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Master's Thesis — MS Sustainable Business and Innovation

"European Energy Resilience in Response to the Russo-Ukrainian War"

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Abstract

This study examines how energy resilience was discursively constructed in European public discourse during the energy crisis triggered by Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022, and explores potential implications of these constructions for the EU's sustainable energy transition. It incorporates insights from resilience theory into the discourse analysis of online English-language European news media, addressing a key gap in transition theory around how to assess regime destabilization. The analysis identified several distinct interpretations of energy resilience: resilience as immediate systemic adaptation with a promise of future transformation; resilience as systemic resistance that reinforces the status quo; and more technology-specific sub-narratives, focused on problematising the resilience aspects of nuclear and renewable energy systems. Among these, resilience-as-adaptation emerged as the dominant framing, largely shaped by EU-level policy actors. The findings also demonstrate that how vulnerability and risk are framed plays a critical role in legitimizing particular resilience strategies. Narrow framings tend to justify incremental or adaptive measures, whereas broader framings can support calls for more transformative change. Furthermore, empirical analysis revealed that regime actors often articulate resilience in temporal terms: emphasizing short- to medium-term adaptation while deferring structural transformation to the long term. This suggests that exercised resilience capacities might differ across time horizons and crisis intensities. Finally, the analysis reveals that discursive emphasis on certain vulnerabilities — particularly around dependency — may extend beyond fossil fuel concerns to shape perceptions of renewables and nuclear energy as well. These insights underscore the role of discursive power in legitimizing crisis responses and steering transition trajectories. By combining resilience theory with discourse analysis, the study offers an innovative methodological lens for examining the effect of crises on sustainability transitions.

Keywords: sustainability transitions, energy crisis, resilience, discourse analysis, sustainability, Russo-Ukrainian war, European Union, energy regime, regime resilience.

1 Introduction

When Russia launched its full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022 and weaponized its role as the EU's dominant energy supplier, analysts claimed that the resulting energy crisis could mark a turning point in the development of the European energy sector. For example, early on, energy transition scholars Żuk and Żuk (2022) suggested equally plausible yet divergent response trajectories: the crisis, they argued, could trigger a security-driven rise in nationalism that would undermine the EU's overarching climate policies, or alternatively, accelerate the energy transition by spurring investment in clean energy innovation. Other researchers also emphasized the profound implications of the current crisis for European energy policy, suggesting it could indeed catalyze a fundamental transformation of the EU energy system (Aitken & Ersoy, 2022; Falkner, 2023; Osička & Černoch, 2022; Kuzemko et al., 2022). For instance, in the crisis's first year, cross-partisan public support for clean energy surged in Switzerland, driven by "the interpretation of the war where the main problem is fossil fuel dependence, which can be solved by expanding solar and wind power as a replacement" (Steffen & Patt, 2022). Furthermore, the EU bolstered its 2030 renewables target from 40% to 45% (European Commission, n.d.-a), signaling a growing commitment to renewable energy. This suggested that the crisis might have widely reframed renewables as reliable and localized alternatives while securitizing fossil fuels (Osička & Černoch, 2022; Kuzemko et al., 2022); a shift that could persuade previously hesitant actors to embrace the energy transition.

Research into sustainability transitions has long recognized the role of shocks and crises in disrupting path-dependent systems and driving systemic change (Geels & Kemp, 2007; Johnstone & Schot, 2023). However, crises can also divert public attention from long-term sustainability goals, impose additional developmental challenges, and strain resources at critical junctures (Leung et al., 2025). Historically, heightened focus on energy security has sometimes led to deprioritization of sustainability goals: for example, Judge and Maltby (2017) argue that Poland's framing of coal as vital to national energy security has played a key role in its past reluctance to pursue a more ambitious environmental energy policy. At the same time, the 1970s energy security crisis prompted a nuclear renaissance and significant advancements in energy efficiency, while the crises of the 2000s helped reframe renewables as a strategic domestic energy source (Von Homeyer et al., 2021).

As it continues to unfold, the extent to which this crisis will contribute positively to the EU's sustainable energy transition remains uncertain. Emergency-driven actions taken to bolster the resilience of the energy sector may not align with the systemic changes required for the transition (Sturm, 2022; Kuzemko et al., 2022). Besides, conceptually, the relationship between pursuit of resilience and sustainability transition remains a subject of debate (Olsson et al., 2014; Scordato & Gulbrandsen, 2024). At the same time, growing academic interest in the destabilization of incumbent systems has highlighted the importance of examining their resilience properties (Turnheim & Geels, 2012; Kanger, 2020). However, interpretations of resilience vary widely, ranging from an emphasis on resistance to a focus on transformation (Scordato & Gulbrandsen, 2024; Rohne Till et al., 2024), each with distinct implications for the likely transition pathway. Moreover, past research on resilience policy discourse has shown that resilience rhetoric is frequently employed to justify divergent crisis response strategies (Chmutina et al., 2016), with scholars emphasizing the influence of public discourse on shaping resilience properties of social systems (Leitch & Bohensky, 2014; McGreavy, 2015).

Therefore, whether the current crisis accelerates or impedes the sustainable energy transition in Europe may depend on how resilience in the energy sector is publicly interpreted and invoked — specifically, whether energy resilience is constructed and promoted as the system's ability to resist and remain unchanged in the face of the shock, or as its capacity for adaptation and even structural transformation. Prior research on the potential impact of the Russo-Ukrainian war on the European energy transition has primarily centered on general policy paradigm analyses (Osička & Černoch, 2022; Kuzemko et al., 2022) or critical summaries of initial EU responses (Sturm, 2022; Falkner, 2023). In contrast, this research incorporates insights from a resilience perspective into an analysis of the public discourse in the EU media coverage of the energy crisis brought on by the Russo-Ukrainian war. By doing so, it provides valuable insights into the destabilization of the EU energy system, which can be used to deduce the crisis's implications for the European energy transition.

As such, this study aims to answer the following research question:

How is 'energy resilience' discursively constructed in European public discourse in response to the energy crisis triggered by the Russo-Ukrainian war, and what implications might this have on the transition toward a sustainable energy system?

To comprehensively address this question, the following subquestions are posed:

- ⇒ *What interpretations of energy resilience can be identified, which one seems dominant, and do these interpretations vary across different actors (e.g., policymakers, NGOs)?*
- ⇒ *How do framings of vulnerabilities and risks influence the way resilience is constructed and understood?*
- ⇒ *What implications might these discursive frames of energy resilience have for the transition toward a sustainable energy system?*

Together, these subquestions help explore the complexity of energy resilience discourse, uncovering key discursive aspects and actors within the context of the ongoing energy crisis.

This study holds both scientific and societal relevance. It addresses a key gap in transition research by examining how incumbent systems become destabilized and open to change in response to external shocks — a process that remains underexplored despite its critical importance for understanding transition dynamics (Grin et al., 2010; Turnheim & Geels, 2012; Kungl & Geels, 2017). Specifically, it investigates how public discourse around regime resilience can offer insights into such dynamics (Kanger, 2020), through an empirical analysis of media coverage of the European energy sector's response to the crisis triggered by the Russo-Ukrainian war. The study also contributes to theoretical debates on the relationship between resilience and sustainability (Roostaie et al., 2019; Manca et al., 2017), offering evidence on the potential normative and temporal links between these concepts. Methodologically, it introduces an innovative approach to examining system destabilization by adopting a constructivist perspective and applying it to the resilience discourse of a socio-technical system. Practically, the findings provide actionable insights for policymakers, sustainability advocates, innovators, and other stakeholders by demonstrating the importance of paying attention to and strategically leveraging resilience discourses in ways that align crisis

response efforts with long-term sustainability goals, while also shedding light on the dominant resilience framings that emerged from the ongoing energy crisis and their potential influence on the sustainability transition dynamics.

2 Theoretical framework

This chapter outlines the key theoretical frameworks underpinning the study: sustainability transition dynamics, resilience conceptualization, and the role of discourse in shaping socio-technical systems. It highlights the points of connection between these approaches and their relevance to the research question, emphasizing how their integration can offer a more comprehensive understanding of crisis-driven system change. By bringing these perspectives together, the chapter illustrates the potential of interdisciplinary research to address critical gaps across traditionally siloed strands of inquiry, showing how the combined application of these frameworks enhances both conceptual clarity and analytical depth.

2.1 Dynamics of sustainability transitions

The notion of sustainability transitions emerged from the recognition that systemic change is essential to address global problems, such as climate change (Schot & Steinmueller, 2018). In the European energy sector this need is critical, since energy production and use account for over 75% of the EU's greenhouse gas emissions (IEA, 2020). In turn, the European Green Deal sets climate neutrality by 2050 as the ultimate goal of the energy transition, emphasizing three guiding principles: ensuring a secure and affordable energy supply, creating an integrated and digitized EU energy market, and prioritizing energy efficiency alongside a shift to renewable energy (European Commission, 2022a).

In innovation studies, sustainability transitions are often conceptualized using the Multi-Level Perspective (MLP). The MLP highlights the path dependency of socio-technical systems, where elements like norms, regulations, and infrastructure reinforce the status quo (Geels, 2002; Geels & Kemp, 2007). According to the MLP, transitions occur when external landscape pressures — such as cultural shifts, disasters, wars — destabilize the dominant regime, creating opportunities for niche innovations to gain momentum and eventually displace the incumbent system. In the energy sector, renewable technology innovations represent these niches, while disruptions like geopolitical energy crises act as landscape pressures. The regime level features centralized fossil-fuel and nuclear energy generation, dominated by large power plants and extensive grid infrastructures (Lindberg et al., 2018). Energy consumption is largely individualized and passive, with minimal community-based solutions, upheld by market mechanisms and cultural norms

favoring private ownership and personal responsibility. At large, a successful energy transition requires systemic changes, including stronger public support for renewables, sufficiency and sustainable consumption, favorable regulations, increased investment into supporting infrastructure (e.g., smart grids, energy storage), and shifts in industrial practices among others (Verbong & Geels, 2010; Hainsch et al., 2022).

While the MLP acknowledges the role of crises in driving transitions, it traditionally views the landscape as a relatively stable, "exogenous environment that is beyond the direct influence of actors" (Geels & Kemp, 2007). This has led researchers to focus more on niche-regime interactions (Turnheim & Geels, 2012), specifically on how niche actors can challenge the regime and capitalize on windows of opportunity to drive transitions (Johnstone & Schot, 2023). However, understanding the interactions between landscape pressures and regime responses is equally critical, especially since scholars increasingly characterise current times as the age of “polycrisis” (Lawrence et al., 2024).

Transition scholars admit that new systems can sometimes emerge from the old through regime-level adaptations to external pressures, with minimal influence from niches (Geels & Kemp, 2007). Upon reflection on historical transition cases, Geels and Schot (2007) differentiated between several kinds of transition pathways: (1) in the *transformation* pathway, the regime remains intact and leads the change, responding to external pressures and public criticism with modest adjustments and reorientation in regime rules, while radical innovation remains confined to niches; (2) in the *reconfiguration* pathway, landscape pressures motivate the regime to adopt and integrate some innovations supplied by niches, leading the structural changes from within as incumbent actors work with niche actors to reshape the system; (3) in the *technological substitution* pathway, mature niche innovations compete with and challenge the regime, gain momentum, accumulate and eventually displace the incumbents; and (4) in the *de-alignment and re-alignment* pathway, the incumbents collapse under intense landscape pressure, followed by the emergence of an entirely new regime through niche experimentation and re-alignment. These pathway distinctions underscore that the regime's ability to handle shocks plays a critical role in transition dynamics. It also introduces a conceptual differentiation between the terms *transition* and *transformation*, underscoring that regime *transformation* should be viewed as one of the possible *transition* pathways. Additionally, Geels and Schot

(2007) emphasized that these transition pathways are not mutually exclusive and may unfold sequentially over time, while noting that the typology helps transition scholars identify the distinct internal logics involved. They also acknowledged the importance of interpretative processes, power struggles, and agency at the regime level, and emphasized the need to analyze these dynamics more explicitly.

Over time, developing a framework for understanding how regimes destabilize and adapt to external shocks has emerged as a key research priority in the study of transitions (Grin et al., 2010; Turnheim & Geels, 2012; Kungl & Geels, 2017). To address the "David vs. Goliath" bias in transition studies, Grin et al. (2010) called for greater attention to the agency of the regime actors, how they respond to threats, when and how they lose faith in the status quo. In turn, Kanger (2020) proposed that researchers could approach transition pathway analysis (e.g. transformation vs. technological substitution) by investigating properties of socio-technical system levels, suggesting that regime *resilience* could provide clues into transition dynamics. Notably, he conceptualized regime resilience as the degree to which a regime can resist external pressures and co-opt niche innovations without undergoing fundamental changes to its basic architecture or direction of evolution, suggesting that regimes can vary along a continuum from high resilience to fragility. However, Kanger (2020) admitted the difficulty of theoretically determining the level of regime resilience associated with each transition pathway. He concluded his theoretical work by emphasizing that regime resilience, like niche maturity, is an integral element of the regime lifecycle and should be understood as a function of time and called for further research into the factors that shape resilience capacity. By incorporating a more nuanced view on resilience, this thesis seeks to build on and respond to this research need.

2.2 Resilience and sustainability transitions

2.2.1 Various interpretations of resilience

Even though the concept of "resilience" has gained prominence in research and policy over the last couple of decades, it still lacks a universally accepted definition in the literature (Scordato & Gulbrandsen, 2024; Rohne Till et al., 2024). Instead, various interpretations of resilience coexist across diverse strands of research, which can be grouped into three main categories: Resilience defined as 1) the ability to resist, absorb, or "bounce back" after a shock; 2) the ability to adapt

and persist; and 3) the ability to transform and remain (Scordato & Gulbrandsen, 2024). Each interpretation has distinct implications for the role of systemic resilience in shaping sustainability transition dynamics.

The focus on resilience as the "preservation of the status quo" might hinder transition efforts, with scholars emphasizing associated lock-ins that obstruct alternative pathways and innovation (Olsson et al., 2014). Importantly, whether resilience in the form of resistance (i.e. the first connotation of resilience) supports or contradicts transition objectives depends on the system analyzed: this type of resilience is problematic in socio-technical structures that undermine long-term societal and planetary well-being (e.g., the fossil-fuel regime), but could be desirable in systems that society seeks to preserve or scale (e.g., niche clean energy generation). Thus, in discussions about the compatibility between resilience and sustainability, some academics also distinguish between *specific* resilience — where the "of what to what" is clear — and *general* resilience, which refers to broader system-level attributes like the capacity for learning and adaptation (Anderies et al., 2013). It is worth noting that the notion of general resilience and the desire to nurture it seem to align well with the ambition for sustainable development.

Some scholars have suggested that while sustainability transitions take a normative approach focused on achieving specific performance outcomes, the resilience perspective is more process-oriented and less concerned with consequences (Redman, 2014; Anderies et al., 2013). However, this distinction is increasingly debated, and many academics treat resilience as a normative concept in their research (Roostaie et al., 2019), with some arguing that the very decision to resist or transform is inherently normative (McGreavy, 2016). Moreover, there is a parallel between the social emphasis on resilience and the aspiration for sustainability. Both concepts highlight the importance of preserving elements of our civilizational development to ensure lasting well-being (Marchese et al., 2017; Roostaie et al., 2019; Manca et al., 2017). Furthermore, cultivating adaptive or transformative forms of resilience in response to changing conditions may be essential for achieving a smooth sustainability transition in the face of diverse global challenges. This may explain why the third interpretation of resilience — i.e. the ability to transform — is gaining traction in social research (Scordato & Gulbrandsen, 2024; Trippl et al., 2023).

This thesis argues that the form of resilience that manifests may depend on how regime actors interpret the crisis. In their work on regional resilience, Manca et al. (2017) present a model for conceptualizing resilience that helps navigate diverse interpretations by emphasizing that the type of ability required to maintain a system's resilience could depend on the nature of the disturbance, emphasizing factors like the intensity and duration of the shock (Figure 1).

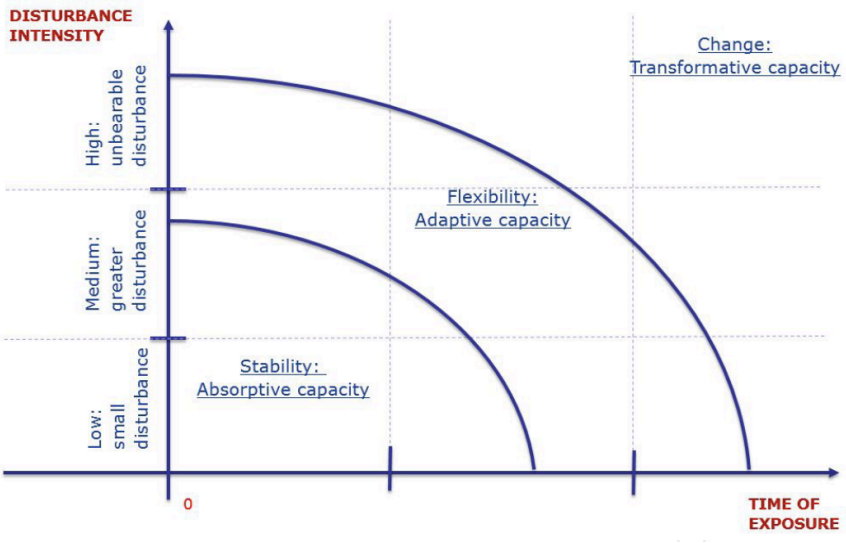

Figure 1. *Shocks and capacities*. *Reprinted from Manca et al. (2017).*

For smaller disturbances and shorter durations of exposure, resilience may imply the system's ability to withstand crises and maintain its status quo (*resilience as resistance*). However, as the magnitude or duration of the shock increases, resilience may necessitate gradual changes to help the system maintain its functionality (*resilience as adaptation*). In the face of especially large crises, resilience may require drastic changes, leading to a transformation of the system's original structure to adapt to new constraints and improve its condition (*transformative resilience*). These interpretive distinctions are summarized in detail in Table 1.

Table 1. *Main resilience interpretations*

Resilience Type	***Meaning***
Resistance	Focuses on maintaining existing structures, emphasizing **stability** and the ability to recover quickly to a pre-shock state. The ideal outcome is to **absorb** a shock without altering the system's structure or function. Appropriate for handling short-term, low intensity shocks.
Adaptability	This interpretation endorses structural or operational adjustments in response to the shock without fundamentally altering the system. It is characterized by "bouncing forward" rather than "bouncing back," emphasizing **flexibility** and **adaptive** capacity through incremental changes. Could be necessary for higher intensity, longer disturbances.
Transformation	Advances the need to **change** and to achieve systemic shifts that could fundamentally alter the underlying structures, allowing the system to maintain its function within the new set of conditions. Represents the most radical, long-term view of resilience, recognizing that solutions need to address immediate crises and possible future challenges and constraints.

By introducing the dimension of time into the conceptualization of resilience, Manca et al. (2017) not only help reconcile diverse existing interpretations, but also offer a potential conceptual link between resilience and transition dynamics: this perspective aligns with Kanger's (2020) proposition that regime resilience might change throughout its lifecycle and, as the result, it could provide insight into the sequential pathway dynamics outlined by Geels and Schot (2007).

In addition, it is important to recognize that the notion of resilience is closely linked to the interpretation and understanding of vulnerability and risk: the need for resilience arises from the need to reduce systemic *vulnerabilities* (i.e., weaknesses that expose the socio-technical system to shocks) and to minimize the likelihood and potential impact of related *risks* (i.e., probable harmful consequences) (Proag, 2014). Thus, in their framework Manca et al. (2017) also stress that resilience requires achieving low riskiness and vulnerability.

Overall, this conceptual framework implies that in social systems the choice of resilience response could depend on society's evaluation of the crisis, the risks and vulnerabilities it exposes, which, in turn, help identify the appropriate actions to take — or not. Moreover, the types of solutions that society considers appropriate — whether aimed at absorbing the shock, adapting to it, or transforming the system — may vary depending on the duration of the crisis or on the perceived timeframe of resulting disturbance. Thus, as the Russo-Ukrainian war goes on,

the type of resilience of the current European energy system might change and evolve accordingly, demanding evaluation across time.

2.2.2 Resilience as discourse

In their study of regime destabilization during Britain's shift away from coal, Turnheim and Geels (2012) highlighted the significant role public opinion and discourse played in the socio-technical transition. They noted that discourse shapes the cultural legitimacy of industries, fosters enthusiasm for emerging technologies, mediates the effectiveness of social movements (e.g., environmental activism), and influences the feasibility of policy reforms. Discourses are not only expressions of dominance and resistance within policy, politics, and society but also constitute social realities (Van Hulst et al., 2024).

A similar argument may hold in the current context of the European energy system. Since whether the focus on resilience is favorable or detrimental to the sustainability transition of the energy sector depends on which interpretation is being embraced and how it is applied within specific context, analyzing regime resilience as a discourse offers valuable insights. Importantly, the definition of resilience adopted within these discourses might play a crucial role in shaping how a regime becomes resilient to shocks or crises, reflecting its capacity for self-organization and learning (McGreavy, 2016; Leitch & Bohensky, 2014). Rohne Till et al. (2024) emphasize the need to pay attention to both how actors interpret and understand resilience and whether they pursue resilience as an end goal in itself (e.g. increased resilience) or as a means for another outcome (e.g. societal transformation or preservation of the old order).

As discussed prior, if actors pursue resilience as an outcome, it is important to ask whether they are referring to specific or general resilience, as each has different implications for compatibility with sustainability. Investigating whether actors progressively define resilience in language associated with resistance or adaptation or even call for transformative resilience in alignment with sustainability goals may provide valuable insights into the unfolding dynamics of the transition process in the light of the crisis.

Previous research has shown that multiple interpretations of resilience can coexist in the public realm, with the term often functioning as a flexible political construct used to legitimize various actions in response to shocks (Chmutina et al., 2016). As such, adopting a discursive approach to

analyzing the resilience of socio-technical regimes during crises allows addressing critical and previously underexplored dimensions of power and agency at the nexus of resilience and sustainability transitions (Geels & Kemp, 2007; Olsson et al., 2014). By examining how different actors within the regime invoke resilience to advance their agendas, this approach helps analyze how resilience shapes and is shaped by the conflicting priorities and strategies of regime agents, ultimately helping to determine which resilience strategies appear to dominate and characterise the regime. As highlighted earlier, understanding the resilience of the regime is crucial for determining the effect of a crisis on whether (and how) a sustainability transition in the sector might take hold.

3 Methodology

3.1 Research design, data collection and sampling

This research adopts a qualitative, abductive design to explore resilience as a socially constructed characteristic of socio-technical systems, which can be investigated through discourse analysis. This approach has been inspired by McGreavy's (2016) exploration of how social resilience might be shaped and constrained by discourse; Leitch and Bohensky's (2014) study of media representations of resilience to natural disasters in Australia; and Chmutina et al.'s (2016) focus on revealing policy interpretations of resilience in the UK. Similarly, this study examines how resilience is constructed and articulated in popular EU media discourse during the energy crisis triggered by the Russo-Ukrainian war. As such, this study uses resilience theory as an overarching guidepost for empirically investigating the energy system's destabilization and then combines the resulting insights with existing transition pathway literature (e.g. transformation, reconfiguration) to derive theoretical conclusions about the crisis's potential implications.

As the first step, desk research was conducted to form a brief overview of the European energy system, serving as practical context for the resilience discourse analysis. This ensured that the study provided the reader with the necessary background information for the subsequent discussion of energy system resilience and transition pathway implications. The overview is provided in **Chapter 4** of the thesis.

For the main data collection, the study employed purposive sampling to collect popular online news articles on the EU energy crisis in the context of the Russo-Ukrainian war. Such a sampling strategy has been chosen for three main reasons. First of all, this data choice is informed by agenda-setting theory, which suggests that public perception of the energy crisis and critical aspects of energy resilience will likely be closely connected to how they are portrayed in the media (Shaw, 1979). By focusing on public media as opposed to specialized publications the study aims to reveal how resilience in response to the crisis is constructed and interpreted within the wider collective discourse, extending beyond the views of policymakers and scholars. Second, according to a 2023 EU media survey, online press and news platforms are the second most frequently used media type, regularly accessed by 42% of Europeans (European Union, 2023a). Lastly, written news articles were selected for discourse analysis due to their integrated expression, which ensures a cohesive and structured presentation of ideas suitable for systematic

analysis within the limited timespan of a thesis project. Unlike spoken media, which often relies on immediacy and contextual cues, written discourse provides explicit, self-contained arguments that facilitate the exploration of complex themes such as energy resilience (Georgakopoulou & Goutsos, 2004).

This research concentrated on English-language news providers, with prominence and popularity as the primary selection criteria. Therefore, the sample includes articles from *Politico Europe*, *The Economist*, *Reuters*, *Financial Times Europe*, *Euronews*, and *EUobserver*. These were recognized as the most influential news providers according to the 2023 Savanta EU Media Poll.

Data collection and sampling were conducted in three stages.

First, the archives of each news platform were systematically searched for articles addressing European energy issues during the period from February 24, 2022, to February 28, 2025. Depending on the functionality of each platform's digital archive, articles were retrieved either through keyword-based searches (e.g., using "Europe" and "energy") or through manual browsing of relevant sections (e.g. sections focused on European affairs, energy, business etc). Notably, although the process was laborious, manually browsing each platform's content helped avoid the constraints of predefined keyword searches and potential limitations associated with databases such as LexisNexis (Buntain et al., 2023).

Second, across each crisis period (e.g., spring 2022, post-winter 2023 reflections), key articles were identified and logged based on their thematic relevance — particularly those focusing on the energy crisis and how the continent dealt with it. Throughout this phase, emerging discursive themes were tracked using a sampling log maintained in an Excel table, which recorded details such as article date, source, title, thematic relevance, notable angle or frame, and additional notes. This process allowed for the systematic identification of recurring narratives and framing patterns and supported the mapping of both dominant and marginal discourse streams across sources. 170 articles were collected and thematically screened at this stage.

This process helped ensure that selected articles reflected a range of perspectives within the broader discourse on European energy resilience. Emerging themes (e.g. "regional struggles") were identified inductively throughout the sampling process and documented in the sampling

log, allowing the analysis to remain grounded in the evolving media discourse. These initially identified coverage themes included:

- **Crisis assessments**: General analyses of the crisis and assessments of the EU's evolving response;
- **EU energy policy developments**: Coverage of EU energy policy developments (e.g. REPowerEU, sanctions, gas price caps and subsidies);
- **Effects on the "energy transition"**: Discussions on the impact of the crisis on the EU's transition goals as outlined in the European Green Deal (e.g. a boost to renewables, promotion of nuclear energy, and coverage of renewable energy scaling challenges);
- **Regional energy struggles**: Continued reliance on Russian fossil fuels with special attention to Hungary, Slovakia, and Austria, and economic challenges in Southern European states;
- **Continued dependency**: Commentary on the persistence of Russian energy imports and speculation regarding return to Russian gas;
- **Critical opinion pieces:** articles critiquing EU crisis response for reinforcing fossil fuel reliance.

In the final stage of sampling, a total of 68 articles were selected based on their discursive richness and thematic relevance, with full sample details provided in the thesis **Appendix A**. The aim was to construct a sample that balances representativeness of dominant frames with diversity of perspectives. Of these, 31 articles (46%) focus on the overall state of the energy crisis and the European Union's policy responses — one of the core discursive themes relevant to this study. An additional 19 articles (28%) examine the implications of the crisis on the EU's green transition, the second main identified thematic category. Together, these two central themes constitute approximately 74% of the total sample, ensuring sufficient comparability across time periods and sources.

To introduce discursive variation and capture less dominant, analytically important framings, the remaining 26% of the sample includes: six articles (9%) highlighting regional struggles, seven articles (10%) discussing the EU's ongoing dependency on Russian energy, and five critical opinion pieces (7%) that challenge mainstream narratives — particularly regarding fossil fuel lock-in and the role of corporate lobbying. This multi-stage emergent sampling technique

resulted in a rough 70/30 balance between core and diverse themes, allowing the analysis to remain grounded in the dominant discourse while also incorporating alternative or underrepresented frames (Palinkas et al., 2013).

Approximately 10-15 articles were selected per news outlet, with 2–4 articles per year (2022, 2023, 2024 and early 2025) to ensure temporal balance across the three-year period. This approach helps capture the evolution of narratives surrounding Europe's energy resilience in response to the crisis. Moreover, by combining thematic depth with discursive breadth, this sampling strategy enables a robust comparative discourse analysis of how Europe's energy resilience is narrated across time and media sources, while also remaining sensitive to emerging and critical perspectives.

3.2 Operationalization of key concepts

To investigate resilience as a socio-technical construct, the study operationalizes the concept into three key dimensions as emphasized in the theoretical framework: resistance, adaptability, and transformation. These dimensions served as an overarching analytical lens for identifying and categorizing the resilience interpretations present in the media discourse. Their recognition is largely informed by the detailed summary of each interpretation provided by Rohne Till et al. (2024), summarized in Table 1 below:

Table 2. *Recognizing main resilience interpretations in discourse*

Resilience Type	***Meaning***	***Example discourse manifestation***
Resistance	Focuses on maintaining existing structures, emphasizing stability and the ability to recover quickly to a pre-shock state. The ideal outcome is to absorb a shock without altering the system's structure or function.	Discourse describing or advocating short-term crisis management centered on preservation of existing energy structures, consumption norms, and continued reliance on established energy sources such as pipeline gas, oil, and coal, with references to "stability," or a "return to normalcy."
Adaptability	This interpretation involves discussions of structural or operational adjustments in response to the shock without fundamentally altering the system. It is characterized by "bouncing forward" rather than "bouncing back," emphasizing flexibility and incremental changes.	Media focus on energy diversification, LNG imports, or temporary policy shifts exemplify this dimension, with keywords such as "flexibility," "adjustment," and "mitigation."

Transformation	Signifies systemic shifts that fundamentally alter the energy landscape, such as widespread investment into renewable energy infrastructure or major policy overhauls. Represents the most radical view of resilience, recognizing both the need to respond to immediate crises and prepare for future challenges and constraints.	Discourse advocating alteration of the previous state, challenging the status quo due to the need to create a viable new state. Aligns most closely with the transition mindset, emphasizing the need for cohesive, forward-looking solutions that integrate diverse risks and challenges, such as energy security, climate mitigation and energy equity (Van Vuuren et al., 2012). Key indicators include calls for accelerating investments in alternative energy, fundamental change in system structure (away from fossil fuel imports) and policy priorities (e.g. energy democratisation).

These dimensions provided the foundation for recognising and coding resilience descriptions, helping to identify and interpret ultimate resilience themes in the collected data.

Additionally, the concepts of risk and vulnerability have also been operationalized to support discourse analysis, as outlined in Table 3.

Table 3. *Recognizing framings of risks and vulnerabilities in discourse*

Concept	***Definition***	***Discourse manifestation***
Vulnerability	The quality and degree of being exposed to harm; a weakness in a system that can be exploited.	Identification of systemic issues driving the crisis and undermining the energy system function (e.g. reliance on Russian gas with varying dependency levels across EU states).
Risk	The potential negative outcomes resulting from the exploitation of systemic weaknesses.	Discussion of possible severe unwanted consequences of the energy crisis that need to be prevented, such as rising energy poverty, loss of government legitimacy, economic instability and others.

This definition-based (Proag, 2014; Manca et al., 2017) operationalization enabled ongoing recognition of the issues that were framed as risks and vulnerabilities within media discourse on energy system resilience.

3.3 Data analysis

The data analysis followed a multi-layered qualitative approach that combined thematic and discourse analysis. Thematic analysis (Clark et al., 2021, p. 1759) offered flexibility for both inductive and deductive coding, allowing for the identification of emerging patterns in the dataset and their grouping into broader themes related to the provided conceptualization of energy resilience. This was complemented by a discourse-analytical lens, adapted from Carvalho's (2000) textual analysis framework, which guided attention toward key discursive elements such as surface descriptors (e.g., news title, topic labels), mentioned actors, constructed objects (e.g. risks, vulnerabilities), crisis narrativization (e.g. acuteness, expectations), actor positioning (e.g. supportive, oppositional), and legitimation strategies. Selected articles were read multiple times to gain familiarity and identify relevant textual features and recurring frames.

The codebook was developed through a combination of deductive and inductive strategies. Deductively, it was informed by the theoretical framework, related operationalizations of resilience, vulnerabilities and risks, and discourse lens categories, resulting in closed codes such as resilience types (adaptability, resistance, transformation), crisis dimensions (vulnerabilities, risks), actor categories (e.g., EU-level, national, civil society), and discursive strategies (e.g., narrativization, positioning). In parallel, inductive open coding was used throughout to remain sensitive to emerging meanings and nuanced framings in the material. For example, under "vulnerability," open codes such as "dependency," "price volatility," and "infrastructure fragility" emerged and were later refined into more specific subcategories such as "dependency on Russia" and "dependency on fossil fuels." A similar process occurred within actor codes, where repeated references to the European Commission led to its reclassification as a distinct actor category, consolidated through axial coding.

The coding process involved double-coding actor mentions with corresponding resilience framings. This enabled the identification of co-occurrence patterns — such as which actors were most frequently associated with adaptability, resistance, or transformation — and the quantification of those patterns across the dataset. For example, references to the European Commission were often paired with adaptability coding, while civil society was more frequently linked with oppositional positioning and framings of fossil fuel resistance. These patterns were not assumed but arrived at through abductive reasoning, where emerging regularities in the data

prompted further refinement of codes and interpretive categories. To support transparency and ensure systematic retrieval of patterns, NVivo software was used for all coding, organization, and frequency analysis.

This combined analytical framework was applied across all three research questions, though with varying emphasis. To answer the first question — concerning dominant interpretations of resilience and their variation across actors — the analysis largely focused on the frequency and co-occurrence of final actor and resilience codes. For the second question — on how framings of risks, vulnerabilities, and solutions shape resilience discourse — the analysis revisited previously coded sections, examining how specific vulnerability types (e.g., fossil fuel dependency) discursively interacted with resilience dimensions.

To move beyond descriptive analysis and toward enhanced discursive differentiation, further attention was given to the positioning framings — specifically how article tone and the portrayal of actors signaled support, opposition, or critique of particular resilience strategies. This interpretive step enabled a distinction between discourses that endorsed regime adaptability or critiqued it as insufficient (e.g., emphasizing diversification or market interventions), and those that constructed regime resilience as resistance to change altogether. Categories related to crisis narrativization were revisited, revealing that time-based expectations (e.g., short-term versus long-term responses) were often employed to legitimize certain resilience rhetoric. Additional attention was given to the solution subcategories of "nuclear" and "renewables," examining how each was linked to certain framings of vulnerability and risk. This layer of analysis was used to partially address the third research question, which examined the implications of discursive framings of resilience for the energy transition. Insights from coding, particularly those relating to actor positioning, were reinterpreted through the lens of sustainability transitions theory, enabling an assessment of what these specific discursive constructions of resilience may imply for expressions of agency in transition directionality.

Throughout the analysis, several challenges were encountered. One was the risk of confirmation bias in applying closed codes (McSweeney, 2021), which was addressed by ensuring that open coding always remained possible, even during late stages of analysis. Another challenge concerned the granularity of actor categories, which initially lacked consistency. This was

mitigated through iterative recoding and consolidation via axial coding. Determining actor positioning also proved interpretively demanding, especially in distinguishing critical and oppositional framings. To ensure consistency, coding memos were maintained, and coding decisions were frequently revisited. Descriptive statistics (e.g., frequency of mentions, co-occurrences) was used selectively to support pattern identification without overreliance on quantification.

In sum, the analytical process was iterative, abductive, and deeply reflexive (Mauthner & Doucet, 2003) — combining a theoretically-informed codebook with openness to emergent meanings, constantly moving between empirical material and theory. This enabled not only the identification of subtle differences in resilience discourses, but a critical evaluation of their implications for energy transition dynamics.

3.4 Research quality indicators

A key limitation of the constructivist research approach lies in its limited capacity for replicability and generalizability, particularly due to its emphasis on contextual interpretation and the role of researcher subjectivity. While the aim was not to produce universally generalizable findings, steps were taken to strengthen the trustworthiness and analytical rigor of the research (Stenfors et al., 2020).

Internal validity was supported with a clear operationalization of key analytical categories such as “resistance,” “adaptability,” “risk,” and “vulnerability.” These codes were defined with reference to existing literature and grounded through concrete examples (as partially illustrated in **Appendix B**), allowing for systematic and consistent application throughout the dataset. This helped ensure that the findings aligned meaningfully with the theoretical framework. However, the inherently interpretive nature of discourse analysis means that these categories are not fixed or objective — they reflect the researcher’s perspective and the specific composition of the discourse. For example, what counts as “adaptability” in one article may be framed as “resistance” in another. This flexibility is a strength of qualitative research, allowing for unique insights, but it also means that findings must be understood as context-specific rather than universally applicable — an acknowledged limitation of this methodology (Clark et al., 2021, p.178).

Credibility was further enhanced through sampling triangulation: data were drawn from a range of prominent media outlets across different ideological contexts, enabling a broader capture of framings and interpretations. Thematic and discursive claims were corroborated through direct textual excerpts, offering transparency and traceability between interpretation and data. Regular iteration, coding reviews and analytical memos helped ensure interpretive consistency and dependability.

External validity, or transferability, is achieved through rich contextual descriptions of the media discourse, supported with explicit source references (listed in **Appendix A**), allowing readers to judge the relevance of the findings. However, generalizability remains constrained, as is typical in constructivist research, where the goal is to understand how meanings are constructed rather than to generate universal laws (Clark et al., 2021, p. 1208).

Finally, the researcher's interpretive role is acknowledged as an integral part of the analytical process. While reflexivity was practiced throughout — by regularly reviewing coding assumptions — the possibility of interpretive bias cannot be fully eliminated. As McSweeney (2021) argued, there are limits to "the extent to which we can be aware of the influences on our research both at the time of conducting it and in the years that follow." These limitations, however, do not diminish the study's contribution; rather, they reflect the strength of qualitative, constructivist inquiry in uncovering often hidden interpretative dimensions that shape understandings of resilience, with insights that may be transferable to other sustainability contexts.

4 European energy system

4.1 Brief overview

To contextualize the energy discourse that follows, it is important to outline the structure of the EU energy system as it stood in 2021 — prior to Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, which served as a geopolitical trigger for the crisis analyzed in this study.

This brief overview draws on the 2023 edition of Eurostat's official energy statistics (European Union, 2023b) and summarizes key features of the EU's 2021 energy mix, energy production and consumption, import dependency, and relevant policy context.

Energy Mix: In 2021, the EU's energy mix was heavily reliant on fossil fuels. Crude oil and petroleum products accounted for the largest share (34%) of gross available energy, followed by natural gas (23%), renewables (17%), nuclear energy (13%), and solid fossil fuels (12%). However, energy source dependence varied significantly across Member States. For example, natural gas played a major role in Italy (40%) and the Netherlands (35%), while solid fossil fuels were dominant in countries like Estonia (56%) and Poland (43%). Some countries, such as Sweden (48%) and Denmark (41%), had a notably high share of renewable energy, whereas nuclear energy made up 41% of energy in France. These figures reflect the uneven and regionally differentiated structure of the EU energy system on the eve of the crisis — largely fossil-fuel based overall, but with significant variation in national energy portfolios.

Energy production: Understanding what portion of the EU's energy mix is produced domestically is key to assessing the region's energy self-sufficiency. In 2021, only 44% of the EU's energy was produced within the bloc. Of that domestically produced energy, renewables made up the largest share (41%), followed by nuclear energy (31%), solid fuels (18%), natural gas (6%), and crude oil (3%). This indicates that while the overall energy mix was dominated by fossil fuels, most of them were imported as domestic energy generation primarily relied on renewables and nuclear.

However, just as the energy mix, energy production patterns varied widely across Member States. Some countries, like Latvia, Portugal, and Cyprus generated over 95% of their domestic energy from renewables. In contrast, nuclear energy was a dominant production source in France

(76%), Belgium (70%), and Slovakia (60%), while natural gas played a significant role in the Netherlands (58%) and Ireland (42%).

Energy consumption: In 2021, the EU's final energy consumption was dominated by petroleum products (35%), followed by electricity and gas, each accounting for 23%. Transport was the most energy-intensive sector (29%), followed closely by households (28%) and industry (26%). While renewables made up 21.8% of total energy consumption, their impact was most visible in electricity production, where they were the leading source (37%), slightly ahead of fossil fuels (36.5%) and nuclear (25%). Electricity makes up about 23% of overall energy use, but since it is only one part of the broader energy system, a focus on renewables growth in electricity alone overlooks the continued fossil fuel dependency of other energy-intensive sectors — an important nuance to keep in mind when reading public energy discourse.

Import dependency: In 2021, the EU imported 56% of its energy, signaling a significant dependency on external suppliers. Petroleum products, including crude oil, made up the bulk of these imports (64%), followed by natural gas (25%) and solid fossil fuels such as coal (6%). Russia was the EU's dominant energy supplier across all major fossil fuel categories: it provided 28% of extra-EU crude oil imports, 44% of natural gas, and 52% of solid fossil fuels. Other notable suppliers included the United States, Norway, Libya, Kazakhstan, and Algeria. Import patterns varied across Member States. For example, natural gas accounted for over a third of imports in Italy and Hungary, while Slovakia and Czechia had the highest shares of solid fuel imports at 17% and 15%, respectively. These figures underscore the extent of import dependency in the EU energy system on the eve of the Russo-Ukrainian war.

The map below (Figure 2) illustrates the primary natural gas import routes into the EU, along with the locations of LNG terminals. Until recently, the majority of gas was supplied by Russia through four main corridors: Nord Stream, Yamal (via Poland), Druzhba (via Ukraine), and TurkStream (via Turkey) (Keliauskaitė et al., 2025). These Russian gas pipelines lie at the center of ongoing geopolitical tensions and energy security concerns in Europe.

Figure 2. *Main EU natural gas import routes. Reprinted from Keliauskaitė et al. (2025)*

4.2 Key policies

The Energy Union Strategy – Introduced in 2015, it focuses on creating a fully integrated internal energy market by enabling the free flow of energy across the EU through adequate infrastructure and the removal of technical and regulatory barriers. It includes the EU Governance Regulation, which outlines how Member States and the European Commission should coordinate their efforts and collaborate to achieve the goals of the Energy Union (European Commission, n.d.- b).

The Marginal Pricing Model for Electricity: The EU used a marginal pricing model for electricity, where the cheapest energy sources are used first, and more expensive ones are added as demand increases (European Union, 2021). The wholesale electricity price was set based on the last (most expensive) source needed to meet demand, often gas-powered plants. This system was designed to promote efficiency and cost minimization in a liberalized market. When renewables alone could meet demand, prices were low, but when fossil fuel plants were needed, they would set the price for all suppliers, often leading to higher electricity costs.

European Green Deal – The EU's overarching policy agenda, introduced in 2019, which aims to reduce net greenhouse gas emissions by at least 55% by 2030 (compared to 1990 levels) and to achieve climate neutrality by 2050. This ambition guides the Union's energy, industrial, and environmental policies (European Commission, 2022a).

Energy Efficiency Directive – Sets binding targets to reduce energy consumption, with the current goal of an 11.7% reduction by 2030 (compared to 2020 projections) (European Commission, n.d.- c).

Renewable Energy Directive – Establishes legally binding targets for renewable energy in the energy mix, aiming for at least 42.5% by 2030, with a goal to reach 45% (European Commission, n.d.- a).

REPowerEU Plan – Introduced within two weeks after Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, the plan aims to reduce dependence on Russian fossil fuels, accelerate the deployment of renewable energy, and strengthen energy efficiency efforts (European Commission, 2022b).

4.3 Crisis response timeline

The chronological overview presented in Table 4 below summarises key EU measures adopted in response to the energy crisis triggered by Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022. This information is drawn from official European Union sources, specifically from webpages on "Electricity Market Design" reform (European Commission, n.d.-d), the "REPowerEU" plan (European Commission, 2022b) and the "Packages of sanctions against Russia since February 2022 (Council of the European Union, n.d.).

Table 4. *EU Energy Crisis Response 2022-2025*

Year	Strategic Policy Shifts	Market Tools (Sanctions)	Energy Diversification Deals	Green Transition & Clean Tech
2022	- REPowerEU proposals (Mar 8, May 18)	- 5th sanctions (coal ban, Apr 8)	- EU–US LNG Task Force (Mar 25)	- Hy2Tech IPCEI (Jul 15)

	- EU Energy Platform Task Force (May 25) - Save Gas for a Safe Winter plan (Jul 20–26) - Gas storage rules (Jun 27)	- 6th sanctions (oil ban, Jun 3) - 8th sanctions (oil price cap, Oct 6) - Oil price cap ($60/bbl, Dec 3)	- EU–Egypt–Israel MoU (Jun 15) - EU–Norway gas deal (Jun 23) - EU–Azerbaijan MoU (Jul 18)	- Renewables permitting acceleration (Nov 9) - Solar industrial alliance (Dec 9)
2023	- Electricity Market Design proposal (Mar 14) - Renewable energy directive deal (Mar 30)	- 10th sanctions (gas storage ban, Feb 25) - 12th sanctions (propane ban, Dec 18)	- Joint gas purchase call (Apr 25) - First joint gas tender (May 10)	-
2024	- Electricity Market Design adopted (May 21) - Rules enter into force (Jul 16)	- 14th sanctions (ban on reloading Russian LNG, Jun 24)	- Mid-term gas matching opens (Feb 15)	- Energy Efficiency Financing Coalition (Apr 22)
2025	- National transposition of electricity market rules (Jan 17) - Roadmap to end Russian energy dependency (May 6) - Proposal to phase out Russian fossil fuel imports (Jun 17)	- 16th sanctions (export/service bans, oil storage ban, Feb 24) - 17th sanctions (shadow fleet bans, dual-use export restrictions, Surgutneftegas, May 20) - 18th sanctions (oil price cap $47.6, Nord Stream ban, RDIF & bank bans, refined oil import ban, Jul 18)	-	

Please note that the overview of these measures extends beyond the timeframe of the analyzed discourse. While the discourse focuses on the period from February 24, 2022, to February 28, 2025, the timeline also includes more recent measures. Overall, its aim is to provide an objective account of the resilience measures undertaken, whereas the discourse tends to be selective in highlighting certain measures while obscuring others.

Together, the elements of this overview not only provide *context* for the discourse analysis presented in the next chapter but also help define and understand what constitutes the European Union's energy *regime*.

5 Analysis and results:

This section examines how resilience has been constructed and interpreted in the public discourse around the European energy system in the aftermath of the Russo-Ukrainian war. As outlined in the theoretical framework, resilience can be framed through three distinct lenses: *resistance* (absorbing or "bouncing back" from shocks), *adaptation* (making incremental changes that preserve the system's core structure), and *transformation* (fundamental structural change to maintain core functions under new conditions). These distinctions are not merely theoretical – their application shapes which crisis-response strategies are legitimized, which solutions are adopted, and which actors gain influence.

This chapter critically examines various discursive interpretations of resilience found in the analyzed media coverage, supported with direct references to the sourced articles as listed in **Appendix A**. First, it investigates the dominant framing of resilience as *adaptation*, and how this interpretation has been constructed and legitimized through related framings of key *system vulnerabilities* and *risks*, as well as which actors appear central in this discursive interpretation. It further analyzes emerging criticisms of the adaptation strategy, which might point to the limitations of adaptive resilience in the face of the current crisis and reflect ongoing processes of resilience learning within the evolving European energy system. It then explores how this framing is contested by other actors who reframe the same resilience response as *resistance*, offering a competing understanding of the *vulnerabilities* and *risks* exposed by the crisis and challenging the legitimacy of the prevailing approach. Finally, the chapter considers how evolving focus on these newly relevant systemic vulnerabilities in the energy sector supports and complicates discourses around nuclear energy and renewables, and what this might mean for future sustainability pathways in the EU energy system. By analyzing both dominant and emergent discourses, this chapter seeks to uncover the competing framings which may influence the direction and nature of sustainability transition in the European energy sector. The chapter culminates in a clear summary of how the presented detailed discourse analysis findings collectively inform the guiding research question.

5.1 Adaptation, With the Promise to Transform

5.1.1 Interpreting Adaptation

The analysis found that the majority of the analyzed articles (55) addressing the European energy crisis framed the EU's response strategy primarily through the lens of resilience as adaptation — that is, emphasizing the need for incremental systemic changes aimed at increasing flexibility and mitigating potential damages (summarized in **Appendix B**). As stressed in theory, the interpretation of resilience is closely tied to the interpretation of the crisis' causes and consequences, such as the vulnerabilities (e.g. system's weaknesses that expose it to shocks) and related risks (e.g. probable harmful consequences) the crisis exposes (Manca et al., 2017). In the case of the investigated adaptation discourse, the need for improving the resilience of the EU energy system came out as the consequence of the Russian war against Ukraine, and perceived manipulation of energy supplies to the EU by Russia. This manipulation of energy supplies by Russia was frequently described in terms of *weaponisation* in many coverages and framed both as the cause of the crisis and as an ongoing risk facing the EU energy system in light of its strong *dependency* on Russian fossil fuels, especially Russian gas.

> *"Rockets, bullets and shells have been Vladimir Putin's weapons of choice in Ukraine. In the rest of Europe, Russia's president has resorted to tightening the gas taps." (ECON-050423)*.*

> *"The Russian troops who poured into Ukraine a year ago had a seemingly powerful weapon to keep Kyiv's would-be allies cowed — Moscow's dominance of Europe's oil and gas supplies." (POLI-230223).*

Dependency on *Russian* imports was framed as the core vulnerability of the EU energy system and was central to the legitimization of the resilience discourse in terms of adaptation. This was visible in the discourse through constant presence of epithet *Russian* or reference to *Russia* frequently featured in the discussion of energy supply troubles*: dependency on* ***Russian*** *gas, oil and coal;* ***Russian*** *gas habit;* ***Russian*** *hydrocarbons; ill-fated dependence on* ***Russia*** and so on. Frequent application of this descriptor served to underscore that the problem is essentially *Russia*.

***Note:** Each reference to a sourced article consists of an abbreviation of the news outlet followed by the publication date in DDMMYY format. For example, *ECON-050423* refers to an article from *The Economist* published on 5 April 2023.

By predominantly attributing the crisis to the EU's long-standing dependence on Russian fossil fuels (as opposed to dependence on fossil fuel imports in general), the EU leaders were able to frame solutions in terms of the need for understandable adaptive measures — that is reducing reliance on Russia.

> *"Timmermans reiterated last week that reducing Russian gas supplies could mean burning coal for longer…" (EUOB-080322).*
>
> *"Commission President Ursula von der Leyen has already backed the idea of buying more U.S. fuel to eradicate its Russian alternative. 'Why not replace it by American LNG, which is cheaper for us and brings down our energy prices?'" (POLI-160125)*

A recurring discursive focus in these articles was on the need to *diversify* energy supplies (EUOB-080322), seek out *new sources of gas* (POLI-080322), import from *alternative suppliers* (EURO-070922) and increasingly turn towards *alternative sources* of energy (EURO-241122), in search of *substitutes* (ECON-241122) to *replace* Russian gas (REUT-080322). The use of words like *replace*, *substitute*, *alternative*, and *diversify* signals a strong focus on flexibility, where energy resilience is largely interpreted as resilience of *energy supply* — centered on the system's ability to maneuver and implement gradual changes in the import structure.

As mentioned previously, the risk of *weaponisation* of energy supplies was central to the crisis interpretation, with *weaponisation* explained in terms of Russia *threatening to cut-off gas supplies* (EUOB-080322)*, manipulating gas markets (*EUOB-050423), *exploiting its dominant position* and *strategically slashing its pipeline supplies to pressure governments to reduce their support for Kyiv* (FT-290424). In the crisis narrativization, this has led to gas prices *skyrocketing,* with gas/energy prices serving as the main discursive indicator of the crisis acuteness. This is especially well-illustrated in the EuroNews article titled "The big turnaround: how Europe's gas prices fell from €300 to €35 MWh in the span of a year" and has been an extremely common discursive framing across the analyzed media coverage:

> *"August 2022 began with the Title Transfer Facility (TTF), Europe's leading hub, trading gas at €145 per megawatt-hour (MWh), an alarming level. Two weeks later, the TTF broke through the €200 MWh barrier for the first time ever. By 26 August, the TTF did the unthinkable: it reached €300 MWh. Suddenly, the prospect of the European citizens, accustomed to decades of*

prosperity, being subject to rationing and blackouts went from far-fetched to plausible." (EURO-280823)

In a causal link, continued *weaponisation,* with its market consequence of high and volatile energy prices, was described as the underlying risk that could give rise to a cascade of secondary, contingent risks. These included socio-economic risks such as a *cost-of-living crisis* (POLI-090922) and rise in energy poverty as vulnerable households would struggle to *financially survive* through winters (EURO-070922). Politically, *weaponisation* was linked to decline in governmental legitimacy, turn towards populism (POLI-090922), and concerns over the erosion of EU unity, with European Commission President von der Leyen warning of deliberate attempts to "*blackmail and split close partners*" (POLI-061022). Economically, there were fears of long-term stagnation and *economic devastation* (ECON-241122)*, industrial decline* (FT-290424), especially in energy-intensive sectors like chemicals and metals, as their executives were quoted warning that the absence of Russian energy could *destroy entire national economies* (ECON-241122). This coverage also stressed the losses to the EU competitiveness on the global market by highlighting that European companies "*pay two to three times more for energy than competitors in the US and China*" (EUOB-260225). At the same time, the continued purchase of Russian fossil fuels under the new conditions was portrayed as geopolitically risky for its role in financing the ongoing war and possible conflict escalation (POLI-160125). In the early coverage of 2025, this raised noteworthy discursive considerations about the entangled nature of energy security and European military security (EUOB-260225).

"That marks a record high, up from the 760,100 tons brought in during the same period last year, fueling concerns that Western nations aren't doing enough to squeeze Russian funds as Moscow's war enters its fourth year." (POLI-160125)

"'Since the start of the war, we have spent on Russian fossil fuels the equivalent of 2,400 F-35 fighter jets,' said energy commissioner Dan Jørgensen. 'This can obviously not stand.'" (EUOB-260225)

Therefore, in addition to increasing the flexibility of supply to reduce dependency on *Russia*, the adaptation discourse also heavily focused on a string of adaptive market intervention measures that would help mitigate the contingent risks of *weaponisation* discussed above: raising gas storage level requirement for union members (EURO-070922), establishing a joint gas

procurement platform (POLI-201022), imposing a windfall tax on energy companies to redistribute *mind-boggling profits* to businesses and consumers in the form of subsidies (POLI-080223), imposing sanctions (REUT-240223) and price caps (FT-141222), setting *voluntary* energy consumption reduction targets (EURO-280423), and turning to renewables as a way to diversify supply (REUT-080322). These intervention measures were framed as a *radical step* (POLI-201022) or as *emergency* (EURO-150922), *temporary* (EUOB-080322), *crisis measures (*REUR-300922), underscoring that they represent an ad hoc change to energy system status-quo, and were legitimized by the need to address contingent risks, that is to restore equity (EURO-150922), protect consumers and businesses (REUR-300922) and ensure political stability (POLI-090922):

> *"Belgian Prime Minister Alexander de Croo put it bluntly last weekend: 'If the European Commission does not intervene, we risk a deep recession with unpredictable consequences. This is about much more than economics. This is about security and stability on the European continent.'" (POLI-090922)*
>
> *"European Union countries on Friday approved a package of emergency measures aimed at pulling down surging gas and power prices that are stoking inflation, hampering industrial activity and inflicting sky-high bills on consumers ahead of winter." (REUR-300922)*
>
> *"She [Ursula von der Leyen] went on to add that it was wrong for companies to receive extraordinary record profits while benefitting from war and at the cost of consumers. 'In these times, profits must be shared and channeled to those who need it most.'" (EURO-150922)*

5.1.2 Dominant Actors

As can already be seen in the provided discourse excerpts, political actors from EU-level institutions are occupying a central position in this discourse. Notably, over half of the analyzed articles (41) focused on the actions and statements of European Commission representatives. Within this coverage, Commission President Ursula von der Leyen and Energy Commissioner Kadri Simson (and, later, Dan Jørgensen) were frequently singled out as key figures steering, and as such accountable for the EU's energy response (this is especially visible in EURO-150922; EUOB-110924; POLI-121224). In other cases, the European Commission appeared more generally, either as an institutional actor (e.g. "*The European Commission is due to present its updated energy strategy…"* in FT-060322) or, often in response to strategy criticisms, through anonymized references to *commission officials or spokespersons*, without naming specific

individuals (POLI-201022; EUOB-010923). This suggests that the European Commission, particularly its top representatives, has been positioned as the central and visible authority in shaping and communicating the EU's energy response. The frequency and framing of media coverage — highlighting specific individuals like von der Leyen and Simson —indicates both a personalization of responsibility and a concentration of perceived accountability. At the same time, the occasional use of anonymized sources or institutional references suggests a strategic ambiguity: when the message is controversial or contested, the Commission appears to step back into a more faceless, bureaucratic role. Overall, this reveals a dual communication strategy — assertive and personalized when projecting leadership, but impersonal and dispersed when facing criticism.

This dominance of the EU policy-level regime actors (i.e. institutions and individuals embedded in the existing energy policy system) in the adaptation discourse was not limited to formal EU institutions. Prominent member states, particularly Germany and France, were also repeatedly invoked in narratives of crisis leadership and policy response: discussions of EU measures often centered on the actions and strategies implemented by Germany and France, positioning them as examples or benchmarks of the European crisis response strategy (see ECON-241122). Additionally, anonymous political figures — often referred to as "EU diplomats" or unnamed officials — further reinforced the visibility of the political elite in shaping the discourse around regime response: *a diplomat from a Baltic country* and *one EU official* (POLI-090922); *worries a European regulator* (ECON-050322); and repeating references to *European leaders* (FT-060322). These actors featured both as *objects* of reporting (e.g., when articles described institutional responses) and as *subjects* (e.g., through direct quotations or paraphrased statements), underscoring the discursive centrality of political actors to shaping the energy system design.

In contrast, fossil fuel companies — despite their notorious influence on the European energy strategy — were mostly absent or marginal within this discourse. Their near-silence suggests a discursive sidelining, even though counter-discourses (see section 5.2) reveal their behind-the-scenes role in shaping key policy directions (EURO-210522; EUOB-231122). This selective visibility seems to reveal thought-provoking power dynamics at play in the construction

of the energy crisis narrative, where the media consistently puts the spotlight on the actions and statements of *political* actors, while other influential stakeholders (fossil fuel companies) remain largely in the shadows of public accountability. These observations highlight the need for further investigation into the journalistic principles that shape the coverage agendas of media 'agenda-setters' during crises and how these principles might be challenged or reformed to enable a more comprehensive and inclusive representation of diverse actor agency (McCombs, 2005).

5.1.3 Promise to Transform

Confirming the framework advanced by Manca et al. (2017) — which argues that the form of resilience capacity adopted in response to a shock is shaped by the duration of a system's exposure — in response to the perceived risks of rising energy poverty, economic stagnation, and political instability arising from consistently *high* energy prices, the observed adaptation rhetoric focused heavily on a mix of short-, medium- and long-term strategies. The switch towards alternative fossil fuel energy suppliers and energy sources, voluntary reduction in consumption, and direct state-led market interventions were often framed as necessary for *short-term* adaptation (FT-060322) while in the *medium- to long-term,* the adaptation rhetoric would often go hand-in-hand with the promise for structural transformation of the energy system:

> *"At the EU level, a wide-ranging proposal to guarantee the bloc's "energy independence" ... is expected to advocate strategic stocks and mandatory gas storage to deal with the Russia risk in the short term, and a dramatic expansion of renewable energy and clean technologies such as hydrogen in the long run." (ECON-050322)*

> *"The EU is pushing member states and markets in a more flexible direction, but upgrading regulations, pricing methods and grid technology takes time." (ECON-200624)*

Investments in renewable energy technologies, particularly solar and wind, with the emerging popularity of green hydrogen, were positioned as essential not only for achieving climate targets, but for enhancing *long-term* European resilience and energy independence:

> *"'Hydrogen can be a game changer for Europe. It is key in diversifying our energy sources and helping us reduce our dependency on Russian gas,' Ursula von der Leyen, the president of*

> *the European Commission, said in September when unveiling the EU's new Green Hydrogen Bank." (EURO-241122).*

This dual framing — combining immediate crisis management with future-oriented transformation — allowed political actors to position the crisis as both a challenge and an *opportunity*:

> *"'Renewable energy, including renewable hydrogen, is a central pillar of the REPowerEU Plan, which is the EU's strategy to get rid of Russian fossil fuels as soon as possible,' says EU Commissioner for Energy Kadri Simson." (EURO-020323).*
>
> *"Commission Green Deal chief Frans Timmermans called it 'a huge opportunity.'" (POLI-080322)*

By doing so, the rhetoric creates an impression of a direct alignment and lack of trade-offs between the short-term adaptation efforts with broader goals of sustainability and strategic autonomy, reinforcing the legitimacy of crisis response measures in the context of the EU's evolving energy policy (POLI-080322). For instance, in one article Commission President Ursula von der Leyen described proposed procedures as *a focused acceleration of the European Green Deal*, aligning clean energy with both resilience and sustainability (FT-060322).

To reinforce the adaptation-on-the-way-to-transformation rhetoric and present it as a successful and appropriate resilience strategy, political actors and media coverage consistently highlighted and celebrated perceived strategic achievements. Among the most prominently featured successes was the record-breaking expansion of renewable electricity generation. For instance, one article noted that *"...combined wind, solar and hydroelectric output [are] outstripping fossil fuel generation for the first time, providing 40 per cent of all electricity supplies"* (FT-270423). Another emphasized: *"...despite importing 22 million tonnes of extra coal throughout the year, the EU only ended up using a third of it. Instead, a record growth in solar and wind were the runaway successes"* (EURO-310123). These milestones helped reinforce the narrative that the adaptive measures taken by the EU were entirely compatible with forward-looking energy transition measures.

Another frequently cited, but a bit more discursively controversial (see section 5.1.4.) success was the substantial reduction in energy consumption during the peak of the crisis in 2022. The media highlighted the extraordinary effort undertaken by both European households and industry to reduce gas usage in response to soaring energy costs: *"Heat pumps, rooftop solar, thermal insulation and turtlenecks became popular overnight"* (EURO-280823).

Among the various discursive points around the adaptive response, perhaps the most significant was the Commission's promotion of a narrative highlighting the EU's claimed success in overcoming its dependence on Russian fossil fuels. This was encapsulated in references to Ursula von der Leyen's declaration that Europe's dependence on Russian oil and gas is now *"history"* (POLI-210323). Similarly, in another article Energy Commissioner Kadri Simson highlighted that Russian gas imports had dropped from 45% in 2021 to 18% by mid-2024, stating: *"...we are no longer at the mercy of Putin's pipelines, and we keep standing by our Ukrainian partners as winter approaches"* (EUOB-110924).

The media focus on and celebration of these milestones — record renewable generation, reductions in energy consumption, and the end of Russian energy dependence — legitimizes the EU's adaptive responses. However, this focus also reveals certain silences within the discourse. While electricity generation from renewables was widely celebrated, this discourse paid little attention to the share of renewables in total energy consumption, which includes heating and transport — sectors where fossil fuel reliance remains substantial (European Union, 2024; European Environmental Agency, 2023). This selective framing of success obscures ongoing structural dependencies and the uneven pace of transformation across the broader energy system.

5.1.4 Vulnerabilities of Adaptation: Threaded Critiques

While adaptation served as the dominant interpretation of resilience in media discourse, it is important to note that coverage of this adaptation was not wholly uncritical. Some reports acknowledged ongoing vulnerabilities and raised concerns about the limitations of adopted strategies. However, these critiques largely operated within the adaptive framework, often calling for a different kind of adjustment rather than truly opposing the regime approach. Still, their

presence is noteworthy, as they may gain more prominence and potentially shape resilience discourse in the coming years.

Numerous adaptation-focused articles incorporated regime critiques, frequently drawing on the authority of experts to lend credibility to their claims. These critiques questioned the extent to which the adopted measures genuinely enhanced the EU's energy resilience in the long-term and typically focused on four key areas: **(1)** the circumstantial and unsustainable nature of many initial adaptative 'victories'; **(2)** disunity and inequality in the EU's energy response; **(3)** the continued reliance on Russian fossil fuels, including the exploitation of loopholes in sanctions and increased imports of Russian LNG; and **(4)** ongoing volatility and elevated energy prices due to apparent precariousness of globalised energy markets.

First, several prominent media coverages, while acknowledging the immediate achievement in reducing energy consumption, emphasized the conditional nature of lower gas use due to *milder-than-usual* weather (EURO-280823; ECON-050423; FT-290424) that had helped the EU get through the first crisis winter in a case of *astonishing luck* (ECON-110123).

> *"Although policymakers in Brussels have been quick to congratulate themselves on the geo-economic victory, the key to success lies in an intricate combination of factors, including a milder-than-usual winter that dented demand for heating." (EURO-280823).*

Moreover, coverage also emphasized that a chunk of reductions in consumption on the consumer side was driven by declining affordability for households (REUT-240223; EURO-310123), as well as business closures or scaled-back operations (FT-290424; ECON-050423; EURO-280823) — adaptive behaviors that can hardly be seen as positive or sustainable in the long-term: *"'Some people are now saying we have achieved this [emissions reduction] due to decarbonisation... The main reason... is because the economy simply produced much less. Steel production was 10 million tonnes less last year"* (FT-290424). Similarly, governmental subsidies were also criticized for being poorly designed and *untargeted* (ECON-241122; ECON-110123), in some cases *benefiting the rich more than the poor* (ECON-080922) or discouraging energy use reduction and improvements in energy efficiency (FT-141222). This raised concerns about whether such reductions could be maintained in the long-term without more structural adjustments — underscoring the limitations of initial adaptability tactics.

Second, media coverage consistently illuminated the disunity in energy resilience response across member states, with Hungary and Slovakia conspicuously positioned as oppositional or problematic to the EU solidarity in transition away from Russian fossil fuels (POLI-090922; EUOB-110924; POLI-121224; REUT-290224; ECON-050924; FT-300125; ECON-160225).

> *"In particular, Hungary and Slovakia — headed by Russia-friendly leaders Viktor Órban and Robert Fico — have historically opposed new energy restrictions." (POLI-121224)*

Additionally, Austria has been singled out as *still heavily dependent* (REUT-290224; ECON-050924) and described as a *gateway to Europe for Russian gas* (REUT-230624). Although Austria was frequently grouped with Hungary and Slovakia as an *'outlier'* (EUOB-110924) due to its continued *heavy* dependency on Russian energy, rather than attributing blame to the government, responsibility for the country's dependency was framed in terms of structural challenges —specifically, Austria being *landlocked* or *tied up* by contracts (ECON-050924; REUT-230624). While countries such as Hungary, Slovakia, and Austria were frequently singled out for maintaining energy ties with Russia, other dependent member states (e.g. France and Spain (Raghunandan, 2024)) received comparatively less attention — suggesting a discursive sidelining and potentially imbalanced attribution of blame.

While most prominent, the continued dependency of certain member states was not the only manifestation of disunity in adaptive resilience represented in the discourse. Some coverage highlighted the deep structural and economic inequalities shaping how different EU countries were able to respond to the crisis. For example, several articles drew attention to the uneven fiscal capacities across member states, noting that *"some countries can afford to be generous"* due to lower government debt, while others — particularly in southern Europe — faced mounting debt burdens that constrained their ability to implement energy support measures (ECON-241122; EURO-080223). Some media coverage also underscored persistent market dysfunction (FT-130924) and infrastructural disparities, contrasting the well-integrated energy networks and diversified renewable portfolios of northeast Europe with the *fragmented and isolated* systems in much of the southeast (REUT-070125). Furthermore, the disproportionate benefits accruing to larger member states under loosened EU state aid rules were also

highlighted. In EURO-080223 article, Bruegel expert was quoted explaining how the relaxed competition policy during the crisis led to Germany and France — *"the ones...that have the fiscal space"*— ending up accountable for the vast majority of state aid, with *"80%...allocated by Germany and France only."* Together, these narrative streams highlighted how asymmetries in fiscal space, energy infrastructure, and political leverage contributed to an uneven distribution of the celebrated adaptive resilience capacity across the EU.

Third, criticisms of the EU's ongoing entanglement with Russian energy sources began to surface more visibly by spring 2023 (POLI-210323; EUOB-050423; EUOB-010923), persisted throughout 2024 (REUT-290224; REUT-230624; ECON-050924), and intensified during the winter of 2024–2025 (POLI-121224; POLI-160125; FT-300125; ECON-160225; REUT-180225; FT-180225). This uptick coincided with harsher weather conditions and renewed geopolitical tensions, particularly surrounding U.S.-led ceasefire negotiations, which triggered a resurgence in rhetoric favoring a return to Russian gas. As one article put it, *"The first proper winter in three years had already reignited energy debates"* (ECON-160225). This coverage also underscored ongoing tensions within the EU's adaptation politics by highlighting a growing rift between member states positioned as more open to re-engaging with Russian gas (e.g. Hungary, Austria) and the *Russia-wary members* (not specified) pushing for continued diversification and energy independence (ECON-160225).

Several analyzed articles highlighted a contradiction in the EU's energy diversification strategy: while LNG imports were framed as a way to reduce reliance on Russian pipeline gas, rising imports of *Russian* LNG undermined that objective. This was part of a sub-narrative focused on exposing loopholes which allowed Russia to *adapt* its export strategy and continue supplying the EU via alternative channels (EUOB-050423; POLI-210323). Initially, EU officials downplayed the issue: *"Even though [Russian] LNG volumes have increased, it's still a relatively small level and a very small share of our overall energy imports,"* claimed an EU Commission *spokesperson* (EUOB-010923). However, critical coverage noted growing concerns over Russia's strategic use of LNG markets, revealing that *Russia was increasingly squeezing out alternative LNG suppliers* and prompting accusations of strategic incoherence from some member states, with Lithuania's energy minister quoted: *"You build the infrastructure [LNG] to get rid of the supplier [Russia] who manipulated your [pipeline-gas] markets...and then you*

accept the same supplier through LNG?" (EUOB-050423). By late 2024, articles admitted that despite an overall drop in EU LNG imports, Russian LNG bucked the trend, increasing by 10–11% (EUOB-120924; POLI-121224). And in the early 2025 coverage, Russia was labeled the EU's *second-largest* LNG supplier, accounting for 19% of imports (REUT-180225). Some articles began reporting emerging institutional responses, such as calls from *France and nine other countries* for stricter reporting on Russian LNG (REUT-151024). Still, this strategic contradiction, unlike concerns over a *return* to Russian pipeline gas (FT-300125), remained largely marginal in mainstream discourse, appearing mostly in isolated articles rather than as part of a sustained critique of the proclaimed energy divorce.

Lastly, concerns over energy price volatility and market instability were consistently present in the discourse (e.g. EUOB-080322; POLI-201022; FT-290424; EURO-231124; EUOB-260225). Pertaining to this, many articles highlighted how the EU's pivot toward global LNG markets gave rise to a new set of related external vulnerabilities. *Tight global supply* and *rising competition,* particularly from Asian markets, were frequently cited as factors compounding instability (EURO-070922; POLI-201022; REUT-241023; REUT-240223). Several media reports underscored that the EU's growing reliance on global LNG markets exposed it to unpredictable price shifts, seasonal supply shortages, and heightened geopolitical competition — actively positioning Asian economies as supply competitors and sources of risk. Articles warned that that *"...once Chinese economic activity picks up again, competition to attract LNG sources will be stronger"* (FT-141222), and that *"Resurgent demand from Asia will also keep costs high as the bloc competes with importers for limited cargoes"* (FT-290424). These framings continued in the early 2025 coverage, which highlighted that *"This year Europe will have to buy more than usual — just when Asian importers are also rushing to restock"* (ECON-160225).

This competition with Asia also illuminated deeper global inequalities and ethical tensions within the EU's adaptive strategy. One Financial Times article starkly captured this issue in its title: *"LNG 'inequality' bites as Europe takes supply from Asia."* By quoting Michael Stoppard of S&P Global, it provided a stark critique of the regime crisis response:

"The message from European policymakers is, 'We handled this situation well, we avoided blackouts'. But actually there were blackouts. The blackouts were in certain markets in Asia,

particularly in south Asia, where the LNG was diverted away to the higher-paying European markets." (FT-060723)

At the same time, this same article framed EU adaptative turn to global LNG market as *obviously needed* in the context of the ongoing crisis, a sentiment encapsulated in one of the opening quotes from an energy trader.

The discourse around market volatility showed limited engagement with systemic critiques of the intra-EU energy market structure. Only a few news reports identified the EU's marginal pricing model — where the last source used to meet demand, often gas, sets the overall market price — as a structural vulnerability (FT-120922; EURO-150922). Even then, this framing remained underdeveloped. While some articles briefly mentioned that the EU intended to implement market reforms (EURO-080223; FT-290424), none offered a detailed explanation of what those reforms would entail. EU officials were openly acknowledging the challenges posed by ongoing volatility, with Executive Vice President Stéphane Séjourné cited, *"Almost all our industrial sites face the same problem — energy costs are too high, and the power market is too volatile"* (EUOB-260225). In early 2025, while calls to stabilize prices and decouple electricity from gas costs were made, discourse demonstrated that the regime actors remained vague about this solution — *"the commission 'will look at' how to decouple retail power prices from high gas costs,"* but offered *"no further details on this"* (EUOB-260225). This reflects a broader pattern of rhetorical acknowledgment that market volatility is a significant energy system vulnerability, without substantive detail on how to address it.

In conclusion, while EU media discourse often framed the bloc's adaptive energy response as successful, a few significant critical perspectives were periodically woven into this narrative, exposing enduring vulnerabilities. The adaptation achievements were questioned in light of circumstantial factors like mild weather and demand destruction. Disunity among member states, turn towards Russian LNG, and deepened market volatility highlighted that *the EU's adaptation-focused resilience strategy might not be resilient enough*. Though calls for reform surfaced, they remained vague and largely sidelined. Even though critical voices were present in the discussion around adaptive resilience strategy evaluation, they were typically cited to highlight problems with the regime response, rather than to propose, explain and advance specific alternatives that could enable fundamental systemic change. As a result, the dominant

discursive framing of resilience still tended to focus on and reinforce the state interventionist, adaptive logic, prioritizing immediate *emergency* crisis management over deeper transformation.

5.2 Counter-discourse: Sold as Adaptation — Actually Resistance

While the majority of the analyzed media articles framed the EU's crisis response as a successful or semi-successful adaptive strategy aimed at enhancing energy resilience, a counter-discourse emerged to challenge this framing. It was promoted by activists from civil society organizations such as Fossil Free Politics, Corporate Europe Observatory, Open Society European Policy Institute, Greenpeace EU, ChangeNOW, Global Witness, Human Rights Watch and Extinction Rebellion. These actors argued that many of the measures enveloped in the language of adaptation, in fact reflected regime resistance in the face of needed structural transformation: *"The EU cannot imagine a world without fossil gas…"* (EURO-210522). Rather than seizing the crisis as a moment for accelerating the clean energy transition, EU institutions were framed as reinforcing fossil fuel dependency under the guise of short-term necessity (EURO-210522; POLI-240322; EUOB-231122).

Central to this critique was a reframing of the EU energy system's core vulnerability — not as dependence on Russian fossil fuels specifically, but on fossil fuels more broadly. Activists argued that this systemic reliance exposes democratic countries to the recurring risk of financially empowering fossil fuel-backed autocracies, with Russia serving as one cautionary case. One article, for example, quoted a Kyiv-based member of Extinction Rebellion who argued that *Putin's military ventures outside Russia* were funded by European purchases of Russian fossil fuels, a view echoed in quotes from Greenpeace campaigner who, in turn, emphasized the role of fossil fuel companies in *funneling money to Putin's war machine* and concluded that Europe *must move away from fossil fuels for good* (EURO-180322). This reframing was best elaborated in a standalone "opinion" piece by Heather Grabbe from Open Society European Policy institute titled "Oil has an autocracy problem" (POLI-240322). In it, she argued:

> *"The narrative that 'Russia is a reliable long-term supplier' is finally dead, but the line that 'gas and oil will continue for several more decades' still is not — and it should be. Simply substituting one autocratic hydrocarbon supplier for others — such as Azerbaijan, Iran, Saudi Arabia and Venezuela — would damage the causes of climate, energy security and democratic governance" (POLI-240322).*

Such contrasting interpretation of the crisis dimensions aligns social, environmental, and geopolitical security concerns on a global scale and exposes the substitution-focused adaptive responses promoted by EU politicians as reproducing patterns of ethical compromise and geopolitical dependency, thereby undermining institutional claims that these "adaptive" measures align with broader sustainability goals: "*Switching suppliers will only fund other dictators tightening their grip on power, abusing human rights and threatening their neighbors*" (POLI-240322). This sentiment was echoed by a Human Rights Watch activist underscoring that the EU response "*entails swapping out ties with one human rights violating dictatorship, engaged in an illegal war, for another [Azerbaijan]*" and arguing that economic collaboration should be tied to *concrete rights improvements* (EURO-310523).

Activist-led counter-discourse also exposed the agency and influence of fossil fuel corporations — such as Shell, BP, Total, ENI, E.ON, and Vattenfall — in shaping REPowerEU policy and called out political leaders — namely President Von der Leyen and Energy Commissioner Kadri Simson — for ongoing entanglement with fossil companies (EURO-210522; EUOB-231122). This discourse tried to unsilence the power-dynamics involved in "adaptive" resilience strategy decisions by shedding light on *more than 100 meetings* between EU politicians and fossil giants that occurred during the first months following the full-scale invasion and on the complete absence of civil organizations in the decision-making body *tasked with getting the continent off Russian gas* – the Energy Platform Industry Advisory Group (EUOB-231122).

> *"There is not a single public interest voice in the group: no organisations representing those in energy poverty, nor workers, nor climate or biodiversity. Meeting minutes make it clear that the gas lobby came up with this idea — CEOs pitched the advisory group under the banner of 'offering assistance'." (EUOB-231122)*

As a result, regime strategies such as heavy investment in LNG infrastructure were reinterpreted as regime resistance and preservation of the status quo — further *locking in* fossil fuel dependency — rather than an intermediate step towards energy transition. The opposing discourse also incorporated distributional equity critiques, noting how untargeted subsidies and windfall tax schemes disproportionately benefited fossil fuel firms — whose record profits were reframed as the outcome of *'fierce lobbying'* rather than impersonal and disinterested market dynamics that needs to be addressed, with redistribution measures taken by political leaders

labeled as *symbolic* (EUOB-231122). In their interpretation, activists positioned fossil fuel companies as *powerful voices pushing against* the energy transition (EURO-210522) and a *major blocker* for policy-makers (EUOB-231122), actively assigning blame for ongoing price volatility ("*This will keep us reliant on the erratic fossil-fuel market…")* and the cost-of-living crisis to *outsized influence* of these corporations (EUOB-231122) — instead of attributing it solely to Russian weaponization. They further argued that the continued involvement of fossil fuel firms in the shadows of energy politics serves as a fundamental vulnerability of the current energy system, one that risks exacerbating the cost-of-living crisis by delaying much-needed market reforms and locking billions into *useless* [LNG] *infrastructure while diverting money from investments in renewables* (EUOB-231122). This risk of fossil fuel *lock-in* has been echoed in other media coverage: underscoring the *cost* of this potential regime-led mistake (EUOB-120924), and the *outdated design* of EU funds that allows local regime actors in Poland and Romania to use *public money to finance new fossil projects,* which goes against proclaimed goals of advancing renewable energy transition across the EU (EUOB-140723). As such, activist-led discourse calls for limiting corporate fossil fuel influence in energy policymaking (EUOB-140723) and improving transparency (EURO-210522), and urges EU leaders to send *clear signals* that the fossil fuel phaseout is *irreversible* (POLI-240322), framing these deeper institutional changes as essential solutions for a more resilient energy system.

In sum, the activist-led counter-discourse challenged the dominant framing of the EU's energy crisis response as successful adaptation by reinterpreting it as regime resistance to necessary structural change. It reframed the core vulnerability exposed by the crisis not as dependence on Russian fossil fuels alone, but as systemic fossil fuel dependency. The preservation of this broad structural vulnerability, it was argued, exposes democratic states to the geopolitical and ethical risks of financially supporting authoritarian regimes, with Russia serving as an example. The corporate capture of EU energy policymaking, particularly the political influence of fossil fuel giants was framed as a related institutional vulnerability. Activists also reframed continued price volatility and cost-of-living crisis as consequences of the corporate influence locking in fossil fuel infrastructure that delays renewable investment. This narrative broadened the framing of related risks of insufficient action: from funding Russia to reproducing human rights-abusing states, their present and future conflicts, and as such systemically undermining global democratic legitimacy. When it comes to solutions, this discourse advocated for clear political commitments

to fossil phase-out, restrictions on fossil fuel industry influence, structural reforms to energy markets, and a redirection of public funds toward renewable energy and true social equity. However, this discourse strand remained at the margins of news media reporting, with most discursively comprehensive coverage appearing in separate *opinion* (POLI-240322; EUOB-140723) or *view* pieces (EURO-210522), rather than being integrated into the mainstream news narrative on a recurrent basis.

5.3 What Kind of Transformation?

The following sections examine how renewables (5.3.1) and nuclear energy (5.3.2) have been discursively positioned and legitimized as resilience-enhancing solutions in European public discourse. While these solutions have been actively promoted in the aftermath of the energy crisis (section 5.1.3), the discourse around them has also revealed new vulnerabilities and risks associated with their adoption, which may shape their role in Europe's energy system transition. In particular, the crisis-triggered discursive focus on *dependency* as a core energy system vulnerability has begun to extend to renewables and nuclear alike. Finally, the section explores how the risk of nuclear *weaponization* — though currently marginal and largely silenced — could emerge as a central concern in future debates around energy resilience, especially in light of ongoing geopolitical instability.

5.3.1 Will Renewables Take Off? Resilience of Renewables

Overall, the crisis might have shifted discourse around renewables toward greater support and perceived legitimacy, increasingly labeling them as *domestic* (FT-060322), *homegrown power sources that can offer energy security* (EUOB-230125), that not just serve as a means *to become carbon neutral but also energy independent* (EURO-070922). EU policymakers reinforced this positioning in their media statements: in 2023 commission's vice-president Maroš Šefčovič were quoted stating that the crisis had "*accelerated all our efforts in getting as much as possible from indigenous European [energy] sources, which are renewables"* (POLI-230223). Renewables were rebranded as more *affordable*, generated from *local* resources, and less geopolitically entangled: *"Now with the [energy] crisis ... we have a lot of desire to get heat that is affordable and also not depending on what's happening in Russia"* (POLI-040723). In the first years of the crisis, analysts were quoted predicting that "*the desire to be more self-sufficient, combined with*

the lowered cost of renewables and ambitious national climate targets, should trigger a ramp-up in domestic clean energy" (FT-060322). As such, renewables were often positioned as the solution to the regional *energy trilemma* — what early coverage in *The Economist* described as the EU's need to reconcile "*three competing objectives: cost, greenery and security*" (ECON-050322).

Early commentary by experts from *Ember think-tank* helped frame the crisis as a window of opportunity: *"The shocks of 2022 only caused a minor ripple in coal power and a huge wave of support for renewables"* (EURO-310123). Similarly, in another article *Ember's* analyst was quoted stating, *"People will look back to 2022 and 2023 and see it as the time that renewables really started to fly… Governments are waking up to the fact that we can't rely on fossil fuels, and renewables can form the majority of our energy system"* (FT-270423). Whereas fossil fuel imports were consistently portrayed as costly, responsible for volatility in the market and for exposing the EU to geopolitical risks, clean energy was advantageously framed as more affordable, independent and climate-friendly (EUOB-260225).

> *"'Trump, Putin and Xi Jinping,' who he [French MEP Thomas Pellerin Carlin] described as 'bully number one, two and three' can 'all have a big impact on our fossil fuel prices,' he also said. 'But they can't stop the wind from blowing in Normandy, the sun from shining in Sicily.'" (EUOB-230125)*

While early coverage framed renewable expansion as a straightforward path to resilience, discourse in the later reporting complicated this narrative by revealing a range of vulnerabilities within the energy transition.

First, the media emphasizes *aging power grids*, regulatory *red tape*, and *limited cross-border infrastructure* as systemic vulnerabilities that undermine renewable energy deployment (REUT-151024; REUT-010724). The so-called *ultra-cheap energy* coming from renewables began to put new pressures on the electricity system: Europe experienced record negative energy prices in 2024, interpreted as a result of an interim renewable energy oversupply which the infrastructure struggled to handle and make use off (FT-140924; ECON-200624). As the ECON-200624 article put it, *"As solar panels and wind farms take over Europe, the question facing the continent's policymakers is what to do with all the power they produce.*

Ultra-low—and indeed negative—prices suggest it is not being put to good use." The piece concluded that the EU energy system transformation will inevitably *take time* since regime actors will have to address the exposed vulnerabilities by *"upgrading regulations, pricing methods and grid technology"* (ECON-200624). This focus on the problematic consequences of *wasted energy* persisted into 2025: *"Wind and solar farms are wasting energy at rising rates by stopping production because there is not enough capacity to transport or store the electricity…"* (FT-270225).

Second, coverage of other transition elements also reflected systemic vulnerabilities. For instance, while permitting reforms for renewables were perceived as progressing, investment in efficiency seemed to lag behind (FT-141222). Although regime actors promoted green hydrogen investment plans as a guarantee of future transformation and resilience (EUOB-080322; EURO-241122), other discourse around green hydrogen revealed structural challenges. Energy industry voices urged decision-makers to *"expand renewables… expand infrastructure… only with that will you see then the hydrogen coming up at the same time"* (EURO-241122). Supporting this urgency, one article quoted IEA analysis noting *a huge amount of extra renewable power generation* needed to build a *green hydrogen future* — a *100-fold increase* by 2027 (EURO-020323). At the same time, concerns were raised about the mismatch between *EU's planned supply* and demand, with a representative of Renewables Grid Initiative cited cautioning against *"the risk that we are driven away from direct electrification into a hydrogen bubble"* (EURO-020323).

Third, and perhaps most directly related to the discursive outcome of the recent energy crisis, focus on vulnerability of dependency became more prominent to the renewable energy transition discourse. Resilience issues promoted in the discourse around fossil fuel dependency, like risks of funding autocratic regimes, were applied to EU dependency on Chinese solar, with added concerns over socio-economic outcomes: "*Does meeting ecological targets with containers full of Chinese solar panels merely change the autocratic regime Europeans will depend on, and crush employment to boot?*" (ECON-080224). This emergent strand of discourse argued that risks stemming from dependency on Chinese solar panels could replicate those of past fossil fuel dependencies. In the same article, French officials were positioned as increasingly protectionist, arguing that solar manufacturing is a matter of *sovereignty*, while the expertise of Bruegel's

experts was leveraged in a discursive effort to dispel the validity of protectionist claims, labelling analogies with Russia as *far-fetched* and further elaborating "*Gas stops flowing as soon as a pipeline is cut, whereas already-installed solar panels keep generating juice*" (ECON-080224). Even though this line of argumentation appeared sparingly in the analyzed selection of media discourse, it raises newly relevant questions about the depth of renewables-based energy sovereignty when markets for renewable energy infrastructure are global. The contradiction between localized energy generation and global technological dependence has begun to gain traction in the media discourse surrounding resilience of renewables and may emerge as a new focal point in the political struggle around energy system transformation.

5.3.2 Is Nuclear the Solution? Resilience of Nuclear

Early on, the discourse around energy crisis solutions positioned nuclear as a possible remedy to the European energy crunch, legitimizing it primarily by framing it as a low-carbon substitute for Russian fossil fuels. For example, in spring 2022 a EuroNews article stated that "*nuclear power was on the menu*" even before the war, but the invasion of Ukraine "*focused minds in Europe on energy security and weaning the continent off Russian fossil fuels*" (EURO-270522). Overall, the dual emphasis on energy security and decarbonization favorably positioned nuclear as a credible long-term solution. In this context, nuclear was often grouped with renewables as *a low-carbon source*: "*Most of the money will come from a price cap set on electricity produced through renewable energy, nuclear power and other low-carbon sources*" (EURO-150922). The framing not only legitimized nuclear's place in future energy systems but also, in turn, positioned pro-nuclear countries such as France and the UK as pragmatic leaders in crisis response (EURO-270522).

At the same time, systemic vulnerabilities that prevented nuclear take-off in the EU were often framed as political rather than technological. The article titled *"Nuclear is a solution to the energy crisis but where will Europe store its radioactive waste?"*(EURO-270522) exemplifies this framing by presenting political tensions and local opposition to waste storage as the main urgent systemic vulnerabilities preventing nuclear adoption: "*Can we swerve the diplomatic tensions and local protests before it's too late?"* (EURO-270522). The intra-EU divide on nuclear, with France and the Netherlands positioned as *turning towards nuclear* in contrast to *Germany shutting down its nuclear fleet* (ECON-050322) — helped strengthen the impression

that *political* disagreement is the main systemic vulnerability consistently undermining transition to nuclear across Europe. The significance of this nuclear antagonism framing is also evident in the recent 2025 coverage, highlighting how political shifts in Germany's leadership could potentially ease intra-EU nuclear tensions, noting it might finally "*help ease the EU's never-ending nuclear spat"* (POLI-240225).

While not dominant in the nuclear discourse, concerns about nuclear dependency also surfaced, emphasizing this newly salient vulnerability. One 2022 article captured the *paradox*: while nuclear was often promoted as a path to energy independence, several EU countries remained dependent on Russian nuclear technology and fuel. "*Even countries that don't have Russian-designed reactors are hardly independent*," it argued, pointing to France's ongoing cooperation with Russian *Rosatom* (EUOB-100822). Though it was only intermittently referenced in later discourse — such as in *Reuters* crisis coverage from 2023, which noted in passing that "*EU countries imported 20% of their natural uranium from Russia in 2020*" (REUT-240223) — the vulnerability of nuclear dependency remained largely underexplored. Even as it surfaced again at the end of 2024, when the new energy commissioner was quoted mentioning that his plan to address the ongoing EU energy dependence would focus *"on gas primarily, but also oil and nuclear*" (POLI-121224), it was treated peripherally, without substantive elaboration or integration into broader discussions on energy resilience.

Finally, the war in Ukraine might have introduced a new aspect to the resilience discourse around nuclear energy: safety risks under conditions of military conflict. While marginal within broader European public energy coverage, one *EUobserver* article published within the first months of the military conflict illuminated the unprecedented nature of this risk, made visible primarily through the unfolding war: "*The war in Ukraine marks the first time we have seen an armed conflict take place near nuclear power plants*" (EUOB-100822). The piece warned that nuclear reactors "*are not designed to withstand military fire*" and that their safe operation relies on vulnerable systems such as uninterrupted electricity supply and the availability of highly specialized personnel — both of which are at serious risk during wartime. Although this problem framing received limited attention in the wider discourse around energy security, its implications for nuclear-based resilience in an increasingly militarized Europe could gain prominence as geopolitical tensions evolve. While currently framing of energy system *weaponization* has

focused almost exclusively on manipulation of gas markets, events such as the occupation of the Zaporizhzhia nuclear plant and the attack on Chernobyl illustrate that the risk of nuclear weaponization is real (World Nuclear Association, 2025). Though largely silenced in mainstream media discourse for now, these risks could become central to future energy resilience interpretation in the event of further conflict escalation.

5.4 Concluding remarks

In summary, this analysis revealed several distinct interpretations of energy resilience in the public discourse: general energy resilience as systemic *adaptation*, energy resilience as regime *resistance,* and sub-narratives around the specific resilience (Anderies et al., 2013) of potential solutions such as nuclear and renewables. The lens of *adaptation* is most prevalent across media coverage, with EU policy-level regime actors consistently centered in this discourse. What's noteworthy, the agency of fossil fuel companies, though revealed to continue shaping strategic direction, was largely absent or silenced within mainstream narratives.

The findings also showcase how each resilience interpretation was built around specific framings of vulnerability and risk, and how these framings are used to legitimize the congruent resilience capacity in response. This was exposed in the contrast between the dominant, regime-led narrative of *adaptation-on-the-way-to-transformation*, and the civil society's account of regime *resistance,* in which the turn towards other geopolitically questionable suppliers of fossil gas was reinterpreted as a strategy that sustains long-standing institutional arrangements in energy governance. By reframing vulnerability and risk not merely as dependence on *Russia* and its weaponisation of energy, but more broadly as continued reliance on fossil fuel incumbents and the consequent exposure to — and indirect support of — potentially threatening militant autocracies, civil society actors challenged the regime-led narrative that framed incremental shifts in energy supply as a robust systemic restructuring.

Finally, the analysis reveals that discursive emphasis on certain vulnerabilities — particularly around dependency — may extend beyond debates around fossil fuels to shape perceptions of renewables and nuclear energy as well. Their resilience is increasingly scrutinized in light of this shifting discursive agenda. This demonstrates how elements from general resilience framings — those that address urgent large-scale systemic vulnerabilities — can "travel" into and shape more

specific resilience discourses around individual energy system components. As such, resilience discourse analysis helps reveal how risk and vulnerability framings might shape both public perception and policy pathways in socio-technical transitions.

6. Discussion

6.1. Theoretical Implications

Contemporary times are often described as an age of polycrisis — a term that underscores the growing number of systemic failures and risks threatening the development and well-being achieved by (some) modern societies (World Economic Forum, 2023). This proliferation of crises continues to challenge proclaimed political ambitions for sustainable development and has sparked analytical debates about whether each new crisis constitutes a barrier to transition or a window of opportunity for advancing more sustainable solutions (Lehmann et al., 2021; Żuk & Żuk, 2022). In academic research, this has prompted a gradual rise in discussions about the conceptual compatibility between resilience thinking and sustainability efforts (Olsson et al., 2014; Redman, 2014; Roostaie et al., 2019; Scordato & Gulbrandsen, 2024). Simultaneously, interpretive scholars have emphasized the potential influence of socially constructed understandings of resilience on the behavior of socio-technical systems (Chmutina et al., 2016; McGreavy, 2016; Leitch & Bohensky, 2014), prompting a need for an empirical investigation into how different interpretations may affect the pursuit of sustainability goals.

This study offers several empirically derived theoretical contributions to the literature on resilience and sustainability transitions. Drawing on a media discourse analysis of the European energy crisis triggered by the Russo-Ukrainian war, the findings illuminate how resilience is discursively constructed through temporal and normative framings, and how these constructions, in turn, can shape perceptions of sustainability and influence transition pathways. Three principal implications emerge. First, the study contributes to ongoing debates regarding the conceptual relationship between resilience and sustainability transition pathways (Olsson et al., 2014; Scordato & Gulbrandsen, 2024), by demonstrating the significance of temporality and interpretive framing in shaping resilience discourse. Second, it advances a normative perspective on the interaction between concepts of sustainability and resilience (Roostaie et al., 2019), illuminating how interpretations of resilience can influence the public perception of sustainability in the aftermath of a crisis. Third, the findings underscore the utility of discourse analysis as a methodological approach for evaluating the dynamic, contested, and power-laden character of resilience in socio-technical regimes (McGreavy, 2016). Each of these contributions is elaborated below.

First, the findings advance and support the conceptual relationship between resilience and sustainability transition pathways by illustrating that resilience is not a singular, static attribute of socio-technical regimes but rather a temporally differentiated and interpretively flexible property. In contrast to Kanger's (2020) theoretical conceptualization of regime resilience as a continuum between two poles (e.g. resilient and fragile), the empirical analysis reveals that regime actors frequently articulate resilience as a set of temporally sequenced capacities, emphasizing adaptation in the short- to medium-term and transformative action as a time-enabled ability, exercised in the long-term. This observed temporal layering corresponds with Manca et al.'s (2017) proposition that resilience capacities can differ across time horizons and crisis intensities. The findings also affirm the relevance of Manca et al.'s (2017) suggestion that resilience cannot be understood in isolation from the framing of vulnerabilities and risks. Indeed, this study demonstrates that interpretations of regime resilience are strongly mediated by how actors define the core systemic vulnerabilities that enabled the crisis. Policy actors that framed these vulnerabilities narrowly — e.g., dependence on Russian fossil fuels — were able to promote and legitimize short-term adaptive responses such as fuel diversification. In contrast, leveraging a broader understanding of the exploited vulnerability — e.g. reliance on fossil fuels and their erratic suppliers — enabled civil society actors to discursively undermine the legitimacy of adaptive measures and advocate for more transformative actions. Complementing the role of temporal framing, this suggests that the extent to which focus on resilience aligns with the normative goals of sustainability depends also on the range of vulnerabilities and risks acknowledged within resilience discourse.

Therefore, these findings suggest that future theoretical work seeking to conceptualize the relationship between regime resilience and sustainability transition pathways would benefit from adopting a more nuanced and temporally sensitive understanding of resilience. This conceptual refinement could challenge Redman's (2014) proposition that "the current political arena favors adaptation because it works to maintain the established order and address near-term problems... it appears less radical than transformation, which involves uncertain outcomes and the associated costs of system restructuring." The empirical analysis effectively complicates this point by highlighting that regime resilience response might be inevitably shaped and constrained by temporal dynamics (Kanger, 2020). While short-term resilience strategies indeed seem to prioritize adaptive responses aimed at immediate stabilization, the discursive emphasis on

longer-term transformation suggests that regimes may still retain the capacity (and, perhaps, the intent) to engage with deeper structural change over extended time horizons. As such, it may be valuable to further investigate how regime actors discursively construct resilience across diverse transition pathways (Kanger, 2020). Such analysis could offer transition scholars deeper insight into whether certain interpretations of resilience enable regimes to lead transitions (e.g. *transformation* or *reconfiguration* pathways) and whether the temporal framing of resilience capacities in discourse can help explain the cases when these pathways evolve and sequentially follow each other over time (Geels & Schot, 2007).

Second, the findings carry significant normative implications for understanding how public conceptions of sustainability might be shaped by the discourse of resilience in the aftermath of a crisis. As evidenced during the Russo-Ukrainian war, crises can serve as discursive junctures that prompt reflection on and facilitate learning about the interconnections between sustainability goals. This study revealed that the war prompted sustainability advocates and political actors alike to foreground the geopolitical dimensions of energy sourcing, bringing into sharper focus the implications of continued fossil fuel dependence for democratic integrity and military security (Kuzemko et al., 2022; Osička & Černoch, 2022). This mirrors patterns of interpretative effects on sustainability observed during other crises, such as the COVID-19 pandemic's discursive foregrounding of health-related sustainability goals (Hakovirta & Denuwarta, 2020) or the renewal of public debates around nuclear safety in energy transition post the Fukushima disaster (Wittneben, 2011). As such, it implies that the discursive framing of crises' causes, that is of the exploited systemic vulnerabilities involved and the related risks, could influence public normative understanding of sustainability priorities. In this case, the analysis reveals that in the aftermath of the Russo-Ukrainian war, the vulnerability and risk framings shaping the discourse around the resilience of fossil fuel supplies were extended to the discourses on resilience of renewables and nuclear energy, which began to debate the effects of their adoption not just on climate, but also on geopolitical risk, democratic legitimacy and achievement of energy sovereignty. Such developments support the view that sustainability is not a fixed or universally agreed-upon end goal but a dynamic and contested normative construct, responsive to shifting societal interpretations of vulnerabilities, risks and required resilience (Marchese et al., 2017). In line with perspectives that frame sustainability as a "wicked problem" (Pryshlakivsky & Searcy, 2012), the findings suggest that crises and associated resilience discourses could play a

constitutive role in shaping normative trajectories of sustainability transitions. As such, the resilience framings that gain prominence during crises may influence not only the policy responses adopted but also the underlying societal vision of what constitutes a sustainable future (Hadden & Seybert, 2016). This underscores the importance of continued academic inquiry into resilience discourses and their potential role in shaping the direction and dynamics of sustainability transitions.

Third, the study provides both theoretical and methodological insights regarding the application of discourse analysis to the study of resilience in socio-technical systems (McGreavy, 2016; Kanger, 2020). Specifically, it highlights the importance of attending to the temporal, categorical, and agency dimensions of resilience discourse. As mentioned previously, the analysis demonstrates that resilience is frequently articulated in time-specific terms (e.g., immediate adaptation versus long-term transformation) which suggests that temporality is a constitutive element of resilience as a discursive construct. Next, the study identifies categorical variation in how resilience is framed: some articles evoke a general conception of energy system resilience, while others focus on the resilience of specific technologies or measures (e.g., "resilience of renewables" or "resilience of adaptation"). The presence of this variation confirms the relevance of theoretical distinction between categories of general and specific resilience (Anderies et al., 2013), underscoring the need for conceptual nuance when operationalizing resilience in discourse-analytic research. This also aligns with previous research findings which suggest that multiple resilience interpretations can coexist and compete in the public realm (Chmutina et al., 2016). Third, the findings draw attention to how discourse analysis can uncover the role of power and agency in the construction and dissemination of resilience interpretations. The predominance of policy-level regime actors in media discourse, and the marginalization of civic actors to the realm of opinion commentary, illustrates existing power asymmetries that shape the visibility, legitimacy, and impact of diverse resilience interpretations. This echoes the argument that discourse is not only reflective but also constitutive of socio-political structures (Van Hulst et al., 2024), and therefore discourse analysis can serve as a lens for examining how regimes sustain their legitimacy through strategic resilience narratives in response to crises.

Taken together, these findings support the argument that resilience should be theorized not as a static property but as a temporally and normatively constructed concept (McGreavy, 2016) that

evolves in response to the framings of the crisis dimensions (e.g. duration, vulnerabilities and risks) (Manca et al., 2017). By introducing and examining the role of temporal dimension and highlighting the significance of interpretive flexibility, this study contributes to ongoing debates regarding the compatibility of resilience and sustainability (Scordato & Gulbrandsen, 2024) and offers empirical grounding for theoretical claims that crises can be perceived as “windows of opportunity” and catalysts for change in socio-technical systems (Geels & Schot, 2007; Johnstone & Schot, 2023). Furthermore, the study builds upon recent efforts to conceptualize regime resilience as an evolving regime property that may serve as a diagnostic indicator of transition dynamics (Kanger, 2020), suggesting that discursive interpretations of resilience can offer insights into the positioning of regimes along transition pathways. Finally, by demonstrating the utility of discourse analysis in capturing these dynamics, the study opens new avenues for methodological innovation and empirical exploration in the analysis of resilience, transition, and regime-driven socio-technical change.

6.2. Practical Implications

The theoretically derived insights hold a series of practical implications.

First, civil society actors, sustainability advocates, and reformist policymakers might need to keep leveraging resilience discourse in a way that pushes the public toward acknowledging a broader set of interconnected structural vulnerabilities in the energy system. By widening the framing of underlying vulnerabilities and potential risks (e.g., linking the crisis to dependence on fossil fuel funded autocracies), these actors can continue to put pressure on the current regime structure. Transition theory indicates that the shift from a *transformation* pathway in which "regime actors react with adjustments in the system" and "the survival of incumbent regime actors is not threatened, as they are the ones to enact the redirection of the development trajectory of the existing system" to the more substantial transition occurs when the regime adjustments are insufficient in addressing the perceived problems (Geels & Kemp, 2007). While broader framings of risks and vulnerabilities are currently discursively sidelined in the analyzed media coverage, there is also a need to find more discursive avenues to leverage them in the public sphere. In their study of regime destabilisation, Turnheim and Geels (2012) emphasise that the seeds of destabilisation are often sown well before their effects become visible, and that

the interaction and alignment of diverse pressures play a crucial role in the destabilisation process. Additionally, studies of social movement framings have shown that the broader and more flexible a frame is, the more groups it can engage — and the greater its potential for mobilization (Benford & Snow, 2000). This insight suggests that while pressure from social movements alone may not be sufficient to immediately challenge entrenched fossil fuel dependencies, their influence can be significantly amplified through the sustained alignment of resilience rhetoric with that of other actors. Such alignment requires activating various discursive leverage points — for example, by linking fossil fuel politics to broader concerns about democratic legitimacy in the context of ongoing geopolitical crises.

Second, analysts can systematically monitor resilience narratives (across speeches, media coverage, and strategic policy documents) to evaluate whether the regime rhetoric signals a focus on resistance, adaptation, or even openness to transformation, as this may have implications for likely transition dynamics (e.g. regime-led *reconfiguration* or niche-advanced *technological substitution*). If media discourse continues to repeatedly challenge the adopted adaptive measures, this may indicate that incremental solutions are reaching their limits, and that the regime is nearing a critical juncture. In such a case, diverse niche actors can take advantage of progressing regime destabilisation to advance an alternative set of technologies and practices that could more effectively address the unresolved vulnerabilities and risks. Research has shown the bi-directional causality between emerging novelties and industry destabilisation serves a critical function across political and socio-cultural arenas (Turnheim & Geels, 2012). Recognizing that prolonged crises may push regimes beyond adaptation, innovation and transition policy can be designed to ensure that viable alternatives, especially those that currently seem to be silenced in discourse (e.g., community energy, decentralized renewables) can be effectively promoted when new windows of opportunity emerge. Discourse analysis can help identify when such windows may be opening and which framings might be most relevant in helping legitimize particular innovation to the public. For example, this study showed that in the aftermath of the Russo-Ukrainian war, sustainability transition is increasingly legitimised by framing renewable energy generation as local and less geopolitically entangled, thus with lower risk of becoming weaponised in the future.

Third, while the securitization of energy discourse during the Russo-Ukrainian war primarily targeted fossil fuel dependencies, emerging discursive patterns suggest that similar security framings are now being extended to other technologies, including renewables and nuclear. Though still marginal, the rise of resilience narratives emphasizing these recently salient vulnerabilities — such as Europe's dependence on Chinese solar manufacturing or the geopolitical and safety risks associated with nuclear — signals a critical shift that policymakers and energy system organizations must take seriously. These developments underscore the need to anticipate and respond to competing securitization framings, which may be strategically deployed to either legitimize or undermine specific technologies during security crises. To safeguard the long-term integrity of the energy transition, it is essential to design communication strategies that directly engage with such perceived vulnerabilities, rather than allowing them to distort and polarize public understanding. Perhaps, through proactive strategic frame assimilation, where cultural ideas are selectively adapted to enhance their resonance with the target context, sustainability transition advocates can increase the likelihood that the collective sustainability action frame evolves into a broader "master frame" capable of shaping and constraining the orientations and activities of other movements, rather than the other way around (Benford & Snow, 2000). In this light, engaging with resilience discourses should not be dismissed but strategically embraced. By learning from and incorporating such framings, sustainability advocates can expand their argumentative repertoire, resonate with broader audiences, and tackle concerns around technological dependencies in ways that bolster, rather than undermine, the credibility and durability of clean energy transitions. Doing so may help ensure that achievement of the sustainability transition is seen not only as desirable but as truly resilient in the face of real and discursively constructed vulnerabilities and risks.

6.3. Limitations

This study is subject to several notable limitations, primarily related to its sampling strategy and the scope of the media content analyzed. First and foremost, the use of *purposive sampling* — while appropriate for qualitative discourse analysis — means that the findings do not capture the full spectrum of energy-related discourse present in European media during the analyzed timeframe (Palinkas et al., 2013). As such, some narratives, framings, or actor perspectives have

been excluded. The sample, though diverse, is inherently selective and shaped by the research aims and resource constraints.

The aim of this research introduced a bias towards selecting articles that discuss energy resilience in the context of the current geopolitical tensions, as the link to the Russo-Ukrainian war heavily guided the sampling scope. The iterative and inductive nature of sampling also raised the risk of confirmation bias around resilience issues, especially since article selection was based on perceived "discursive comparability" across sources (McSweeney, 2021). The researcher's conceptual lens on resilience may have influenced which resilience framings were considered relevant. To mitigate these risks, the sampling process was made transparent and iterative, and full media archive browsing, rather than keyword-only searches, helped to uncover unexpected energy discourses present across media platforms. As a result, some articles covering European energy in distinct ways have also been strategically selected and included into the analysis, thus reducing the effect of researcher's confirmation biases in the sampling process.

A second limitation stems from the *representativeness of the sample in quantitative terms*. While efforts were made to include a wide range of viewpoints — including both mainstream and critical voices — the sampling process was guided by discursive richness and thematic relevance, not proportional representation. As a result, the relative frequency with which certain framings appeared in the sample (e.g., adaptation versus resistance) cannot be taken as indicative of their prevalence in the wider media landscape in absolute terms. The study does not aim to make generalizations but to offer a nuanced qualitative exploration of key discursive patterns present in coverage pieces of prominent new media platforms.

Moreover, sample size constraints played a role in shaping the analysis. Due to time and scope limitations inherent to a master's thesis project, only a limited number of articles (n = 68) could be subjected to close reading and rigorous coding. This limitation was partially mitigated through an iterative sampling process in which a broader pool of potentially relevant articles was initially identified, briefly reviewed, and logged in a structured sampling frame. From this larger set, the final sample was selected based on thematic relevance and discursive diversity, ensuring that the included articles reflected the range of perspectives observed during the broader review. This

approach helped enhance the reliability of the analysis by grounding it in a systematically assembled dataset, rather than a random subset (Palinkas et al., 2013).

Lastly, the focus on English-language European media platforms — such as *Politico Europe*, *The Economist*, *Reuters*, *Financial Times Europe*, *Euronews*, and *EUobserver* — introduces an additional limitation. While these outlets offer influential and transnational perspectives, they may underrepresent the discursive framings prevalent in national-language media, particularly those reflecting local political dynamics or public sentiment (Berry et al., 2016). For instance, region-specific interpretations of resilience — such as those underpinning Hungary and Slovakia's resistance to phasing out Russian fossil fuels, or those reflecting the energy struggles of Southeastern Europe — may be flattened or overlooked in pan-European English-language coverage. As a result, localised tensions and alternative framings of resilience, and their effect on the EU energy transition may not be fully captured in this study.

Taken together, these limitations highlight the importance of interpreting the study's findings as indicative rather than exhaustive. Nonetheless, the purposive and iterative sampling approach employed here allows for the identification of key *existing* discursive trends and tensions that are analytically valuable for understanding the evolving construction of energy resilience in the EU context.

6.4. Recommendations for future research

Building on the insights of this study, several directions for future research emerge. First, while this research captured a diversity of discourse strands around resilience, more focused analyses could offer greater depth. For instance, a longitudinal study focused only on the development and influence of counter-discourses could yield important insights into how opposing framings gain or lose traction over time (Benford & Snow, 2000). Such an approach could provide more insights into the dynamics of discursive power and contestation within energy politics. Understanding these shifts is crucial for identifying how interpretations of resilience become institutionalized, or sidelined, ultimately shaping the direction and legitimacy of energy transition pathways.

Second, the discourse findings (5.1.4. Vulnerabilities of adaptation) revealed notable regional tensions and divergences in resilience strategies within the EU. Comparative studies that analyze media coverage of the energy crisis across different EU countries or regions could help unpack how national contexts, political cultures, or energy dependencies might be shaping divergent resilience narratives, and how these variations contribute to or undermine collective EU energy system resilience and transformation. These insights are essential because understanding regional variations helps policymakers recognize the specific challenges and priorities different member states face, preventing one-size-fits-all approaches that may be ineffective or counterproductive (Bouzarovski & Herrero, 2015). By revealing how local contexts shape resilience narratives, comparative studies can foster more inclusive, tailored strategies that strengthen collective EU energy system resilience and support a smoother, more equitable sustainable transition across diverse political and socio-economic landscapes.

Third, this study observed a clear media bias in attributing systemic responsibility which was seen in disproportionate focus on EU policy-level actors, often omitting the role of other powerful regime actors such as fossil fuel companies. Further research could explore why this skew occurs by, for instance, investigating newsroom agenda-setting processes during crises (McCombs, 2005). Additionally, it would be valuable to examine how such imbalances in representation shape public perceptions of responsibility for energy system resilience. Public surveys could be used to assess whether media framings influence where citizens place blame or responsibility — whether primarily on policymakers or also on corporate actors. More broadly, surveys could also help explore how the public conceptualizes resilience — as adaptation, resistance, or transformation — and if these understandings correspond with discourse patterns found in the media. Together, these lines of inquiry could deepen our understanding of how resilience discourse is produced, how it is (re-)framed and becomes diversified, and if a specific narrative gets internalized within a broader political and social context.

7. Conclusion

This study addresses a significant research gap in transition theory concerning how to gauge regime destabilisation and understand its potential implications for transition dynamics (Grin et al., 2010; Turnheim & Geels, 2012; Kungl & Geels, 2017), by empirically examining the resilience discourse surrounding the EU energy system in the context of the current energy crisis. Specifically, the study asked: *How is 'energy resilience' discursively constructed in European public discourse in response to the energy crisis triggered by the Russo-Ukrainian war, and what implications might it have on the transition toward a sustainable energy system?*

To address this overarching question, this research first investigated what interpretations of energy resilience could be identified in the discourse, which appeared dominant, and whether these interpretations varied across different actors. The analysis identified several distinct interpretations of energy resilience: resilience as immediate systemic *adaptation* with a promise of future *transformation*; resilience as systemic *resistance* that reinforces the status quo; and more technology-specific sub-narratives, focused on problematising the resilience aspects of nuclear and renewable energy systems. Most of the analyzed crisis reporting described European energy resilience using the language of *adaptation*, heavily focusing on systemic adjustments and mitigation of potential damages, with EU policy-level regime actors, especially the European Commission and its representatives, playing a central role in shaping this discourse. In contrast, the discourse that re-framed the energy system response as *resistance* was primarily advanced by civil society representatives and largely sidelined, often labeled as 'opinion' or 'view' pieces, thereby limiting its perceived legitimacy in mainstream debate. What's more, this countering discourse revealed the agency of other incumbent regime actors in shaping the EU energy response to the crisis, namely the fossil fuel companies, which was silenced in mainstream coverage. This difference in actor representation across these distinct interpretations of energy resilience in popular news coverage reveals that discursive power might play a crucial role in legitimizing certain crisis responses over others and shaping which resilience strategies are seen as viable, desirable, or even possible within the public imagination (McGreavy, 2015; Chmutina et al., 2016).

Next, the study sheds light on how different framings of vulnerabilities and risks influence the way resilience is constructed and understood. While the findings confirm that the vulnerability of energy dependency and the related risk of weaponization of energy seem to dominate public energy system coverage (Osička & Černoch, 2022), the application of discourse analysis revealed that the scope and emphasis of these framings play a critical role in shaping distinct interpretations of resilience. More specifically, it found that narrower framings tend to go hand-in-hand with the legitimisation of more adaptive measures, while broader framings underscore the need for more transformative resilience capacities. By simply reframing the perception of key energy system vulnerability from dependence on *Russian* fossil fuels, to dependence on fossil fuel imports *in general*, civic activists are able to challenge the effectiveness and, thus, legitimacy of the adopted measures, which consequently were reframed as *resistance* to necessary transformation. This suggests that the alignment between the focus on resilience and that on sustainability may depend on society's ability to recognise and integrate diverse forms of vulnerability and risk in pursuit of these normative goals — an approach that could help bridge the conceptual boundaries between resilience and sustainability frameworks (Marchese et al., 2017; Roostaie et al., 2019; Scordato & Gulbrandsen, 2024).

Lastly, the study explores how these diverse discursive framings of energy resilience may influence the transition toward a sustainable energy system. First of all, it found that the crisis compelled regime actors to acknowledge the need for adjustments within the energy system. Although these adjustments may not fully align with the type of structural change required for the desired transition (Kuzemko et al., 2022; Sturm, 2022), they suggest that landscape pressures are beginning to push the regime in a transformative direction. Indeed, this discourse analysis revealed that regime actors increasingly assign temporal horizons to diverse resilience abilities, signaling an intention to pursue transformative change in the future. This implies that, under current conditions, incumbent regime actors might be positioned to lead the transition — potentially pointing toward transition pathways of *'transformation'* or '*reconfiguration'* as discussed in the MLP literature (Geels & Kemp, 2007). At the same time, the analysis showed that the regime's adaptive resilience strategy is being sporadically criticised as insufficient, leaving the energy system vulnerable to a variety of pertinent systemic risks as a result. This

ongoing discursive scrutiny suggests that the crisis continues to challenge the status quo and may still catalyse deeper structural changes within the energy system.

Additionally, this study reveals that the resilience aspects of renewable energy expansion and nuclear adoption can also be questioned, particularly when viewed through the lens of potential dependency vulnerabilities and risks of geopolitical weaponization. For example, discourses surrounding the EU's reliance on Chinese-made solar panels and critical components, along with concerns about Russian dominance in uranium supply and the potential weaponization of nuclear infrastructure highlight potentially relevant systemic vulnerabilities that could be leveraged as geopolitical conflicts continue. For advocates of the sustainability transition, this underscores the need to more carefully account for emerging risks and to develop strategies for addressing them as they continue to legitimize and promote the growth of renewable energy in the years ahead (Benford & Snow, 2000). If reformers fail to do so, they risk being blindsided by emerging political obstacles and losing credibility with the public and policymakers, especially as national security concerns grow in importance amid a shifting geopolitical landscape (Sivonen & Kivimaa, 2024).

As crises continue to unfold and disrupt the pursuit of sustainability transition goals, socio-technical researchers will be increasingly challenged to assess their impacts and to integrate real-world dynamics into theoretical frameworks. There is a growing need to situate modern sustainability transition pathway discussions within the concrete socio-political and geopolitical contexts that shape them. This study demonstrates the value of combining resilience theory with discourse analysis to better understand how crisis responses interact with long-term transformation processes. When the Russo-Ukrainian war began, scholars warned that it could either accelerate or derail the energy transition (Żuk & Żuk, 2022); however, by incorporating insights from various strands of resilience theory, this research showed that the relationship between crisis response and sustainability transition pathways is likely much more nuanced. The methodological approach used here can be extended to other sectors and crises, offering a way to further explore how resilience and transition discourses evolve under pressure in different contexts. And since the energy crisis triggered by the war is still ongoing, continued research will

be essential to fully understand its long-term implications for Europe's path toward a sustainable energy future.

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Appendix A. *Sourced articles*

The table below lists the sourced articles used in the discourse analysis. Please note that *"My Reference"* is a custom citation format created for ease of reference throughout the analysis. Each reference consists of an abbreviation of the news outlet followed by the publication date in DDMMYY format. For example, ECON-050322 refers to an article from *The Economist* published on 5 March 2022.

My Reference	News Source	Date	Title	Author	Length
2022					
ECON-050322	The Economist	5/3/2022	Europe reconsiders its energy future	Anonymous	1561 words
FT-060322	Financial Times	6/3/2022	EU to step up push for clean power as Ukraine conflict escalates	Camilla Hodgson	1033 words
EUOB-080322	EUobserver	8/3/2022	It's not easy being green — and cutting Russian gas	Elena Sánchez Nicolás	624 words
REUT-080322	Reuters	8/3/2022	EU charts expensive path towards energy freedom	Lisa Jucca	416 words
POLI-080322	POLITICO	8/3/2022	How Putin made the Green Deal great again	Zia Weise and Karl Mathiesen	1217 words
EURO-180322	EuroNews	18/3/2022	Will green targets be sacrificed in race to solve Europe's energy crisis?	Rosie Frost	650 words
POLI-240322	POLITICO	24/3/2022	Oil has an autocracy problem	Heather Grabbe	792 words
EURO-210522	EuroNews	21/5/2022	Euroviews. View: Why is the EU going to the companies who caused the climate crisis for advice on fixing it?	Chloé Mikolajczak	761 words
EURO-270522	EuroNews	27/5/2022	Nuclear is a solution to the energy crisis but where will Europe store its radioactive waste?	Tim Gallagher	1038 words
EUOB-100822	EUobserver	10/8/2022	Russia puts EU in nuclear-energy paradox	Karola Klatt	940 words
EURO-070922	EuroNews	7/9/2022	Russia has turned off Nord Stream 1. Here's what it means for the EU.	Alice Tidey	1189 words
ECON-080922	The Economist	8/9/2022	Europe scrambles to protect citizens from sky-high energy prices	Anonymous	1078 words
POLI-090922	POLITICO	9/9/2022	Europe's energy woes fuel leaders' populist fears	Suzanne Lynch and Jacopo Barigazzi	1352 words
FT-120922	Financial Times	12/9/2022	Energy crisis should spur regulatory overhaul	Patrick Jenkins	728 words

EURO-150922	EuroNews	15/9/2022	EU reveals plan to pass profits from fossil fuels on 'to those who need it most'	Rosie Frost	615 words
REUR-300922	Reuters	30/9/2022	Europe's crisis measures to tackle energy price spike	Kate Abnett	811 words
POLI-061022	POLITICO	6/10/2022	Coal built the EU. Will gas destroy it?	Charlie Cooper	965 words
POLI-201022	POLITICO	20/10/2022	The gas buyers' club: EU plots price-cutting cartel	Charlie Cooper	1007 words
EUOB-231122	EUobserver	23/11/2022	How the gas lobby is fuelling the cost-of-living crisis	Pascoe Sabido	760 words
ECON-241122	The Economist	24/11/2022	The costs and consequences of Europe's energy crisis are growing	Anonymous	3246 words
EURO-241122	EuroNews	24/11/2022	Europe's energy crisis is boosting green hydrogen. Is it finally a real alternative?	Natalie Huet	1514 words
FT-141222	Financial Times	14/12/2022	Europe may not find energy efficiency exciting - but it's crucial	Elisabetta Cornago	796 words
2023					
ECON-110123	The Economist	11/1/2023	The energy crisis and Europe's astonishing luck	Anonymous	520 words
EURO-310123	EuroNews	31/1/2023	Major milestone for EU energy: Wind and solar produced more electricity than gas in 2022	Lottie Limb	937 words
POLI-080223	POLITICO	8/2/2023	'Mind-boggling' profits for big oil puts tax hikes back on the agenda	Charlie Cooper and Victor Jack	842 words
EURO-080223	EuroNews	8/2/2023	How are EU households and businesses coping with the energy crisis?	Bryan Carter	969 words
POLI-230223	POLITICO	23/2/2023	How American energy helped Europe best Putin	Ben Lefebvre	1593 words
REUT-240223	Reuters	24/2/2023	Explainer: Europe's energy security better than feared after a year of war in Ukraine	Kate Abnett	794 words
EURO-020323	EuroNews	2/3/2023	Spain is ramping up green hydrogen production - but can its renewable energy sector keep up?	Angela Symons	1055 words
POLI-210323	POLITICO	21/3/2023	Russian oil finds 'wide open' back door to Europe, critics say	Gabriel Gavin	997 words

EUOB-050423	EUobserver	5/4/2023	Russian liquid gas sales to EU jump despite war	Andrew Rettman	492 words
ECON-050423	The Economist	5/4/2023	Europe drastically cut its energy consumption this winter	Anonymous	581 words
FT-270423	Financial Times	27/4/2023	Coal demand dropped in Europe over winter despite energy crisis	David Sheppard	591 words
EURO-280423	EuroNews	28/4/2023	Crisis winter': Renewables and €12bn in energy savings stopped EU return to fossil fuels	Rosie Frost	490 words
EURO-310523	EuroNews	31/5/2023	The energy crisis prompted the EU to seek closer ties with Azerbaijan. Here's why it's controversial	Will Neal	860 words
POLI-040723	POLITICO	4/7/2023	EU sees geothermal boom as bloc digs deep to replace Russian gas	Victor Jack	1027 words
FT-060723	Financial Times	6/7/2023	LNG 'inequality' bites as Europe takes supply from Asia	Erwida Maulia, Nikkei Asia	709 words
EUOB-140723	EUobserver	14/7/2023	How Poland and Romania are using €4bn in EU funds for gas	Raluca Petcu, Krzysztof Mrozek and Gligor Radečić	797 words
EURO-280823	EuroNews	28/8/2023	The big turnaround: how Europe's gas prices fell from €300 to €35 MWh in the span of a year	Jorge Liboreiro and Aida Sanchez Alonso	823 words
EUOB-010923	EUobserver	1/9/2023	Lining Putin's pockets': EU's LNG imports rise since war	Paula Soler	490 words
REUT-241023	Reuters	24/10/2023	EU on track to quit Russian fossil fuels - report	Kate Abnett	361 words
2024					
EURO-070224	EuroNews	7/2/2024	Scientists are shocked by the discovery of white hydrogen in France: could it be Europe's fuel?	Alice Carnevali	849 words
ECON-080224	The Economist	8/2/2024	Europe is importing a solar boom. Good news for (nearly) everyone	Anonymous	1010 words
REUT-290224	Reuters	29/2/2024	EU's Russian gas exit should be written into law, says Lithuania	Kate Abnett	291 words
FT-290424	Financial Times	29/4/2024	How Europe solved its Russian gas problem	Alice Hancock and Shotaro Tani	2400 words
ECON-200624	The Economist	20/6/2024	Europe faces an unusual problem: ultra-cheap energy	Anonymous	978 words
REUT-230624	Reuters	23/6/2024	Austria's significance as gateway to Europe for Russian gas	Reuters	564 words
REUT-010724	Reuters	1/7/2024	EU's power mix in 2024 the greenest yet, industry data show	Kate Abnett	357 words

ECON-050924	The Economist	5/9/2024	The West still needs Russian gas that comes through Ukraine	Anonymous	626 words
EUOB-110924	EUobserver	11/9/2024	Europe 'no longer at mercy of Putin's pipelines', says energy commissioner	Benjamin Fox	621 words
EUOB-120924	EUobserver	12/9/2024	Europe's costly LNG terminals sit half-empty as demand falls	Wester van Gaal	579 words
FT-130924	Financial Times	13/9/2024	Russian attacks are breaking EU electricity market, Greece warns	Alice Hancock and Henry Foy	558 words
FT-140924	Financial Times	14/9/2024	Negative European energy prices hit record level	Shotaro Tani and Rachel Millard	780 words
REUT-151024	Reuters	15/10/2024	EU energy ministers discuss Ukraine energy crisis, Russian LNG	Julia Payne	535 words
EURO-231124	EuroNews	23/11/2024	Winter is coming: Volatile energy prices set to return in Europe	Doloresz Katanich	850 words
POLI-121224	POLITICO	12/12/2024	EU's new energy chief vows to end Russian fuel ties for good	Victor Jack and Gabriel Gavin	682 words
REUT-311224	Reuters	31/12/2024	Europe's Russian gas era comes to an end as Ukraine transit stops	Reuters	629 words
2025					
FT-010125	Financial Times	1/1/2025	Russian gas stops flowing through Ukraine	Shotaro Tani and Alice Hancock	983 words
REUT-070125	Reuters	7/1/2025	Europe's power price divide hits southeastern economies	Angeliki Koutantou, Forrest Crellin, Edward Mcallister	935 words
POLI-160125	POLITICO	16/1/2025	EU devours Russian gas at record speed despite cutoff	Gabriel Gavin and Giovanna Coi	639 words
EUOB-230125	EUobserver	23/1/2025	Solar power surges past coal, and gas faces 'terminal decline', analysis finds	Wester van Gaal	459 words
FT-300125	Financial Times	30/1/2025	EU debates return to Russian gas as part of Ukraine peace deal	Henry Foy and Alice Hancock and Christopher Miller	679 words
EURO-140225	EuroNews	14/2/2025	Electricity firms demand new EU energy security plan at Munich conference	Robert Hodgson	729 words
ECON-160225	The Economist	16/2/2025	Will Europe return to Putin's gas?	Anonymous	1065 words

REUT-180225	Reuters	18/2/2025	Cheap Russian gas in Europe? No such thing	Ron Bousso	900 words
FT-180225	Financial Times	18/2/2025	European gas faces déjà vu all over again	Camilla Palladino	417 words
POLI-240225	POLITICO	24/2/2025	German election results tilt EU back toward nuclear energy	Victor Jack	754 words
EUOB-260225	EUobserver	26/2/2025	EU to 'mobilise' €100bn to boost clean industries and tackle energy costs	Wester van Gaal	683 words
FT-270225	Financial Times	27/2/2025	Green energy gets switched off as power systems fail to keep up	Rachel Millard	1230 words

Color-Based Navigation of Discourse Themes

To help readers navigate the complexity of the EU's energy crisis discourse discussed in the analysis, the table employs a color-coded system that categorizes articles according to the arrived interpretative themes. The categories are as follows:

- Adaptation: Articles that describe the EU's crisis response as a process of adaptation and/or promote adaptive policy measures.
    - Adaptation-on-the-way-to-transformation: Rhetoric that aligns short-term adaptive responses with a broader, long-term transformative action.
    - Adaptation-critica: Discourse that acknowledges the need for adaptation but critiques the EU's adaptive efforts as insufficient or ineffective.
- Resistance: Articles that reframe the EU's response as an act of resistance rather than adaptation.
- Nuclear resilience: Coverage that problematised the resilience aspects of nuclear energy.
- Renewables resilience: Articles that problematise the resilience aspects of renewable energy technologies.

Appendix B: *Adaptation discourse*

The table below summarizes the main framings of resilience aspects that help construct EU energy system resilience as *adaptation*, along with the number of articles in which such framings appear. Please note that the counts for these aspects — such as specific risks — refer exclusively to the number of articles within the *adaptation framing* that focus on those discursive elements.

Across all discourse manifestations, *EU-level institutional actors* and *national policy actors from individual member states* most frequently appeared as the *subjects of discourse* — that is, they were the primary actors discussed, represented, or held accountable within the narrative framing of the articles.

Interpretation	Discursive signals	Discourse examples (quotes)	Articles
Resilience as ***adaptation***: regime focus on incremental structural changes and mitigation of damage (Manca et al., 2017)			55
Core vulnerability (*systemic weakness)*: **dependence** on Russian imports	*Descriptions of dependency that single out Russia as the problematic energy supplier (without criticising dependency on other fossil fuel suppliers, or fossil fuel dependency in general)*: dependency on **Russian** gas, oil and coal…; reducing **Russian** gas imports; …ease of **Russian** gas supplies; dropping **Russian** energy; **Russian** gas habit; **Russian** LNG; **Russian** hydrocarbons; **Russian** energy; dependency on gas imported from **Russia;** reliance on **Russian** gas; to shun **Russian** fuel; cut-off of **Russian** gas; ill-fated dependence on **Russia.**	*'How to "phase out our dependency on **Russian** gas, oil and coal imports" is on the agenda of the leaders' meeting in Versailles, France...' (EUOB-080322)* *'But given the scale of the bloc's dependency on **Russian** gas…' (EURO-070922)* *'Timmermans has said countries may need to burn coal in the short term to help ease off **Russian** gas supplies.'(POLI-080322)* *'The European Union is ready to kick its **Russian** gas habit.' (REUT-080322)* *'**Russia** used to supply 40-50% of the EU's natural-gas imports—a reliance that meant Mr Putin's war on his neighbour wreaked havoc on energy markets.' (ECON-050423)* *'...Jørgensen warned that the EU is faltering in its multiyear campaign to shun **Russian** fuel and needed a plan to get things back on track.' (POLI-121224)* *'The EU's most **Russia**-wary members would lobby hard against greater dependence on the country's energy.' (ECON-160225)*	46

Related risk: "*Weaponisation*" of energy supplies by Russia	*Discourse directly applying terminology "**weaponisation**" and "**weapon**" towards Russian energy as well as discourse describing how Russia/Russian actors **threaten** to cut off energy supplies, try to **manipulate*** and ***destabilise** the European market, and **pressure** European politicians with energy **blackmail**:* the threat of Mr Putin's **weaponisation** of energy; if Mr Putin turned off the taps; Putin's manipulation of energy market; Russian **manipulation**; Putin's **threat** to end energy exports; Russia abruptly **throttled** supplies; Russia's energy **blackmail**; the Russia risk; harder for Gazprom to hold them **hostage**.	*'For EU officials, Russia stopping its key gas pipeline to Europe is proof the Kremlin is **weaponising** energy supplies.'* (EURO-070922); *'The Russian troops who poured into Ukraine a year ago had a seemingly powerful **weapon** to keep Kyiv's would-be allies cowed — Moscow's dominance of Europe's oil and gas supplies.'* (POLI-230223); *'Rockets, bullets and shells have been Vladimir Putin's **weapons** of choice in Ukraine. In the rest of Europe, Russia's president has **resorted to tightening the gas taps.**'* (ECON-050423). *'This followed a warning from Kadri Simson, EU energy commissioner, that the conflict has made it "painfully clear that we cannot afford to leave to any third country the power to **destabilise** our **energy markets** or **influence** our energy choices."'* (FT-060322)	25
Related risk: Economic decline	*Discourse focusing on large scale damage to European economy such as rising inflation, interest rates, fiscal problems, loss of competitiveness, industrial decline:* the feared economic meltdown; fiscal problems; accelerating inflation; firms struggling to remain competitive.	**'***Policymakers are hopeful that diversifying gas supplies and taking steps to boost hydrogen production and roll out renewables will help ease the deepening **fears about industrial decline on a continent that is reliant on imports for fuel supplies.**'* (FT-290424) *"... the EU wants to build up its resilience against **volatile energy markets**, where gas prices have been skyrocketing."* (EUOB-080322) *'Basic chemicals, metals and ceramics are **struggling to remain competitive**. Bosses of such firms have been jumping up and down. Forswearing Russian gas, the CEO of BASF, a big German chemicals firm, said in April, would "**destroy our entire national economy**". '*(ECON-241122)	21
Related risk: Rising socio-economic insecurity	*Discourse focusing on the livelihood struggles of citizens, the threats of rising poverty, inequality and general social instability:* vulnerable households to financially survive; Europeans struggling to	*'...the next several winters are likely to be difficult for governments to manage and for **vulnerable households** to financially **survive**."* (EURO-070922) *'Suddenly, the prospect of the **European citizens**, accustomed to decades of prosperity, being **subject to***	14

	pay their bills; to avoid energy poverty; endanger societal peace; cost-of-living crisis.	***rationing and blackouts*** *went from far-fetched to plausible.'* (EURO-280823) *'Habeck last week warned that an immediate stop to imports would* ***endanger "societal peace****" with high energy prices.'* (POLI-080322)	
Related risk: Political instability	*Discourse describing threats to European unity and legitimacy of current governments and their policies, potential push for change in leadership, rise in populism:* protests at rising prices; strikes over wages; threats to EU unity; test of EU solidarity; backlash against Brussels; loss of public faith in the EU; return to populism.	*"European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen acknowledged the risks to European unity. Russia's "manipulation and weaponization of the energy ... deliberately tries to blackmail and split close partners," she said in a joint statement with Norway's prime minister on Thursday."* (POLI-061022) "*If they fail, European voters may demand their governments drop sanctions on Russia in the (forlorn) hope of getting cheaper energy — or make way for new leaders who will.*" (ECON-080922) '*In Prague last weekend, an estimated 70,000 people took to the streets to demonstrate against the government, demanding action on rising energy costs — and chanting against the EU and NATO.*' (POLI-090922)	6
Related risk: War complicity and conflict escalation	*Discourse pointing out how European purchases of Russian energy fund ongoing war, Russian military expansion or Russian political regime:* funding war machine; funding the war in Ukraine; wary of offering Moscow financial support, we spent… an equivalent of 2,400 F-35 fighter jets.	*'"Buying Russian gas has the same impact as buying Russian oil," Jonathan NoronhaGant, campaigner at Global Witness said. "Both* ***fund the war in Ukraine,*** *and every euro means more bloodshed."'* (EUOB-010923) *'Europe is buying Russian gas at an unprecedented rate in 2025,* ***spending billions of dollars the Kremlin can use to fund its war in Ukraine*** *just weeks after the end of a major transit agreement raised hopes the continent may break its dependency on Moscow.'* (POLI-160125) '*...the region is unlikely to resume imports at a scale close to pre-Ukraine invasion levels any time soon, given strong political opposition from key EU-members that are* ***wary of offering Moscow financial support****.'* (REUT-180225)	5

		'"Since the start of the war, we have spent on Russian fossil fuels the equivalent of 2,400 F-35 fighter jets," said energy commissioner Dan Jørgensen.' (EUOB-260225)	
Solution: Supply flexibility	*This discourse promotes supply flexibility by emphasizing the problem-solving role of alternative suppliers and energy diversification, treating LNG imports and the expansion of renewables as equally important strategies:* Alternative suppliers, alternative energy sources, diversification of supply (LNG alongside renewables), replacing/substituting Russian gas.	**'***After the Russian invasion of Ukraine in February, Europe began trying to wean itself of Russian gas, albeit slowly, as there were no easy* ***substitutes*****.'** **(**ECON-241122**)** *'Days later the chancellor, Olaf Scholz, vowed "to change course in order to overcome our import dependency" with* ***more renewables, bigger domestic stores of gas and coal, and revived plans for LNG terminals.****' (ECON-050322)* *'Long-planned pipelines from Norway to Poland and from Poland to Slovakia have opened, helping to diffuse gas around the continent. And European buyers have outbid prospective Asian purchasers of LNG to build up stocks for the winter.' (ECON-241122)* *'Experts say this type of "clean" hydrogen could* ***replace fossil fuels*** *in sectors struggling to slash their carbon emissions because they can't easily switch to electricity — think heavy industry, like steel making or heavy transport.' (EURO-241122)*	38
Solution: Mitigation measures (both emergency interventions and regulatory changes)	*This discourse focused on promoting measures aimed at mitigating negative impacts and minimizing associated risks, such as financial subsidies for citizens, joint purchasing to ease intra-EU competition, temporary voluntary demand reduction, and regulatory adjustments that reduce risk without fundamentally altering the existing system structure:* Voluntary energy demand reduction; gas storage; price cap; joint gas purchasing platform; spending on energy relief; subsidies; to shield consumers; mitigate impact; absorb harm.	'*Given these constraints on supply, European demand may need to fall by 10-15% next winter* ***to cope*** *with a Russian cut-off, estimates Bruegel, a think-tank in Brussels*.' *(ECON-050322)* *'European politicians are spending lavishly both to obtain alternative supplies of energy and* ***to shield consumers from high prices****.' (ECON-241122)* *'The "whatever it takes" strategy adopted during the pandemic, during which governments tried to* ***absorb most of the economic harm*** *done, has been largely replicated.' (ECON-241122)* *'The EU is pushing member states and markets in a more* ***flexible*** *direction, but upgrading regulations, pricing*	26

		methods and grid technology takes time.' *(ECON-200624)* *'But more could still be done preemptively to* ***mitigate*** *their* ***economic impact****.' (FT-120922)*	