoted as examples of the energy politics in action. In 2006, viewpoints on gas and transit charges caused short-term gas cuts to European markets via Ukraine. Even though the downstream effects were officially explained as the commercial disputes between Gazprom and the Naftogaz of Ukraine, the sensitivity of the situation in Europe increased the sense of helplessness among consumers. The episode showed that transit controversies could interfere with the overall energy security of the region and this showed the interdependence of pipeline networks.

The crisis that happened in 2009 was even more disruptive. The result of a long standoff was the intense supply disruption in some areas of Europe in winter,

including the Central and South-Eastern areas. These incidents propelled the belief that relying on one supplier, as well as transit routes clustered in one path caused systemic damage. Under realist perspective, the conflicts depicted how Russia might use the control of supply to manipulate its neighboring states especially those that were within its perceived domain of influence. Liberal point of view on the other hand viewed the crises as a result of contractual failures aggravated by political mistrust and not planned coercion.

In 2014, another stage of politicization of gas relations was an annexation of Crimea. Although massive shortages in the supply of large-scale suppliers into Western Europe did not happen instantly, the conflicts and negotiations caused the relationship between Russia and Ukraine to become even strainer. The European Union reacted by enhancing reverse- flow mechanism and increasing storage facilities and encouraging diversify plans. These actions helped to decrease the vulnerability of transit in the short term but failed to help eliminate reliance on Russian gas in general.

Infrastructure strategy was a key issue in all these disputes. Nord stream and Turk stream were some of the projects that Russia defended as measures to untrustworthy transit routes. However, opponents said that going around Ukraine diminished the strategic value of Ukraine and denied it bargaining power in political solutions. The emergence of competing paths therefore explains how even the infrastructure choice itself is a kind of geopolitical instrument that restructures the regional balance of power without actually disrupting the supply.

The combined impact of the 2006, 2009 and 2014 crisis was that it led to the slow securitization of European Union energy policy. What was once deemed as basically a commercial relationship was put into perspective as a strategic weakness? The idea that energy might be exploited politically provided the basis of the more radical changes that would come after the 2022 invasion of Ukraine.

To conclude, the issue of conceptualizing energy as a geopolitical instrument means applying economic and strategic aspects to it. An example of how interference of supply control, transit dependency, and infrastructure development with foreign policy objectives can be seen in Russian gas politics in past disputes. Being read either as an intentional form of coerced, or as a reactionary form of bargaining, these instances may indicate that there is no such thing as energy outside the politics of power in Europe. European efforts to diversify their identity are still defined by the legacy of these battles, and the debates on the topic of strategic autonomy and resiliency are informed by these controversies.

## IV. The Impact of the Russia–Ukraine War

This full-fledged invasion of Ukraine of February 2022 was the biggest upset in the Russian-European energy relations since the end of the Cold war. The once tense but functionally dissimilar interdependent structure was transformed to the field of open geopolitical struggle.

This war did not only disrupt the physical transportation of gas but it also helped to reuse the concept of energy security as the vestage it formed in the policy of European strategies.

The aftermath had taken shape on three interrelated levels: shocks in supplies and prices, macrotrends in the EU policy, and the still stand as depicted by future crises in the region.

**Disruption of the supply and volatility of prices.**

This was followed by a sharp reduction in the Russian natural-gas exports to Europe after the invasion along the main pipeline routes.

One of the immediate effects was recorded in un-paralleled price volatility; European gas benchmark prices have hit record levels in 2022, causing inflationary pressures, industrial slacks and causing people to worry about shortages during the winter. Electricity markets which are closely related to the price of the gas as a result of the marginal prices mechanisms, had increased concurrently. The structural downturn of the Europe energy system, which the crisis showed, was that the pipeline infrastructure was slow to replace intuitively and that the LNG import volume was not distributed uniformly among the member countries.

The policy analysts and academic scholars highlighted that the shock outlined asymmetrical vulnerabilities that were rooted in market of European energy. Central and Eastern Europe countries that were traditionally more dependent on the Russian supply via the pipeline had more difficulty in doing the adjustments than the states that enjoyed access to diversified LNG. The crisis was also able to show how geopolitical conflict would be directly turned into the instability of the economy via the channels of energy. Whereas Russia has been subjected to fluctuation of revenue, Europe was facing an imminent supply shortage and macroeconomic tensions.

Short term measures such as emergency storage and alternate supply contracts lessened the instability of the market to some level over the succeeding periods, but the event highlighted how interdependence of energy can easily become strategic vulnerability when politics becomes bad.

**EU Policies Responses: Diversification and REPowerEU.**

The reaction to the crisis in the European Union included the direct remedial measures and the functional restructuring.

Diversification programs involved an increase in the volume of imports of liquefied natural gas by the United States, Qatar, and other sources, as well as an increase in pipeline supply of Norway and North Africa. Member states quickly invested in floating storage and regasification units (FSRUs) in order to increase the LNG import volume in specific cases in Germany and the Netherlands and that was a strategic move towards abandoning reliance on pipelines, achieving a high degree of flexibility in the international gas markets.

At the same time, the goals on the implementation of renewable energy were also strengthened. Crisis increased an understanding that decarbonizing and the quest to enhance security could meet. The EU aimed at shortening the dependence on imported fossil fuels as the process was accelerated to develop wind, solar, and hydrogen. Supply-side adjustments were supplemented by energy-saving programs such as the work of building renovation and anti-demanding campaigns.

Policy analysts will argue that REPowerEU means something more than the occasional focusing on crisis management; it represents, instead, a restructuration of the energy framework in Europe that is substantive. The plan restates the energy transition as a geopolitical plan, which comprises climate ambitions and strategic autonomy. However, the problem still exists: LNG markets are international in nature, the cost of infrastructure investments is high, and the internal differences between the member states make the coordinated implementation to be a difficult issue. As a result, Russia gas dependence has reduced significantly even though, the new dependencies especially in relation to international trade in LNG have been formed.

### Case Study: The '2025' Slovak -Ukraine Gas Dispute.

Regardless of the fact that Russian exports to Europe were also decelerated after 2022, arguments between the regions remained to underline the instability of transit solutions.

Slovakia, long reliant on gas interference through Ukraine, faced the risk of being uncertain, with transit agreements running out and the volumes and tariff negotiation getting more political prominence. Ukraine, walking the fine line between the needs of war and the destruction of infrastructure demanded new conditions and security assurances. The conflict highlighted the role of the transit states as especially important in European energy security, despite the overall agent decrease in Russian quantities.

The conflict was not as vast as the precedent crises, but it revealed the outstanding weaknesses of Central Europe. It also showed that the issue of security of the energy supply is not preconditioned only by the relations between suppliers and consumers but also by the political stability and strategic intentions of the transit nations. Another problem of intra-European asymmetries was also brought to light in the case: whereas Western European states were more diversified than their access to LNG, land-locked central European states, were more vulnerable to uncertainty surrounding transit.

On a visual geopolitical basis, the 2025 conflict is reflective of the long-standing inter-relationship of both energy and security aspects in the Eastern European region. As EU tries to decouple with the Russian supplies, geographical realities and infrastructural legacies define transitional risk. The case supports the significance of the regional coordination and inter-connectivity, as well as solidarity within the European Union.

## V. European Policy and Strategic Shifts

The eruption of the Russia-Ukraine war has served as a trigger to a rapid change of policy across the European Union as both legal policies and strategic ones are implemented to lessen reliance on Russian energy and increase overall resilience. The European policymakers have realized that use of Russian oil and gas through historical dependence is not only dangerous economically but also geopolitically. The EU in its turn responded with institutional, infrastructural, as well as cooperative strategies to protect member states and neighbors.

### Drafted in the E.U. Parliamentary Resolution and Legal action.

The resolutions of the European Parliament of the first days of the 2022 invasion have recommended adopting an integrated and concerted policy to end the use of Russian fossil energy. All of these resolutions emphasized the necessity of diversification and strengthened sanctions against Russia, as well as emphasized the legality of collective action by member states. The Parliament promoted binding deals in the areas of energy storage, preparation in the case of emergencies, and regarding the joint procurement strategies towards liquefied natural gas (LNG) supplies.

The court proceedings have also become an important tool. The EU has taken advantage of its domestic regulatory and competition frameworks to provide flexibility of the energy markets to react to the supply shocks. The Union aims at eliminating the weaknesses brought about by national policy fragmentation by harmonization of contracts, enforcement of cross-border infrastructure standards and introducing mechanisms of solidarity in energy. Those who work at the Oxford Institute of Energy Studies argue that these actions are indicators of institutionalized concept of strategic autonomy: by imbuing energy security into the institutional structure of law and regulation, the EU strengthens its ability to react to external forces.

## Move to LNG, Renewables and Resilience of Energy

One of the key factors of Europe strategic change has been the speed up in the switch of alternative sources of energy. Liquefied natural gas has turned out to be a component of short over the middle-term diversification initiatives. The expansion of regasification infrastructure has been witnessed, and long-term contracts with suppliers involved in the United States, Qatar and other markets around the world. This has allowed Europe to offset the supply of gas volumes that will be supplied by Russia by pipelines and decrease the supply risks in the short-term.

At the same time, the use of renewable energy has also received a new impulse. The EU has put more investment on wind, solar and hydrogen projects, where they understand that the goal of decarbonisation and energy security is complementary. The rapid uptake of renewables will also decrease the reliance on the imported fossil fuels and improve the subsequent resilience of the geopolitical disruption on an extended basis. There are also energy efficiency programmes such as building retrofits and demand side management programmes which enhance systemic resilience by reducing total consumption and guarding against price shocks.

This conceptual shift on energy security is seen as indicative of the wider conceptualization of energy security at EU where the policy is aimed at diversification of supply, decarbonisation as well as strengthening of infrastructure. Analysts note that such actions not only reduce the susceptibility to the external force, but also enhance the ability of Europe to cope with the global energy markets that are both volatile and competitive.

## Harmonization Modifications and Supporting Agreements.

The strategic changes within Europe are not confined to the member states by including the neighbors that are influenced by the Russian energy policy. Moldova which relies so much on Russian gas has been a point of focus of EU energy diplomacy. They have made agreements to provide Moldova with other sources of gas, to enter the regional energy markets, and to support infrastructure improvements in the country with financial and technical assistance. These mechanisms involve reverse-flow facilities of Romania, availability of LNG through ports of Black Sea and investing in the modernization of pipelines and storage facilities.

The Moldova example is an illustration of how the EU will merge solidarity, the integration of the market and institutional assistance to promote the energy security of its neighborhood. By keeping smaller and less powerful countries stable in case of any disruption, as well, the EU does not only enhance the stability in the region, but also builds on its strategic self-sufficiency. According to scholars the act measures will be a new kind of multilateral energy governance, whereby the collective mechanism will counter the asymmetric leverage that is usually used by large suppliers of energy like Russia.

## VI. Economic and Market Implications

The resulting geopolitical tensions in Russia and Europe after the invasion of Ukraine in 2022 escaped without resulting in lasting economic and market effects, as not only European customers were affected by the global energy trade. The disruption of Russian gas supply to Europe triggered a reshuffling of the supply chains, market places and price schemes therefore revealing both the integration of the global energy markets as well as, the complexity of the energy geopolitics.

### Effects of Russian Redirection of Exports to Asia and Sanctions

Russia shifted a significant part of its exports of energy to the Asian markets in response to the decreasing European demand, as well as the effect of sanctions. Russia has particularly seen the growth of such countries as China and India as key consumers of its oil and liquefied natural gas (LNG). Analysts argue that such a change helped to partially offset losses of revenues created by shrinkage of European sales. The growth of long-term agreements and the spot markets with the Asian clients has increased the power of the Moscow in the recent energy markets and diversifies its range of export.

At the same time, the EU, the US, and other western forces centered sanctions limited the exposure of Russia to technological values, funds, and pipeline-stretching developments. Inhibition on investment in Russian liquefaction plants, offshore exploration and pipeline construction inhibited the ability of Russia to replace the European volumes efficiently and quickly. Researchers of the Center of Strategic and International Studies also highlight that the sanctions generated economic constriction in the short-term as well as structural limitations in the long-term and as such, it can influence the strategic considerations of Russia in international energy trade.

### Changes in the market and effects on the prices

The withdrawal of the Russian gas supplies to Europe had a significant effect on the market. The gas prices at the European benchmark had peaked to record high levels in the months that followed the conflict to indicate the tight supply conditions and increased demand of alternative sources. Electricity markets were also affected by price volatility which are linked very much with natural gas by the process of marginal pricing. The energy price skyrocket had direct macroeconomic effects, such as increased inflation, slow industrial production, and increased citizen worries about their affordability and preparedness to confront winter.

The crisis also changed the flows of energy in the world. The increased European demand of LNG created competition to the Asian buyers and has created upwards pressure on the spot-market prices and it underscores the interconnectedness of the regional energy systems. Theorists who investigate this set of dynamics state that the redirection of the flows of trade demonstrates the flexibility and the constraints of the global energy markets. Even though other suppliers would have some capacity to compensate the shortfalls created by the pipeline gas in Russia, the transport capacity, and the competition in pricing also brought new vulnerabilities to the consumers of Europe.

### Complicities of Western facilitated exports of LNG

The Western countries especially the United States increased their LNGC exports to Europe to help in mitigating the crisis. Even though these deliveries brought much needed short-term relief, they also brought complexities. A LNG chain of supply is capital, logistically intensive, requiring port positions, liquefication stations, shipping lines and regasification systems. The rate of deployment was not the same in all parts of Europe and a country was able to get extra capacity in a much faster way and some countries experienced delays because of congestion of ports and lack of infrastructural facilities.

In addition, the competition of LNG in the world market increased. The demand in Europe on substitutes was coupled with strong demand within Asia specifically China, South Korea, and Japan. The effects of spot markets and the conclusion of long-term contracts were the cause of price fluctuations which placed the European importers in a state of high volatility. According to scholars, the increase in resilience due to LNG imports against Russian supply disruptions came at a cost of creating additional dependencies in global markets, shipping logistics and geopolitical stability in supplier regions. The mentioned factors accentuate the trade-offs of diversifying the energy relationship: losing dependence on a specific powerful supplier transfers the anticipated risks onto other more likely and occasionally more diffuse risks.

## VII. Long-Term Security and Geopolitical Considerations

The conflict between Russia and Ukraine has radically changed the analytical paradigm of the European concept of energy security, with the need to plan over the long term, transition to energy faster, and consider remodeling geopolitical preferences. In addition to short-term disruptions of the supply chains and fluctuations in the markets, the crisis has forced policymakers, scholars, and international agencies to consider the flaws in the structural vulnerability of the

energy infrastructure in Europe. Such considerations are not restricted to diversification policies and green embrace but go far deeper into wider security partnerships and trans-Atlantic associations.

### Energy System Transition and Entire Energy Systems Decoupling

One of the key elements of the long-term plan of the European Union is the systematic easing of its energy network concerning the presence of the Russian fossil fuel provider, which will be done by the diversification, integration of the renewable source, and the technological innovations that result in structural reliance diminishing. An example of such an approach is the REPowerEU initiative of the European Commission of 2022, which plays with emergency solutions and complies with the overarching logic of transformation. Immediate mitigation is in the short-term programmes like the importation of LNG since the United States, Qatar, and Norway offer these mitigation instruments, and the medium- and long-term resilience will improve through such investment in wind, solar, hydrogen and energy-programmes.

The energy change adds to the security in various aspects. To start with, the rise in renewables dilutes the above energy leverage of a few large suppliers, thus impeding the coercive power. Second, it improves flexibility in the generational and storage systems that are decentralized to minimize the susceptibility to localized interruptions. Third, energy-saving solutions reduce total usage and in the process reduce vulnerability to fluctuations in the global market, as well as limiting the strain applied to the delivery system. The Oxford Institute of Energy Studies claims that the nexus of diversification, decarbonisation, and efficiency reflects a kind of structural resilience, in which energy policy invariably is a specific combination with strategic security goals.

The concept of decoupling does not only limit itself to imports of fossil fuels, but the reconfiguration of pipelines, the operation of LNG terminuses, and the interconnectors across borders as well, as a means of making the network more flexible and redundant. The growth of the regional grids, reverse-flow capacities, and storage capacity will make the European Union dynamic and responsive to the supply shocks, which will reduce the risk of the cascading disturbances throughout the continent. This infrastructural flexibility plays an important role in the maintenance of energy security and fast tracked the shift to sustainable energy systems.

### NATO, EU Strategic Autonomy and Transatlantic Ties

Energy changes in Europe have both direct effects on NATO and security systems in general. Energy security is also seen as part and parcel of collective defense especially with the overlap of the supply disruptions and aggressive aggression in the geopolitical arena. The members of NATO face a twofold challenge, assuring that they can maintain readiness to operations without letting their energy weaknesses interfere and responding to energy-powered coercion. It is argued that such state-level planning as critical infrastructural protection, energy system cybersecurity, and integration of emergency responses strengthens alliance unity and negatively impacts deterrence.

The other topical factor is strategic autonomy in the European Union. The independence of foreign-policy and security actions of the Europeans who are not tied up to their dependence on the Russian energy resources makes them have a greater ability to perform unhindered by the ties of energy sources. Researchers argue that there was a historical dependency on an outside powerful supplier, which narrowed the choices in policies, particularly responding to the aggressive moves of Russia. The EU uses its power of diversification, integration of renewable sources, and the strengthened regional interconnectivity to enhance its decision-making capability premised on strategic and security needs instead of short to medium-term energy imperatives.

At the same time, transatlantic relations continue to play a key role in the power balance of the EU in energy and security. The United States LNG imports and the systematic regimes in sanctions highlight the unchanged relevance of the U.S. cooperation with the European Union. Although decoupling also reduces the risk of coercion vulnerability, it does not eliminate the need to cooperate with the strategic partners in North America. The transatlantic collaboration enhances avenues with regard to alternative supply, transfer of technology to renewable and energy-efficient project and collaborative strategic planning to overcome threats of hybrid energy. The concept of energy security across the wider context of geopolitical approach reinforces European resilience and solidarity inside NATO.

However, there are also problems associated with long-term implications. Reliance on the international LNG markets, rivalry with Asian customers, and the necessity to invest in the development of significant infrastructure present new addictions. Europe will reduce leverage imposed by Russia, but at the same time, it will be prone to shocks occurring in international market relations, geopolitical conflicts in supplier countries, and technological logjams related to the implementation of the renewable energy. The experts suggest that such trade-offs could be dealt with through long-term insourcing of the national governments, EU institutions, NATO partners, and the stakeholders of the private sector.

## CONCLUSION

The discussion on the role of the Russian factor in the energy security in Europe shows that there has been an unmistakable shift between a stage of mutually dependent economies to an aspect of strategic susceptibility and ultimately structure change. In the past, Russia relied on long pipeline reliance networks like Druzhba, Nord Stream, and TurkStream facilitated Europe to be vulnerable to structural asymmetry which allowed Russia to gain leverage by fixations like pricing, transit and even selective supply cutoffs. Despite the fact that the previous phases of energy exchange were usually marked by a pragmatic collaboration, the 2006, 2009, and 2014 crises proved that energy may be used as a geopolitical tool. These controversies underscored the vulnerability to infrastructure and transit dependency and the political calculation in existence and exposing the vulnerability of energy interdependence to become a source of power instead of a path to security.

The invasion of Ukraine in 2022 took the scale of a full invasion, which served as a stimulus driving sweeping changes in the market, economy and policies in Europe. The intervention of supply, the massive fluctuations in prices and the stopping of the pipeline delivery revealed the shortcomings of the conventional approach to the energy strategic plans. In reaction, European Union initiated an overall package of policy measures, the most notable of them being the REPowerEU the plan, which encompasses the topics of the supplier's diversification, the development of LNG infrastructures, speeding up the implementation of renewable energy, and introduction of the programmes of the energy efficiency. The Resilience strategy of the EU was extended into its neighboring regions with the help of regional support mechanisms, such as agreements with Moldova and the other neighboring states, which strengthened the energy security due to its integration with the infrastructure. All of this, along with legal frameworks and resolutions of the parliament, is an indication of rethinking the energy system in Europe, towards a situation of no longer being dependable, but rather being resilient and structurally flexible.

The crisis also restructured the world energy flows, where Russia had to redirect its exports towards Asia and the imports of LNG mediated through the West presented both opportunities and challenges. The competitive nature and market instability on the energy systems represented the global energy systems that are interlocked, and the diversification and decoupling of the Russian supplies needs to be balanced by building infrastructure, logistics, and plans. At the same time the shift to renewables and decarbonisation born as a climate and security necessity reduced the degree of leverage in the supply of fossil fuels and created a more adaptable and resilient energy system.

The development of the European energy policy is, strategically speaking, a strengthen of both the EU autonomy and the NATO coordination and, consequently, of coordinated security along with transatlantic relations. The committed investments in the renewable energy, storage, and interconnectivity have helped to overcome the structural weakness, and the further cooperation with allies guarantees the possibility to find other energy sources and makes the geopolitical resilience better. The shift of energy also rebalances the balance of power, limits the influence possibilities of Russia over the European states, and encourages more diversified and multipolar order of energy.

On the basis of these observations, some policy suggestions can be made towards strengthening more on the energy security of Europe. To begin with, there is the urgent need to enhance diversification of the sources of supply; that of LNG, pipeline options, regional interconnectivity, among others just to eliminate reliance on a single supplier. Second, increased speed with which renewable energy and related storage technologies are implemented will increase resiliency and will support climate goals. Third, it will be sufficient to make a strategic investment in infrastructure modernization, such as including reverse-flow pipelines, interconnectors, and digital grid-management, whereby such responses will be much more flexible in response to disruptions. Fourth, increased legal and institutional

cooperation to coordinate the emergencies and energy solidarity would ease the unequal distributions of the region and avoid the development of the local crises. Lastly, a long-term experience of transatlantic and regional collaboration including strategic planning and matters of technology transfer will see Europe handle future geopolitical shocks comfortably.

To sum up, the connection between Russian impacts on the energy security of the European region has had a long and prosperous history based on structural dependence and asymmetric leverage. However, the resilience, diversification and decarbonisation discussed within the realms of European energy policy have changed the post-Russia-Ukraine war strategic and policy response, which has placed these three elements at the heart of energy policy. Through the incorporation of infrastructure renewal, renewable use, and collaborative models, Europe is on the path of securing a more reliable and independent energy system far resistant to external forces, and changes in the global energy structures. A combination of the lessons that the past has taught along with active strategy planning creates a blueprint on the proper path of maintaining long-term stability, sustainability, and the geopolitical resilience of European energy security.

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