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THE SECURITIZATION OF ENERGY POLICY IN THE EUROPEAN UNION:

Evolution, Consequences, and Lessons in the Pursuit of Strategic Autonomy

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Men accept change only when it is necessary,

and they see necessity only in crisis.

Jean Monnet

RESUMEN

La invasión rusa de Ucrania en 2022 transformó profundamente la política energética europea al convertir una dependencia conocida y asumida durante décadas en una vulnerabilidad estratégica inmediata. Lo que hasta entonces había sido gestionado principalmente mediante instrumentos de mercado, estrategias de diversificación y objetivos de transición climática pasó a ocupar un lugar central en la agenda de seguridad de la Unión Europea. La crisis puso de manifiesto que el acceso a la energía no era únicamente una cuestión económica, sino también un elemento esencial para la estabilidad política, la resiliencia económica y la capacidad de actuación internacional de la Unión.

A partir de este cambio, el análisis examina si la respuesta europea puede entenderse como un proceso de securitización de la política energética y hasta qué punto dicha transformación ha reforzado realmente la autonomía estratégica de la Unión. La investigación muestra que la UE logró reducir de forma significativa su dependencia directa de Rusia mediante medidas excepcionales como REPowerEU, las obligaciones de almacenamiento de gas, la reducción coordinada de la demanda y diversas intervenciones de mercado destinadas a contener los efectos de la crisis. Sin embargo, esta respuesta no eliminó la vulnerabilidad estructural europea, sino que la reconfiguró y desplazó hacia nuevos proveedores, mercados globales de GNL, rutas marítimas estratégicas, materias primas críticas y tecnologías limpias extranjeras. En consecuencia, aunque la crisis impulsó una mayor integración y capacidad de respuesta a nivel europeo, la autonomía estratégica alcanzada sigue siendo parcial y presenta importantes limitaciones.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Securitización energética; Unión Europea; seguridad energética; autonomía estratégica; REPowerEU; dependencia externa; gobernanza energética.

ABSTRACT

Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2022 profoundly transformed European energy policy by turning a dependency that had been known and accepted for decades into an immediate strategic vulnerability. What had previously been managed mainly through market instruments, diversification strategies and climate transition objectives moved to the centre of the European Union's security agenda. The crisis revealed that access to energy was not merely an economic issue, but also an essential condition for the Union's political stability, economic resilience and capacity to act internationally.

Against this background, the analysis examines whether the European response can be understood as a process of securitization of energy policy and to what extent this transformation has genuinely strengthened the Union's strategic autonomy. The research shows that the EU significantly reduced its direct dependence on Russia through exceptional measures such as REPowerEU, gas storage obligations, coordinated demand reduction and several market interventions aimed at containing the effects of the crisis. However, this response did not eliminate Europe's structural vulnerability; rather, it reconfigured and displaced it towards new suppliers, global LNG markets, strategic maritime routes, critical raw materials and foreign clean technologies. Consequently, although the crisis promoted greater integration and response capacity at the European level, the strategic autonomy achieved remains partial and subject to significant limitations.

KEYWORDS: energy securitization; European Union; energy security; strategic autonomy; REPowerEU; external dependence; energy governance

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INTRODUCTION

Problem statement

For several decades, the European Union's energy policy has been centred on three closely linked priorities: market integration, affordable supply and gradual decarbonisation. The liberalisation of national markets, the expansion of cross-border infrastructure and the European Green Deal reflected the idea that competition and economic interdependence could guarantee security whilst contributing to climate neutrality (Maltby, 2013). Under this model, the EU maintained close energy ties with Russia. Russian gas supplied via pipelines was relatively cheap, promoted industrial competitiveness and was underpinned by long-term contracts and infrastructure. However, it also created an asymmetric dependency that was not sufficiently taken into account despite the gas disputes of 2006 and 2009 and the annexation of Crimea in 2014.

The Russian invasion of Ukraine on 24 February 2022 exposed the political consequences of this dependence. Russia's share of EU gas imports, approximately 45% in 2022, became a direct vulnerability as deliveries declined, prices increased and energy supply became connected to the Union's capacity to sanction Russia and support Ukraine (*REPowerEU - 4 Years On*, n.d.). The EU responded through REPowerEU, storage obligations, coordinated demand reduction, market interventions and accelerated diversification (European Commission, 2022a). By 2025, Russian gas had fallen to around 12% of EU imports and 36 billion cubic metres. Nevertheless, LNG increased from 20% of EU gas imports in 2021 to 45% in 2025, increasing exposure to global prices, maritime routes and external suppliers (European Council & Council of the European Union, 2026).

The 2026 Iran conflict demonstrated that the EU´s energy vulnerability was not limited to Russia. It also derives from the Union's exposure to global fossil-fuel markets, strategic transport routes and geopolitical crises over which it exercises limited control. Disruptions around the Strait of Hormuz have affected a shipping route through which approximately a quarter of global oil trade and nearly a fifth of global LNG exports passed (International Energy Agency, 2026). The principal problem addressed by this thesis is therefore not only whether the European Union successfully reduced Russian energy imports, but whether the post-2022 response represents a broader securitization of energy policy and whether this transformation has created an effective pathway toward European strategic autonomy.

Research questions

The main aim of this study is to provide a concrete answer to the following research question: To what extent did the EU's response to Russia's 2022 invasion constitute a securitisation of energy policy, and why has this transformation produced only limited strategic autonomy? This question brings together two dimensions that are often examined separately. The first concerns the transformation of EU energy policy after the Russian invasion of Ukraine. The second concerns whether this transformation has strengthened the Union's capacity to act without excessive dependence on external actors. By analysing securitization, I move beyond a descriptive account of post-2022 measures and instead examine how energy dependence was constructed as a threat, which political actors promoted this framing, which referent objects were considered to require protection, and whether the measures adopted departed from ordinary political and legal procedures.

The first subsidiary question asks: Which actors, threat constructions, audiences and emergency measures characterised the EU's post-2022 energy response? And to what extent did these developments move EU energy policy beyond ordinary politicisation? Answering this requires establishing what counts as securitization and how it differs from ordinary politicisation. Chapter One therefore develops the theoretical framework, drawing on the Copenhagen School and later contributions to identify the elements required for a successful securitizing move. Chapter Two reconstructs the evolution of the EU energy model, comparing the legal and normative foundations of the pre-2022 framework with the post-invasion shift. Chapter Three then applies the analytical framework to assess whether the EU's response effectively moved energy from normal politics into the realm of emergency politics.

The second subsidiary question examines whether this legal and political response has produced an effective long-term approach to energy. This is addressed in Chapter Four, which analyses the consequences of the post-2022 energy framework and provides a comprehensive assessment of the current state of EU energy governance. This chapter also evaluates the impact of a second stress test, the Iran and Gulf crisis, and identifies the legislative and political gaps that continue to constrain the development of a coherent energy strategy.

This leads to the third and final question: which reforms could convert temporary emergency responses into a coherent long-term strategy for European energy resilience and strategic autonomy? The final chapter addresses this question by outlining proposals to strengthen the EU's capacity to act, with particular attention to avoiding the replacement of one concentrated dependence with another, whether through LNG suppliers, critical raw materials, foreign clean technologies or vulnerable transport corridors.

Relevance and objectives

This study is of particular interest, as it examines the European Union's energy crisis not as a temporary disruption, but as a structural turning point that has redefined the logic of EU energy policy. Existing analyses tend to focus on the immediate consequences of Russia's invasion of Ukraine, but the vulnerabilities that came to light in 2022 have not disappeared. On the contrary, they have evolved within a geopolitical environment marked by instability in the Middle East, a growing concentration in global LNG markets, a reliance on clean technologies and critical foreign raw materials, as well as persistent fragmentation within the EU itself.

By analysing these developments from a security perspective, this thesis aims to clarify how energy dependence has been reframed as a security threat, which actors have driven this shift, and to what extent the resulting measures have strengthened the EU's capacity to act autonomously. The study therefore pursues four objectives: to analyse how the security dimension of EU energy policy has been strengthened since 2022; to identify the actors, threats, referent objects and audiences involved in this process; to assess whether the crisis in Iran and the Gulf confirms or alters the post-2022 dynamics; and to propose realistic reforms that reduce external dependence without creating new strategic vulnerabilities.

Hypothesis

This thesis argues that geopolitical crises, particularly the Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2022 and the subsequent instability affecting Iran and the Gulf, have acted as catalysts for the securitization of European energy policy. Since 2022, energy has increasingly been presented not only as an economic, environmental or regulatory matter, but as a condition for protecting European citizens, political unity and the Union's ability to act internationally. This construction obtained sufficient political and social acceptance to legitimise extraordinary measures, including compulsory storage requirements, coordinated demand reduction, temporary intervention in energy markets and the accelerated replacement of Russian supplies.

However, securitization does not automatically translate into a fully comprehensive long-term strategy. First, many exceptional measures were temporary and linked to specific emergency instruments rather than incorporated into a permanent governance framework. Second, audience acceptance was sufficient to support crisis coordination, but not to overcome national control over energy mixes, infrastructure and external supply relations. Third, the reduction of dependence on Russia did not eliminate the structural vulnerability of the European energy system. Instead, dependence partly shifted towards global LNG markets, maritime transport routes, alternative fossil-fuel suppliers, critical raw materials and foreign clean technologies.

The expected finding is therefore that securitization has strengthened the European Union's capacity to manage immediate disruption, but has not produced full strategic autonomy. It has changed the instruments and priorities of energy policy without fully resolving the institutional fragmentation and external dependencies that continue to constrain long-term European action.

Methodology

This thesis adopts a qualitative case-study methodology that combines securitization theory with EU policy and legal analysis. The aim is to understand not only which measures were adopted after 2022, but how political actors framed energy dependence as a security threat and how this framing shaped institutional responses.

The analysis draws on four complementary types of evidence. First, discourse analysis is applied to declarations, speeches and communications issued by EU institutions, allowing me to identify the actors involved in securitizing energy and the narratives through which threats were constructed. Second, legal analysis examines the Treaty provisions and regulations used to implement the crisis response, with particular attention to Articles 122 and 194 TFEU and the emergency instruments adopted after 2022. Third, institutional and market data are used to trace changes in import dependence, supplier concentration, infrastructure bottlenecks and governance practices. Fourth, these primary sources are interpreted through academic literature on securitization, energy security and strategic autonomy, which provides the conceptual tools needed to assess whether the EU's actions constitute a shift from normal politics to emergency politics.

In order to avoid equating politicisation with securitization, the thesis applies a differentiated analytical threshold. Politicisation is identified when energy becomes a matter of public debate, regulation or institutional intervention through ordinary procedures. Securitization is identified only when energy dependence is framed as an exceptional threat, accepted by relevant audiences and translated into emergency-oriented legal or political measures. Strategic autonomy is assessed through the EU's capacity to reduce supplier concentration, withstand external shocks, coordinate collective action and prevent external dependence from becoming a source of political vulnerability.

Together, these methods allow for a comprehensive evaluation of how geopolitical crises have reshaped EU energy policy and its prospects for long-term autonomy.

CHAPTER 1. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: SECURITIZATION

This chapter establishes the theoretical foundations used to assess whether the EU´s post-2022 energy response constitutes a securitization movement rather than an ordinary political act. Its purpose is to provide the necessary framework needed to answer the central question of the thesis: how can we distinguish between heightened political attention to energy from a genuine shift into emergency politics?

The chapter first outlines the main assumptions of securitization theory, focusing on the Copenhagen School's understanding of security as a speech act, and on later contributions that emphasise audience acceptance, institutional context, and policy effects. It then applies these concepts to the energy domain, showing how dependence, scarcity or disruption can be framed as threats to the functioning of the economy, society or political order.

The chapter concludes by defining the analytical framework and the securitization indicators used in the empirical analysis: the presence of securitization actors, the construction of a narrative that presents energy dependence as a threat, a significant acceptance of this framing by relevant audiences, and the adoption of exceptional or emergency measures. These indicators allow the subsequent chapters to assess not only whether EU institutions used the language of security, but whether this discourse produced concrete political and legal effects that moved energy policy beyond ordinary governance.

1. SECURITIZATION THEORY

Securitization theory emerged in the aftermath of the Cold War in the 1990s, as part of a broader attempt to rethink the concept of security in International Relations. Against traditional approaches that had largely reduced security to military threats, interstate conflict and the defence of the state, the Copenhagen School sought to broaden the security agenda and to explain how issues that were not originally military could nevertheless come to be treated as matters of security. Authors such as Barry Buzan, Ole Wæver and Jaap de Wilde argued that security should not be understood only as an objective condition, but also as a political and discursive construction through which certain issues are elevated above ordinary politics (Ramadhan, 2023).

This does not mean that material conditions are irrelevant. A threat discourse will usually be more persuasive when it resonates with existing vulnerabilities, historical fears, institutional constraints or social expectations. However, securitization theory insists that the analytical focus should not be limited to the existence of danger itself. The key question is how, by whom, under what conditions, and with what consequences a given issue is transformed into a matter of security (Waever, 1995). This makes the theory particularly useful for analysing policy areas that have moved from technical or economic governance into a logic of urgency, exception and survival.

From this perspective, a social or political issue does not become a security matter solely because it is materially dangerous. Rather, it becomes securitized when it is successfully presented as an existential threat to a valued referent object, such as the state, a society, an economy, territorial integrity, collective identity, or even the environment (Buzan et al., 1998). Security is therefore not merely a descriptive category; it is a process through which political actors construct a threat, demand priority, and justify the adoption of urgent or exceptional measures. As Wæver (1995) argues, security operates as a speech act: by declaring that a certain issue threatens survival, the actor is not only describing reality, but attempting to produce a new political reality in which extraordinary action becomes legitimate.

The classic model identifies three main components. First, there must be a securitizing actor, meaning an individual or institution with sufficient authority or legitimacy to articulate the threat. In practice, these actors are often governments, political leaders, security agencies or international organisations. Second, there must be a referent object that is said to be existentially threatened. Third, there must be an audience whose acceptance, whether explicit or implicit, enables the securitizing move to become politically effective (Buzan et al., 1998). In this sense, as Jori Kalkman (2019) notes, securitization is not complete unless the targeted audience recognises the threat as sufficiently serious to justify action that would otherwise be politically difficult, legally exceptional or institutionally unusual.

The key analytical question, therefore, is not simply whether a danger exists, but how, by whom, and under what conditions it is transformed into a matter of "security". In that regard, the Copenhagen School distinguishes between non-politicized, politicized, and securitized issues. A politicized issue has entered the sphere of public policy and is handled through ordinary political mechanisms, while a securitized issue is represented as a threat to survival and therefore as something that requires emergency action, priority, and exceptional responses (Ramadhan, 2023).

Nevertheless, the Copenhagen School has also been criticised for being too formalistic and excessively centred on the speech act itself. Balzacq argues that securitization should be understood as a pragmatic and contextual process, shaped not only by language, but also by institutions, power relations, historical conditions and the strategic position of the actor (Balzacq, 2011). In this view, identifying who framed an issue as a threat is not enough. It is also necessary to examine why that discourse became persuasive, through which institutional channels it was translated into action, and what political effects it produced. Similarly, Stritzel criticises the linearity of the Copenhagen model, especially the ambiguity surrounding audience acceptance (Demurtas, 2019). The problem is that securitization rarely occurs through a clear moment in which a unified audience explicitly accepts a security claim; rather, acceptance may be implicit, fragmented, gradual, or expressed through institutional behaviour rather than public endorsement (Stritzel, 2011). This is particularly important in the EU, where there is no single audience, but a plurality of institutional and political actors, including Member States, EU institutions, markets and public opinion.

These criticisms are especially relevant for this dissertation because the securitization of EU energy policy cannot be assessed only through speeches or official declarations. A purely discursive approach would risk overstating securitization whenever EU actors use the language of security. For that reason, this study adopts a contextual approach: it retains the Copenhagen School's core insight that securitization occurs when an issue is constructed as an existential threat, but it follows Balzacq and Stritzel in treating securitization as dependent on context, audience reception, institutional capacity and policy practice. In practical terms, this means that the dissertation will examine not only whether EU actors framed energy dependence as a threat, but also whether that framing generated legal, political or regulatory effects that departed from ordinary energy governance.

2. POLITICISATION, SECURITIZATION AND DESECURITIZATION

A central distinction when assessing a securitization process, is the difference between politicisation and securitization; not every issue that becomes conspicuous, contested or strategically important should be considered securitized. Politicisation means that an issue has entered the sphere of public decision-making. It becomes subject to political debate, legislation, institutional reform or public disagreement. Securitization, by contrast, requires a further step: the issue must be framed as an existential threat in a way that legitimises urgent, exceptional or emergency-oriented responses (Ramadhan, 2023).

This distinction is essential because energy has long been politically relevant. States have always cared about access to energy, prices, infrastructure, and sufficient supply. However, strategic relevance is not the same as securitization. An issue may be economically vital and politically debated without being treated as a matter of survival. In that case, it remains politicized, but not securitized.

Securitization therefore requires an analytical threshold. The issue must be represented as threatening the survival or basic functioning of a referent object, and this framing must enable a departure from ordinary governance. In practical terms, this means looking not only at discourse, but also at whether the framing of the issue produces emergency regulation, exceptional funding, temporary derogations, accelerated procedures, crisis-based coordination, or a redistribution of competences.

This conceptual separation is crucial to prevent the analysis from equating political salience with securitization. The fact that an issue becomes more visible, contested or institutionally prioritised does not, by itself, mean that it has entered the realm of security. In the case of EU energy policy, the distinction makes it possible to assess whether the post-2022 response simply intensified a pre-existing concern with energy dependence, or whether it produced a deeper reconfiguration of the policy field. The central question is therefore whether energy continued to be governed primarily as a matter of market regulation, climate policy and supply management, or whether it was recast as an existential question linked to sovereignty, social cohesion and the EU's capacity to act autonomously in an increasingly unstable geopolitical environment.

The reverse movement is desecuritization. In the Copenhagen School's formulation, desecuritization refers to "moving issues out of threat-defense sequence and into the ordinary public sphere" (Buzan et al., 1998, p. 29). It therefore occurs when an issue ceases to be governed primarily through urgency, exception and emergency justification, and is instead returned to ordinary political debate, institutional procedures and long-term policy-making. This does not necessarily mean that the issue becomes irrelevant or depoliticised. Rather, it means that the threat framing loses its exceptional status and that the problem can be addressed through normal governance mechanisms. In this sense, desecuritization is often presented as preferable to securitization, because security is understood by the Copenhagen School as a failure to handle issues within normal politics (Wæver, 2011). However, securitization may still be useful in circumstances requiring rapid mobilisation, priority and concentration of resources. For the purposes of this thesis, desecuritization will therefore be understood not as the removal of energy from strategic debate, but as the gradual movement of energy governance away from temporary emergency measures and back into stable, institutionalised and ordinary EU policy-making.

3. ENERGY SECURITIZATION

The application of securitization theory to energy reflects the broader expansion of the security agenda beyond the military domain. Energy is not only a technical sector or a market commodity. Modern societies depend on stable and continuous energy flows to sustain economic production, public services, transport, heating, digital infrastructure and social order. A prolonged disruption of energy supply can therefore generate cascading effects, including industrial paralysis, price shocks, inflation, social unrest and a weakening of state capacity (Bordoff & O´Sullivan, 2025). For this reason, energy can easily become a security issue when dependence, scarcity or disruption is framed as a threat to the basic functioning of the economy, society or political order (Ramadhan, 2023).

However, it is important to clarify that energy is not automatically securitized by virtue of being strategically important. Realist approaches have traditionally understood energy as a component of national power, insofar as access to resources strengthens industrial capacity, diplomatic leverage and, indirectly, military capability. Liberal approaches, by contrast, have tended to place greater emphasis on the stabilising effects of trade, market integration and mutual dependence (Maltby, 2013). This logic is close to Keohane and Nye's concept of complex interdependence, according to which relations between states are shaped not only by military power, but also by dense economic, institutional and transnational ties that may create incentives for cooperation and restraint (Keohane & Nye, 1977). Before 2022, much of the EU's energy model reflected this assumption. Internally, it relied on liberalisation, interconnection and market integration among Member States; externally, it accepted sustained energy relations with ambivalent actors such as Russia on the premise that trade could moderate geopolitical tensions (Maltby, 2013). The Russian invasion of Ukraine challenged this premise by exposing the coercive potential of asymmetric dependence. Rather than operating as a guarantee of stability, energy interdependence became a source of vulnerability when one actor proved willing to exploit dependency for geopolitical purposes.

At the same time, energy securitization can produce tensions. It may accelerate decarbonisation by making renewables a matter of resilience, but it may also justify short-term fossil fuel substitutions or new LNG dependencies. Therefore, the question is not only whether energy has been securitized, but what type of securitization has occurred and whether it supports or contradicts the EU's longer-term normative and governance objectives.

4. STRATEGIC AUTONOMY AS REFERENT OBJECT AND EVALUATIVE CRITERION

For the purposes of this dissertation, strategic autonomy can be understood as one of the main referent objects of EU energy securitization. In securitization theory, the referent object is the entity presented as existentially threatened and therefore as possessing a legitimate claim to protection or survival (Buzan et al., 1998).

In classical security studies, this position was usually occupied by the state. In the EU context, however, the object is more diffuse. The Union is not a state in the traditional sense, but it has developed forms of collective vulnerability and collective capacity in areas such as trade,, climate policy, energy governance and internal market regulation (articles 3 & 4 TFEU). For this reason, what is threatened is not only the physical continuity of gas, oil or electricity supplies, but also the Union's capacity to make autonomous political and economic decisions.

According to the EU Global Strategy, strategic autonomy refers to the EU's capacity to act autonomously in order to promote its common interests, principles and values (European External Action Service, 2016). Applied to energy, this does not imply complete self-sufficiency, which would be unrealistic given the EU's limited fossil resources and its continued exposure to external suppliers. Rather, it refers to the ability to prevent external dependence from becoming a source of political vulnerability. In this sense, energy insecurity affects not only households, companies or industrial production, but also the Union's freedom to sanction, regulate, decarbonise and act geopolitically.

This explains why the Russian invasion of Ukraine transformed strategic autonomy into a more concrete political concern. The Versailles Declaration of March 2022, linked the pursuit of greater European autonomy to defence, energy supply and the economy, with the phasing out of EU dependence on Russian gas, oil and coal (Damen, 2022). Energy dependence was therefore not framed merely as a market failure or a supply problem, but as a constraint on the EU's capacity to act as an autonomous political actor.

For this reason, strategic autonomy is treated in this thesis in a dual sense. It forms part of the referent object invoked in EU discourse, insofar as energy dependence was presented as limiting the Union’s capacity to act. At the same time, it functions as an evaluative criterion through which the consequences of securitization are assessed. The question is therefore not whether the EU achieved energy independence, but whether it became more capable of managing external suppliers without being politically constrained by it.

5. EU ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK: ACTORS, THREATS, AUDIENCES AND EMERGENCY MEASURES

On the basis of the preceding theory, this study assesses the securitization of EU energy policy after 2022 through four cumulative indicators.

First, we examine the presence of securitizing actors. In the EU context, these include the European Commission, the European Council, the Council of the EU, the European Parliament, national governments and, in some cases, energy regulators or strategic agencies. Their relevance depends on their institutional authority to define the crisis and propose measures. The European Commission is especially important because it has historically acted as a policy entrepreneur in energy governance, framing dependence and fragmentation as European problems requiring European solutions (Maltby, 2013).

Second, it analyses the construction of the threat. The main threat is not simply high energy prices or insufficient supply, but the political interpretation of external dependence as a strategic vulnerability. After 2022, Russian fossil fuel dependence was framed as a threat, in words of President von der Leyen (2022b): “This is a war on our energy, a war on our economy, a war on our values and a war on our future”. This indicator will therefore focus on whether EU institutions presented energy dependence not merely as an economic problem, but as a strategic constraint on the Union’s capacity to act.

Third, it considers audience acceptance. In the EU, the audience is plural and fragmented. It includes primary Member States, energy markets, industries and public opinion. Acceptance does not need to be unanimous, but it must be sufficient to allow measures that would not have been politically feasible under ordinary conditions. This is particularly important because EU securitization does not occur through a single sovereign decision, but through negotiated institutional acceptance.

Fourth, and most importantly, it examines whether the securitizing discourse translated into exceptional or emergency-oriented measures. This includes the use of crisis legal bases, temporary emergency regulations, or derogations from ordinary market rules. This fourth indicator is decisive because it distinguishes securitization from mere politicisation. As argued above, the threshold is crossed when threat construction and audience acceptance enable a move, even partial and temporary, from normal energy governance to emergency-oriented politics.

This framework prevents the analysis from making an exaggerated claim. The argument is not that EU energy policy has been fully transformed into a permanent security framework. Rather, the thesis argues that geopolitical crisis triggered a partial, legalised, but uneven securitization of EU energy policy. This securitization was strong enough to justify extraordinary measures and reframe energy as a matter of societal and political survival and of strategic autonomy, but not strong enough to overcome the structural limits of EU energy governance, including national control over the energy mix, divergent threat perceptions, infrastructure asymmetries and dependence on new external suppliers.

CHAPTER 2. THE EVOLUTION OF EU ENERGY POLICY

This chapter reconstructs the evolution of EU energy policy to explain the structural conditions that made post-2022 securitization possible. It asks why Russian energy dependence became a top-tier security issue after the invasion of Ukraine, even though asymmetric energy dependence had existed for decades. The chapter therefore avoids treating 2022 as the origin of European vulnerability. Instead, it examines how earlier policy choices, legal constraints and geopolitical warning signs created a fragile energy model that was already politicised before 2022, but not considered a risk until the governing actors shifted their narrative and presented it as such.

We begin by analysing the pre-2022 model, its continuity despite earlier energy crises, and showing that geopolitical risks predated the invasion but were not recognized or framed as such, and were managed through ordinary regulatory tools. The chapter also examines the institutional limits of EU energy governance, particularly the tension between shared competences and Member-State control over the energy mix preventing stronger and more coordinated action from being taken. It concludes by identifying the structural vulnerabilities of the pre-2022 energy system, which will be the basis for the following chapter establishing that the invasion did not create vulnerability, but transformed its political meaning, making securitizing claims more credible, and therefore allowing for stronger action to be taken.

1. PRE-2022 EU ENERGY MODEL AND EARLIER WARNING SIGNS: 2006, 2009 AND CRIMEA

Before 2022, EU energy policy was structured around a changing balance between three main priorities: market integration, decarbonisation and security of supply. Although concerns about dependence and external vulnerability were not absent, they were generally managed through ordinary regulatory instruments rather than through an explicitly security-driven logic. Energy was treated primarily as a market and environmental policy area: liberalisation, competition, cross-border interconnection, infrastructure investment and gradual diversification were expected to reduce vulnerability without requiring a deeper transfer of sovereignty to the EU level (Maltby, 2013).

The origins of this model can be traced back to the oil shocks of the 1970s, when Western economies first experienced the political consequences of energy dependence. The 1973–1974 oil embargo (Rodríguez Martínez, 2021), followed by the second oil shock linked to the Iranian Revolution, showed that energy supply could be deliberately disrupted and used as a geopolitical instrument. As a result, advanced economies began to develop strategic reserves, diversify suppliers and, in some cases, expand nuclear energy in order to reduce exposure to Middle Eastern oil (Valdez, 2020). However, at the European level, this did not yet translate into a fully integrated energy security policy. Energy security entered the political agenda, but mainly as a concern to be managed by states and through coordination among consumers, not as a central supranational competence.

From the 1990s onwards, the European approach shifted towards market integration. In a post-Cold War context marked by liberalisation and confidence in economic interdependence, the EU increasingly sought to manage energy through the construction of an internal market. Successive legislative packages promoted competition, unbundling, cross-border interconnection and regulatory convergence, culminating in the Third Energy Package of 2009. The assumption behind this model was that a more integrated and competitive market would improve affordability and, at the same time, strengthen security of supply by allowing energy to circulate more efficiently across borders (Maltby, 2013). In other words, the EU did not ignore security, but it largely expected security to emerge from the proper functioning of the market.

This logic was soon tested by the gas disputes between Russia and Ukraine. In January 2006, a pricing conflict between Gazprom and Naftogaz led to a temporary reduction of gas flows through Ukraine, affecting several EU Member States during winter and revealing the weakness of European coordination mechanisms (Gullo & Tuñón, 2009). The 2009 crisis was even more serious. Gas transit through Ukraine was halted for nearly two weeks, leaving parts of Central and Eastern Europe without sufficient supply and exposing the asymmetry between Member States that had access to alternative routes and those dependent on a single corridor (Maltby, 2013).

These crises did not overturn the market-based model, but they did weaken its credibility. They demonstrated that liberalisation and interdependence could not, by themselves, neutralise geopolitical risk. In response, the EU increased support for infrastructure, LNG terminals and interconnectors, and began to frame energy security as a more collective European challenge. The Lisbon Treaty also gave energy a specific legal basis in Article 194 TFEU, establishing security of supply as one of the objectives of EU energy policy, alongside market functioning, energy efficiency, renewable energy and interconnection. Nevertheless, Member States retained responsibility for their energy mix, which meant that Europeanisation remained partial and constrained (Dulian, 2024).

The annexation of Crimea in 2014 reinforced these concerns. The European Commission's Energy Security Strategy explicitly called for greater resilience and for reduced dependence on specific suppliers, routes and fuels (European Commission, 2014). At the political level, the crisis also intensified debates on energy solidarity and on the risks created by fragmented national approaches, particularly where bilateral energy relations with Russia could undermine the collective position of the Union (Siddi, 2016). However, even after Crimea, the EU response remained essentially one of politicisation rather than full securitization. The problem was recognised, but it was still expected to be solved within the existing framework of market integration, infrastructure development and gradual diversification.

The launch of the Energy Union in 2015 represented the most coherent attempt to reconcile these different priorities within a single framework. It was designed around five dimensions: security of supply, the internal energy market, energy efficiency, decarbonisation, and research and innovation (European Commission, 2015). This framework acknowledged that energy security required more than market efficiency, but it still preserved the basic logic of EU energy governance as a hybrid project: partly geopolitical, but still mainly regulatory, technocratic and market-based.

From 2019, the hierarchy of priorities shifted again with the European Green Deal. Climate neutrality by 2050 became the strategic horizon of EU policy, later made legally binding through the European Climate Law, which also set the target of reducing net greenhouse gas emissions by at least 55% by 2030 (European Climate Law, n.d.). Renewable deployment, electrification and energy efficiency were no longer secondary concerns, but key instruments of economic and regulatory transformation. However, this shift also produced a contradiction. As coal was progressively phased out and nuclear capacity became politically contested in several Member States, natural gas acquired a privileged position as a transition fuel in order to provide system stability, affordability and lower emissions than coal, while renewables were scaled up (Mincicova, 2021).

This trajectory confirms that energy security had already been politicised before 2022, but not fully securitized. It had been recognised as a policy problem, incorporated into EU strategies and addressed through ordinary regulatory, market, climate and infrastructure instruments. However, it had not yet crossed the threshold of securitization, since security concerns remained embedded in long-term governance rather than in emergency legal instruments or exceptional procedures.

In sum, the pre-2022 EU energy model rested on an inherently fragile balance. It sought simultaneously to advance ambitious decarbonisation goals, deepen a liberalised internal market and maintain substantial imports of external fossil fuels. Although security of supply was acknowledged, it did not yet function as the primary organising principle of the system. Market integration and interconnection helped mitigate certain vulnerabilities, yet they also entrenched others by allowing a high degree of dependence on a narrow set of external suppliers, notably Russia.

2. LEGAL AND INSTITUTIONAL LIMITS OF EU ENERGY GOVERNANCE

EU energy governance has long been shaped by a structural tension between shared competences and persistent national sovereignty. Although the Lisbon Treaty elevated energy to primary law, the Union's capacity to act has always been constrained by the prerogatives retained by Member States over their energy mix and supply structures.

Article 194 provides the general basis for EU energy policy, identifying security of supply as a core objective while simultaneously safeguarding Member States' sovereign control over their energy mix (Papadopoulou, 2026). This clause has limited the possibility of imposing a fully centralised European strategy, particularly when measures affect the national energy mix. As a result, EU energy policy has often been characterised by a gap between common objectives and fragmented national implementation.

Even when the EU began constructing a more integrated legal architecture, national sovereignty remained central. The Gas Security of Supply Regulation (EU) 2017/1938 explicitly acknowledges that decisions taken by individual Member States generate externalities in an interconnected market, which justifies regional cooperation. Yet the Regulation still relies on national risk assessments, national preventive plans, and national emergency declarations (arts. 7–11), confirming that operational authority remains decentralised. The solidarity mechanism in Article 13 requiring one Member State to supply another during severe crises, illustrates both the ambition and the limits of integration: it is conceived as a last resort and depends on prior bilateral agreements to determine technical and financial conditions.

A similar dynamic characterises the electricity market framework. Regulation (EU) 2019/943 and Directive (EU) 2019/944 promote an integrated market as the primary guarantee of security, but they restrict national intervention only when it distorts price formation or cross-border trade. This confirms that the Union disciplines national action but does not replace national authority with a fully centralised model. Security of supply is thus framed as a shared responsibility, but one implemented through national institutions and subject to national constraints.

These legal and institutional limits are important because they explain why the EU entered the 2022 crisis with recognised vulnerabilities but without a fully centralised energy security framework. The problem was therefore not only material dependence on Russia, but also the fragmented governance structure through which that dependence had to be managed.

3. STRUCTURAL DEPENDENCE AND STRATEGIC VULNERABILITIES BEFORE 2022

Europe's structural energy dependence is not a recent development. It emerges from long-term dynamics that predate both the 2021 energy crisis and the 2022 Russian invasion. The European Union's vulnerability originates in a structural scarcity of indigenous resources. With the exception of coal, domestic production, particularly in the North Sea, has steadily declined while demand remained high (Dulian, 2024). As early as 2014, the European Commission warned that genuine energy security requires resilience to shocks and a deliberate reduction of dependence on specific fuels, suppliers and routes, noting that such reliance forces "politically difficult strategic choices" (European Commission, 2014). By 2022, this structural fragility is reflected in an import dependency rate of 62.5 percent, a figure that has risen steadily since 1990 (Dulian, 2024).

This vulnerability is intensified by strategic management choices. For decades, the EU, and Germany in particular, embraced the doctrine of *Wandel durch Handel*, assuming that deepening economic interdependence with Russia would foster geopolitical stability (Damen, 2026). This philosophy prioritised low cost imports over diversification and embedded Russian gas into the core of the European energy system. In 2021, Russian pipeline gas supplied roughly 45 percent of EU gas imports (Rodríguez-Rata, 2022) and around 40 percent of total consumption, flowing through Nord Stream, Yamal, Ukrainian transit, TurkStream and LNG deliveries. This was not a narrow reliance on a single corridor but a systemic exposure across the Union's gas architecture (Nunzi, 2025). As Bruegel notes, the EU Russia energy relationship constituted a "structural dependence" tolerated for decades because it provided low cost and predictable volumes (McWilliams et al., 2024).

Infrastructure choices further entrenched this dependence. The completion of Nord Stream 1 and the near-finalisation of Nord Stream 2 reflected a strategic bet on deepening direct connectivity with Russia, particularly in the case of Germany (Rodríguez-Rata, 2022). In practice, this physical architecture narrowed the Union's room for manoeuvre and amplified Russia's leverage through pipeline diplomacy (Feklyunina, 2008). The green transition also produces unintended vulnerabilities. As Member States phase out coal and nuclear power, most notably Germany after Fukushima, natural gas becomes the "bridge fuel" of the transition (Mincicova, 2021).

This systemic exposure, however, was not evenly distributed across the Union. As Table 1 shows, Member States differed substantially in their degree of dependence on Russian gas, their access to alternative routes and their capacity to replace pipeline supplies with LNG.

Country	Russian dependence (%)	Rute 1	Rute 2	LNG access	Exposition
Austria	**80–90**	**Ukraine**		No	**High**
Hungry	**80–95**	**Ukraine**	**TurkStream**	No	**High**
Slovakia	**80–90**	**Ukraine**		No	**High**
Germany	**50–60**	**Nord Stream**		Limited (pre-2022)	**High**
Italy	**~40**	**Argelia**	**Rusia**	Yes	**Medium**
Poland	**40–50**	**Yamal**		Yes	**Medium**
Spain	**<10**	**LNG**	**Argelia**	Yes	**Low**
France	**~20**	**LNG**	**Pipeline**	Yes	**Low**

Table 1. Exposure of selected EU Member States to Russian gas before the 2022 invasion

Source: Own elaboration based on Keliauskaitė and Zachmann (2024).

This uneven geography of dependence is important for the securitization argument. It shows that the EU did not enter the 2022 crisis with a homogeneous vulnerability, but with differentiated national exposure, infrastructure constraints and supply alternatives. As a result, the Russian invasion did not affect all Member States in the same way. It transformed a pre-existing structural dependence into a common European security issue, but the material costs and political constraints of that transformation remained nationally uneven.

By late 2021, these structural weaknesses converge into a severe energy crisis. Gas prices quintuple, storage levels fall to historic lows, and analysts argue that Gazprom is deliberately tightening supply to pressure the certification of Nord Stream 2 (Stelzenmüller and Gross, 2024). When Russia invades Ukraine in February 2022, the EU is therefore not only confronted with a geopolitical shock while already facing a structurally fragile energy position (Nunzi, 2025).

This sequence is essential for the argument: the invasion did not create the EU's energy vulnerability, but it exposed and accelerated vulnerabilities that had accumulated through decades of market-based governance, fragmented national choices, and strategic dependence on Russian gas.

4. THE RUSSIAN INVASION OF UKRAINE AS A TURNING POINT

After 24 February 2022, these vulnerabilities moved to the centre of European security debates. The invasion turned what had been a recurring policy problem into a full-scale strategic emergency. As the International Energy Agency described it, this was the first truly global energy crisis, with consequences likely to be felt for years (Thomson, 2022).

Russia, fully aware of Europe's dependence, progressively reduced gas deliveries to the EU and cut supply altogether to some Member States, including Poland, Bulgaria and Finland (Von der Leyen, 2022a). By October 2022, Russian pipeline deliveries to Europe had fallen by around 80% year on year, illustrating the scale of the shock (Thomson, 2022). The risk of winter shortages was no longer theoretical, but a concrete concern shaping national and EU-level decision-making.

What distinguishes 24 February 2022 as a genuine turning point is that it transformed the political status of concern about energy security, rather than creating it from scratch. Energy reliance had been recognized as a vulnerability before the invasion, but it was mainly controlled using the concepts of long-term transition, market efficiency, and diversification. In contrast, reliance on Russian fossil fuels was reframed as an immediate strategic weakness. The Versailles Declaration captured this shift by linking the war to foreign and defence policy and by presenting the reduction of Russian energy reliance as part of a broader project of European resilience and strategic capacity (European Council, 2022). The significance of the date lies in the conjunction of discourse and disruption: the weaponisation of supply turned a long-term risk into an urgent threat, enabling exceptional policy responses. This change in governing logic is visible in REPowerEU and in the emergency measures adopted between mid-2022 and early 2023.

The restructuring of EU gas imports after the invasion illustrates this shift. As Figure 2 shows, Russian pipeline routes such as Nord Stream, Yamal and Ukrainian transit declined sharply between 2021 and 2023, while LNG and alternative suppliers gained prominence. This reflected not only higher prices but a rapid breakdown of the supply architecture on which several Member States had relied. Yet the decline of Russian flows did not eliminate vulnerability; it marked the beginning of a broader relocation of dependence from pipeline gas to LNG markets and alternative suppliers.

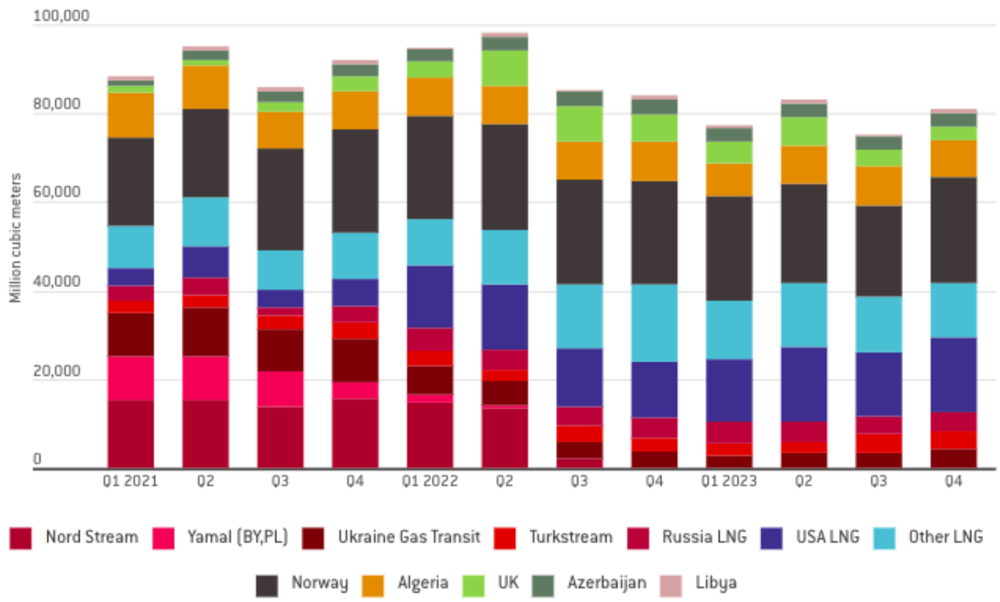

Figure 2. EU natural gas imports by supplier and route, 2021–2023

Source: McWilliams, Sgaravatti, Tagliapietra and Zachmann (2024).

The invasion therefore operates as the analytical bridge between structural vulnerability and securitization. Before 2022, energy dependence had been politicised and partially regulated; after the invasion, it was increasingly framed as a strategic threat requiring accelerated, exceptional and coordinated action.

CHAPTER 3. THE SECURITIZATION OF ENERGY AFTER 2022

The Russian invasion of Ukraine did not create the European Union's energy vulnerability, but it fundamentally transformed its political meaning. Before 2022, dependence on Russian fossils had already been identified as a structural weakness, particularly after the gas crises of 2006 and 2009 and Russia's annexation of Crimea in 2014. However, this vulnerability was still largely managed through the ordinary language of market integration, diversification, competition, and decarbonisation.

After February 2022, this framing shifted abruptly. The same patterns of dependence were reinterpreted as a security problem: not merely an inefficient or risky economic relationship, but a strategic exposure to a hostile actor willing to use energy as a tool of coercion. This reframing opened the political space for exceptional measures and accelerated decision-making.

This chapter evaluates whether the post-invasion reorganisation of EU energy policy can be understood as a process of securitization in the sense defined by the Copenhagen School. It applies the analytical framework developed in Chapter 1, examining four dimensions: the role of securitizing actors, the construction of energy dependence as a threat, the degree of audience acceptance among Member States and EU institutions, and the adoption of exceptional or emergency-oriented measures. Through this structure, the chapter assesses not only whether EU leaders used the language of security, but whether this discourse produced concrete legal and political effects that moved energy policy beyond ordinary politicisation and into the realm of emergency politics.

1. SECURITIZING ACTORS & DISCOURSE

In the EU energy case, the most consequential securitizing actors were the EU Institutions. The European Council played a foundational role by endorsing, at the highest political level, the claim that dependence on Russian fossil fuels constituted a strategic liability requiring rapid and coordinated action. Moreover, the Versailles Declaration was not a technical energy document; it framed the reduction of energy dependence alongside defence, resilience, and economic security, thereby placing energy within a broader strategic posture (European Council, 2022). This mattered because, in a multi-level polity such as the EU, securitization requires not only rhetorical urgency but also institutional authority.

The European Commission then operationalised this framing, with Ursula von der Leyen acting as its most visible spokesperson. In July 2022, she argued that Russia "continues to use energy as a weapon" and called for coordinated emergency planning in the event of a complete supply cut-off, moving the issue beyond price management and into a language of preparedness, coercion, and defence (European Commission, 2022a). This discourse was not detached from policy. It accompanied proposals on gas storage, demand reduction, price caps, joint purchasing, and electricity market intervention, all of which implied that ordinary market mechanisms were no longer considered sufficient.

The European Parliament also contributed to the securitizing move by strengthening the permissive political environment for exceptional action. In April 2022, it called for an immediate full embargo on Russian imports of oil, coal, nuclear fuel, and gas, and demanded the abandonment of Nord Stream 1 and 2 (European Parliament, 2022). Although parliamentary resolutions on external affairs are not binding in the same way as Council regulations, they remain politically relevant because they shape the range of measures that appear legitimate within EU politics.

In addition, national leaders acted as amplifiers, translating the EU-level threat narrative into domestic political terms. Olaf Scholz connected the war to rapid diversification and LNG infrastructure, presenting exceptional speed and investment as security necessities rather than ordinary economic adjustments (Scholz, 2022). Emmanuel Macron warned of the "end of abundance", preparing citizens for scarcity and sacrifice as part of the defence of Europe's social and political model (Willsher, 2022). Mario Draghi made the trade-off even more explicit when he asked whether citizens preferred peace or air conditioning, thereby transforming energy consumption into a moral and security dilemma (ANSA, 2022).

Finally, epistemic and external validators reinforced the credibility of this securitizing discourse. Fatih Birol, Executive Director of the International Energy Agency, described the situation as the first "truly global energy crisis", supporting the idea that energy had moved from a technical sector to a systemic security issue (Euronews, 2022). In Balzacq's terms, such validation matters because securitization is not only a speech act but also a context-dependent process in which authority, audience receptivity, and external conditions reinforce one another (2011).

2. CONSTRUCTION OF THE THREAT AND AUDIENCE ACCEPTANCE

The EU’s securitizing discourse did not construct a single, unitary threat. Rather, it layered several dimensions: geopolitical coercion, economic destabilisation, supply insecurity, and internal fragmentation.

First, dependence on Russia was reframed from interdependence into strategic exposure. Political leaders and EU institutions repeatedly described Russia as instrumentalizing energy, presenting supply reductions not as market fluctuations but as deliberate acts of geopolitical pressure. This discursive move is central because the object of concern was no longer only the availability or price of gas, but the EU’s vulnerability to coercive manipulation.

Second, the threat was presented as urgent and potentially destabilising for social and economic stability. The legal justification of the market correction mechanism connected “Russia’s weaponization of gas supply and market manipulation through intentional disruptions of gas flows have led to skyrocketing energy prices in the Union”, threats to supply security, and wider economic harm (Council of the European Union, 2022e, recital 1). This is important because the regulation did not treat the crisis as a normal supply-demand disturbance. It framed the situation as exceptional, thereby legitimising exceptional intervention.

Third, the crisis was framed as a risk to EU cohesion. Especially given the unequal national exposure to Russian supplies, divergent fiscal capacities, inflation and unilateral policy responses which threatened to fragment the internal market and therefore affect the Member States cohesion. In this sense, the referent object was not only “security of supply” but also the integrity of the Union’s governance model under stress. EU emergency measures repeatedly justified coordination on the grounds that uncoordinated national action could shift burdens unevenly across Member States and undermine the internal market (Papadopoulou, 2026).

The success of this securitization process ultimately depended on audience acceptance. Domestically, European citizens largely endorsed the narrative, as public opinion shifted in favour of reducing dependence on Russian energy and accelerating the transition to alternative sources, even at higher economic costs (Steffen & Patt, 2022). At the institutional level, Member States broadly supported emergency measures such as joint gas purchasing, price interventions, and accelerated diversification strategies, although important divergences persisted. Internationally, actors such as the International Energy Agency and major European think tanks validated the EU's framing by characterizing the crisis as systemic and global, further reinforcing its legitimacy.

However, this approval was neither unanimous nor uncontested. Hungary and several other governments questioned the efficacy and economic consequences of sanctions, challenging the prevailing narrative and resisting aspects of the emergency package (Starcevic, 2026) complicating the negotiations on the European Council. These divergences highlight a structural limitation of securitization: while a shared understanding of the threat can facilitate rapid policy change, it does not guarantee consensus on the appropriate instruments or pace of implementation.

3. FROM NORMAL POLITICS TO EMERGENCY POLITICS

The strongest evidence of securitization is not rhetorical alone, but institutional. Before the war, EU energy governance was mainly structured around market integration, competition, decarbonisation, and long-term regulatory coordination. The European Green Deal, for example, placed climate neutrality by 2050 at the centre of the Union's economic and regulatory agenda (European Commission, 2019). After the invasion, however, the centre of gravity shifted from incremental transition governance to emergency security governance. Energy was no longer treated only as a regulated market or a decarbonisation pathway, but as a strategic vulnerability requiring immediate collective intervention.

The decisive distinction between politicisation and securitization appears in the type of measures adopted. If the EU had merely intensified existing diversification, infrastructure and market policies, the response would have remained within politicisation. The securitizing threshold is crossed when threat construction and audience acceptance enable emergency-oriented instruments that depart from ordinary energy governance.

This shift is visible in the sequence and legal basis of the measures adopted between mid-2022 and early 2023. First, the EU introduced coordinated measures to reduce gas demand. Council Regulation (EU) 2022/1369 established a voluntary 15% demand reduction target and allowed the Council to trigger a "Union alert" that could make reductions mandatory. This was significant because consumption itself became an object of security governance: reducing demand was no longer merely a question of efficiency, but a collective obligation linked to preparedness for supply disruption.

Second, the EU introduced emergency electricity market intervention. Council Regulation (EU) 2022/1854 created temporary measures to address high energy prices, including electricity demand reduction, a cap on certain inframarginal revenues and a temporary solidarity contribution from parts of the fossil-fuel sector. These measures departed from ordinary liberalised market logic because the EU intervened directly in price formation and revenue redistribution in order to contain the social and macroeconomic consequences of the crisis.

Third, the EU adopted a wider set of crisis instruments to prevent fragmentation and manage scarcity. These included the temporary framework to accelerate renewable permitting under Council Regulation (EU) 2022/2577, the temporary market correction mechanism under Council Regulation (EU) 2022/2578, and coordinated tools for joint purchasing and cross-border solidarity. The acceleration of renewables is particularly relevant because it shows that securitization did not simply displace climate policy. Rather, it partially absorbed it: renewables became not only a decarbonisation instrument, but also a security instrument within the EU's strategic vocabulary.

The legal foundation of several measures confirms this movement from normal politics to emergency politics. Key regulations were adopted under Article 122(1) TFEU, an emergency provision allowing Council action in a spirit of solidarity where severe difficulties arise in the supply of certain products, particularly energy. This is analytically important because securitization is not only about the content of policy, but also about the procedural route through which policy is legitimised. By relying on emergency legal bases, the EU prioritised speed, coordination and crisis management over the slower procedures of ordinary internal market governance.

However, this shift should not be overstated. The EU did not abandon legality, institutional procedure or internal bargaining. Its emergency response remained embedded in the Treaties and mediated by Member-State consent. This is what makes the EU case distinctive: securitization occurred through legalised emergency governance rather than through an unconstrained suspension of ordinary rules. The exception was therefore procedural and temporary, not absolute.

4. HAS SECURITIZATION OCCURRED? ANALYTICAL ASSESSMENT

The previous section showed that the EU response moved from ordinary regulatory coordination to emergency-oriented governance. This final section assesses that evidence against the four securitization indicators established in the theoretical framework: securitizing actors, construction of the threat, audience acceptance and extraordinary measures.

A Copenhagen School assessment suggests that securitization of EU energy policy after 2022 did occur, but unevenly and within significant constraints. The first condition is the presence of securitizing actors. This condition is met: the European Council and Commission supplied the authoritative framing, the European Parliament strengthened the permissive political environment, and national leaders translated the threat into domestic security trade-offs.

The second condition is the construction of a serious threat. This was also fulfilled. Russia was no longer framed merely as a problematic supplier, but as an adversarial actor capable of weaponising energy dependence. The consequences of this threat were not limited to supply disruption; they extended to inflation, purchasing power, industrial stability, social cohesion and the integrity of the internal market. This is what distinguishes securitization from mere politicisation. Politicisation would have meant treating energy dependence as a contested policy problem to be managed through ordinary instruments. Securitization meant presenting it as a strategic vulnerability requiring exceptional collective action.

The third condition is audience acceptance. In the EU, this audience was fragmented. Member States were the central institutional audience because energy remains a shared competence and Article 194(2) TFEU preserves national authority over the energy mix and the general structure of supply. The adoption of emergency packages, gas storage obligations, demand reduction instruments, and REPowerEU indicates sufficient elite-level acceptance. Yet this acceptance was pragmatic rather than fully internalised. Negotiations over the market correction mechanism and exemptions from restrictive measures showed that national energy mixes, fiscal capacities, and exposure to Russian imports continued to shape the limits of consensus (Browning, 2022).

Hungary illustrates this tension most clearly. Its dependence on Russian energy gave material weight to its political opposition. In 2020, Russia supplied around 95% of Hungary’s gas imports and 64% of its crude oil imports (International Energy Agency, 2022a). This dependence translated into demands for exemptions, delays, and flexibility, while Viktor Orbán publicly argued that sanctions had caused the Union to “shoot itself in the lungs” (Euronews, 2022). The unanimity requirement in sanctions policy enabled such positions to generate bargaining leverage, confirming that acceptance was partial and transactional rather than uniform (Schäffer, 2025).

At the societal level, acceptance was strong but conditional. In 2022, large majorities expressed solidarity with Ukraine and supported greater EU military cooperation, suggesting that the war had been internalised as a security threat (European Commission, 2022b). At the same time, support coexisted with economic pressure, as 85% reported that rising energy prices affected their purchasing power**.** By 2025, Russia’s invasion of Ukraine remained among the most salient issues facing the EU, and majorities continued to support sanctions, humanitarian aid, and military assistance (European Commission, 2025c). This indicates sustained acceptance, but not unconditional consent.

The fourth condition is the adoption of extraordinary measures. This condition is strongly supported by the evidence. Emergency regulations enabled demand targets, storage mandates, price interventions, revenue caps, fast-track permitting, and coordinated purchasing. These instruments deviated from the pre-war expectation that liberalised markets and ordinary regulatory coordination would manage energy security.

Securitization therefore occurred, but it remained limited. It did not eliminate strategic divergence among Member States, nor did it produce a fully integrated model of European energy governance. National control over the energy mix continues to constrain deeper integration (Wilson & Dobreva, 2019). Moreover, diversification away from Russian fossil fuels has not eliminated dependency; it has partly transformed it. The shift toward LNG and alternative suppliers has improved short-term resilience but has also exposed the EU to new geopolitical chokepoints, supplier dependencies, and price volatility (IEA, 2025). The post-2022 transformation is therefore best understood as partial securitization: sufficient to justify emergency governance, but insufficient to overcome the structural limits of EU energy integration.

CHAPTER 4. NORMATIVE AND GOVERNANCE CONSEQUENCES

The current chapter will examine whether the securitization of EU energy policy after 2022 has produced a coherent and durable transformation of European energy governance or whether it has remained mainly a crisis-driven response. The chapter first analyses the shift in legislative and regulatory priorities after 2022, with particular attention to the use of emergency instruments and the growing centrality of energy security within EU policy. It then evaluates the tensions exhibited by this shift, especially in relation to the European Green Deal, solidarity between Member States, and the functioning of the internal energy market. Its purpose is to answer the second subsidiary question of the thesis, namely whether the legal and political response adopted after the Russian invasion has resulted in an effective long-term framework for energy security and strategic autonomy.

Incorporating the ongoing Iran crisis as a second stress test allows us to assess whether the post-2022 framework has actually made the Union more resilient or simply relocated its vulnerabilities. Examining persistent external dependence, market fragmentation and uneven national capacities shows the limits of the securitized response. The chapter argues that the EU became more capable of managing disruption, but that this improvement did not amount to full strategic autonomy.

1. LEGAL INSTRUMENTS AND THE SECURITIZED REORIENTATION OF EU ENERGY GOVERNANCE

The legal architecture governing EU energy security has undergone a marked reorientation since the Russian invasion of Ukraine in February 2022. The abrupt weaponization of gas by Russia exposed the fragility of the liberalized energy model and triggered a shift towards a more emergency-driven and solidarity-oriented regulatory framework (Shoukat et al., 2024). Since then, Article 122 TFEU has emerged as the pivotal legal instrument of the crisis period, designed for situations of severe supply disruption, it allows the Council to adopt binding measures without the European Parliament, enabling rapid regulations that bypass the slower ordinary legislative procedure (Mańko, 2025). This represented a clear departure from a governance model based on market coordination toward one shaped by executive emergency action.

The war catalysed a regulatory paradigm shift defined by the predominance of directly applicable regulations, the institutionalisation of solidarity, and the elevation of strategic autonomy as a guiding objective. The REPowerEU Plan set the overall direction by committing the Union to end dependence on Russian fossil fuels before 2030 through energy savings, diversification, and accelerated renewable deployment (Tagliapietra, 2022). This strategy was operationalised through emergency measures adopted under Article 122, including the Gas Storage Regulation (EU) 2022/1032, which introduced mandatory 90 percent filling targets by 1 November, and the creation of AggregateEU under the Solidarity Regulation (EU) 2022/2576 to coordinate joint purchasing and prevent internal bidding wars (Dulian, 2024).

The post-2022 response demonstrates both the effectiveness and the limits of this securitized turn. Emergency measures enabled actions that would have been difficult to justify under ordinary governance, yet they remained constrained by long-standing institutional and structural limits. REPowerEU provided a comprehensive strategy, but as a non binding communication it relied on national implementation. The Gas Storage Regulation imposed binding obligations but included flexibility clauses, exemptions for structurally disadvantaged Member States, and compensation mechanisms for those without storage facilities. These features show that the EU moved beyond ordinary regulation while still operating within a system marked by national asymmetries and incomplete centralisation.

The adjustment after 2022 also illustrates the depth of Europe's previous dependence and the scale of the effort required to unwind it. Russian fossil fuel imports fell from 16 billion dollars per month in early 2022 to around 1 billion by late 2023, and EU gas demand declined by 12 percent in 2022 and 19 percent in 2023 compared to the 2019 to 2021 average. This reduction required extraordinary measures, including demand cuts, rapid LNG expansion, and accelerated renewable deployment. Territorial asymmetries persisted, with Austria, Hungary, and Slovakia remaining highly exposed as Ukrainian transit still supplied 65 percent of their gas demand in 2023 (Bruegel, 2022).

Crucially, the decline in Russian dependence did not eliminate vulnerability. Instead, the post-2022 response shows that securitization can enable rapid adaptation while relocating risk into new supply chains and new external dependencies. By late 2025, Russian pipeline gas accounted for 12 percent of EU imports, down from 45 percent in 2021 (European Commission, 2025b). The Union remained on track for a full ban on Russian gas and LNG by 2027 (Petrovich & EMBER, 2026), and new trade agreements with Mercosur and India in January 2026 supported diversification (Damen, 2026). Yet diversification created new dependencies. The EU became heavily reliant on US LNG, which supplied 56 to 60 percent of total LNG imports (Cubero et al., 2026), and remained dependent on China for clean technology components. China provided 94 percent of solar PV systems and 50 percent of battery components used in the EU (European Commission, 2025b), while critical raw materials essential for electrification continued to be overwhelmingly imported (Rada, 2025).

These developments highlight the ambivalence of energy securitization. The EU reduced exposure to Russian coercion but increased dependence on alternative LNG suppliers and external clean technology supply chains, mitigating one form of strategic dependence while intensifying others.

2. TENSIONS WITH THE EUROPEAN GREEN DEAL?

The EU's emergency response to the post-2022 energy crisis has generated significant tensions with its established Green Deal climate objectives. Although the Union's long-term strategy continues to frame renewable energy as the foundation of strategic autonomy, the immediate imperative to secure physical supply has repeatedly required measures that prioritise fossil fuels, divert investment, and strain existing regulatory frameworks (Dulian, 2024). These contradictions are often conceptualised through the energy trilemma, which highlights the difficulty of simultaneously achieving energy security, environmental sustainability, and energy sovereignty when these goals pull in different directions (Marin, 2023).

The most visible expression of this tension has been the short-term return to carbon-intensive energy sources to compensate for the loss of Russian natural gas. Several Member States, including Germany and Italy, reactivated mothballed coal power plants or extended the lifespan of existing units to maintain grid stability during periods of acute supply pressure (Hafner, M., & Raimondi, 2020). This reactivation was not a strategic reversal of decarbonisation goals but rather a crisis-driven response to prevent blackouts and stabilise electricity markets. At the same time, the EU was compelled to increase imports of high-carbon fuels from third countries and to negotiate new long-term LNG agreements. These arrangements introduced new logistical risks and raised concerns about fossil fuel lock-in, particularly where new LNG terminals and pipelines required multi-decade investment horizons (Clifford Chance, 2022).

National deviations further illustrate the strain placed on the Green Deal framework. For instance, in Germany, Economy Minister Katherina Reiche argued for developing domestic gas reserves in the North Sea and called for greater flexibility in meeting the 2050 climate neutrality objective, suggesting that a deviation of up to 10 percent might be necessary to protect energy-intensive industries from economic decline (Renewable Energy Industry, 2026). Such statements reflect a broader political dilemma in which governments must reconcile industrial competitiveness with decarbonisation commitments during a period of heightened geopolitical uncertainty.

Emergency interventions designed to stabilise energy markets have also had unintended consequences for the financial viability of the green transition. The EU Agency for the Cooperation of Energy Regulators (ACER) observed that several emergency measures had a neutral or negative effect on renewable investment by absorbing capital, distorting market signals, and creating regulatory uncertainty at a moment when large-scale investment was essential (Dulian, 2024). These distortions were particularly evident in electricity markets where the rapid penetration of renewables coincided with stressed system conditions. In Spain, balancing and ancillary service costs rose sharply, reaching 50 to 60 percent of final prices in 2024 and 2025, a development that risked discouraging further renewable deployment in the absence of parallel grid modernisation (Cubero et al., 2026).

Overall, these developments expose a structural tension between the EU's emergency energy response and its long-term decarbonisation agenda. While REPowerEU seeks to align the Green Deal with energy security by presenting renewables as a form of "homegrown" protection against geopolitical shocks crisis management has also justified LNG expansion, coal reactivation and selective national deviations from climate targets. The result is a complex and sometimes contradictory policy landscape in which the EU simultaneously accelerates renewable deployment while expanding LNG infrastructure, reactivating coal plants, and accommodating national deviations from climate neutrality pathways.

This tension does not indicate a collapse of the Green Deal but rather exposes the fragility of its implementation under conditions of geopolitical stress. The EU's central challenge is therefore to reconcile security and transition by strengthening grids, preserving investment certainty and ensuring that temporary emergency measures do not obstruct long-term decarbonisation objectives.

3. THE GULF/IRAN CRISIS AS A SECOND STRESS TEST

The Iran crisis has become a second major stress test for European Union energy security. While the 2022 crisis exposed the dangers of overreliance on pipeline gas and a single dominant supplier, the current conflict has revealed a different and equally destabilising vulnerability: Europe's dependence on global maritime routes and the liquefied natural gas markets that replaced Russian pipeline flows (Piebalgs, 2026). The EU's diversification away from Russia has therefore not eliminated geopolitical exposure, but relocated it from regional pipeline dependency to global LNG supply chains.

The conflict's impact has been immediate and severe. The closure of the Strait of Hormuz, through which roughly 20 percent of global oil and 20 percent of global LNG transit, has disrupted one of the world's most critical energy corridors (Tagliapietra, 2026). This shock was compounded by the Iranian drone strike on Qatar's Ras Laffan industrial complex on 2 March 2026, which damaged the world's largest LNG export facility and removed an estimated 17 percent of Qatar's export capacity from the market. Because repair timelines suggest that the disruption may become a long-term constraint on global LNG supply, the crisis represents a strategic setback for Europe, where LNG has become the marginal source of gas security (Stehr, 2026).

The crisis has also exposed the EU's vulnerability beyond gas. In 2025, approximately half of EU aviation fuel imports originated in the Gulf, making the middle distillates market particularly exposed to disruption . Lufthansa's cancellation of 20,000 flights and fuel rationing in Italian airports illustrate that Europe's transport and industrial sectors remain dependent on external fossil fuel supply chains, despite the progress made in renewable electricity generation (Łoskot-Strachota, 2026).

The economic burden of the crisis has been equally significant. In the first 44 days alone, the EU's fossil fuel import bill increased by €22 billion without any corresponding increase in physical supply (Tessari, 2026). European benchmark gas prices surged by 70 percent within days, briefly exceeding €60 per MWh, while Brent crude rose by roughly 37 percent (Piebalgs, 2026). Since LNG now functions as Europe's marginal supply, EU buyers must compete with Asian markets for available cargoes, intensifying price volatility and import costs (Stehr, 2026). These dynamics have revived inflationary pressures and weakened growth expectations, particularly in energy-intensive economies.

Fiscal responses confirm that the 2026 shock reproduced one of the central weaknesses observed after 2022: crisis management remained primarily national and often untargeted. Bruegel's fiscal response tracker estimates that, by 5 May 2026, European governments had committed more than €11 billion to cushion the impact of the energy shock on households and firms, with Spain and Germany accounting for the largest absolute amounts and Spain alone representing almost half of the total. More importantly, over 72 percent of the committed funds, around €8.3 billion, took the form of untargeted measures such as general VAT or excise-duty reductions. This pattern is significant for the securitization argument because it shows that energy shocks continue to generate emergency state intervention, but not necessarily coordinated or strategically transformative action. In practice, many governments reacted by subsidising fossil-fuel consumption and shielding domestic consumers in the short term, rather than by directing scarce fiscal resources toward demand reduction, electrification, grids or targeted protection of vulnerable groups (McWilliams et al., 2026).

The timing of the crisis has further magnified its impact. It struck at a moment when EU gas storage levels were unusually low, falling below 30 percent after a harsh winter (Tagliapietra, 2026). Europe now faces the largest restocking effort in recent years, requiring the injection of at least 575 TWh of gas before winter 2026–2027 in a market defined by scarcity and extreme price volatility (Stehr, 2026). This situation has revived fears of intra-EU competition reminiscent of 2022, as Member States scramble to secure limited LNG cargoes.

In response, the Commission launched AccelerateEU on 22 April 2026, framing it as a structural response to break what it described as Europe's "excessive" dependence on fossil fuels (Tessari, 2026). The plan coordinates mandatory gas storage refilling, explores the creation of a Fuel Observatory, and strengthens civil-military cooperation in the fuel sector (Łoskot-Strachota, 2026). It also accelerates electrification and renewable deployment, reflecting the growing recognition that long-term resilience cannot be achieved through diversification alone but requires a permanent reduction in fossil fuel demand.

Yet the crisis has also reignited internal tensions within the Union. Italy has requested budgetary flexibility, arguing that energy spending should receive the same deficit exemptions as defence expenditure (PubAffairs Bruxelles, 2026), while Germany's Economy Ministry has suggested revisiting climate neutrality timelines and developing domestic North Sea gas reserves to protect heavy industry (Renewable Energy Industry, 2026). These debates reveal the re-emergence of the energy trilemma, as governments struggle to balance security, affordability, and sustainability under conditions of acute geopolitical stress.

Taken together, the Iran crisis demonstrates that Europe's energy security has entered a new phase in which maritime chokepoints, global LNG markets, and geopolitical fragmentation shape vulnerability as much as pipeline politics once did. The EU is more resilient than it was in 2022, yet the crisis reveals that diversification has not delivered full strategic autonomy.

4. EUROPEAN ENERGY GOVERNANCE AND THE LIMITS OF SOLIDARITY

The limits of solidarity in European energy governance become most visible when viewed through the balancing-of-interests test articulated by the Court of Justice of the European Union in the OPAL judgment. The Court made clear that solidarity is not an unconditional shield that allows a Member State to block Union-wide measures simply because they may harm its national preferences. Instead, EU institutions must conduct a proportionality assessment, weighing the Union's collective energy security against the burdens placed on individual states. The purpose is not to guarantee identical outcomes for all, but to ensure that no Member State is disproportionately disadvantaged by measures adopted in the name of energy solidarity (Papadopoulou, 2026).

However, even as the Union pursues decarbonisation and strategic autonomy, national governments retain the legal right to choose supply paths that diverge from collective objectives. As a result, supranational interventions such as mandatory demand-reduction measures must be narrowly justified and can only override national preferences when necessary to avert a severe systemic crisis (Marin, 2023). Solidarity therefore operates within a constitutional framework that protects energy mix sovereignty as well as manages the tensions created by interdependence.

Hungary illustrates how these limits materialise when national strategies openly conflict with Union goals. While REPowerEU aims to eliminate Russian fossil fuel imports by 2027, Hungary has continued to defend its access to Russian energy and has repeatedly obstructed EU-level financial assistance and sanctions packages. This reflects a form of strategic free-riding, whereby a Member State benefits from the collective security efforts of others while preserving a bilateral energy strategy that weakens the Union's common position (U.S. Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, 2026). It exposes a political limit to solidarity: the Union cannot compel alignment when a government's geopolitical orientation fundamentally diverges from the majority.

The transit dispute between Hungary and Croatia further reveals the infrastructural boundaries of solidarity. The Hungarian energy company MOL has argued that Croatia is obliged to guarantee the transit of Russian oil to Hungary and Slovakia, claiming that solidarity requires transit states to maintain flows even when they contradict broader EU policy (Reuters, 2026). This raises a difficult question: can solidarity be invoked to preserve a dependency that the Union is collectively trying to phase out? The tension is therefore not only legal, but also normative, because the same principle may be used both to justify collective energy security and to defend practices that undermine long-term strategic autonomy.

Finally, solidarity is constrained by the need to preserve fair competition within the internal market. Hungary's practice of shielding households through price caps financed by shifting costs onto businesses has produced some of the highest industrial energy prices in the EU (European Commission, 2024). While such measures may stabilise domestic politics, they distort competition and force other Member States to absorb indirect economic consequences. When national interventions create these asymmetries, they strain the practical limits of solidarity within a shared market.

Taken together, these dynamics show that solidarity in EU energy governance is not an open-ended obligation but a principle shaped by constitutional safeguards, national sovereignty, geopolitical divergence, and market integrity. It is a mechanism for managing interdependence, not overriding it, and its effectiveness depends on maintaining a delicate balance between collective security and national autonomy.

5. FRAGMENTATION OF THE INTERNAL ENERGY MARKET

The fragmentation of the EU's internal energy market has become one of the most persistent obstacles to building a resilient and genuinely integrated energy system. Although the Union has long aspired to create a unified Energy Union capable of guaranteeing affordable, secure and sustainable supply, the reality on the ground resembles a "kaleidoscope of models," where national priorities repeatedly override supranational ambitions (Dulian, 2024). Fragmentation is therefore not the result of a single failure, but of the interaction between uneven infrastructure, divergent regulatory choices and asymmetric fiscal capacities.

Physical constraints are among the most visible sources of fragmentation. For example, the Iberian Peninsula remains an "energy island," with interconnection capacity with France representing only around 3% of Spain's installed capacity, limiting its ability to support or be supported by neighbouring systems (International Energy Agency, 2022b). Similar bottlenecks exist across Central and Eastern Europe, where insufficient cross-border capacity and uneven grid readiness prevent energy from flowing freely across the Union. These technical limitations create pockets of isolation that undermine the premise of a single market and leave Member States exposed to regional shocks.

Regulatory divergence has deepened these structural divides. The 2022 Russian invasion of Ukraine and the 2026 Gulf/Iran crisis prompted Member States to adopt emergency measures that often reflected domestic political pressures rather than a coordinated European strategy. Germany introduced nearly €30 billion in industrial electricity subsidies over three years to shield heavy industry, a level of fiscal intervention that countries such as Italy or several Eastern European states cannot match. This asymmetry risks fuelling subsidy competition and distorting the level playing field within the internal market.

Member States also disagree on the foundations of electricity market design. Northern and Nordic countries defend marginalist pricing as necessary for efficient investment signals, while Southern states and France argue that extreme volatility justifies more permanent political pricing or redistributive mechanisms, such as the French Universal Nuclear Payment. The Iberian Exception, which temporarily decoupled gas and electricity prices in Spain and Portugal, further illustrates how regional deviations can become embedded in national policy (Geoffron, 2026). These divergences make it difficult to maintain a common market logic during periods of crisis.

The consequences are already visible. Hungary's decision to protect residential consumers through regulated utility prices has shifted adjustment costs onto other parts of the economy, contributing to high energy costs for firms and weakening competitiveness (European Commission, 2024). More broadly, inconsistent national rules weaken investment signals, complicate long-term planning for renewable infrastructure and slow the pace of the energy transition (Geoffron, 2026). Even Member States with high renewable penetration, such as Spain, remain constrained if interconnections, grids and storage do not allow clean generation to translate into broader European resilience.

Taken together, these dynamics show that the internal energy market remains fractured because Member States continue to pursue different balances between security, affordability and sustainability. The EU aspires to unity, but its energy system remains constrained by infrastructural asymmetries, fiscal inequalities and divergent national regulatory choices.

6. PERSISTENT AND TRANSFORMED EXTERNAL DEPENDENCE

The European Union's external energy dependence has not disappeared after 2022; it has simply been transformed. The substantial reduction of Russian fossil fuel imports, nearly 90 percent since the invasion of Ukraine, did not create an autonomous Europe, but redirected vulnerability towards new suppliers, routes, and new geopolitical dynamics (Dulian, 2024). The Union remains a net energy importer with a dependency rate between 57 and 62.5 percent, a structural reality that continues to shape its strategic exposure. What has changed is the geography and nature of that dependence, shifting from a regional pipeline system to a global maritime network (U.S. Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, 2026).

This transformation became visible during the 2026 Gulf/Iran crisis. The EU's "divorce" from Russia therefore did not end external dependence; it reconfigured it. The United States now supplies close to 60% of EU LNG, placing Europe in direct competition with Asian buyers and exposing it to global price swings that it cannot meaningfully influence (Cubero et al., 2026). This shift underscores the analytical point that diversification away from a single supplier does not automatically produce resilience. It can instead create a wider, more complex web of interdependence.

A second layer of persistent dependence lies in the nuclear sector. Several Eastern European Member States remain reliant on Russian nuclear products, particularly VVER fuel assemblies and enrichment services provided by Rosatom. While technical alternatives exist, scaling them requires long-term investment and the construction of new supply chains (McWilliams et al., 2024). This illustrates how deeply embedded Russian influence remains in certain segments of the energy system, even after the collapse of pipeline gas flows.

The current supplier landscape reflects this reconfiguration. The United States, Norway, and Saudi Arabia dominate petroleum oil imports, while Algeria and Norway have become the primary pipeline gas suppliers (Dulian, 2024). LNG imports are now concentrated among Norway, the United States, North Africa, and Azerbaijan. Coal imports have shifted entirely away from Russia toward producers such as South Africa, Colombia, and Australia. These shifts demonstrate diversification, but also consolidation: Europe's energy security increasingly depends on a small group of external partners and routes.

Internal dynamics show similar asymmetries. Gas demand fell by 19 percent in 2023 compared to the 2019–2021 average, driven by emergency measures and price-induced industrial contraction (McWilliams et al., 2024). AggregateEU has pooled 90 bcm of demand by 2026, strengthening collective bargaining power (von der Leyen, 2026). Yet national trajectories diverge. Hungary increased its dependence on Russian energy by 30 percent between 2022 and 2024, illustrating how national strategies can conflict with Union-wide objectives (U.S. Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, 2026).

Taken together, these developments show that the EU's external dependence has not been resolved but restructured. The Union has moved from a concentrated reliance on Russian pipelines to a dispersed dependence on global LNG markets, U.S. exporters, and maritime chokepoints. This new configuration is more diversified but also more exposed to global shocks, reinforcing the argument that Europe's vulnerability was never eliminated, only redistributed.

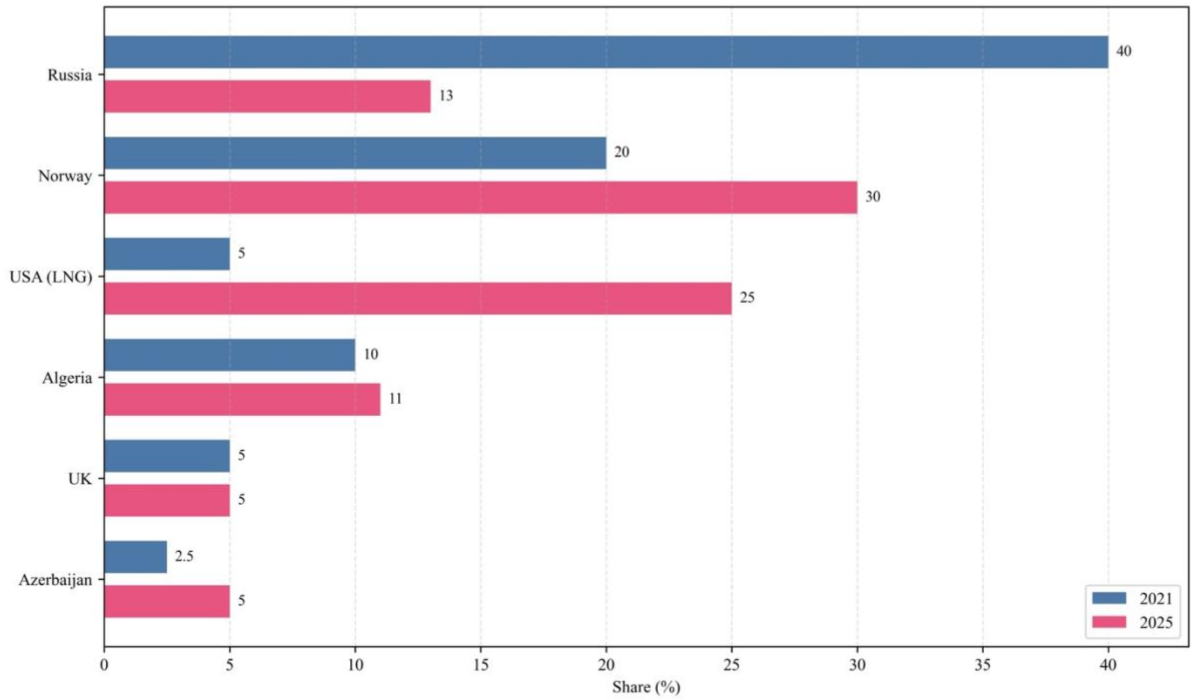

Figure 3. Main suppliers of EU gas imports, 2021 and 2025

Source: Own elaboration based on European Council and Council of the European Union (2026).

The transformation of EU gas imports after 2022 confirms this ambivalence. As Figure 3 shows, Russia's share of EU gas imports fell sharply between 2021 and 2025, while Norway and US LNG became substantially more important suppliers. This shift reduced Russia's direct coercive leverage over the Union, but it did not eliminate external dependence as such. Rather, it changed its geography and form: vulnerability moved away from Russian pipeline dependence towards greater reliance on LNG markets, alternative suppliers and maritime transport routes. In this sense, diversification improved short-term resilience, but it did not automatically produce full strategic autonomy.

7. IMPLICATIONS FOR EU STRATEGIC AUTONOMY

The energy crises of 2022 and 2026 have profoundly reshaped the European Union's pursuit of strategic autonomy, forcing the Union to confront the depth of its structural dependence and the limits of its existing governance model. Strategic autonomy in the energy field rests on three interlinked dimensions: autonomy for specific purposes such as security of supply, autonomy through capabilities including legislation and budgetary tools, and autonomy from specific external influences, most notably Russian fossil fuels (Damen, 2022). The crises revealed how fragile each of these pillars had been, but they also accelerated the construction of a more resilient framework.

The first pillar is the shift toward total electrification and decarbonisation. The EU increasingly frames homegrown renewables and nuclear energy as strategic assets that offer price stability and insulation from geopolitical shocks in a way imported fossil fuels never could (von der Leyen, 2026). The foreseen 2026 Electrification Strategy embodies this logic, seeking to break what the Commission calls Europe's "excessive" dependence on fossil fuels by accelerating the electrification of industry, heating, and mobility. In this narrative, the energy transition is no longer only a climate imperative but the foundation of a sovereign economic model (European Commission, n.d.).

The second pillar concerns diversification and infrastructure. The rapid move away from Russian pipeline gas has pushed the EU into a global maritime system dominated by LNG, with the United States now supplying nearly 60 percent of EU LNG imports (McWilliams et al., 2024). This diversification has reduced exposure to Russia but increased vulnerability to global price volatility and maritime chokepoints. To mitigate this, the Union is investing heavily in interconnections, aiming for 15 percent by 2030, and in smart grids capable of integrating intermittent renewables (Dalli et al., 2026). These investments are not merely technical upgrades; they are political instruments designed to reduce the strategic leverage of external suppliers.

A third dimension is legal centralisation. Since the OPAL judgment, the principle of energy solidarity has become a binding legal rule requiring Member States to balance national preferences with the collective security of the Union (Papadopoulou, 2026). This marks a shift toward a more integrated governance model in which crisis response increasingly relies on supranational authority.

Finally, the EU is developing a form of economic hard power. Mechanisms such as AggregateEU and the emerging Fuel Observatory allow the Union to leverage its market size to negotiate collectively and defend its interests against actors like Russia or China.

Taken together, these developments show that EU strategic autonomy is in a phase of precarious consolidation. The tools for a unified response now exist, but their effectiveness depends on whether Member States are willing to prioritise collective resilience over national sovereignty (Marin, 2023).

CHAPTER 5. ASSESSMENT AND POLICY PROPOSALS

This chapter addresses the final subsidiary question of the thesis: which reforms could transform temporary emergency responses into a coherent long-term strategy for European energy resilience and strategic autonomy? Having established that the EU's post-2022 securitization was partial, legalised and uneven, the chapter moves from diagnosis to assessment. Its purpose is not to propose complete energy self-sufficiency, but to identify realistic reforms capable of reducing vulnerability without replacing one form of dependence with another.

The chapter first explains why the current response remains incomplete. Although the EU reduced its exposure to Russian fossil fuels and strengthened short-term crisis management, it continues to face supplier concentration, infrastructure bottlenecks, internal fragmentation and dependence on foreign clean technologies and critical raw materials. The proposals that follow respond directly to these weaknesses.

Then it examines five areas of reform: supplier diversification thresholds, renewables, grids and efficiency as security infrastructure, nuclear energy as partial resilience, hydrogen and clean-tech autonomy, and governance reforms for a more coherent Energy Union. Together, these proposals aim to convert securitization from a temporary emergency reaction into a more durable strategy to manage interdependence and preserve European freedom of action.

1. WHY CURRENT RESPONSES REMAIN LIMITED AND INCOMPLETE

The European Union's response to the energy crisis triggered by Russia's invasion of Ukraine has demonstrated a remarkable ability to adapt quickly. Emergency measures, including coordinated gas storage, demand reduction, supplier diversification and joint procurement, have reduced the immediate risk of shortages and weakened Russia's ability to use dependence on fossil fuels as a means of exerting pressure. However, the success of these measures should not obscure their essentially reactive nature. Europe has reduced a critical dependency, but has not yet eliminated the structural vulnerabilities that made the crisis possible. Dependence has partly shifted to new external suppliers, electricity markets remain fragmented, grid infrastructure is inadequate, clean technology supply chains are concentrated abroad, and national energy strategies continue to limit coherent European action.

The proposals that follow therefore move beyond short-term crisis management and outline a long-term framework for European energy resilience and strategic autonomy. Each responds directly to a specific limit identified in the analysis:

LIMIT IDENTIFIED	PROPOSAL RESPONDING TO IT
Dependence shifted rather than disappeared	Supplier-diversification thresholds
Fossil-fuel exposure persisted	Renewables, efficiency, nuclear and hydrogen
Strategic autonomy constrained by infrastructure	Grids and interconnection
Green transition created new dependencies	Clean-tech autonomy and critical raw-material diversification
Emergency response remained temporary	Governance reform

Taken together, these proposals would not imply a complete desecuritization of EU energy policy. Energy would remain part of the security agenda insofar as external dependence, infrastructure vulnerability, critical raw materials, LNG markets and geopolitical transport routes continue to affect the Union's capacity to act autonomously. However, their implementation could contribute to a partial desecuritization of the crisis logic that has dominated EU energy governance since 2022. In other words, the objective would not be to depoliticise energy or to remove it from strategic debate, but to reduce the need for exceptional, temporary and emergency-based measures.

From this perspective, long-term resilience can be understood as a mechanism for moving energy security from exceptional politics back into ordinary, institutionalised governance. The result would therefore be a more stable form of security governance: energy would remain strategically relevant, but it would be managed through predictable rules, structural preparedness and permanent coordination rather than through ad hoc crisis instruments.

2. PROPOSALS

2.1. Proposal I: Supplier diversification thresholds

As Daniel Yergin (2003) argues, "the starting point for energy security is diversification of supplies" This principle remains highly relevant to the EU after 2022, but the European experience also shows that diversification cannot be understood merely as replacing one supplier with another. It must be assessed in terms of concentration, exposure and political vulnerability.

This proposal responds to the fact that dependence on Russia was reduced but partly replaced by new forms of supplier concentration. The rapid replacement of Russian gas with LNG has made the United States Europe's main supplier. The US now provides around 39% of all gas imported into the European Economic Area and more than 61% of its LNG. This level of concentration weakens the argument that diversification has strengthened strategic autonomy. Although US LNG has been essential for stabilising supply in the short term, it also exposes the EU to a new form of geopolitical pressure, especially since US energy policy is increasingly framed around "energy dominance" and global influence (Piria et al., 2026). Economically, the shift from long-term pipeline contracts to globally traded LNG has increased Europe's exposure to price volatility, infrastructure failures and regional shocks. The impact of US terminal outages on European wholesale prices illustrates this vulnerability (Topsoe, 2025).

A more coherent approach to EU energy security requires abandoning the assumption that any non-Russian supplier automatically counts as diversification. The EU should therefore consider a supplier-concentration limit for strategic energy imports, especially LNG, ensuring that no single external actor exceeds a defined share, ideally between 30% and 40%. This would not restrict US LNG outright. It would instead function as a resilience measure that prevents the replacement of one structural dependency with another.

This logic is already present in other areas of EU economic-security policy. The Critical Raw Materials Act states that the EU should not depend on a single third country for more than 65% of any strategic raw material at key stages of the value chain (Leichthammer, 2025). Newer industrial-policy proposals go further by suggesting that firms should rely on at least three suppliers and that no single supplier should exceed 30% to 40% of total inputs in sensitive sectors (Lichfield et al., 2026). Applying this reasoning to energy would be consistent with the EU's broader shift from market-driven optimisation to resilience-based governance.

The justification for a concentration cap rests on three main arguments. First, it reduces single points of failure. Supply-chain research shows that excessive dependence on one supplier creates systemic fragility because a disruption in one node can trigger cascading effects across the entire network (Risk Ledger, 2025). In the LNG sector, this risk is intensified by geographic clustering, exposure to extreme weather and bottlenecks in export infrastructure. Second, it limits geopolitical coercion. The current level of dependence on US LNG gives Washington potential leverage over EU regulatory choices, especially when energy negotiations intersect with pressure to weaken EU sustainability legislation such as the CSDDD, CBAM or methane rules (Piria et al., 2026). Third, it improves price stability by maintaining a more competitive and geographically balanced import portfolio. Since LNG spot prices increasingly shape European gas and electricity markets, supplier concentration heightens exposure to external shocks (Topsoe, 2025).

However, such a cap would need to be introduced gradually. Diversification has costs. Firms may lose economies of scale, face higher transaction burdens or struggle to secure alternative suppliers (Qureshi and Ali, 2025). In some areas, rapid substitution is impossible because global production capacity is already constrained, as seen in Norway's limited gas output or China's dominance in certain clean-technology supply chains (Lekavičius et al., 2024). For this reason, a concentration cap should be combined with monitoring obligations, joint purchasing, infrastructure coordination and demand-reduction measures. The goal is not self-sufficiency but portfolio resilience. It aims to ensure that no external supplier becomes so indispensable that it can influence the EU's strategic, regulatory or climate decisions.

2.2. Proposal II: Renewables, grids and efficiency as security infrastructure

The European Union's approach to energy resilience has shifted from treating renewables, grids and efficiency as environmental tools to understanding them as essential security infrastructure. This proposal translates the securitization of energy into long-term resilience by treating renewables as the core of the new security agenda. Accordingly, Von der Leyen (2026) defines them as "homegrown" security because they provide price stability and insulation from geopolitical shocks. The REPowerEU plan raised the 2030 renewable target to 42.5 percent, with an aspirational goal of 45 percent (Becker and Ciucci, 2025). This ambition is operationalised through the Solar Strategy, the Hydrogen Accelerator, which aims for 20 million tonnes of green hydrogen by 2030, and mandatory heat pump deployment (Clifford Chance, 2022). Yet the expansion of renewables is constrained by slow permitting, with wind projects sometimes requiring up to nine years for approval (Tagliapietra, 2022). It also generates new dependencies on critical raw materials dominated by China (Pardo de Santayana, 2022).

The EU has responded by simplifying permitting through Council Regulation 2022/2577 (Bergström, 2023) and by scaling up two-way Contracts for Difference and Power Purchase Agreements to stabilise investment and shield consumers from volatility (Widuto, 2024). These measures show that renewables are no longer framed as climate policy, but as a strategic asset whose expansion must be accelerated and protected.

Electricity grids constitute the second pillar of this security-driven model. The EU recognises that outdated grids are a structural bottleneck that limits renewable integration and exposes Member States to local shocks (von der Leyen, 2026). The 2025 Grids Package and the Electrification Strategy aim to prepare the system for a projected 60 percent increase in electricity demand by 2030 (Audax Renewables, 2024). A binding 15 percent interconnection target is intended to ensure cross-border solidarity during crises (Nouicer, 2020). However, modernisation requires 584 billion euros by 2030 (Nunzi, 2025), and insufficient grid readiness has already produced high balancing and ancillary service costs, reaching 50 to 60 percent of final prices in Spain in 2024 and 2025 (Cubero et al., 2026). The TEN-E Regulation and the Electricity Market Design reform address these weaknesses by fast-tracking Projects of Common Interest and introducing peak-shaving tools to manage demand (Widuto, 2024). The argument is clear: without modern grids, renewable expansion cannot deliver security.

Efficiency and demand reduction form the third strategic component. The EU now treats reduced consumption as a security instrument, guided by the principle that the cheapest and safest energy is the energy not used (von der Leyen, 2026). The Energy Efficiency Directive sets a target to cut primary and final energy consumption by 11.7 percent by 2030 (Becker and Ciucci, 2025). Renovation requirements and industrial upgrades aim to reduce fossil fuel intensity (von der Leyen, 2026). Yet efficiency measures face high upfront costs and the risk of social backlash (Hafner and Raimondi, 2020). The 2025 Affordable Energy Action Plan therefore links efficiency to affordability, while the Social Climate Fund and the Just Transition Fund prevent the transition from deepening energy poverty (Nunzi, 2025). Efficiency is thus reframed as a security tool that must be socially sustainable to be politically viable.

Finally, the EU seeks to consolidate this infrastructure-based security model through structural reforms. The Clean Industrial Deal mobilises more than 100 billion euros to accelerate clean technology deployment (Geoffron, 2026). The 2026 Energy Security Package integrates renewable gases and creates a Fuel Observatory to monitor global risks (Dalli et al., 2026). The Industrial Accelerator Act aims to expand domestic manufacturing capacity for renewables and batteries to reduce dependence on China (Łoskot-Strachota, 2026). These initiatives confirm that the EU now treats clean energy as the backbone of a resilient and autonomous energy system.

2.3. Proposal III: Nuclear energy as partial resilience

This proposal addresses the limits of a resilience strategy based exclusively on variable renewables and imported LNG by considering nuclear energy as a partial source of controllable low-carbon capacity.

Nuclear energy should be understood as a core element of European energy resilience rather than a legacy technology awaiting closure. Its value does not lie in replacing renewable energy, but in complementing it by providing continuous, dispatchable and low-carbon electricity when wind and solar output decline. This role becomes increasingly important as European power systems incorporate larger shares of variable renewables. Nuclear generation can reduce reliance on gas-fired backup, support grid stability and limit exposure to external fossil-fuel shocks. Its high energy density and limited land footprint also make it particularly suitable for densely populated and industrialised economies (Quiroga-Barriga et al., 2025). In this sense, nuclear power strengthens the structural foundations of energy security rather than competing with the renewable transition.

The strongest case for nuclear energy concerns price resilience and security of supply. European gas and electricity prices remain highly vulnerable to geopolitical crises, infrastructure disruptions and competition in global LNG markets. Although nuclear power is not immune to cost pressures, its operating costs are far less exposed to short-term fossil-fuel volatility. Once a reactor is running, fuel accounts for a relatively small share of total generation costs, and uranium can be stockpiled for long periods. Nuclear capacity therefore acts as a strategic buffer during supply interruptions and helps stabilise electricity systems in moments of market stress.

Europe's separation from Russian energy has also shown that diversification cannot be reduced to replacing one external supplier with another. While the decline in Russian fossil-fuel imports has reshaped Europe's energy landscape, the resulting dependence on alternative gas and LNG suppliers continues to expose the Union to external price and geopolitical risks. Genuine resilience requires expanding domestic or controllable low-carbon electricity sources alongside import diversification (McWilliams et al., 2024). In this context, nuclear energy can reduce the structural role of gas in electricity generation, especially during periods of low renewable output.

However, nuclear energy carries significant constraints. New projects require high upfront investment, long construction timelines and complex licensing. Delays and cost overruns can undermine economic viability, and the competitiveness of small modular reactors remains uncertain. Safety, radioactive waste and decommissioning demand long-term institutional capacity and credible financing. Severe accidents are statistically rare, but their potential consequences are substantial, and high-level waste must be safely isolated for very long periods. These challenges justify strict regulation, independent oversight and transparent waste-management strategies, but they do not necessarily justify excluding nuclear power from a diversified electricity system (Quiroga-Barriga et al., 2025).

Public attitudes are also more complex than simple support or opposition. Before 2022, only 18 percent of Europeans associated EU energy policy with nuclear power, yet 85 percent considered nuclear safety and security essential for ensuring reliable access to energy (European Commission, 2019). This contrast suggests that nuclear energy lacked political centrality but enjoyed broader acceptance when framed as a matter of system security and effective regulation. The geopolitical and price shocks following Russia's invasion of Ukraine have reinforced this security-based interpretation, even if support remains uneven across Member States.

Spain illustrates this divergence. The Spanish government has maintained its plan for the phased closure of the nuclear fleet and continues to frame security of supply around renewable expansion, storage, electrification and interconnection. The updated National Integrated Energy and Climate Plan presents the gradual withdrawal of nuclear generation as compatible with full security of supply (Boletín Oficial del Estado, 2024). At the same time, Spanish nuclear policy increasingly focuses on radioactive-waste governance and the long-term legacy of existing plants, including temporary storage and planning for a deep geological repository (Consejo de Seguridad Nuclear, 2022).This strategy is coherent, but it may underestimate the insurance value of existing nuclear capacity during a period of volatile gas prices, rising electricity demand and incomplete large-scale storage deployment. Closing reactors before sufficient firm low-carbon capacity is available could increase dependence on gas-fired generation during low renewable output, weakening both price resilience and efforts to reduce external dependence.

A more balanced approach would avoid both unconditional nuclear expansion and premature closure. Extending the operating lives of reactors that meet safety standards could provide stability while investment in renewables, storage, grids and interconnections continues. New nuclear projects should be evaluated selectively, with attention to financing, construction risk and system needs. Under such a strategy, nuclear energy would not compete with renewables but support their integration by providing stable low-carbon electricity and reducing the need for fossil-fuel backup.

Overall, nuclear power offers a combination of decarbonisation, controllable generation and resilience against external price shocks. Its risks are real but manageable through strong regulation and long-term planning. For Spain and the wider European Union, maintaining a diversified electricity mix that includes nuclear energy may align more closely with strategic autonomy, system stability and price resilience than relying predominantly on intermittent renewables supported by imported fossil fuels.

2.4. Proposal IV: Hydrogen and clean-tech autonomy

The EU has significantly expanded its financial commitment to clean technology and alternative energy, yet current evidence shows that these efforts remain below what is required to meet the 2030 and 2050 climate and security objectives. Nevertheless, this proposal responds to the risk that the green transition may reproduce external dependence through critical raw materials, batteries, electrolysers and clean technologies

Although hundreds of billions of euros have been mobilized, the International Energy Agency warns that global clean energy investment must triple by 2030 to reach carbon neutrality. Within the EU, the pace of renewable deployment and supporting infrastructure still falls short of what is needed for greater energy resilience (Nunzi, 2025). To accelerate the transition, the EU has constructed a multilayered financing architecture. As we have seen, REPowerEU allocates around €300 billion to reduce reliance on Russian fossil fuels and expand renewable capacity, while the 2026 AccelerateEU plan reframes electrification and decarbonization as the structural response to fossil fuel price shocks. The Clean Industrial Deal adds more than €100 billion to support clean manufacturing and simplify State aid rules, aiming to prevent industrial decline as energy costs rise (Becker and Ciucci, 2025). Moreover, specific hydrogen initiatives, such as the Hydrogen Accelerator and the proposed European Hydrogen Bank, aim to scale both production and market uptake (Clifford Chance, 2022).

This financial mobilisation is not only an environmental strategy but a geopolitical necessity. Renewable energy and domestically produced green hydrogen can offer more predictable supply and reduce exposure to maritime chokepoints such as the Strait of Hormuz. They also protect the European economy from extreme price volatility. During the first 44 days of the 2026 Iran conflict, the EU paid €22 billion in additional import costs without receiving any extra energy (von der Leyen, 2026). For energy-intensive industries, affordable clean energy is increasingly a condition for remaining in Europe rather than relocating to regions with lower energy prices.

Despite major financial commitments, the European Union still faces structural gaps that limit the credibility of its long-term energy strategy. The most pressing issue is the scale of investment. Meeting the 2030 emissions-reduction target requires €380–€400 billion annually, a level far above current public budgets and private mobilisation (Geoffron, 2026). This shortfall slows progress across generation, grids, storage and industrial decarbonisation, all of which must advance simultaneously for the transition to succeed.

Infrastructure constraints deepen this problem. Grid modernisation alone demands €584 billion by 2030, and delays already force renewable curtailment and higher balancing costs. Without accelerated investment, Europe risks producing clean electricity that cannot be delivered where it is needed.

Uneven national capacities further threaten cohesion. Wealthier Member States can deploy large national subsidies, while others depend on limited EU-level instruments, creating the risk of a two-speed transition (Nunzi, 2025). At the same time, new dependencies on critical raw materials processed mainly in China highlight the need for stronger recycling and domestic supply chains (Pardo de Santayana, 2022).

Overall, the EU has built an ambitious financial framework, but achieving true resilience will require a substantial increase in both public and private investment.

2.5. Proposal V: Governance reforms for a more coherent Energy Union

Given that emergency coordination instruments cannot become permanent basis of the Energy Union, this proposal advocates for a stronger EU role in energy policy. This is no longer a federalist ambition but a practical response to the growing mismatch between continent-wide risks and nationally fragmented governance. Treating energy as a shared competence under Article 4 TFEU, while maintaining sovereignty reserves under Article 194 TFEU, overlooks how unilateral choices can undermine price stability, security of supply, industrial competitiveness and decarbonisation efforts across borders. In this context, deeper EU coordination is not a federalist imposition; it is the minimum condition for an internal market capable of functioning under geopolitical stress (Widuto, 2025).

The crisis also exposed both the usefulness and the limits of Article 122 TFEU. It enabled rapid emergency measures, from joint gas purchasing to temporary price interventions (Council of the European Union, 2023). This experience resembles what Spyrakou (2026) describes as a "federal emergency": a form of integration in which EU authority expands pragmatically through collective risk management rather than through Treaty reform or a comprehensive constitutional settlement. In the energy sector, the temporary pooling of authority allowed the Union to act despite divergent national interests and the absence of prior agreement on a more centralised governance structure.

However, emergency action cannot become the permanent foundation of the Energy Union. Article 122 was designed to address exceptional circumstances and allows the Council to act without the European Parliament exercising its normal role under the ordinary legislative procedure. Although this flexibility contributed to the effectiveness of the crisis response, its repeated use raises concerns regarding accountability, parliamentary scrutiny and legal predictability. Provisional measures may gradually become normalised, reshaping expectations regarding the legitimate scope of EU action (Spyrakou, 2026). The relevant lesson for energy governance is therefore not that emergency instruments should disappear, but that measures that prove useful during crises should subsequently be evaluated, democratically scrutinised and, where appropriate, incorporated into ordinary and durable Union law.

A more coherent Energy Union should also discipline the fiscal dimension of energy crises. Emergency support may be necessary to preserve social cohesion and protect vulnerable households, but it should remain temporary, targeted and compatible with decarbonisation. The 2026 response shows that untargeted VAT cuts, excise-duty reductions and fuel rebates remain politically attractive, yet they weaken price signals, favour fossil-fuel consumption and reproduce inequalities between Member States with different fiscal capacities (McWilliams et al., 2026). EU-level guidelines for crisis support should therefore prioritise vulnerable consumers, exposed strategic sectors and public investment in grids, efficiency, storage and electrification. This would preserve the capacity to respond rapidly to shocks without turning energy securitization into a permanent logic of national subsidies.

Deeper regulatory and infrastructural integration is also necessary to overcome persistent market fragmentation. Letta (2024) proposes stronger cross-border coordination, common renewable auctions, a reinforced Connecting Europe Facility for Energy and the possible creation of a Clean Energy Delivery Agency. Such measures could improve security, affordability and sustainability without removing Member-State authority over the composition of the national energy mix. The Commission's Affordable Energy Action Plan and Clean Industrial Deal already reflect attempts to strengthen the Energy Union through greater coordination between energy, industrial and climate policy.

The need for reform is supported by measurable evidence of fragmentation. ACER's monitoring indicates that incomplete compliance with the 70% cross-zonal capacity requirement continues to restrict cross-border electricity trade, maintain price differences and obstruct renewable integration. In the Core region, transmission operators made only 54% of physical capacity available on the most congested lines in 2024, while full compliance could have generated approximately €580 million in additional welfare (ACER, 2025). Congestion and insufficient coordination also produce substantial remedial costs and increase exposure to avoidable price shocks. Declarations of solidarity are therefore insufficient without greater interconnection, coordinated congestion management, improved bidding-zone design and financial instruments capable of preventing national fiscal disparities from transforming the green transition into a subsidy competition (Letta, 2024).

Formal Treaty reform would remain politically and procedurally difficult, since Article 48 TEU generally requires unanimity and national ratification. Nevertheless, the absence of Treaty change does not prevent further integration. Articles 114, 192 and 194 TFEU already provide legal bases for internal-market, environmental and energy measures, although their use remains constrained by competence boundaries, national preferences and the distributional consequences of common policies. The problem is therefore not exclusively a lack of political will, but the interaction between political disagreement, constitutional limits and uneven national capacities.

A realistic approach would follow a form of incremental constitutionalism. Rather than beginning with a comprehensive transfer of energy sovereignty, the EU could use existing Treaty provisions more systematically, rely on directly applicable regulations where legally appropriate, strengthen Energy Union governance and link European funding more closely to national implementation. Additional measures could include reinforcing ACER's supervisory capacity, expanding joint planning for cross-border infrastructure, using enhanced cooperation where Union-wide agreement is impossible and considering the Article 192(2) passerelle for specific environmental measures (Cuyvers et al., 2024).

This gradual approach is consistent with Spyrakou's (2026) description of the EU as an unfinished and experimental political formation. Its capacity to respond to crises does not necessarily depend on reaching a final federal structure; it may instead derive from an issue-specific assembly of authority. In the energy field, this adaptability can constitute a strategic advantage. The underlying principle is that energy can no longer be governed as a collection of largely separate national systems. Because supply disruptions, infrastructure failures, price shocks and decarbonisation costs cross national borders, European resilience requires a more durable framework of shared responsibility. The objective is not to establish a centralised European energy system, but to ensure that national choices remain compatible with collective security, market integration and the Union's capacity to act under external pressure.

CONCLUSIONS

Main findings

The analysis shows that the European Union's reaction to the Russian invasion of Ukraine produced a consolidation of energy policy, but this consolidation was partial and uneven. It was partial because the security framing concentrated on dependence on Russian fossil fuels and the immediate risk of supply disruption, rather than on the full scope of EU energy governance. It was legalised because emergency measures remained anchored in the Treaties, especially Article 122(1) TFEU, instead of suspending ordinary procedures. It was uneven because Member States accepted common emergency instruments while maintaining divergent energy mixes, infrastructures and external supply relationships.

This consolidation strengthened the Union's capacity to manage the immediate crisis. Instruments such as joint procurement, coordinated demand reduction, gas storage obligations, accelerated permitting and temporary market interventions expanded the EU's toolbox in ways that were not politically feasible before 2022. Yet greater crisis management capacity did not amount to full strategic autonomy. The EU reduced its vulnerability to Russian coercion, but it remained dependent on external suppliers, LNG infrastructures and imported clean technology value chains. Institutional fragmentation continued to limit its freedom of action.

The first finding concerns the role of securitising actors. The European Council and the European Commission reframed long standing dependence on Russian fossil fuels as an immediate strategic threat. The Versailles Declaration linked the reduction of Russian energy dependence to European resilience, defence and geopolitical agency. The Commission described Russian supply cuts as the weaponisation of energy. National leaders and the European Parliament reinforced this narrative, but the Council and Commission were decisive because they combined discursive authority with the institutional capacity to translate the threat framing into common measures.

The second finding concerns the referent objects protected by the securitising discourse. The most immediate was continuity of supply, including heating, electricity generation and industrial production during potential gas interruptions. The threat was also framed as endangering economic stability, household purchasing power and social cohesion, since high prices risked inflation, industrial disruption and unequal burdens across Member States. A further referent object was the cohesion of the Union itself. Divergent national exposure and fiscal capacity created the risk of unilateral responses that could fragment the internal market. Dependence also constrained the EU's external capacity to sanction Russia and support Ukraine without incurring disproportionate economic costs.

The third finding concerns audience acceptance. Member States endorsed storage obligations, demand reduction targets, joint purchasing and market interventions, which shows that they accepted the need for coordinated action. Acceptance was not uniform. National positions reflected differences in infrastructure, import profiles and fiscal space. Hungary's resistance to parts of the sanctions and energy agenda illustrates how high material dependence translated into demands for exemptions. Acceptance was therefore pragmatic. It was strong enough to authorise emergency measures but insufficient to eliminate national bargaining or produce lasting authority shifts.

Hypothesis verification

The hypothesis is supported, but with important qualifications. The evidence confirms that the Russian invasion acted as a catalyst for the securitisation of EU energy policy. Threat construction, institutional acceptance and exceptional measures moved energy beyond its previous treatment as a predominantly economic, regulatory and environmental field. However, the process did not generate a complete or durable security-oriented governance framework, nor did it create comprehensive strategic autonomy.

The first limitation concerns the temporary character of the response. Most exceptional measures adopted under Article 122(1) TFEU were conceived as crisis instruments rather than permanent reforms. While they expanded the EU's capacity to respond to the emergency, they did not fundamentally transform the long-term governance of energy policy.

Second, acceptance did not overcome national sovereignty. Despite unprecedented coordination, Member States retained control over key aspects of energy policy under Article 194(2) TFEU. The crisis generated sufficient consensus for emergency action, but not for a fully integrated energy policy.

Third, reduced dependence on Russia did not eliminate external vulnerability. It shifted rather than resolved it, and the EU achieved a meaningful but limited increase in strategic autonomy. The Union reduced its exposure to a dominant supplier through rapid diversification of gas imports and the sharp decline of Russian pipeline deliveries. Mandatory storage targets and coordinated demand reduction strengthened its capacity to withstand short-term disruptions. Common purchasing, emergency regulation and greater coordination also demonstrated a stronger institutional capacity for collective action. The combination of lower demand, alternative supply and accelerated renewable deployment reduced Russia's ability to use energy dependence as direct political leverage. These developments increased resilience, but they did not amount to comprehensive autonomy.

Diversification created new forms of concentration, particularly in relation to US LNG, while greater reliance on globally traded gas increased exposure to international prices, competition for cargoes and disruptions along maritime routes (BBVA Research, 2026). Infrastructure bottlenecks and unequal access to LNG terminals and interconnectors continued to distribute resilience unevenly among Member States. National control over energy mixes and external supply relations further limited the consolidation of a genuinely integrated European response. At the same time, the transition towards renewable energy generated its own external dependencies, including imported critical raw materials, solar technologies and battery components.

The hypothesis is therefore confirmed in its central claim. Securitisation strengthened the EU's capacity for crisis management, but its temporary, fragmented and dependency-transforming character constrained the development of full strategic autonomy.

Nonetheless, this thesis has three main limitations. First, the post-2022 period remains recent, and some of the long-term effects of the emergency measures analysed here cannot yet be fully assessed. Second, audience acceptance in the EU is difficult to measure because there is no single audience, but rather a fragmented set of Member States, institutions, markets and public opinions. Third, the Gulf/Iran crisis is used as a stress test rather than as a fully separate securitization case, because its political and market consequences are still evolving. These limitations do not weaken the central finding, but they require interpreting it cautiously: the EU has become more resilient, but the durability of this transformation remains uncertain.

<u>Summary of policy recommendations</u>

The securitisation of EU energy policy cannot remain limited to temporary emergency measures. If it is to produce lasting strategic effects, the crisis response must be translated into a long-term strategy capable of strengthening resilience beyond the immediate management of supply disruptions. The measures adopted after 2022 demonstrated that the EU could coordinate demand reduction, storage, diversification and market intervention under exceptional circumstances. However, they did not fully resolve the structural weaknesses that had made the European energy system vulnerable in the first place.

The central challenge is therefore to convert short-term adaptation into durable capacity. This requires reducing excessive dependence on individual suppliers, strengthening internal infrastructure, expanding reliable low-carbon energy sources and ensuring that the transition towards renewables does not reproduce external dependence on critical materials and foreign technologies. It also requires a more coherent governance framework capable of coordinating national policies and transforming temporary solidarity into a stable feature of the Energy Union.

The following proposals address these principal needs. They do not aim to achieve complete energy self-sufficiency, which is not realistic. Instead, they seek to strengthen the EU's capacity to manage interdependence, absorb external shocks and prevent energy dependence from limiting its political and economic freedom of action.

- **Introduce supplier-diversification thresholds.** The EU should monitor concentration in strategic energy imports and consider an indicative threshold of approximately 30–40% for reliance on a single external supplier. Exceeding this level would trigger diversification plans, joint purchasing and infrastructure coordination, reducing exposure to geopolitical pressure, supply disruptions and price volatility.
- **Treat renewables, grids and efficiency as security infrastructure.** Renewable generation can reduce dependence on imported fossil fuels only if it is supported by modern electricity grids, storage, interconnection and demand flexibility. Faster permitting, stable investment mechanisms and socially balanced efficiency policies are therefore necessary to combine security, affordability and decarbonisation.
- **Strengthen the internal energy market** by enforcing cross-border capacity rules, accelerating interconnections and grid investment, and limiting unilateral national measures that distort competition. A genuinely integrated market would reduce price fragmentation, improve renewable integration and make energy solidarity more effective in future crises.
- **Use nuclear energy as a selective source of resilience.** Existing nuclear reactors can provide stable low-carbon electricity, reduce dependence on gas-fired backup and

support systems with increasing shares of variable renewables. However, extensions and new projects should be assessed individually according to safety, costs, construction risks, waste management and fuel-cycle dependence.

- **Strengthen hydrogen and clean-technology autonomy.** EU investment should prioritise renewable hydrogen in sectors that cannot be directly electrified, rather than promoting hydrogen as a universal energy solution. Financing should also support European production, recycling and diversified supply chains for batteries, electrolysers, solar technologies and critical raw materials.
- **Consolidate a more coherent Energy Union.** Temporary coordination under Article 122 TFEU should gradually be incorporated into durable legislation based on Articles 114, 192 and 194 TFEU. Stronger cross-border infrastructure, coordinated investment, common financing and an expanded supervisory role for ACER would reduce market fragmentation without eliminating national control over the energy mix.

Together, these proposals understand strategic autonomy not as energy self-sufficiency, but as the capacity to manage external dependence without allowing supplier concentration, infrastructure weaknesses or fragmented national policies to restrict European action.

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COMILLAS
UNIVERSIDAD PONTIFICIA
CIHS

Curso 2025/26

ANEXO: Declaración de uso de herramientas de IA generativa

Nombre Grado/Máster:	**GRADO EN RELACIONES INTERNACIONALES**
Nombre Alumno:	**LUCÍA RAMÍREZ HERNÁNDEZ**
Coordinador/a TFG/TFM:	**MARTA PARÁDES MARTÍN**
Nombre Director/a de TFG/TFGM:	**ILEANA DANIELA SERBAN**

Declaro que para la elaboración del presente Trabajo Fin de Grado / Trabajo Fin de Máster se ha utilizado inteligencia artificial generativa como herramienta de apoyo.	**SÍ**	NO

1) Uso de la IA Generativo

Si tu respuesta ha sido SÍ, contesta a las siguientes preguntas. Si has contestado NO, pasa al apartado 2.

Uso ético

	SÍ	NO
¿A la hora de usar la herramienta IA, en los *prompts* utilizados has incluido datos de carácter sensible o de carácter personal (fotos de personas reales, datos personales, etc.)? *Si tu respuesta es afirmativa especifica cuáles.*		**X**
¿Has orientado tu uso a suplantar tu trabajo personal sin hacer una revisión crítica de la extraído en la herramienta IA? *Si tu respuesta es afirmativa especifica cuáles.*		**X**
¿Has tenido en cuenta las recomendaciones académicas que te han hecho específicamente en el Grado/Máster sobre lo que está permitido o no con la IA?	**X**	

Uso técnico realizado:

¿Qué herramientas has utilizado (ChatGPT, Copilot, Claude, Nano Banana….)? Especifica la versión o tipo de licencia.

ChatGPT Plus

Marcar lo que corresponda:

☐ Generación de texto *(Especificar qué herramientas)* →

☒ Reformulación *(Especificar qué herramientas)* → ChatGPT: Revisión de gramática y ortografía, acortar frases demasiado largas

☒ Traducción / corrección *(Especificar qué herramientas)* → ChatGPT; DeepL

☒ Sugerencia de estructura *(Especificar qué herramientas)* → ChatGPT: Revisión de la coherencia y del hilo conductor del texto

☐ Apoyo metodológico *(Especificar qué herramientas)* →

☒ Buscar o citar bibliografía *(Especificar qué herramientas)* → Scribbr: Bibliografía; ChatGPT: Revisar referencias de fuentes jurídicas

☐ Generar contenido audiovisual (videos, infografías, audios, imágenes, gráficos. *Especifica en concreto qué contenidos has generado con IA además de citarlo correctamente en el trabajo.*

☐ Otros *(Especificar qué herramientas)* →

Confirmo que el contenido final ha sido revisado, corregido y validado íntegramente por mí como autor/a y asumo la plena responsabilidad académica del mismo. **Sí**

La utilización de la IA no ha sustituido el análisis crítico, la reflexión personal ni el trabajo intelectual propio exigido en un TFG/TFM. **Sí**

Firma: