How the EU’s framing of Russia’s management of LNG as 'weaponization' impacted its energy policy during the Russia-Ukraine conflict

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Thesis by Zoë Duurkoop (8029908)
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Supervisor: Dr. T. Jeursen
Second reader: Dr. M. Fumerton

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Abstract

The Russian invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 precipitated a substantial alteration in the EU's energy policy, thereby underscoring the critical importance of energy security. This thesis examines the manner in which the EU has addressed energy security and adapted its energy policy in response to the invasion. Historically, crises involving leverage over Russian gas have not resulted in significant policy changes within the EU. However, the 2022 invasion and Russia's subsequent demand for LNG payments in rubles represented a shift in perspective, reframing Russia's energy management as a form of 'weaponization'. This thesis employs a theoretical framework based on energy security to analyse EU policy documents and Council meetings from the past 50 years. The analysis demonstrates the emergence of a strategic shift in energy policy following the invasion, with a particular focus on enhancing energy security.

In order to mitigate the risk of future disruptions to its energy supply, the EU has accelerated the diversification of its energy sources. This has involved an increase in LNG imports from alternative suppliers and the establishment of new partnerships. The investment in renewable energy technologies under the REPowerEU plan is intended to reduce the EU's dependence on Russian fossil fuels and enhance its energy self-sufficiency. Furthermore, the EU has adopted a more assertive policy approach, introducing joint gas purchasing agreements, enhancing energy storage capabilities, and establishing regulatory frameworks to stabilise energy prices and ensure market transparency. Collectively, these measures serve to reinforce the EU's energy security framework, thereby fostering enhanced resilience and greater levels of cooperation among member states. This thesis concludes that characterising Russia's LNG management as a form of weaponization has prompted a significant shift in EU energy politics. This shift emphasises the importance of solidarity and self-sufficiency in addressing contemporary energy challenges and ensuring a stable, secure energy supply for the future.

List of abbreviations

EESS - European Energy Security Strategy

EPE - Energy Policy for Europe

IEA - International Energy Agency

LNG - Liquified Natural Gas

MICEX - Moscow Interbank Currency Exchange

MS - Member State

NATO - North Atlantic Treaty Organization

US –United States

Introduction

Ever since the pipeline network that exports energy from the Soviet Union to Europe has been established, there have been instances in which Russia has attempted to weaponize LNG (liquified natural gas). Since the establishment of the pipeline network for the export of energy from the Soviet Union to Europe, Russia has consistently sought to weaponize LNG as a geopolitical tool. During the Cold War, the Soviet Union and the United States perceived Western Europe as a key arena for exercising influence. In this context, the construction of the pipeline network can be interpreted as a strategic move by the Soviet Union to enhance its influence in the region.[1] In the post-Soviet period, Russia's weaponization of energy as a geopolitical tool became evident during the gas crisis of 2006, 2009, and 2014.[2] Despite these efforts, the European Union historically did not view these actions as significant threats to its energy security, leading to a lack of substantial re-evaluation of its energy policies. The EU and Russia continued their energy contracts, and the European Member States (MS) became even more dependent on Russian gas.[3]

The issue of this dependency only became pertinent following Russia's decision to invade Ukraine in February 2022. This attack precipitated a global conflict with far-reaching repercussions. Following the invasion, the EU had openly declared its support for Ukraine and imposed economic sanctions on Russia. The conflict was not merely military in nature, energy and specifically LNG started to become weaponized as well. As soon as Russia did not receive the desired support from Western countries Putin threatened to cut LNG supplies to them if they did not pay in rubles.[4] The EU framing of this instance as weaponization proved to be a pivotal moment in the evolution of EU energy security, as it prompted the EU to undertake a comprehensive re-evaluation of its energy policies. The gravity of the situation was highlighted at the EU Council meeting in June 2022, where this issue was formally addressed for the first time. The following statement was put forth:

[1] Jeronim Perovic, 'The Soviet Union's Rise as an International Energy Power: A Short History', in: Jeronim Perovic (ed.), *Cold War Energy A Transnational History of Soviet Oil and Gas* (Cham 2017) 13.

[2] Thijs Van de Graaf, Jeff D. Colgan, 'Russian gas games or well-oiled conflict? Energy security and the 2014 Ukraine crisis', Energy Research & Social Science 24 (2017) 2, 59-64, 61.

[3] James Henderson, Alrild Moe, *The globalization of Russian gas: political and commercial catalysts* (Northampton 2019) 57.

[4] Anne-Sophie Corbeau, 'A Divide And Rule Game: Will Russian Gas Supplies To Europe Be Cut?', *Centre On Global Energy Policy* (18 July, 2022), https://www.energypolicy.columbia.edu/publications/divide-and-rule-game-will-russian-gas-supplies-europe-be-cut. (accessed 1 July, 2024).

> ‘In the face of the weaponization of gas by Russia, the European Council invites the Commission to pursue its efforts as a matter of urgency with a view to securing energy supply at affordable prices'.[5]

In the field of conflict studies there has been research on instances in which Russia has weaponized LNG. This thesis bases itself upon the work of Kratochvíl and Tichý who have written about the LNG crisis of 2006 and 2009 and EU policy responses. In the article: ‘EU and Russian discourse on energy relations’, they highlight how Russia's management of LNG created vulnerabilities for the EU, prompting it to implement securitizing measures**,** such as diversification of energy supplies and infrastructure.[6] My research expands on their analysis by introducing the concept of weaponization, coupled with a framing analysis that explores how geopolitical circumstances shape the evolution of EU energy policy. Russia has been using energy supplies as a tool of geopolitical influence or coercion - weaponizing energy - to assert or maintain geopolitical power long before the invasion of Ukraine in 2022. By examining both historical and recent examples of Russia's use of energy as a geopolitical tool, this research seeks to demonstrate how the EU has responded to these challenges and shaped its energy policy over time.

The primary research question this thesis seeks to answer is: ‘How has the EU’s framing of Russia’s management of LNG as 'weaponization' impacted its energy policy during the Russia-Ukraine conflict?’. The methodology used to answer this research question is a policy analysis which bases itself on EU Council meeting reports and EU energy strategy reports mainly. Furthermore, the theoretical framework used in this thesis is centralized around the concept of energy security. While energy security lacks a singular definition, most interpretations center around the availability, accessibility, affordability, and acceptability of energy sources. This thesis posits that the concept of energy security is inherently multidimensional and that a comprehensive understanding of this phenomenon necessitates a contextual approach that extends beyond the traditional focus on the four factors. It is therefore crucial to not only define energy security, but also to examine the concepts related to it and their function within the EU's broader perception of energy security and associated policy decisions. Chapter one will provide a more extensive explanation of the theoretical framework and the concepts that have been utilized in this thesis. This chapter also offers an overview of the methodological approach employed in this thesis, along with the rationale behind the chosen method.

In order to provide a comprehensive analysis of the EU framing of the Russian management of LNG, I have structured the chapters that follow into two time periods. Chapter two will focus on the

[5] European Council, ‘European Council conclusions, 23-24 June 2022’(June 24, 2022), 2022-06-2324-euco-conclusions-en.pdf (europa.eu) (accessed 16 June, 2024).

[6] Petr Kratochvíl , Lukas Tichý, ‘EU and Russian discourse on energy relations’, Energy Policy 56, (2013) 5, 391-406, 403.

historical context of the Russian pipeline network and how Russia expanded its influence in energy politics over time. The sub-question that will be addressed is: 'How did Russia develop into an energy superpower?'. The research period of this chapter ranges from the 1950s until the invasion of Ukraine in February 2022. I will research a developmental puzzle with regards to how Russia became the EUs primary gas supplier. The second research period ranges from the invasion of Ukraine in February of 2022 to June of 2024 and will be discussed in chapter three. This chapter based itself upon a processual puzzle which aims to answer the following sub-question: How did LNG become a weapon in the Russia-Ukraine war?'.[7] The concluding chapter will summarize the most important findings of my research and provide an answer to the research question.

[7] Jennifer Mason, *Qualitative Researching* (London 2002) 11.

Chapter 1: Theoretical framework and methodology

This chapter provides the theoretical framework that will be utilized in this thesis' analysis of the EUs approach to energy security, particularly in the context of the Russia-Ukraine conflict and the weaponization of LNG by Russia. In order to conduct an accurate investigation into the concept of energy security, it is essential to first establish a clear and comprehensive definition. Furthermore, it is imperative to explore the EU's approach to energy security to gain a deeper understanding of the interconnectivity between energy security and other related concepts, such as energy diversification, energy solidarity, energy self-sufficiency and weaponization. This will be followed by a discussion of the methodology that has been utilized to answer this thesis question.

1.1.1 Energy security

The central concept of this thesis is 'energy security', which can be defined in a variety of ways. There is no single definition that is widely accepted among scholars. In the academic realm, there is a debate surrounding the definition of energy security. On the one hand, there is a group that argues for a more simplistic security-based definition. These definitions focus on four key aspects of energy security namely: availability, accessibility, affordability, and acceptability.[8] Winzer posits that a concise and coherent definition of the concept is instrumental in enhancing energy security within a nation's policy framework.[9] One example of a security-based definition is the International Energy Agency (IEA) definition. The IEA defines energy security as follows: 'the uninterrupted availability of energy sources at an affordable price'.[10] On the other hand, there is a group of scholars that argues for a multidimensional definition of energy security. LaBelle posits that an approach which considers energy security in the context of the wider global environment is necessary for a comprehensive understanding of this issue. He proposes a variety of factors that influence energy security, including geopolitical dynamics, policy frameworks, economic factors, technological innovations, energy sovereignty and solidarity, environmental concerns, and socio-economic stability. According to LaBelle, the multidimensional approach should be used to get a better understanding of energy security and external

[8] Aleh Cherp, Jessica Jewell, ''The concept of energy security: Beyond the four As', *Energy Policy* 75 (2014) 13, 415-421, 416.

[9] Christian Winzer, 'Conceptualizing energy security', *Energy Policy* 46 (2012) 7, 36-48, 41.

[10] IEA, 'Energy Security – Topics - IEA', https://www.iea.org/topics/energy-security (Accessed 20 February, 2024).

influences.[11] I align with LaBelle's approach and concur with Ang et al.'s position, which recognizes the inherent challenges in defining the concept of energy security due to its intrinsic flexibility and context-dependent nature.[12] They argue for a multidimensional approach stating that the concept of energy security has broadened over time to encompass elements such as energy efficiency and environmental sustainability. This evolution of definitions within the field of energy security is aligned with technological advancements, shifts in policymaking, and an increasing awareness of climate change.[13] Therefore, the concept of energy security cannot be studied in isolation and is dependent upon geopolitical developments, especially when studied in relation to international policy developments.

This section of my thesis has already distinguished between a concise and a multidimensional approach to energy security. Furthermore, it is essential to highlight an additional differentiation that is pivotal to a thorough examination of this subject matter. In his book, 'Held Captive by Gas', Posaner identifies two distinct forms of energy security: short-term and long-term.[14] The concept of short-term energy security is concerned with addressing immediate concerns, including patterns of consumption, the flow of pipelines, and the inventory of storage facilities. This approach is primarily concerned with the need for rapid responses to sudden disruptions in the energy supply, with the goal of ensuring stability over weeks or months. In contrast, a long-term energy security approach requires a broader and more multidimensional perspective that considers many different factors, including geographical, geopolitical, economic and environmental considerations. This perspective is not only concerned with the physical availability of energy but also with the sustainability and resilience of energy systems in the face of long-term challenges and evolving circumstances.[15] The distinction between these two forms is important in the context of policy analysis, as it highlights the need for differentiated strategies. The imperative of short-term security is to implement measures that are both prompt and responsive, with the aim of guaranteeing an uninterrupted energy flow and providing a means of averting an energy crisis. In contrast, the focus of long-term security is on the development of proactive and strategic planning, which incorporates future risks and sustainability considerations. An understanding of and approach that encompasses both dimensions allows for a comprehensive and effective energy security policy, ensuring that measures are effective in both the immediate and distant future.

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[11] Michael Carnegie LaBelle, 'Breaking the era of energy interdependence in Europe: A multidimensional reframing of energy security, sovereignty, and solidarity', *Energy Strategy Reviews* 52 (2024) 2, 1-13, 3.

[12] B.W. Ang, et al., 'Energy security: Definitions, dimensions and indexes', *Renewable and Sustainable Energy Reviews 42* (2015) 2, 1077-1093, 1078.

[13] Ibid., 1081.

[14] Joshua Posaner, *Held captive by gas - The Price of Politics in Gazprom's Long-Term Contracts with Central European Buyers (2009 to 2014)* (Berlin 2020).

[15] Ibid., 64.

As we explore the multidimensional approach to energy security, it is imperative to incorporate the concepts of energy self-sufficiency and solidarity. These concepts are critical in understanding how energy security policies develop in a broader geopolitical and environmental context. LaBelle has conducted research into these concepts and their emergence within the context of EU energy policy, defining energy self-sufficiency as follows: 'the ability of a country or region to meet its energy needs entirely from its own domestic resources, thereby minimizing reliance on external energy sources'.[16] In the event that a country proves incapable of doing so, the EU provides support via the principle of energy solidarity. The concept of energy solidarity is defined as a principle that emphasizes mutual support and cooperation among EU member states with the objective of ensuring collective energy security and stability.

1.1.2 Understanding weaponization in the context of energy security

As previously stated in this thesis, the concept of energy security is intrinsically linked to other related concepts. It is therefore essential to define the concept of weaponization, as this is also a pivotal issue in the context of EU energy policy. Weaponization can be defined in many ways depending on the context in which the concept is being used. Cambridge dictionary defines weaponization as: 'the act of using something as a way of attacking a person or a group', or 'the act of turning something such as bacteria, poisonous chemicals, etc. into weapons that could kill or injure many people or putting weapons into a place'.[17] While these definitions do capture the concept of weaponization, they are somewhat limited when applied in the context of energy politics. In their chapter 'Energy and International Conflict' in the *Oxford Handbook of Energy Politics*, Colgan and Stockbruegger provide a more nuanced understanding of weaponization.[18] They elaborate on how energy sources, such as oil and natural gas, play various strategic roles in international conflicts. Instead of being direct weapons, these resources are often used to induce geopolitical changes by exerting influence and control over other states through the manipulation of energy supplies, creating dependencies, or destabilizing economies.[19]

In energy politics, particularly within the EU's policy discussions, weaponization refers

[16] Labelle, 'Breaking the era of energy interdependence in Europe: A multidimensional reframing of energy security, sovereignty, and solidarity', 2.

[17] Cambridge dictionary, https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/weaponization (accessed May 23, 2024).

[18] Jeff D. Colgan, Jan B. Stockbruegger, 'Energy and International Conflict', in: Kathleen J. Hancock (ed.), Juliann Emmons Allison (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Energy Politics* (Oxford, 2020) 283.

[19] Ibid.

specifically to this strategic use of energy resources as tools of geopolitical leverage. This form of weaponization is not about direct physical attacks but rather about how energy can be employed as a means of coercion or influence in the international arena.[20] By analyzing how the EU frames actions such as energy supply disruptions and price manipulations as forms of aggression or coercion, this thesis aims to demonstrate how this perspective on weaponization influences the EU's subsequent decisions and policies. In other words, the way the EU interprets these actions as "weaponization" directly impacts its responses, both in terms of policy-making and strategic planning. This framing can significantly shape both short- and long-term energy security measures, as well as strategies aimed at enhancing energy self-sufficiency and fostering solidarity among member states.

1.1.3 Energy dependency

In my policy analysis, the final concept to be highlighted is energy dependency. This concept is integral to energy security policy and is closely related to the issue of weaponization, as discussed previously. Energy dependency refers to the extent to which a country or region relies on external sources for its energy needs, creating potential vulnerabilities in its energy security.[21] Understanding energy dependency is crucial for analyzing how these vulnerabilities can be exploited, particularly through the weaponization of energy. Energy dependencies significantly influence an actor's geopolitical standing and its perception of energy security. The supplying actor, which exports energy resources, inherently occupies a more powerful geopolitical position. This power dynamic allows the exporting actor to leverage its resources strategically, exploiting the dependency of other actors. This exploitation can manifest in various ways, including the coercion or manipulation of energy-dependent states, ultimately impacting their energy security and broader geopolitical strategies. Thus, energy dependency is not merely a structural condition but a critical factor that shapes the geopolitical landscape. It can be weaponized, turning energy into a tool of influence and coercion, making it essential to consider in any comprehensive energy security policy.

Energy dependency may manifest in various forms, with a common assumption being that interdependencies often exist between two or more parties. This symmetrical dependency is characterized by a mutual dependence of two parties on each other regarding energy resources. In such a scenario, both the supplier and the consumer hold leverage, resulting in a relatively balanced relationship. This mutual dependence means that neither party has absolute power over the other, as each relies on the other for critical energy needs or markets. However, the dynamics of energy dependency are not always balanced. When the dependency is asymmetrical, the situation changes

[20] Ibid.

[21] Colgan, Stockebruegger, 'Energy and International Conflict', 283.

significantly, meaning one party is more dependent on the other. In this case, the less dependent party can exert significant influence or pressure, creating a power imbalance that often leads to geopolitical leverage.[22]

EU policy suggests that reducing or managing reliance on external suppliers is a key factor in addressing energy dependency. To achieve greater self-sufficiency, the EU focuses on strategies such as diversifying its energy sources, boosting domestic production, and establishing alternative energy partnerships. These efforts aim to mitigate the risks associated with dependency, which can be exploited through weaponization. By analyzing how the EU frames actions like energy supply disruptions and price manipulations as forms of aggression or coercion, this thesis aims to demonstrate how these perceptions of weaponization influence the EU's policy responses. Understanding both weaponization and the different forms of energy dependency is crucial for highlighting the vulnerabilities and strategic considerations that shape EU energy policies, making them integral to the analysis presented in this thesis.

1.2. Methodology

This thesis employs a qualitative research approach consisting of a policy analysis and secondary literary sources. The policy analysis focuses on examining EU policy documents, including EU Council meetings, selected EU Commission reports, and press conferences, spanning approximately 50 years. I have chosen to study the documents from the last 50 years because the first council meetings that were documented and published are from 1975. The decision for the time period of my policy analysis was taken on the basis that the earliest council meetings to be documented and published are from 1975. Thus, these primary sources' availability has influenced the research period of this thesis. While the principal focus of this policy analysis is on the EU's energy policies from 1975 onwards, the thesis provides a brief historical overview of the ascendance of Russia as an energy superpower with the use of secondary literary works. It is imperative to comprehend this context, as it provides critical insights into the geopolitical, economic, and social factors that have shaped the EU's energy policy over time. By engaging with historical accounts, academic analyses, and expert commentary on past energy crises, this research situates the EU's current policy decisions within a broader historical framework. The integration of secondary literature not only enhances the depth of the analysis but also facilitates a more nuanced understanding of how past events have informed the EU's present and future strategies regarding energy security.

[22] Andrej Krickovic, 'When Interdependence Produces Conflict: EU–Russia Energy Relations as a Security Dilemma', *Contemporary Security Policy* 36 (2015) 1, 3-26, 8.

By analyzing primary sources such as Council meeting records, targeted Commission reports, and official statements, it is my intention to uncover shifts in the EU's policy framing, with a particular emphasis on the concepts of energy security and the weaponization of LNG by Russia. I have elected to concentrate on EU Council meetings, as they constitute a pivotal decision-making forum where the heads of state and government of EU Member States convene to deliberate and influence the political and strategic trajectory of the European Union. These meetings are of great consequence in establishing the general political guidelines and priorities of the EU, particularly regarding matters of great significance, such as energy security. By analyzing the records and outcomes of these meetings, insights can be gained into the framing and development of energy policy at the highest levels of the EU. Furthermore, I have selectively studied EU Commission reports in addition to Council meetings. However, I have focused primarily on those reports that pertain to subjects discussed during Council meetings where the Council explicitly ordered the Commission to form a strategy on a specific energy security issue. This selective approach ensures that the analysis remains tightly focused on the most relevant documents, thereby providing a clear link between the high-level decisions made at Council meetings and the strategies developed by the Commission in response.

Chapter two: The history of the Russian pipeline network

This chapter will provide a historical context for the pipelines and examine the narrative surrounding the weaponization of Russian LNG. Since Russia has become the primary supplier of LNG to the European Union, instances of unreliability have been observed. This thesis posits that Russia initiated the weaponization of LNG prior to the invasion of Ukraine. This chapter employs a comparative historical analysis to substantiate this claim, examining instances that were analogous to the cutting of the LNG pipelines in 2022. In contrast to the 2022 gas crisis, these incidents were not characterized as weaponization and did not prompt the implementation of analogous EU policy measures to enhance energy security. This chapter will examine the impact of these instances of weaponization on EU energy policy.

Furthermore, this chapter aims to elucidate the developmental puzzle of how Russia became a global energy superpower.[23] The following sub-question will be addressed: 'How did Russia become an energy superpower?'. To achieve this objective, the paper will examine the history and weaponization of the Russian LNG pipelines, with a particular focus on pivotal events. These include the oil crisis of the 1970s, the construction of the Druzhba pipeline, the Siberian pipeline, and the gas crisis that occurred in 2006, 2009, and 2014. By examining these historical events and their implications, this chapter aims to provide a definitive account of the evolution of Russia's influence in the field of energy politics and the EU's response to its increasing dependence on Russian LNG.

2.1.1 Russia as an energy superpower and the Siberian pipeline

In the twentieth century a global energy shift took place. Where EU countries used to produce their own energy sources, they would now import them from the Soviet Union.[24] During the 1950s, the Soviet Union had developed technology to win crude oil from Siberian fields and the first pipeline to export resources from the Soviet Union to Europe was built. This construction process did not take place without any resistance because NATO perceived the growing Soviet influence over West-Europe as a threat. In the cold war context, the fast expansion of Soviet oil production or 'the oil offensive' had to be halted. NATO attempted to do so by putting an embargo on steel pipes. However, this measure would

[23] Mason, *Qualitative Researching,* 11.

[24] Michael Bradshaw, Richard Connolly, 'Russia's Natural Resources in the World Economy: history, review and reassessment', *Eurasian Geography and Economics* 57 (2016) 6, 700-726, 711.

not last long since the demand for Soviet oil increased. The measures were lifted and the 'Druzhba pipeline' or 'friendship pipeline' was finalized in 1964. This oil pipeline answered demands from EU MS and would further economic relations between the Soviet Union and the EU.[25] EU MS would start to increase their dependence on Soviet oil during the 1970s when tensions between Israel and Arab countries were raised. During the Yom Kippur War, Arab countries made a calculated decision to use oil as a weapon to exert influence over US intervention. They decided upon a 76 percent increase in the price of oil, which in turn precipitated an oil crisis in the West.[26] Since the West could not depend on Arab oil the demand for soviet oil was raised. During this crisis the Soviet Union proved to be a reliable oil supplier and the concerns regarding increasing Soviet influence decreased.[27] The oil crisis led to the first documented EU council discussion on energy dependence in 1978. The council stated that they intended to 'reduce dependence on imported oil through energy savings and increased energy production'.[28] In the years that followed, the EU council made it a priority to increase price stability to avoid an economic crisis. Furthermore, the intention was to develop a coherent energy policy.[29]

In the late 1970s, the Soviet Union also started to extract liquified natural gas from Siberia. Thus, in 1981 contracts to construct a pipeline exporting LNG between Siberia and East-Europe were signed.[30] This would mark the beginning of a transatlantic crisis. The 'Urengoy–Pomary–Uzhgorod pipeline' or the 'Siberian pipeline' has been controversial ever since plans to realize the project were announced. Although framed as addressing Europe's rising LNG demand, this pipeline sparked controversy, especially in the Cold War context. Its geopolitical implications were profound, especially in light of the tensions between the U.S. and the Soviet Union. The United States strongly opposed the pipeline, viewing it as an economic pact that would deepen the connection between the Soviet Union and Europe, while simultaneously increasing Europe's dependence on Soviet energy supplies, specifically LNG, in addition to oil.[31] Europe's increasing reliance on Soviet energy made it vulnerable to potential manipulation or coercion, as the Soviet Union could use its control over energy supplies to exert political influence. This asymmetric dependence shifted the balance of power in favor of the Soviet Union, providing it with significant geopolitical leverage over European countries, which

[25]Jeronim Perovic, 'The Soviet Union's Rise as an International Energy Power: A Short History', in: Jeronim Perovic (ed.), *Cold War Energy A Transnational History of Soviet Oil and Gas* (Cham 2017) 13.

[26] Blake C. Clayton, *Market Madness : A Century of Oil Panics, Crises, and Crashes* (Oxford 2015) 108.

[27] Perovic, 'The Soviet Union's Rise as an International Energy Power: A Short History', 2.

[28] European Council, 'Copenhagen European Council, 7-8 April 1978' (20 April, 1978), copenhagen_april_1978__eng_.pdf (europa.eu) (accessed 12 June, 2024).

[29] Ibid.

[30] Susan Colbourn, 'An Interpreter or two: defusing NATO's Siberian pipeline dispute, 1981–1982', *Journal of Transatlantic Studies* 18 (2020) 2, 131–151, 134.

[31] Bengt Soderbergh, Kristofer Jakobsson, Kjell Aleklett, 'European energy security: An analysis of future Russian natural gas production and exports', *Energy policy* 38 (2010) 12, 7827-7843, 7827.

became more exposed to the risk of supply disruptions. While the U.S. framed its opposition to the pipeline as a matter of energy security, concerns about the expanding Soviet influence in Europe were likely a key factor in their resistance to the project. In an attempt to sabotage the construction of the pipeline, the Reagan administration tried to halt the construction by imposing sanctions such as taking measures to halt the transport of materials.[32] EU MS were also told 'They should not put in the pipeline if they expect us to defend them'.[33]

Despite these challenges, the EU proceeded with the agreement with the Soviet Union. American concerns regarding a lack of energy diversification and EU energy security were also dismissed. The EU countered that in the event of the Soviet Union cutting the gas pipelines, Norway could serve as an alternative supplier for the resource.[34] Another argument in favor of the continuation of the pipeline project was that the sanctions imposed by the US did not align with the détente period and its values. The term "détente" refers to a period of reduced geopolitical tensions and increased trade between the Eastern and Western blocs during the Cold War.[35] Consequently, the introduction of US sanctions was met with a negative response from Western allies resulting in an increase in the divisions between them, which is now known as the transatlantic Siberian crisis. During this crisis the EU council came together to discuss EU-US relations and how the US sanctions unilaterally jeopardized the maintenance of an open world trade system.[36] In 1990, NATO was determined to find a solution to managing relations between the 'East' and 'West'. US sanctions on the Siberian pipeline have been lifted as a result of dialogue between NATO members.[37] This dialogue paved the way for the EU for a discussion and implementation of an Energy Charter in 1994.

The EU initially did not perceive the expansion of the Soviet Union's LNG pipeline network as a significant threat, largely due to the longstanding reliability of the Soviet Union as an energy supplier, even at the height of the Cold War. This sense of trust was further reinforced after the Arab oil crisis of the 1970s, which highlighted the risks of external energy dependence by causing severe disruptions to oil supplies across Europe. In contrast to the volatility of Middle Eastern energy supplies, the Soviet Union had consistently maintained stable oil and gas supplies, positioning itself as a reliable partner. Given this history, European leaders were confident in the Soviet Union's ability to provide a secure

[32] Colbourn, 'An Interpreter or two: defusing NATO's Siberian pipeline dispute, 1981–1982', 131.

[33] Soderbergh, Jakobsson, Aleklett, 'European energy security: An analysis of future Russian natural gas production and exports', 7827.

[34] European Council, 'European Council - Brussels, June 1982', bruxelles_june_1982__eng_.pdf (europa.eu) (accessed June 16, 2024).

[35] Dionysios Chourchoulis, 'Understanding the Long Detente and its Crisis in Cold War International History', *Journal of Contemporary History* 55 (2020) 3, 666–678, 668.

[36] Soderbergh, Jakobsson, Kjell Aleklett, 'European energy security: An analysis of future Russian natural gas production and exports', 7827.

[37] Colbourn, 'An Interpreter or two: defusing NATO's Siberian pipeline dispute, 1981–1982', 149.

supply of LNG even amid geopolitical tensions. This reliability led the EU to downplay the risks of asymmetric dependence and dismiss US concerns that growing energy ties with the Soviet Union could give Moscow greater geopolitical leverage. Instead, the EU believed that any potential disruptions could be mitigated by alternative suppliers, such as Norway, further reducing the perceived risk of dependence on Soviet energy.

2.2.1 The Russian-Ukrainian gas crisis of 2006

On March 23 and 24 of 2001, the EU Council discussed their partnerships with Russia. During this meeting it was stated that 'the dialogue in the field of energy is on track'. There were even agreements to develop a political and security dialogue with Russia.[38] In the years following, the EU made plans to improve the energy transport network to increase security of supply. However, these plans were not put into action yet and the partnership was soon to be tested. This happened on the first of January 2006 when Gazprom cut Russian LNG supplies to Europe. The reasoning behind this decision was unclear as Gazprom denied responsibility, insisting that Ukraine was withholding the LNG supplies.[39] Eventually, the truth surfaced, and there was disagreement over the prices and volume of gas that would be transported through the pipes in 2006. The interruption of Russian pipeline operations was brief but had immediate consequences, which Stern summarized as follows:

> The fall in volumes delivered to European Union countries caused an outcry all over Europe. By January 2, Hungary was reported to have lost up to 40 percent of its Russian supplies; Austrian, Slovakian and Romania supplies were said to be down by one third, France 25 – 30 percent and Poland by 14 percent. Italy reported having lost 32 million cubic metres, around 25 percent of deliveries, during January 1 – 3.57 German deliveries were also affected but no further details are known.[40]

To resolve the crisis, Ukraine had to sign a five-year contract in which the missing variables were included. The distress did not last long and with the help of some Russian compensation, the nations were back to their old volumes of gas by January 4 of 2006. However, EU countries were confronted

[38] European Council, 'Stockholm European Council, 23 and 24 March 2001', stockholm-european-council-presidency-conclusions.pdf (europa.eu) (accessed 16 June, 2024).

[39] Jonathan Stern, 'Natural Gas Security Problems in Europe: the Russian–Ukrainian Crisis of 2006', *Asia-Pacific Review* 13 (2006) 1, 32-59, 43.

[40] Ibid., 44.

with their vulnerable position because of their high dependence on Russia as their main supplier for LNG.[41]

On March 23 and 24 of 2006 the EU council came together to discuss and address the challenges that the EU faced during the energy crisis.[42] It was stated that EU import dependency increased and limited diversification of energy suppliers was achieved so far. The EU had made slow progress in their actions to diversify energy such as improving energy efficiency and the use of renewables. In order to achieve the goals of energy security and energy diversification, the EU had constructed an EPE (Energy policy for Europe) to discuss shared perspectives on EU energy.[43] The EPE stressed that energy security would increase through: 'Intensified diversification with respect to external as well as indigenous sources, suppliers and transport routes supported by investments in the necessary infrastructure, including LNG facilities'.[44] Interestingly, the focus of these security measures was both on diversification regarding external and indigenous sources and thus EU energy policy aimed to increase MS self-sufficiency and solidarity at the same time.[45] To prepare the EU for future challenges regarding energy the EPE included an indicative list of actions in cases of supply disruptions. The list also included actions regarding energy diversification, energy security, the energy market, development of infrastructure and sustainable energy. In the security section of the EPE it was stressed that the dialogue with Russia regarding energy needs to be revitalized and that Russia is required to do the following to do the following:

> 'become more open and effective in support of EU energy objectives, based on our mutual interdependence on energy issues and thus the need for secure and predictable investment conditions for both EU and Russian companies and reciprocity in terms of access to markets and infrastructure as well as non-discriminatory third party access to pipelines in Russia'.[46]

In examining the EU Council meeting and the subsequent EU actions following the 2006 crisis, it becomes clear that the pipeline cut was not perceived as a form of weaponization. However, it acted as a catalyst for the EU to prioritize measures to enhance energy security. This need was emphasized in

[41] Ibid.

[42] European Council, 'Brussels European Council 23 and 24 March 2006' (18 May, 2006), 89013.pdf (europa.eu) (accessed 17 June, 2024).

[43] European Commission, 'An Energy Policy for Europe' (10 January, 2007), eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52007DC0001 (accessed 18 June, 2024).

[44] Ibid.

[45] LaBelle, 'Breaking the era of energy interdependence in Europe: A multidimensional reframing of energy security, sovereignty, and solidarity', 10.

[46] European Commission, 'An Energy Policy for Europe' (10 January, 2007), eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52007DC0001 (accessed 18 June, 2024).

the conclusions of the meeting, which called on the EU Commission and the Council to 'prepare a set of actions with a clear timetable enabling it to adopt a prioritized action plan at its meeting in Spring 2007'.[47] The plan, designated the EU Energy Security and Solidarity Action Plan, addressed the issue of rising Russian LNG prices. It also encompassed a number of initiatives, including infrastructure projects, joint gas purchases, new gas routes and emergency measures. All of these initiatives were collectively aimed at enhancing energy security, reducing dependence on individual suppliers and improving the overall energy resilience of member states.[48] In the same year, the Lisbon Treaty was signed with the objective of reinforcing EU solidarity, particularly in the domain of energy.[49] As a result of the implementation of this treaty in 2009, the EU changed its policy towards energy by recognizing it as an independent policy area in the treaties. The objective was to guarantee the stability and security of the energy market, ensure the availability of energy resources, promote energy efficiency and savings, facilitate the development of renewable energy sources, and enhance the interconnection of energy networks.[50]

2.2.2 The crisis of 2009

On January 1st of 2009, Gazprom cut off the supply of LNG to Europe again leading to a second Russian-Ukrainian gas crisis. However, this crisis would continue to leave a longer lasting impression because of the worldwide consequences.[51] The origin of this gas dispute can be attributed once again to complications arising during the gas negotiation proceedings. In an examination of the 2009 crisis, Lee identifies four issues that surfaced during these negotiations, namely: debts, prices, transit fees and the Ukrainian pipeline system.[52] He categorizes the first three issues as monetary and states that they need to be studied in the light of the financial crisis of 2008. These issues by themself would not necessarily cause a crisis, but in the context of a collapsing market and a decrease in demand for Russian LNG,

[47] Ibid.

[48] European Commission, 'EU Energy Security and Solidarity Action Plan' (13 November, 2008), https://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=COM:2008:0781:FIN:EN:PDF (accessed 1 July).

[49] European Union, 'The Lisbon Treaty ' (17 December, 2007), DOC_19 (europa.eu) (accessed 20 July, 2024).

[50] Ibid.

[51] Andrey Vavilov and Georgy Trofimov, 'The Struggle for Pipelines: Gazprom's Attempts at Strategic Expansion, in the "Near Abroad"', in: Andrey Vavilov (ed.) 'Gazprom: An Energy Giant and Its Challenges in Europe', 125.

[52] Yusin Lee, 'Interdependence, issue importance, and the 2009 Russia-Ukraine gas conflict', *Energy Policy* 102 (2007) 3, 199-209, 202.

they could result into one.[53] Lee also states that these issues were furthered by their political implications. Russia had overlooked these monetary issues in the past, however, Ukrainian efforts to join NATO implied an anti-Russian agenda. Because of Ukraine taking an opposite political stance, Russia mobilized Ukraine's monetary issues as a form of punishment.[54] Gazprom insisted that the Ukrainian company Naftogaz promptly resolve the financial matters by settling the outstanding debts, including accrued interest fees, resulting from payment delays. Ukraine did not manage to meet these demands in the assigned timeframe which resulted in Gazprom cutting the pipelines once again. This time around, the crisis lasted two weeks instead of a few days. The difference between the 2006 and 2009 crisis is only a few days but because of the harsh winter weather every day without gas counts.[55]Mišík states that Slovakia and Bulgaria, had a more difficult time stating that they were forced to take the following measures:

> 'To adopt emergency procedures restricting industry use, since they did not have alternative sources of natural gas (except a very small domestic production that could not cover a significant part of consumption) and had to deal with infrastructural limitations (an insufficient level of gas supplies at storage facilities)'.[56]

In addition to the measures recently implemented by Bulgaria and Slovakia to guarantee their energy security, the EU Council convened once more to deliberate on the matter of energy security. The topic had been discussed more in the years following the crisis of 2006 but there was no cohesive crisis mechanism put into place to deal with supply disruptions. During the EU council meeting on March 19 and 20 of 2009, they agreed on several points of action.[57] The first one being that energy infrastructures and interconnections must be developed to ensure that no MS is isolated from liquified natural gas. Secondly, they formed a crisis mechanism including all actors in the energy industry to improve overall communication and energy security. Both measures were intended to strengthen the positions of MS individually and unilaterally, leading to increased energy self-sufficiency and energy solidarity. On

[53] Andrey Vavilov (ed.), *Gazprom an energy giant and its challenges in Europe* (Hampshire 2015) 6.

[54] Lee, 'Interdependence, issue importance, and the 2009 Russia-Ukraine gas conflict', 204.

[55] Mert Bilgin, 'Energy security and Russia's gas strategy: The symbiotic relationship between the state and firms', *Communist and Post-Communist Studies* 44 (2011) 5, 119-127, 123.

[56] Matúš Mišík, 'Crisis as remedy? The 2009 gas crisis and its influence on the increase of energy security within Visegrad Group countries', *International Issues & Slovak Foreign Policy Affairs* 21 (2012) 1-2, 56-72, 62.

[57] European Council, 'European Council conclusions, 19 and 20 March 2009' (29 April, 2009) 106809.pdf (europa.eu) (accessed 17 June, 2024).

diversification, the Council emphasized the significance of reusable energy in reducing reliance on external suppliers and proposed the development of alternative pipelines to diversify energy suppliers.[58]

2.2.3 The LNG crisis of 2014 and EU energy policy responses

On June first of 2014, Gazprom cut the pipelines again. Comparable to the crisis of 2006 and 2009, the formal reasoning was because of unpaid debts by Naftogaz and disputes over gas pricing.[59] However, this crisis is perceived differently than the former. The reason being is because of the context in which the cut-off took place. This time, the gas crisis was parallel to the Crimea conflict between Russia and Ukraine.[60] Preliminary to the 2014 crisis, there were multiple instances in which Russia has been accused of weaponizing natural gas. However, this was the first instance in which the crisis could be linked to a conflict. The reason being is because the crisis followed the ousting of Ukraine's pro-Russian President Yanukovych, Russia's annexation of Crimea, and the outbreak of conflict in Eastern Ukraine. The cut-off from Russian LNG would put Ukraine under even more pressure in the geopolitical context and can be perceived as a display of power. Because winter was on its way, Ukraine had to compromise and discuss new prices with Russia. The parties stepped back from the brink in October 2014 to reach a temporary agreement on partial debt repayment by Ukraine and pre-payment for new Russian deliveries until the end of June 2015.[61]

Following the energy crisis of 2014 the EU Council issued a statement in which they addressed the topic of energy security and their support for Ukraine:

> ‘Energy and energy security are an important part of the Union's external relations. We will continue our efforts to ensure security of supply. We also call for the effective and consistent implementation of the Third Energy Package by all players in the European energy market. The European Union also stands ready to assist Ukraine in securing its energy supply through

[58] Ibid.

[59] Thijs Van de Graaf, Jeff D. Colgan, ‘Russian gas games or well-oiled conflict? Energy security and the 2014 Ukraine crisis’, *Energy Research & Social Science* 24 (2017) 2, 59-64, 61.

[60] Ibid.

[61] Ibid., 62.

further diversification, enhanced energy efficiency, and effective interconnections with the European Union'.[62]

This statement was followed by a meeting on the 20 and 21st of March the same year, in which the situation in Ukraine and the consequences of EU dependence on Russia were discussed. The EU has taken the decision to implement a series of measures in the event that Russia does not withdraw its troops from Ukraine. Among these measures are economic sanctions against Russia, although these do not include the sanctioning of LNG.[63] The subject of energy was extensively discussed at the subsequent meetings. The primary focus, however, was not on sanctions but on reducing energy dependence and enhancing energy security with respect to both electricity and gas. One of the key actions that the EU endorsed during the same year was the European Energy Security Strategy (EESS). The EESS focused on energy dependency, diversification and the long- and short-term measures that needed to be taken to ensure EU energy security.[64] In 2015, the European Union (EU) set forth a strategic plan for the creation of an 'Energy Union', comprising five key objectives. These include: the assurance of energy security and solidarity, fostering of trust, the establishment of a fully integrated European energy market, the promotion of energy efficiency as a means of moderating demand, the decarbonization of the economy, and the advancement of research, innovation, and competitiveness.[65]

The aforementioned meetings and actions demonstrated that the discourse surrounding diversification has reached a peak in the wake of the energy crisis. Initiatives such as the EESS showcase the need for EU energy diversification. However, there is a stark discrepancy between these measures and the EU policy response to the invasion of 2022, which will be discussed in the following chapter. EU MS did not diverge from using Russian LNG; in contrast, they began to rely on the resource even more due to the competitive pricing. I follow Henderson in idea that this competitive pricing was a strategy to maintain influence over EU-countries and to ensure their dependence on Russian LNG. This growth in demand would stagnate as the tensions between Russia and Ukraine grew over the 2010's.[66]

The Covid-19 pandemic also influenced Russia's position as primary supplier for EU energy. The pandemic caused a decline in global economic activity, which led to a decreased demand for LNG.

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[62] European Council, 'Statement of the Heads of State or Government on Ukraine Brussels, 6 March 2014' (6 March 2014), 141372.pdf (europa.eu) (accessed 18 June, 2024).

[63] European Council, 'European Council 20 and 21 March 2014' (21 March 2014), 141749.pdf (europa.eu) (Accessed 18 June, 2024).

[64] European Commission, 'European Energy Security Strategy'(May 28, 2014), https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52014DC0330&from=EN (accessed 20 June, 2024).

[65] European Council, 'EU Energy Union', Energy union - Consilium (europa.eu) (accessed 24 June, 2024).

[66] James Henderson, Alrild Moe, *The globalization of Russian gas: political and commercial catalysts* (Northampton 2019) 57.

As economies began to recover, a number of factors contributed to increased price volatility and rising costs. These included disruptions to the supply chain and geopolitical factors that prompted EU MS to reduce their reliance on Russian pipeline gas. In response to the aforementioned factors, the EU began diversifying its energy suppliers and imported LNG primarily from the United States. The invasion of Ukraine led to a further radical shift in energy relations between Russia and the EU. The conflict prompted European countries to accelerate their efforts to further decrease their dependency on Russian gas, emphasizing the need for energy security and diversification of supply sources.[67] Chapter three will analyze how the EU framed the weaponization of the pipelines following the invasion of Ukraine and how they adjusted their energy policy accordingly to ensure energy security. This chapter will examine the EU's strategic response, policy adjustments, and initiatives implemented to mitigate the risks associated with energy dependency and enhance the resilience of the EUs energy infrastructure.

[67] IEA, 'The role of Russia and Ukraine's transit in Europe's gas supply', Gas Market and Russian Supply – Russian supplies to global energy markets – Analysis - IEA (accessed 1 July, 2024).

Chapter 3: The Russian invasion of Ukraine - the rise of a 'weaponization' narrative in EU policy and actions

This chapter will examine the evolution of EU energy policy in the context of the Russia-Ukraine war, with a particular focus on the weaponization of LNG pipelines by Russia. It is based on a processual puzzle of how Russian LNG became weaponized from the perspective of EU Member States. This study aims to address the following sub- question: 'How did Russian LNG become a weapon following the invasion of Ukraine?'. The following section will present a concise overview of the invasion of Ukraine and the subsequent disruptions in the Russian supply of liquefied natural gas (LNG). Furthermore, an examination of EU policy responses will be presented. Ultimately, this chapter seeks to illustrate the discrepancy between EU policy responses to analogous instances of weaponization, thereby emphasizing the significance of event framing and the influence of geopolitical circumstances. This comparison will be conducted using the findings of Chapter Two, which has provided a comprehensive analysis of these gas crises.

3.1.1 The invasion of Ukraine, energy blackmail and EU responses

On the 24th of February 2022, Putin ordered the invasion of Ukraine, commencing the Russia-Ukraine war. At the time of the invasion, there had been a protracted period of diplomatic and territorial tensions between Russia and Ukraine for several years. This was evidenced by a series of disputes over gas supplies, as well as Russia's annexation of Crimea. In his article 'Now or Never': The Immediate Origins of Putin's Preventative War on Ukraine', Roberts presents Putin's actions as a preventative strategy.[68] He posits that the growth of NATO and Ukraine's integration into the alliance were perceived as threats to Russian national security.[69] In order to substantiate this argument, the author draws upon a translated excerpt from a speech delivered by Putin a year prior to the invasion.

> 'It appears, and this is highly regrettable, Ukraine is being turned, slowly but steadily, into an antipode of Russia, an anti-Russia, a territory from which, judging by all appearances, we will

[68] Geoffrey Roberts, 'Now or Never': The Immediate Origins of Putin's Preventative War on Ukraine', *Journal of Military and Strategic Studies* 22 (2022) 2, 3-27.

[69] Ibid., 8.

never stop receiving news that requires special attention in regard to protecting the national security of the Russian Federation'.[70]

This statement showcases the relevance of geopolitical tensions between Russia and the West in the Russia-Ukraine war and the period prior to the conflict. While the Cold-War had ended, the Russian fear of Western influence had not. While this argument provides an interesting research topic, this thesis will continue to specifically focus on the EU reaction to the invasion of Ukraine and how it influenced EU energy policy.

Immediately following the invasion of Ukraine, the EU Council convened an emergency meeting. During this meeting which took place on 24 February, it was stated: 'By its illegal military actions, Russia is grossly violating international law and the principles of the UN Charter and undermining European and global security and stability'.[71] In order to regain both global stability and security, the EU demanded the following:

> 'That Russia immediately ceases its military actions, unconditionally withdraws all forces and military equipment from the entire territory of Ukraine and fully respects Ukraine's territorial integrity, sovereignty and independence within its internationally recognised borders'.[72]

The Council meeting provided a comprehensive examination of the invasion of Ukraine, which was subsequently addressed in a press conference by EU Council President Charles, who discussed the concept of 'building a united Europe'. He expressed his aspiration to achieve sovereignty or strategic autonomy among EU MS. One potential avenue for achieving this objective is to reduce the EU's reliance on external resources and to enhance its self-sufficiency. One example that he provides in his speech is the need to reduce EU energy dependency and to increase the capacity for strategic independence in the field of energy. Prior to the invasion, the EU had already started to diversify its energy sources and suppliers to increase energy security. But this focus would increase following the invasion as the ramifications of the Russia-Ukraine conflict soon became apparent, extending beyond the immediate confines of the battlefield. In his article 'The war in Ukraine: Consequences for the economy, labor class and equitable development in Europe and beyond', Piotr Żuk discusses the repercussions of the Russian invasion of Ukraine, stating that it has had a multifaceted impact.[73] He

[70] Ibid.

[71] European Council, 'European Council Conclusions on Russia's Unprovoked and Unjustified Military Aggression Against Ukraine' (February 24, 2022), https://www.consilium.europa.eu/press (Accessed 3 June, 2024).

[72] Ibid.

[73] Piotr Żuk, 'The war in Ukraine: Consequences for the economy, labour class and equitable development in Europe and beyond' , *The Economic and Labour Relations Review* 34 (2023) 2, 343-356.

notes that the events in Ukraine caused by Russia's invasion of the country in 2022 were affecting not only Ukrainian and Russian societies but are increasingly becoming a global challenge.[74]

Considering the global scale of the conflict and the concomitant rise in geopolitical tensions, it was imperative for the EU to adapt its policy in a corresponding manner. As this thesis has demonstrated, EU Member States have consistently relied on Russia as their principal supplier of LNG. This reliance on external energy sources has consistently been a feature of the EU's energy policy, even in instances where Russia has cut off the supply of LNG, as discussed in Chapter Two. This thesis aligns with the assertion put forth by Colgan and Stockbruegger that periods of conflict can render a state vulnerable due to its dependency on external energy sources. Colgan and Stockbruegger present the argument that this is contingent on the pipeline network, proposing the following:

> 'While regions are interconnected, there is no single global price of gas, as there is for oil, despite the growing significance of the market for liquefied natural gas (LNG). States cannot easily respond to supply shocks by shifting their commercial relations and importing gas from other countries, as they can do with oil. This has important implications for international security. It makes producers, consumers, and transit countries vulnerable to supply-line disruptions, and it allows them to use gas as a "weapon"'.[75]

On 23 March 2022, Russian President Vladimir Putin issued a decree requiring EU member states to pay for their natural gas imports in rubles. This directive was formalized in a decree signed on 31 March 2022. This demand was a direct response to the economic sanctions imposed by the European Union and other Western countries in consequence of Russia's invasion of Ukraine. In accordance with the decree, payments for gas from countries deemed hostile to Russia were required to be made via a dedicated account with the Russian banking institution Gazprom bank. Furthermore, all transactions were to be conducted through the Moscow Interbank Currency Exchange (MICEX), which constituted a pivotal component of Russia's financial infrastructure. The objective of this measure was to stabilize the ruble by establishing a consistent demand for the currency, thereby protecting Russia's domestic economy from the adverse effects of international sanctions.

The implementation of this directive gave rise to a broader debate within the European Union concerning the region's energy dependence on Russia. The demand for ruble payments highlighted the vulnerability of the EU's energy security, prompting calls for the diversification of energy sources. As a result of the Russia-Ukraine conflict, EU leaders began to perceive the reliance on Russian LNG not only as an economic risk but also as a potential security threat. In response, the European Union intensified its efforts to reduce its dependency on Russian energy. This shift prompted policy

[74] Ibid., 343.

[75] Colgan, Stockebruegger, 'Energy and International Conflict', 283.

discussions and actions aimed at diversifying energy supply through the exploration of alternative sources, including renewable energy, LNG imports from other regions, and the formation of closer partnerships with non-Russian energy suppliers.

Putin's directive had a decisive impact on the EU's energy strategy, prompting the MS to take substantial steps towards reducing external energy dependency and becoming more self-sufficient. This also had broader implications for global energy politics and power dynamics. In the event of the Member States of the European Union declining to comply with this demand, Russia proceeded to terminate the supply of liquefied natural gas to these countries. Given the disparate levels of dependency on Russian LNG among EU Member States, Putin had intended for this demand to precipitate a rift between them. Germany, for instance, was particularly reliant on Russian LNG at the time and would have to take measures to ensure energy security if the gas supplies to the country were to be cu[76] Taking the strategic nature of this demand in consideration, this thesis follows Carter in the idea that Russia's demand for Ruble payments was not merely an economic tactic to strengthen its currency. Rather, it was a geopolitical strategy designed to navigate and counteract Western sanctions, with the objective of maintaining economic and political influence through the utilization of energy exports. In the context of geopolitical tensions and the Russia-Ukraine war, this demand can be interpreted as a form of blackmail, and [77]

On 24 and 25 March 2022, the EU Council convened to deliberate on the Russian demand during the Versailles Meeting.[78] The meeting was based on the Versailles Declaration, which addressed the topic of energy dependency.[79] During the course of this meeting, the necessity of reducing reliance on Russian gas was centralized and the EU Council outlined a plan of action to achieve this goal. The conclusions of this meeting include the following statement regarding future actions to reduce energy dependency:

> ‘The European Union will phase out its dependency on Russian gas, oil and coal imports as soon as possible, as set out in the Versailles Declaration. Therefore, the European Council looks

[76] European Union, ‘EU sanctions against Russia following the invasion of Ukraine’, https://eu-solidarity-ukraine.ec.europa.eu/eu-sanctions-against-russia-following-invasion-ukraine_en (accessed 18 June, 2024).

[77] Dylar Carter, ‘Russia demands gas payments in rubles: What does this mean?’ (2 April, 2022), https://www.brusselstimes.com/214515/russia-demands-payment-for-gas-in-rubles-explained (accessed August 1, 2024).

[78] EU Council, ‘Informal meeting of heads of state or government, Versailles, 10-11 March 2022’ (11 March 2022), Informal meeting of heads of state or government, Versailles - Consilium (europa.eu) (accessed 17 June 2024).

[79] EU Council, ‘Informal meeting of the Heads of State or Government: Versailles Declaration’, (11 March 2022), 20220311-versailles-declaration-en.pdf (europa.eu), (accessed 17 June, 2024).

forward to the comprehensive and ambitious plan, elaborated in close coordination with Member States, that The Commission will submit to this effect by the end of May 2022. National circumstances and Member States' energy mix will be taken into account'.[80]

3.1.2 The REPowerEU plan and energy dependency

To further the EU policy on the issue of energy dependency, the EU Council had requested the Commission to develop a plan during the Versailles meeting. The REPowerEU plan, presented on May 18, 2022, outlines a series of measures designed to diversify energy sources.[81] The first phase of the REPowerEU plan is designed to replace approximately two-thirds of Russia's LNG exports with alternatives sourced from non-Russian suppliers by the end of 2022. The overarching objective is to significantly reduce the EU's reliance on Russian fossil fuels by accelerating the development of renewable energy sources, with the ultimate goal of eliminating the complete reliance on Russian energy imports by 2027. Other measures include the acceleration of renewable energy deployment, the enhancement of energy infrastructure, and the improvement of efficiency in the energy sector.[82] This component of the REPowerEU plan already showcases a shift in both EU energy policy and international energy relations. Contrary to former energy crisis, the EU did not merely respond to the crisis with measures to improve short term energy but had composed an actionable plan to drastically reduce consumption of Russian LNG. One illustrative example of energy diversification is the utilization of renewable energy sources. The focus on renewable energy sources is not new in EU energy policy, however the developments in this department went through a significant increase due to the EUs' prioritization of energy diversification in its policy. This development also aligns with the EU's broader climate change goals and thus provides long-term benefits. Another key priority of the plan is strengthening energy infrastructure, which is crucial for enhancing long-term energy security. The plan aims to improve energy transport systems. This will enable member states to become more self-sufficient and less vulnerable to external disruptions. Additionally, it seeks to increase the interconnectedness between EU member states. This enhanced cooperation will foster greater solidarity and create a more resilient and efficient energy network across the region.

[80] Ibid.

[81] European Commission, 'REPowerEU Plan' (18 May, 2022), eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/HTML/?uri=CELEX:52022DC0230 (accessed 24 June).

[82] Ibid.

3.2.1 Weaponization narrative and its influences on EU energy security policy

This thesis has thus far observed that the EU has reacted to the 2022 weaponization of gas in a manner that differs from previous responses. In response to Russia's weaponization of LNG, the EU has adjusted its energy policy and implemented measures to enhance long-term energy security. Examples thereof are the search for alternative energy suppliers, but also the increase in renewable energy sources. The most drastic measure so far is the replacement of approximately two-thirds of Russia's LNG exports with non-Russian LNG products by the end of the year 2022. In all the former instances of weaponization that have been discussed in this paper, the EU has not taken such a definitive stance. However, one important difference between the former gas crises and the crisis of 2022 is the framing thereof. The first Council meeting in which the Russian actions were framed as 'weaponization', was during the meeting on 23 and 24 June of 2022.[83] This was followed by a rapid intensification of the discourse on the Russian weaponization of gas. On 7 October 2022, an informal meeting of the EU heads of state or government was held in Prague. During this meeting, the energy crisis and its consequences were discussed. Subsequently, the EU council president Michels held a press conference in which he stated,

> 'Russia has launched an energy missile against the European continent and the world. We are facing an energy crisis'.[84]

The aforementioned statement suggests that the EU has come to recognize the use of energy, and in this case LNG, as a weapon by Russia. Furthermore, Michels reiterated three areas in which European action is required: firstly, measures to reduce consumption and demand; secondly, energy storage to increase security of supply; and thirdly, the reduction of the price of energy resources. The meeting on October 7 established the agenda for the subsequent meeting, scheduled to take place on the 20th and 21st of October.[85] During this formal session, the EU Council reached resolutions regarding the prioritization of key areas requiring action. As in previous meetings, a clear distinction was evident between the EU MS and external partners, reflecting the objective of this meeting, which was to protect

[83] EU Council, 'European Council conclusions, 23-24 June 2022' (24 June, 2022), 2022-06-2324-euco-conclusions-en.pdf (europa.eu) (accessed 29 June 2024).

[84] EU Council, 'Informal meeting of heads of state or government, Prague, 7 October 2022' (7 October 2022), https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/meetings/european-council/2022/10/07/ (accessed 29 June, 2024).

[85] EU Council, 'European Council conclusions, 20-21 October 2022'(21 October 2022), https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/59728/2022-10-2021-euco-conclusions-en.pdf (accessed 2 July).

EU citizens and businesses. This focus demonstrates a form of solidarity among EU MS and simultaneously frames Russia as the enemy. The meeting addressed a number of pivotal strategies to reinforce energy security, including joint purchasing of gas, the establishment of a novel gas market benchmark, the implementation of a provisional price corridor, and the formulation of a framework to regulate gas prices. Moreover, initiatives are being implemented with the objective of enhancing market transparency, accelerating the development of renewable energy sources, and strengthening energy solidarity and savings. It is evident that the portrayal of Russia's LNG management as a form of weaponization has shaped the direction of EU energy policy. There were two key outcomes of this framing. First, the EU Council was inclined to undertake a re-evaluation of its policy. Second, the framing enabled the Council to perceive the incident as a matter of urgency, necessitating the implementation of immediate measures to enhance both long-term and short-term energy policy.

As evidenced with the statement above, these meetings showcase an increasement in 'us-vs-them' sentiments.[86] These sentiments become clear in statements like the statement above which uses the framing of Russia against Europe and the rest of the world. This distinction is telling since in former instances of Russia leveraging LNG, there would be a call for dialogue with Russia and Russia would not be framed as the enemy. However, the weaponization of 2022 would result in a noticeable shift towards a more assertive approach in EU energy policy, with a greater emphasis on the diversification of energy sources and suppliers. Rather than simply discussing the topic in meetings and reports, the EU would implement tangible measures in a relatively timely manner, which differs from previous instances of weaponization. This is also the case for solidarity and self-sufficiency policies. Historically, the focus has been on increasing EU solidarity and self-sufficiency. However, the invasion of Ukraine and the weaponization of LNG have led to an acceleration of this process and an increase in statements and sentiments about strengthening these components of EU policy.

3.2.2 EU Energy platform

This thesis has already discussed the implication of the Russia-Ukraine war and how the EU has based its energy policy on reducing dependence on Russian LNG. The EU had focused its policy on enhancing the internal energy market to strengthen the EUs energy security and geopolitical position in the global energy market.[87] This is how the REPowerEU plan was born which proposed the following three objectives to increase EU energy security: saving energy, producing clean energy and the diversification

[86] Jolle Demmers, *Theories of violent conflict* (Abingdon 2016), 135.

[87] European Commission, 'In focus: EU energy security and gas supplies' (15 February 2024), https://energy.ec.europa.eu/news/focus-eu-energy-security-and-gas-supplies-2024-02-15_en (accessed 1 August 2024).

of EU energy supplies.[88] In response to a directive from the European Council and as part of the REPowerEU initiative, the European Commission established the EU Energy Platform in April 2022.[89] The establishment of the EU Energy Platform represents a significant and proactive step towards the realization of the objectives set out in the REPowerEU plan. The platform is aligned with the plan's objectives, facilitating collective action among EU member states with the aim of enhancing energy security and reducing dependence on Russian fossil fuels, a central tenet of the REPowerEU strategy.

The plan bases itself upon three objectives that each contribute to REPowerEU goals. The first objective is to aggregate demand and coordinate joint purchasing. By reducing the risk of internal competition among EU countries, the platform mitigates the potential for price increases and weakens the EU's negotiating position. This collective approach ensures more favorable purchasing terms, contributing to the REPowerEU goal of securing affordable and reliable energy supplies. Secondly, the plan places an emphasis on optimizing the utilization of existing gas infrastructure, which serves to enhance the efficiency of energy distribution across the EU. This, in turn, has the effect of reducing potential bottlenecks and improving the overall resilience of the energy system. This is of great importance for meeting the REPowerEU target of a robust and integrated energy network. The third component of the platform's strategy is to engage in international outreach and negotiate with reliable global partners with the objective of diversifying energy sources. This diversification is a key objective of the REPowerEU plan, as it will reduce the EU's reliance on Russian energy. The platform's efforts to bring in alternative suppliers and introduce direct competition among global energy providers will strengthen the EU's energy security and sustainability.[90] In conclusion, the EU Energy Platform plays a crucial role in advancing the objectives of the REPowerEU plan. It does so by fostering cooperation and solidarity among member states, optimizing the utilization of existing infrastructure, and securing diverse and reliable energy sources. It is of considerable importance to pursue these endeavors, as they will contribute to the enhancement of the EU's energy self-sufficiency, the reduction of dependency on external and potentially unreliable suppliers, and the assurance of a stable and sustainable energy future for all member states. The aforementioned actions undertaken by the platform serve to reinforce the internal energy market of the EU, whilst simultaneously exemplifying the principles of solidarity and shared responsibility. These principles are of the most significant consequence in the attainment of the objective of energy independence and sustainability throughout the EU.

[88] European Commission, 'REPowerEU Plan' (18 May, 2022), eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/HTML/?uri=CELEX:52022DC0230 (accessed 24 June 2024).

[89] European Commission, 'EU Energy Platform', EU Energy Platform (europa.eu) (accessed 1 August 2024).

[90] Ibid.

3.3.1 Shifting energy dependencies

This thesis has discussed EU energy policy and the invasion of Ukraine extensively. My policy analysis has evidenced that the EUs framing of the Russian management of LNG has made it an urgent matter in the EU energy policy agenda. As a consequence of this framing, energy diversification emerged as a central objective of EU energy policy. Although the diversification of energy sources has long been a part of EU policy, the weaponization of LNG in 2022 prompted the EU to prioritize and pursue this goal with a more focused and actionable approach. This analysis has identified two principal areas in which diversification occurred. Firstly, there was a discernible shift towards diversifying energy sources, as evidenced by an uptick in investments in renewable energy development. Secondly, the 2022 crisis demonstrated the detrimental impact of relying on a single primary energy supplier on EU energy security. Consequently, the EU sought to diversify its energy suppliers and was driven to form alternative alliances. This shift has resulted in a broader realignment of global alliances and power dynamics', Karan et al. describe how the Russian weaponization of LNG had influenced global power dynamics:

> 'As a result, it is revealed that both sides will suffer from the gas war. However, in the medium term, Europe's developing LNG market and renewable resources may emerge stronger from this war. Still, Russia, which has lost its political and economic power over Europe, will suffer more'.[91]

This statement illustrates that Europe has begun to develop policies to become more self-sufficient, thereby reducing Russia's influence. However, Europe is not aiming for complete self-sufficiency. Instead, in addition to diversifying its energy sources, Russia's 'weaponization' of LNG has prompted the EU to seek greater cooperation with the United States and other major LNG-exporting countries. This approach is intended to ensure a more secure and diversified energy supply and reduces the risks associated with dependence on a single energy source or supplier.[92]

Following the Russian invasion of Ukraine, the European Union significantly increased its reliance on LNG imports from the United States to replace the reduced Russian gas supplies. This strategic shift is part of the EU's broader efforts to enhance energy security by diversifying its energy sources. A tight market and sensitive prices have boosted short-term LNG trading, with the share of spot and short-term contracts in total LNG trade increasing from 25% in 2017 to nearly 40% in 2021.

[91] M. B. Karan et al., 'The Natural Gas War Between Europe and Russia After the Invasion of Ukraine', in: James Thewissen et al., *The ESG Framework and the Energy Industry Demand and Supply, Market Policies and Value Creation* (2024) 61.

[92] Jan Osička, Filip Cernoch, 'European energy politics after Ukraine: The road ahead', *Energy Research & Social Science* 91 (2022) 9, p. 4, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.erss.2022.102757.

The US has considerably strengthened its position as a provider of LNG contracts, and US gas producers' revenues nearly tripled in 2022 due to the heightened European demand.[93] Despite efforts to diversify suppliers of LNG, the EU's primary supplier has become the US. This development highlights a parallel between the Cold War and current energy dynamics: During the Cold War, Europe was a battleground for influence between the Soviet Union and the US. The energy market today reflects a similar dynamic, with Europe shifting away from Russian energy dependence towards greater collaboration with the US. The increasing reliance on US LNG highlights the necessity for the EU to persist in evaluating its energy policy, with the objective of preventing EU MS from becoming unduly dependent on the US for their energy supply.

3.3.2 The Russia-Ukraine war: does LNG still play a role in the conflict?

As demonstrated by this thesis, LNG played a pivotal role in the initial phases of the Russia-Ukraine conflict, particularly in the economic and energy dynamics between Russia and Europe. In the aftermath of Russia's invasion of Ukraine and the weaponization of LNG, there has been an 80% reduction in Russian gas exports to Europe, leading to a notable surge in gas prices and intensifying concerns about energy security in Europe.[94] In response to these circumstances, European countries have increased their reliance on LNG imports, particularly from the United States, in order to offset the decline in Russian pipeline gas. This shift has given rise to concerns about the potential for excessive reliance on a single buyer. However, the EU has also become more self-sufficient as a result of the war, which has precipitated Europe's accelerated transition to renewable energy sources and underscored the imperative for long-term energy security. In consequence, the conflict has initiated long-lasting modifications to both the global energy market and geopolitical relations.[95]

As a direct consequence of the sanctions imposed on Russian LNG, Russia initiated a strategic programme of expansion of its LNG market, directing its attention to Asia rather than Europe. Consequently, the resource that previously constituted a pivotal factor in the relationship between Europe and Russia is no longer a key element.[96] As a result of diversification of both Russian and EU

[93] Karan et al., 'The Natural Gas War Between Europe and Russia After the Invasion of Ukraine', 70.

[94] James Henderson, 'The Impact of the Russia-Ukraine War on Global Gas Markets', *Current Sustainable/Renewable Energy Reports* 11 (2024), p. 1, https://doi.org/10.1007/s40518-024-00232-x.

[95] Ibid., 8.

[96] Chi Kong Chyong et al., 'Future options for Russian gas exports', *Center On Global Energy Policy (*19 January 2023), Future Options for Russian Gas Exports - Center on Global Energy Policy at Columbia University SIPA | CGEP. (accessed 23 August 2024).

LNG export and import options, the perceived interdependence between the two has diminished. Consequently, the conflict has since expanded beyond the domain of energy to encompass broader military and geopolitical considerations. Despite the reduction in the energy aspect of the conflict, LNG remains a crucial component of Europe's long-term plan to reduce its reliance on Russia. In the immediate term, Europe has endeavored to diversify its gas sources. However, the conflict has now shifted towards military strategies, including Russia's efforts to exhaust Ukraine's capacity to resist, while energy remains one of many complex elements.[97]

[97] Henderson, 'The Impact of the Russia-Ukraine War on Global Gas Markets', 4.

Conclusion

This thesis has examined the significant transformation in EU energy policy prompted by the Russia-Ukraine war, highlighting the critical importance of energy security amidst geopolitical threats. The research question, ‘How has the EU’s framing of Russia’s management of LNG as 'weaponization' impacted its energy policy during the Russia-Ukraine conflict?', guided this comprehensive analysis. The Russian invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 triggered a re-evaluation of the EU's energy security policies. This thesis argues that the disruption of natural gas pipelines from Russia to Europe, perceived as an act of weaponization, was instrumental in driving a strategic shift in the EU's approach to energy security. In response to Russia's use of natural gas as a geopolitical tool, the EU revised its energy policies to be more proactive, with a focus on ensuring long-term energy security. By analyzing EU policy documents and Council meetings over approximately 50 years, this thesis has aimed to highlight how previous instances of Russian leveraging of LNG did not elicit a unified EU response. Following the Russian invasion of Ukraine and Putin’s decree for LNG payments in Rubles, the EU characterized the Russian leverage of LNG as weaponization. This framing enabled the EU to respond to the Russian weaponization of LNG more proactively and has therefore contributed to the strategic shift in EU energy policy.

The first chapter provided a theoretical framework based upon the concept of energy security. Additionally, the chapter introduced key concepts such as weaponization, dependency, solidarity, and self-sufficiency. These concepts were essential for analyzing the EU's evolving energy policy. Furthermore, it has introduced the research method that has been employed for conducting the comparative analysis which serves as the foundation for this thesis. The second chapter offered a historical contextualization of the Russian pipeline network, examining how Russia became the EU's primary gas supplier and instances of unreliability. The sub-question that has been addressed is: How did Russia develop into an energy superpower?’. This historical perspective serves to illustrate the EU's initial lack of concern regarding the growth of Russian energy influence. In the context of the Cold War, both the United States and the Soviet Union attempted to gain influence in Western Europe. The formation of a business partnership between the EU and the Soviet Union was not solely driven by economic interests. From the perspective of the United States, the construction of pipelines from Russia to the West could be considered a political deal. This led to a deterioration in relations between the Western allies, with the United States advancing the position that the European Union should reduce its reliance on Russian LNG. These tensions were soon resolved and Russia had proved to be a ‘reliable’ supplier of LNG. However, this was not the case during the gas crisis of 2006, 2009 and 2014.

The analysis of these crises has demonstrated that they functioned as critical stages at which the EU's vulnerabilities were brought to light due to its reliance on Russian gas. Similar to the 2022 crisis, there were disputes regarding the prices and payments of LNG. However, during these crises the

main priority of EU policy was on dialogue with Russia to resolve tensions and continue the flow of LNG to Europe. This forms a stark contrast with the EU policy response to the invasion of Ukraine and the leveraging of Russian gas that followed. I have integrated the historical context with a detailed policy analysis to gather a deeper understanding of the EU's approach to energy security and the strategic importance of framing in shaping policy responses to geopolitical threats. To highlight the differences in EU framing and policy responses before and after the invasion, chapter three explores the processual puzzle of how Russian LNG was weaponized from the perspective of EU Member States. Consequently, the following sub-question has been addressed: 'How did Russian LNG become a weapon in the Russia-Ukraine war?'.

This thesis' analysis of EU policy responses to the invasion of Ukraine reveals that the EU initiated efforts to diversify its energy sources shortly after the Russian invasion. This was not a significant development, given that there has been an increase in EU discourse surrounding diversification following the crises discussed in Chapter Two. Nevertheless, the EU did not implement as many tangible measures in response to these instances of weaponization, and they were not perceived to be instances in which Russia was utilizing LNG as leverage. Despite the invasion and the EU's subsequent declaration of support for Ukraine, the EU continued to rely on Russian gas to a significant extent. The pivotal moment in the evolution of EU energy policy occurred when Russia demanded that 'unfriendly countries' pay in rubles. In the event that EU Member States did not acquiesce to this demand, Putin threatened to terminate pipeline flows to those Member States. This incident was perceived as a form of weaponization, which led to the EU imposing sanctions on Russian gas. This thesis argues that the Council meetings in March and June 2022 mark this shift in framing. For the first time, the issue of Russia weaponizing LNG by cutting pipelines exporting to EU MS was raised. Furthermore, statements made by EU leaders highlighted this even more. One notable statement that this thesis has presented is:

> 'Russia has launched an energy missile against the European continent and the world. We are facing an energy crisis'.[98]

The strategic shift in EU energy policy, as presented, includes an intensification of the discourse on energy diversification. In order to mitigate the impact of reduced imports from Russia, the EU implemented a series of compensatory measures. In order to attain this objective, the EU has expeditiously augmented its imports of LNG from alternative suppliers, including the United States, Qatar, and Australia. This strategic shift was deemed pivotal in mitigating the risks associated with dependency on a single supplier and ensuring a stable energy supply, thereby enhancing EU energy

[98] EU Council, 'Informal meeting of heads of state or government, Prague, 7 October 2022' (7 October 2022), https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/meetings/european-council/2022/10/07/ (accessed 29 June, 2024).

security. Moreover, the EU has initiated the formation of new partnerships with the objective of enhancing the diversity of LNG suppliers. Secondly, the EU initiated investments in renewable energy technologies with the objective of enhancing self-sufficiency and reinforcing the internal energy market. The REPowerEU plan, introduced in May 2022, seeks to significantly reduce the EU's reliance on Russian fossil fuels by fast-tracking the development of renewable energy initiatives, with the goal of completely ending its dependence on Russian energy imports by 2027. The plan sets out targets for the increase of the proportion of renewable energy sources in the EU's energy mix to 45% by 2030. While there has historically been an incentive to develop renewable energy technology, this process has been accelerated as a consequence of the weaponization of LNG subsequent to the invasion of Ukraine.

In response to recent geopolitical challenges, the European Union has implemented a series of substantial initiatives with the objective of enhancing its energy security and fostering solidarity among its member states. One pivotal strategy is the implementation of joint gas purchasing agreements, which are intended to guarantee equitable access to energy resources and prevent any single member state from bearing an undue burden due to disruptions in the energy supply. This collaborative approach allows member states to utilize their collective bargaining power, thereby securing more favorable terms from suppliers and enhancing the overall stability of energy imports. In order to further enhance self-sufficiency, the EU has concentrated its efforts on improving energy storage capacities across the region. This strategic initiative encompasses the development of extensive strategic reserves and the enhancement of storage facilities, thereby providing a critical buffer against potential supply shocks and ensuring that member states can support each other during times of crisis. The objective of enhancing storage capabilities is to construct a more resilient energy network, capable of withstanding external pressures and unforeseen disruptions.

Furthermore, the European Union has introduced regulatory frameworks with the objective of stabilizing energy prices and safeguarding consumers and businesses from the adverse effects of excessive fluctuations. These measures include the establishment of a new gas market benchmark and a temporary price corridor, the purpose of which is to prevent market manipulation and ensure transparency in energy trading. By regulating the market and promoting fair pricing mechanisms, the EU aims to protect its economies from the detrimental effects of volatile energy costs and maintain economic stability across the region. Collectively, these initiatives serve to reinforce the EU's energy security framework, whilst simultaneously fostering enhanced resilience and cooperation among member states. By pooling resources, enhancing infrastructure and regulating markets, the EU demonstrates a unified and proactive approach to mitigating dependency risks and ensuring a stable and secure energy supply for the future. These measures underscore the EU's commitment to solidarity and self-sufficiency, highlighting the importance of collective action and strategic planning in addressing contemporary energy challenges. This comprehensive strategy positions the EU to better navigate geopolitical uncertainties and promotes a more sustainable and secure energy future for all member states. Understanding these measures is crucial, as they highlight how the EU is not only addressing

immediate energy concerns but also securing long-term energy security by promoting diversification, enhancing self-sufficiency, and reinforcing resilience against future crises. They showcase how EU energy policy has evolved following the Russian weaponization of LNG.

My thesis concludes that EU energy policy measures taken post-invasion represent a significant strategic shift from the pre-invasion approach. The REPowerEU plan, which embodies this shift, includes the creation of the EU Energy Platform, a critical tool for enhancing energy security through the collective purchasing and diversification of energy supplies. By aggregating demand and coordinating joint gas purchasing, the platform prevents member states from competing against each other in global markets, thereby securing more favorable terms and enhancing solidarity across the EU. Furthermore, it optimizes the use of existing infrastructure and supports international outreach efforts to secure reliable energy partnerships. These measures reflect a more proactive, unified, and urgent response to the heightened perceived threat from reliance on Russian energy. By accelerating diversification, enhancing infrastructure, stabilizing markets, and fostering greater solidarity through initiatives like the EU Energy Platform, the EU has markedly strengthened its energy security framework in response to the geopolitical challenges posed by the invasion of Ukraine. This thesis has provided historical examples of crises in which the leveraging of LNG has been a factor, but the EU's response to these previous incidents did not involve the same level of action. Despite an increasing awareness of their vulnerability, EU countries continued to rely on Russian gas and sought dialogue in order to resolve disputes. This altered significantly when Putin demanded payment in rubles, threatening to sever energy supplies to those member states that did not comply. Although this was not the inaugural financial conflict regarding LNG, the context of the Russia-Ukraine war prompted the EU to categorize this leveraging as weaponization. It can therefore be concluded that the EU's framing of Russian management of LNG as 'weaponization' has resulted in a fundamental shift in EU energy politics following the invasion of Ukraine.

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Ignorance of these rules is not an excuse. Each individual is responsible for their own behaviour. Utrecht University assumes that each student or staff member knows what fraud and plagiarism entail. For its part, Utrecht University works to ensure that students are informed of the principles of scientific practice, which are taught as early as possible in the curriculum, and that students are informed of the institution's criteria for fraud and plagiarism, so that every student knows which norms they must abide by.

I hereby declare that I have read and understood the above.
Name: Zoë Duurkoop Student number: 8029908
Date and signature: 15-9-24 

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