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Forged in Crisis?

Assessing the EU's Evolving Actorness on Energy Security in Light of Energy Supply Crises

Imke Johanna Pohl

Centre for European Research (CERGU)
University of Gothenburg
Box 714, SE 405 30 GÖTEBORG
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Abstract

This thesis's purpose is two-fold. First, the primary purpose of this thesis is to explore the EU's evolving actorness in energy security, seeking to answer how we can understand the main factors that have led to the EU acquiring actorness in energy security. In this context, the thesis builds on the theoretical framework of actorness, informed by the two criteria of decision-making power and capabilities. By applying the method of process-tracing and primarily looking at empirical material from the Commission, the analysis reveals that crises in energy supply are the main driving force behind EU actorness in energy security. Second, the study explores how strategic autonomy is manifested in the EU's ambitions regarding energy security. The analysis finds that the concept is reflected in the EU's plan to end its overreliance on Russian energy imports with the help of diversifying, investing in renewables, reducing demand, and developing storage capacity.

Table of Contents

1 Introduction

"Europe will be forged in crisis, and will be the sum of the solutions adopted for those crises."

– Jean Monnet (1967)

Jean Monnet, one of the founding fathers of the European Union (EU), once famously wrote these words, conveying the message that challenges would serve as a motor for European integration. Today, Monnet's words gain extra meaning considering the energy crisis affecting Europe.

During the past few decades, European integration progressed in the field of external action. With the help of treaty reforms, the EU has gained competence in several fields – from foreign and security to defense policy – and, thus, expanded its ability to engage in external policymaking (Schunz et al, 2018: 3). With the recent return of power politics to Europe, there is a growing scholarly interest in studying the EU's ability to act at a global level. Scholars have pointed to the need for the Union to overcome its lack of military capabilities to successfully engage in foreign policymaking (see Hyde-Price, 2021; Howorth, 2019; Zielinski, 2020). However, nowadays, the Russian war against Ukraine draws a more complex picture of external action capacity, putting the energy domain in the limelight. As a result of the war, the EU is faced with a historic energy crisis (see Kuzemko et al, 2022).

A crisis is often defined as "a shared perception of threat to a fundamental part or value of a society, which requires urgent action by authorities under conditions of deep uncertainty" (Backman and Rhinard, 2018: 261). In terms of energy, a crisis occurs when energy supply and affordability can no longer be guaranteed (Goldthau and Sitter, 2020: 112) – due to, for instance, a sudden interruption in the energy supply (see IEA, 2006). As a significant economic power, the EU's prosperity depends heavily on energy; thus, energy security is indispensable for a successful EU foreign policy (Müller-Kraenner, 2008: xii). Moreover, the ongoing war in Ukraine, and the associated conflict with Russia have caused a sudden interruption in the Union's energy supply, moving the subject of energy security to the top of the agenda of EU policymakers.

With the EU being a large energy importer, covering over half of its energy needs through imports (Eurostat, 2023), its security relies on reliable partners to guarantee an uninterrupted energy supply. In this context, the EU's relationship with Russia is essential. With its extensive access to natural resources and geographically strategic position on the double continent Eurasia, Russia has been the leading energy supplier to many European countries for decades (Müller-Kraenner, 2008: xii, 56). Taking on a leading role, Russia accounted for the Union's imports of gas (44%), oil (28%), and coal (52%) in 2021 (Eurostat, 2023a). As seen in Figure 1, supply interruptions from Russia pose a particular risk for an energy crisis due to the EU's overreliance.

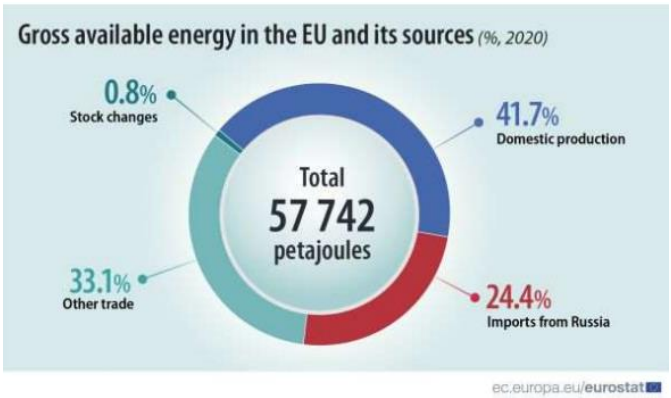

Figure 1: EU Energy Availability & Import Dependency

The current crisis makes clear how vulnerable the EU energy system is. However, already before the current energy crisis, the EU faced vulnerabilities resulting from its dependence on Russian fossil fuels. In 2009, the Union had to counter energy supply disruptions due to Russia-Ukraine gas disputes. In 2014, the Russian annexation of Crimea required the Union to prepare for possible supply cuts. Hence, energy security, implying the security of supply, has become an essential objective in the EU's external policymaking (see Batzella, 2018). To successfully navigate these crises, the Union requires competence in energy security. Here, Monnet's words receive new meaning.

1.1 Research Aim & Questions

Despite the EU's origin in the European Coal and Steel Community, EU literature has largely ignored the field of energy until the early 2000s (Kustova, 2017: 95). However, with the EU's increasing activeness in energy policy – enhanced by the Lisbon Treaty (2009), amongst others – and the growing importance of energy security, scholarly interest has surged (Siddi and Kustova, 2021: 1077). Looking at energy security, the academic debate has mainly applied realist-geopolitical and market-liberal frameworks to assess the EU's engagement in the domain (see Youngs, 2011, 2020; Siddi, 2017; Goldthau and Sitter, 2020, Romanova, 2023). However, this study is interested in combining energy security with studying (EU) actorness. Applying the idea of actorness implies taking a step back from examining whether the EU is a realist or liberal actor. Instead, the use of the concept indicates the aim of this thesis to understand the essence of the EU as an emerging actor in energy security. Here, this thesis aims to contribute to the previous literature.

Over the past decades, the EU has developed its energy security agenda, with the Commission being the institutional body responsible. Today, as the EU faces significant energy challenges resulting from its overreliance on Russian energy imports, its ability to act in terms of energy security becomes more critical. The puzzle driving this thesis lies in understanding the factors that represent the driving motor behind EU actorness in the domain. Hence, this thesis aims to answer the question: *How can we understand the main factors that have led to the EU acquiring actorness in terms of energy security?*

Looking at foreign and security policy, EU actorness "has been closely linked [...] to external impulses in the global context" (Simão, 2022: 14). By setting up a theoretical framework for defining

(EU) actorness and applying the method of process-tracing, this thesis argues that the EU's actorness in energy security is driven by moments of crisis in energy supply. The analysis will shed light on three crises in energy supply[1], primarily looking at the Commission due to its role as the key institutional body responsible for shaping the EU's energy security agenda (see Batzella, 2022: 821). Studying the Union's acquisition of actorness will have interesting applicability to the European integration process as it helps us to understand the underlying forces that shape the process.

Given the EU's evolving actorness in the field of energy security, it is relevant to explore how the EU addresses its external vulnerabilities resulting from its dependence on energy trade with Russia. To do so, European Strategic Autonomy (ESA) is reviewed, referring to the idea of the EU freeing itself from external constraints. Applying an open definition of ESA, this thesis aims to contribute to the understanding of the concept in the context of energy security. Hence, while the first question and aim form the primary purpose of this paper, this thesis also seeks to – more briefly – answer the additional research question: *How is the idea of strategic autonomy manifested in the EU's approach toward energy security?*

1.2 Disposition

This thesis is organized into six chapters, starting with the introduction. After reviewing previous and relevant academic literature in **Chapter 2**, **Chapter 3** engages in a theoretical debate to reason for this thesis's conceptualization of (EU) actorness. Based on the defined criteria of actorness, it formulates two hypotheses. Furthermore, the theoretical framework will define the terms 'energy security' and 'strategic autonomy,' highlighting their relevance for this thesis. Subsequently, **Chapter 4** presents the methodological framework, justifying the method of process-tracing. **Chapter 5** provides the analysis where process-tracing will be used to test the outlined hypotheses, exploring the driving forces behind the EU's evolving actorness in terms of energy security. In addition, the chapter closes with a brief examination of how strategic autonomy is manifested in the Union's approach to energy security. Finally, the thesis will conclude by summarizing the main findings and arguments (**Chapter 6**).

[1] The 2009 Ukraine-Russia gas dispute, the 2014 Russian annexation of Crimea, and the 2022 Russian invasion of Ukraine.

2 Literature Review – Global Power Debate; Actorness & Energy Security

Since its foundation, the EU has undertaken a unique position in international affairs. Accordingly, European Studies scholars have tried to locate the Union among other international actors and to understand its external relations. Furthermore, regarding the increasing engagement of the EU in external governance, scholarly interest has shifted toward defining the Union as a *sui generis* global actor (Niemann and Bretherton, 2013: 262).

By looking at the EU as an actor in international relations, scholars have put forth different ways of conceptualizing the Union. The *EU-as-a-power* debate offers a variety of ways to understand the Union's external governance (e.g., Aggestam, 2008; Wagner, 2017). Among the most influential ideas is the concept of Normative Power Europe (NPE). Since its development in the early 2000s, the concept has received much scholarly attention. By complementing the idea of Civilian Power Europe, NPE focuses on an idealist and normative perspective (Manners, 2002: 236). Emphasizing the internal aspects of the EU, NPE stresses that the Union's norms and their promotion shape what is 'normal' in world politics. It means that the EU no longer needs to use any form of coercive tools to reach the desired outcome. Instead, NPE assumes that the EU unintentionally shapes global politics simply by *what it is* (Manners, 2002: 252).

Despite its popularity, the concept of NPE has been widely criticized by scholars, given the ever-changing geopolitical environment in which the EU finds itself (see Hyde-Price, 2013). Moreover, since the emergence of the concept, the EU's approach to foreign policy-making has been constantly evolving and adapting to its need to act. Hence, some scholars question the concept's ability to explain the challenges facing the EU (see Hyde-Price, 2006; 2021). Also, NPE has been criticized for its underlying assumption that the EU is an actor. Based on this assumption, the concept is concerned with assessing *what kind of* actor the Union is by looking at its internal characteristics (Niemann and Bretherton, 2013: 263). In fact, the entire EU as a power debate rests on the assumption that the Union has sufficient actorness.

However, perceiving (EU) actorness as a given ignores the doubts of previous studies on the degree to which the EU is an actor (see Sjöstedt, 1977; Hill, 1993; Jupille and Caporaso, 1998). Hence, taking a step back from the EU-as-a-power debate is crucial to take a closer look at the factors that constrain or enable EU actorness (Niemann and Bretherton, 2013: 262-263; Simão, 2022: 13-14). Actorness is considered a significant analytical concept to "reflect on novel areas of EU's external engagement." (Schunz et al, 2018: 6).

Contributing to the debate on actorness is crucial as there remains a lot of *conceptual fuzziness* (see Brattberg and Rhinard, 2012; Niemann and Bretherton, 2013; Simão, 2022). Since its emergence in the late 1970s, the study of actorness has significantly developed, putting forward various approaches as to how to assess the concept. Given the different approaches, it is important to note that the "EU's actorness can be significantly different in each dimension" (Tichý et al, 2021: 2). Accordingly, scholars have focused on analyzing actorness against the backdrop of a particular policy field, such as

the EU's Common Foreign and Security Policy (Hill, 1993), the Union's neighborhood policy (Niemann and Hoffmann, 2019) or its approach toward global counterterrorism (Brattberg and Rhinard, 2013).

However, as claimed by Batzella (2022) and Tichý et al (2021), the idea of actorness has received little attention in the context of external energy governance, despite the field being particularly well-suited for analyzing EU actorness due to the Union's "increasingly active role in the external dimension of its energy policy" (Batzella, 2022: 821). Energy is one of the policy domains in which the Union initially did not hold external policies (Schunz and Damro, 2020). Subsequently, this thesis seeks to contribute to studying EU actorness in this field.

Considering external energy governance, the EU's key objective is energy security (Batzella, 2018; Keukeleire and Delreux, 2022). With respect to energy governance and security, most scholarship has focused on understanding *what kind of* international actor the EU is (see Prontera, 2017: 16; Youngs, 2011). Here, the scholarly debate is characterized by a dichotomy as scholars have either argued for a liberal-market approach (see Goldthau and Sitter, 2015) or a realist-geopolitical one (see Siddi and Kustova, 2021; Romanova, 2023). Looking at the two approaches, Prontera (2017: 16-17) points to their limitations when studying EU and energy security, saying that energy security has always included both market forces and geopolitical dynamics. More specifically, Batzella (2022: 822) argues that these scholars tend to ignore the fact that how the EU acts is defined by numerous "factors enabling or constraining its actorness" (Batzella, 2022: 822), leaving room for more research.

Hence, this thesis seeks to contribute to the study of EU actorness from today's perspective. Especially with the Russian invasion of Ukraine, the geopolitical landscape the EU finds itself in has changed, posing new challenges to the EU; it appears timely to take a step back from the debate on *what kind of* actor the EU is and instead contribute to the understanding of EU actorness. Given the Union's deteriorating relationship with Russia – the EU's key supplier of fossil fuels – it appears highly relevant to look at the EU's actorness regarding energy security. More specifically, it is essential to understand the driving motors behind the EU's evolving capability to act.

3 Theory

3.1 Studying (EU) Actorness: A Theoretical Framework

Over the past decades, scholars have developed many concepts to explore the EU's functioning in international affairs. Whereas some of these concepts have disappeared, the idea of actorness has become one of the most prominent to assess the EU's global role (see Drieskens, 2017; 2021). In the 1970s, the concept of actorness emerged as part of the academic debate on the EU's role in the international system. During this time, the Union became more present in international affairs through its acquisition of more interdependence (Drieskens, 2021: 28). Instead of deriving "neatly from any of the major schools of thought about integration" (Hill, 1993: 308), the origin of defining actorness lies in the ambition to understand the essence of the EU as a newly emerging actor in the international system (see Drieskens, 2021).

Given the EU's *sui generis* nature, scholars started to redefine the historically based notion of 'international actor.' It no longer seemed appropriate to tie the concept to ideas of nation and sovereignty (Brattberg and Rhinard, 2013: 558). In the context of the EU, scholars have utilized many different approaches to actorness. Notably, Sjöstedt (1977) is seen as the first scholar to address the new political realities of the EU. He establishes the framework for actorness, arguing that it is "[…] a measure of the autonomous unit's capacity to behave actively and deliberately in relation to other actors in the international system" (1977: 16).

However, the debate on (EU) actorness has moved beyond Sjöstedt's generic approach to actor capability, and instead toward actorness as a stand-alone theoretical framework. Due to a lack of consensus on what constitutes an international actor, literature on actorness has varied in its conceptualization and operationalization (Drieskens, 2017: 1353). For instance, a variety of variables has been brought forward by scholars to assess actorness – from measuring actorness based on the idea of 'global influence' (see Cosgrove and Twitchett, 1970) to analyzing the concept concerning 'consistency' (see Brattberg and Rhinard, 2012). Furthermore, significant attention has been paid to the work of Jupille and Caporaso (1998) and Bretherton and Vogler (1999, 2006, 2013). Their theoretical frameworks apply a series of analytical criteria that are often systematically used by scholars to explore EU actorness concerning external policies such as pipeline policy (Batzella, 2022: 824) and foreign and security policy (Brattberg and Rhinard, 2013).

On the one hand, Jupille and Caporaso (1998) examine actorness using four variables – recognition, authority, autonomy, and cohesion – reflecting a more positivistic view. Notably, by setting recognition as a variable for measuring actorness, the authors depart from the common understanding of recognition as a consequence of actorness (see Gehring et al, 2017: 730). In general, the two scholars try to set up a framework to measure actorness independent of any institutional form, such as the EU. Bretherton and Vogler (1999), on the other hand, take a more constructivist approach toward measuring actorness (see Brattberg and Rhinard, 2012: 559). They study EU actorness as a combination of the variables of presence, opportunity, and capability. Significantly, the criteria of presence, taking into consideration the EU's character and identity, distinguishes their framework

from that of Jupille and Caporaso. It highlights their combination of concretely measurable variables (capability) with more informal and blurry ones (presence) (Brattberg and Rhinard, 2012: 559).

Even though these theoretical frameworks contribute to understanding the EU's global role, they remain puzzling and excessively complex (see Niemann and Bretherton, 2013; Drieskens, 2017). For instance, Dryburgh (2008: 256) argues that "Bretherton and Vogler's criteria are a useful means of evaluating the actorness of the EU at the institutional level," though "they present difficulties within individual policy areas." Therefore, criteria need to be adapted and applied based on the thesis's focus on energy security policy. Against this background, it is important to clarify the component variables of actorness that inform this thesis. The question of the EU's actorness in the field of energy security is complex as the community's ambitions focus on different activities. This thesis will take a narrower approach to capture a clear picture of EU actorness regarding energy by only drawing upon two variables in the existing literature.

In contrast to well-known actorness research that takes on a more intersubjective approach by including identity-related criteria (see 'presence' by Bretherton and Vogler), this thesis' idea of actorness centers on objectively existing characteristics. The conceptualization of EU actorness driving this chapter is the logic of Christopher Hill's (1993) acclaimed 'expectations–capability gap' argument. Hill (1993) states that the EU is ineffective in its international role due to "a matter of both lack of tools and lack of political will or consensus" (Goldthau and Sitter, 2015: 108). Referring to this idea of effectiveness, this thesis assumes that the EU can only achieve full actorness regarding energy security if it has sufficient competencies to act. Therefore, the systematic analysis of actorness will be based on two components: 1) *decision-making power* and 2) *capabilities*. According to Gehring et al (2017: 729), decision-making power and governance resources (here, capabilities) are vital for acquiring actorness, implying the ability to act independently. Only if member states agree to allow the EU to define goals and provide it with the capabilities to act upon them – in relation to energy security – will the Union be able to fulfill its expectations as an actor in international relations.

Decision-making power is about effective political will. There needs to be a force that is driving the decision-making process. If the will to act is missing – decision-making power is limited, as political will is "only manifested through actions" (Brinkerhoff, 2010). Furthermore, with regard to decision-making power, EU actorness depends on an institutional apparatus. Without this center force, the EU "is not capable of defining goals and strategies for action and cannot act intentionally" (Gehring et al, 2017: 729). However, decision-making power by itself is not sufficient for achieving actorness. For the EU to become an actor regarding energy security, it needs to have access to capabilities; otherwise, the Union's decisions on energy security will be deemed irrelevant. Capabilities point to the characteristics that "constrain or enable [...] action" (Bretherton and Vogler, 2006: 29). More specifically, they refer to the EU's authority and power to utilize capabilities (Bretherton and Vogler, 2013: 381), such as the authority to regulate the internal market, monitor agreements and control investments.

Consequently, this theoretical framework is applied to assess the research question of how can we understand the main factors that have led to the EU acquiring actorness in terms of energy security. As outlined in the next section (Section 3.2), the idea of energy security, applied by the EU, is synonymous with the stable supply of energy at an affordable price (see IEA, 2021). Guided by Monnet's words[2], this thesis builds on two hypotheses that are as follows:

Hypothesis 1 (decision-making power): In moments of crisis in energy supply, the EU acquires more decision-making power by developing a strong political will to act in energy security. In this context, the EU's institutional apparatus receives more competencies in the energy security domain.

Hypothesis 2 (capabilities): In moments of crisis in energy supply, the Union gains more actorness in energy security as member states are willing to give up some of their capabilities to empower the EU's action capacity and promote energy security.

3.2 The Concept of Energy Security

To understand the EU's actorness regarding energy security, it is essential to take a closer look at the very concept of energy security. The term 'security' is not solely based on one aspect but instead emerges through the interplay of different factors. According to Baumann (2008: 4), security refers to "the ability of states and societies to maintain their independent identity and their functional integrity". As the name suggests, the concept of energy security is embedded in the wider security framework (see Cherp and Jewell, 2014). As put forth by Baldwin (1997: 23), energy security does not vary from other concepts of security, such as economic security or military security, but rather adds to the broader picture of security.

Like the concept of actorness, there are multiple definitions of energy security. Especially as the EU's external policy agenda has increasingly shifted its focus to energy security during the past two decades, an extensive scholarly debate has emerged (see Jonsson et al, 2015). Scholars try to understand the nature of energy security and seek to develop methods to determine the concept's state (Ranjan and Hughes, 2014).

Whereas some scholars argue for a relatively simple, more classic definition (e.g., Yergin, 1988), others contend that today's vast network of energy challenges and the expansion of the energy sector requires a more complex and multidimensional understanding of energy security (see Baumann, 2008). More specifically, a multidimensional understanding of energy security does not only include aspects such as security of demand, sustainability, affordability, and security of supply, but also considers geopolitical aspects and economic risk factors (see Jonsson et al, 2015: 48). By overlapping different dimensions, this complex approach points to the need for internal and external action to address all aspects successfully (Baumann, 2008: 4).

[2] See the quote from Monnet at the beginning of the introduction.

Given the debate between a simple and multidimensional conceptualization of energy security, scholars like Cherp and Jewell (2011) have tried to clarify the concept by putting forth three co-existing perspectives that inform policy-making concerning energy security: resilience, robustness, and sovereignty. However, despite their effort to explain the concept, there remains doubt as to what extent these perspectives offer an adequate explanation (Strambo et al, 2015: 2). Consequently, competing definitions remain as energy security is too difficult to conceptualize due to its contextual and dynamic character. As stressed by Strambo et al (2015: 2), the understanding of energy security "will vary in time and space, depending on what the energy system looks like and how risks are perceived and framed". Given the situational notion of energy security, this thesis defines the concept following its focus on EU-Russia relations and their impact on the community's energy security governance.

When looking at EU-Russia relations, energy plays an important role in developing a functioning security framework. More specifically, Russia's war against Ukraine has indicated a return to geopolitical energy security (see Kuzemko et al, 2022: 2). Given the importance of energy in modern societies and, thus, Europe's reliance on Russia as an energy provider, the war has highlighted the EU's enormous insecurity regarding energy, causing increased securitization of the energy discourse. More specifically, the new discourse is guided by the idea of security of supply, meaning not being vulnerable to one actor (Kuzemko et al, 2022: 2).

In the literature, various classifications of the dimensions of security of supply exist. However, this thesis focuses on a reduced version of the security of supply by focusing on availability and affordability. All EU member states rely on the import of energy to stabilize their economy, increase prosperity, and remain competitive (Ryon, 2020: 241). More specifically, the community has come to be heavily dependent on Russian natural gas (see Rodríguez-Fernández et al, 2020). This reliance on Russia's reliability as a trading partner plays a crucial role in defining energy security. As a significant trading bloc, the Union's power is based on economic growth and global competitiveness, making it indispensable for the EU to maintain low and stable energy prices (Krickovic, 2015: 11). Consequently, looking at Russia, the concept of energy security revolves around the features of availability and affordability, often viewed as the concept's main features (see Misík, 2022: 2). More specifically, the EU can only achieve energy security if it secures a sufficient energy supply at an affordable price.

Subsequently, the concept adopted in this thesis is that set out by the International Energy Agency (IEA) (2021) – commonly used by the European Commission (Müller-Kraenner, 2008: xi) – referring to "energy security as the uninterrupted availability of energy sources at an affordable price". The IEA's definition is considered suitable with respect to the importance of availability and affordability in the context of EU-Russia relations. Only when external challenges no longer affect the EU's energy availability and affordability, will energy security be achieved. For the EU, the assurance of availability and affordability implies its departure from extensive dependency on the Russian supply of natural gas (Rodríguez-Fernández et al, 2020: 1).

3.3 EU Actorness and Energy Security – Considering Strategic Autonomy

The study of EU actorness, referring to the assessment of the Union's capability to act independently (Gehring et al, 2017), is reflected in the overall understanding of ESA. The idea of ESA is based on the argument that the EU needs to be able to formulate its own strategic interests and act independently upon them. However, the discussion continues and leaves space for different scholarly interpretations and conceptualizations (see Lippert et al, 2019; Ryon, 2020).

With the United Kingdom's vote for Brexit, the change in Transatlantic relations due to Trump's presidency, and the resulting publication of the 2016 EU Global Strategy paper, scholarly interest in ESA has surged (Aggestam and Hyde-Price, 2019). The increasing interest has moved the concept from a French-dominated discourse on European power to a more general discourse on EU foreign policy (see Ryon, 2020; Miró, 2022). Looking at the debates surrounding EU foreign policy, the idea of ESA is particularly influential with respect to defence issues, arguing for the necessity of the EU to act autonomously by investing in and gaining access to critical military capabilities (Olsen, 2022: 610). Given the return of power politics, ESA has emerged as a framework for different approaches that seek to enhance a more European strategic culture regarding military tools and defence cooperation (Aggestam and Hyde-Price, 2019).

However, the idea of ESA moves beyond the typical focus on defence issues. As highlighted by Pohl (2021: 184), the concept does not solely underline the lack of military capabilities but, instead, points to "key vulnerabilities that lie at the heart of the European project and a political will to do something about them". Energy represents one of these critical vulnerabilities – which is especially evident today. Therefore, this thesis argues for a more open understanding of ESA.

The term vulnerability emphasizes "the flaws and weaknesses of a system" (Eifert et al, 2018: 21) and refers to "the degree to which a system is unable to cope with selected adverse events" (Gnansounou, 2008: 2 in Roupas et al, 2011: 350). In terms of energy, the EU is vulnerable due to its dependence on reliable and affordable energy imports. Here, the idea of vulnerability refers to "the relative availability and costliness of the alternatives" (Keohane and Nye, 2001: 13) that the EU faces regarding energy. The EU's vulnerability in terms of energy is characterized by an overreliance on Russian imports of natural resources, such as gas and oil (Van Veen and Langenberg, 2022: 5). For instance, in 2020, 24.4 percent of the EU's energy needs were covered by Russia (Eurostat, 2022). This dependency on Russia's reliability as a primary energy supplier leads to the Union's energy supply being extremely vulnerable to external shocks – seen by the annexation of Crimea and the Russian war against Ukraine.

The idea of vulnerability is often used together with the concept of resilience, referring to "possible resources and capacities that would help […] [a] system to maintain or achieve a desired state" (Eifert et al, 2018: 21). Against this background, the concept of ESA becomes relevant as it is best conceptualized as an endeavour by the EU to overcome its vulnerability. When looking at energy, the existence of dependencies can have adverse effects on the EU's stability and prosperity. More specifically, the dependence on a specific external supplier may constrain the EU's self-determination

regarding decision-making and action (Ryon, 2020: 241). Therefore, ESA implies the European ambition to become more independent in several policy domains, for instance, energy (Miró, 2022: 1-2). To be resilient to external threats and maintain an energy supply at a stable price, the Union needs to free itself from its reliance on external actors.

4 From Theory to Empirical Analysis

Considering the theoretical framework developed in the previous chapter, it is important to discuss the methodological implications arising from the theoretical context. Hence, this section will argue for using the qualitative method of process-tracing to answer the presiding research questions.

4.1 The Method of Process-Tracing

Given this thesis' aim to understand how we can understand the main factors that have led to the EU acquiring actorness in terms of energy security, it is vital to comprehend the sequence of events, particularly the critical junctures that define the Union's actorness. That is why the method of process-tracing is relevant. The idea behind using the method is to unfold essential steps in the EU's history and behavior, exploring the mechanisms that enable or constrain the Union's actorness regarding energy security. Applying the method of process-tracing to the study of (EU) actorness is not uncommon; scholars have already used the method when analyzing the concept (see Batzella, 2022; Gerards, Schunz, and Damro, 2022; Härtel, 2022).

Process-tracing is a qualitative method of within-case analysis. That said, it seeks to explore a specific case in greater detail by tracing causal mechanisms and events (see Beach and Pedersen, 2013). Compared to most other case study methods, process-tracing makes a different kind of inference. Instead of making cross-case inferences, the method focuses on a single case, looking at processes from within (Beach and Pedersen, 2013: 4). Therefore, methodologically, this thesis applies process-tracing based on a single case study: EU energy security actorness.

By applying process-tracing, researchers seek to investigate a social phenomenon by tracing the processes that may have led to the specific outcome. In other words, it "is a method for identifying the causal relations that connect hypothesized causes and outcomes" (Halperin and Heath, 2017: 247). Process-tracing is an important tool for testing theory and exploring theory development. It is an effective tool for not only helping to generate "numerous observations within a case", but also for linking observations in a particular way "to constitute an explanation of the case" (George and Bennet, 2005: 207). By applying process-tracing, researchers seek to trace the unfolding of events over time to understand underlying causal mechanisms and analyze policy change and sequence (see Halperin and Heath, 2017: 248; Batzella, 2022: 825).

In this thesis, having already established the two dimensions of actorness in the theory section – 1) decision-making power and 2) capability – process-tracing is used to explore their causal relationship to the outcome, that is, actorness. To study the EU's evolution in energy security actorness, this study applies the method to explore whether crises in energy supply[3] represent events of a critical juncture in the process of the EU's acquisition of actorness. By using process-tracing, this thesis seeks to explore whether EU actorness in energy security (outcome) is advanced by moments of crisis (cause). It will begin the process-tracing with empirical material from the Commission (and

[3] This thesis focuses on the following crises: The 2009 Ukraine-Russia gas dispute, the 2014 Russian annexation of Crimea, and the 2022 Russian invasion of Ukraine.

Council) in 2009, leading up to the implementation of the Lisbon Treaty, and will end in December 2022, covering the REPowerEU plan. Prior to 2009, the EU did not have clearly defined competencies regarding energy. According to George and Bennet (2005: 215), there are different ways in which process-tracing can be used as an effective tool. Given the assumptions mentioned above, this thesis applies the analytical form of the method to test the thesis's presiding hypotheses. As already outlined in the theoretical framework, these hypotheses are as follows:

Hypothesis 1 (decision-making power): In moments of crisis in energy supply, the EU acquires more decision-making power by developing a strong political will to act in energy security. In this context, the EU's institutional apparatus receives more competencies in the energy security domain.

Hypothesis 2 (capabilities): In moments of crisis in energy supply, the Union gains more actorness in energy security as member states are willing to give up some of their capabilities to empower the EU's action capacity and promote energy security.

4.2 Empirical Material

This section aims to clarify the considerations concerning the selection and analysis of empirical material. Having argued for process-tracing as a qualitative method, the empirical material consists of various sources that are used critically and complimentary.

To begin with, this thesis builds on primary sources, such as EU official legal documents (e.g., regulations, treaties, and directives) and communications to identify the Commission's position and strategy regarding energy security. To limit the scope of the study, the Commission was chosen as the primary subject of analysis as it represents the institutional body with the most significant power in energy security (see Aalto and Temel, 2014; Herranz-Surrallés, 2020). In addition, the Commission represents the EU institution responsible for proposing and enforcing policy. Hence, if the Commission receives competencies, it reflects on EU actorness. Still, to provide some insights into the member states perspectives, a few EU Council conclusions, and declarations – relatively timely in relation to the crises (2009; 2014; 2022) – were chosen to trace how moments of crisis are an impetus for the evolution of EU actorness in the field of energy security. To complement these primary sources, the analysis also includes secondary sources, such as relevant academic literature, focusing on the EU and energy security.

Regarding the primary sources, the material is thematically filtered using keywords when searching the official electronic databases representing the EU Commission. For directives and regulations, the keywords 'energy security' and 'security of supply' were used. The keyword 'Russia' was added when searching for all other types of acts to limit the findings to the scope of this thesis. The analysis only covers events and developments between 2009 and 2022. Two events in 2009, namely the implementation of the Lisbon Treaty and the Third Energy Package, have had a catalyzing effect on EU energy security by advancing the institutionalization of the Union's internal energy market (see Kustova, 2017: 95). In fact, a "clear basis for energy was only introduced with the Lisbon

Treaty" (Batzella, 2018: 111) (Articles 4, 194 TFEU). Hence, the rationale behind the year chosen as a starting date for this thesis's analysis. To look at recent developments and explore the effect of crises on EU energy security actorness, this study extends to December 2022, covering the Russian annexation of Crimea (2014) and the ongoing Russian war against Ukraine (since 2022).

The final part of the analysis (**Section 5.4**) is primarily based on the EU's major energy strategy papers (the 2014 Energy Security Strategy, the 2015 Energy Union, and the 2022 REPowerEU), since they provide a great insight into the EU's overall approach to energy security. It also includes a few speeches and press statements by representatives[4] of the Commission. As highlighted by previous research, the Commission has frequently used the idea of strategic autonomy in the context of a changing geopolitical environment (see Schmitz and Seidl, 2022). By looking at some Commission speeches, it is possible to gain insights into the EU's plan regarding energy security, helping to draw conclusions on the manifestation of strategic autonomy. The material was chosen for its relevance to energy security and direct reference to the strategy papers.

4.3 Limitations

This thesis remains limited. The overall research design is linked to the study of EU actorness by following the method of process-tracing. However, given the scope of this thesis, the process-tracing focuses on a small number of official sources and a particular time frame, limiting the thesis's contribution to the wider field of EU actorness and energy security studies. Furthermore, the more Commission-centric approach towards EU actorness (with only a few Council documents) does not incorporate the perspectives of specific EU member states and the European Parliament (EP). Hence, this study may not be able to depict all ongoing processes that influence EU actorness in energy security.

However, it is important to note that this study's findings regarding the influence of moments of crisis on EU actorness in terms of energy security will allow for some generalization. The findings offer a fruitful insight into the EU's acquisition of actorness, demonstrating the main factors that enhance or constrain the Union's ability to act. They will have great applicability to the ongoing European integration process regarding external action. As they may also apply to other areas of EU actorness, the findings will help to draw some central conclusions on how the EU will evolve as a global actor. Therefore, they will increase the external validity of this thesis.

[4] The representatives include the current President of the Commission, Ursula von der Leyen, and former President Jean-Claude Juncker, as well as Maroš Šefčovič, former European Commissioner for Energy.

5 Empirical Analysis

To answer the presiding research questions of 1) *how we can understand the main factors that have led to the EU acquiring actorness in terms of energy security*; and 2) *how the idea of strategic autonomy is manifested in the EU's approach toward energy security*, the empirical analysis is structured as follows:

The first three sections assess EU actorness in energy security, building on the concepts of decision-making power and capabilities. The analysis demonstrates how moments of crisis are conducive to understanding the Union's evolving actorness. The three sections focus on different moments of crises in energy supply – moving from the 2009 gas disruptions to the 2014 Russian annexation of Crimea and the 2022 Russian invasion of Ukraine – and evaluate the steps taken by the Commission in dealing with energy security. The main argument revolves around the idea that the EU acquires actorness in energy security in moments of crisis. A fourth section moves from assessing the EU's evolving actorness to exploring how strategic autonomy is reflected in the Commission's plan vis-à-vis energy security.

5.1 The 2009 Gas Disruptions: The Lisbon Treaty and Evolving EU Actorness in Energy Security

In January 2009, the EU experienced – once again[5] – major disruptions in natural gas supply due to Russian-Ukrainian disagreements. Although the crisis was between Russia and Ukraine, EU member states were directly and indirectly affected by supply interruptions as Russia temporarily cut off supplies to Ukraine – a major transit country for the EU's natural gas supply (Keukeleire and Delreux, 2022: 251). The crisis highlighted the EU's vulnerability regarding energy supply. By cutting off supplies, Russia made it clear that it was ready to use its energy dominance for external policy-making. Hence, the crisis altered the Union's perception of Russia as a reliable partner (Maltby, 2013: 438).

Through process-tracing, it becomes clear that the 2009 Russia-Ukraine crisis provided a powerful impetus to moving energy security to the top of the EU legislative agenda. In response to the major supply interruptions, member states appeared to have a strong political will to find solutions concerning energy security at the community level (Council, 2009). In their Council presidency conclusion, it reads that "in order to deliver on energy security, the EU collectively [...] must be prepared to combine solidarity with responsibility." (Council, 2009: 8). By emphasizing solidarity, EU member states demonstrate a political will to act more coherently, strengthening EU actorness in the field of energy security. In particular, the political will to act is reflected in member states' classification of energy security as a 'key priority' (Council, 2009: 8).

The call for more coherent action and the political will to act at an EU level in terms of energy security triggered actions by the Commission. When tracing the Commission's process regarding energy security, it appears that the 2009 crisis has promoted EU engagement in the domain as the Commission's decision-making power and capabilities were advanced in this field. For instance, by

[5] Due to a cost dispute between Russia and Ukraine, the EU had experienced significant disruptions in natural gas supply in 2006.

illustrating the EU's energy supply vulnerability with respect to the gas crises (2006 and 2009), Regulation (EC) 663/2009, proposed by the Commission and adopted by the EP and Council, advocated for energy security to be solved at the Union level and introduced an energy infrastructure plan to decrease the EU's vulnerability to external shocks. It highlights that the crisis gave new impetus for decision-making at the supranational level. Regulation (663/2009/EC (22)) allows the Union to "adopt measures, in accordance with the principle of subsidiarity [...]" to achieve objectives regarding energy security. In this context, it is worth mentioning that COM (2009/678) shows that the Commission received €4 billion as part of an aid program intended for financing energy projects in May 2009. By approving the funding to support EU progress regarding energy security, member states indicated the political will to transfer resources to the Union level. The transfer of resources enabled the Union to act effectively and implement projects to improve the community's energy security. These extraordinary fundings indicate crisis-driven action to advance EU actorness.

In 2009, the Commission argued for the importance of establishing a regulated internal energy market, stating that security and market integration are interconnected (see Prontera, 2017). As a result, the Commission's Third Energy Package was adopted. Member states agreed to connect their energy markets more closely and invest in transnational infrastructure projects. The outlined goal of completing the internal market, particularly in natural gas, to ensure the security of supply demonstrates increased EU actorness, providing the Commission with more decision-making power in energy-related undertakings. The Package enhanced the Commission's regulatory powers, allowing it to actively put forth legislative proposals concerning the internal energy market. In general, member states' agreement to endorse the interconnection of their energy infrastructure set an important framework for the Commission to gain further competency in terms of regulation and oversight. For instance, as part of the Package, Directive 2009/73/EC[6] was implemented, defining common rules for gas transmission, distribution, supply, and storage. The influence of the 2009 crisis is evident in the Directive, as the crisis had explicitly exposed the EU's vulnerability in terms of natural gas imports. Notably, under the Directive, EU actorness was advanced as the Commission received competency in granting authorizations with respect to natural gas undertakings and in overseeing the security of gas supply. Despite the crisis allowing for a leap forward regarding EU actorness in energy security, there remained resistance among member states in moving the negotiation of energy deals with third countries to the Union level. As will be shown later, another crisis is needed to bring about change in this field.[7]

The implementation of the Lisbon Treaty is decisive when looking at the EU's decision-making power and capabilities in terms of energy security. Before 2009 and the implementation of the Treaty, the EU's competence regarding energy security was limited due to the member states reluctance to provide the Commission with decision-making power (Tosun et al, 2015: 4). In fact, the EU's treaty

[6] This act has been changed (23/06/2022).

[7] In 2022, the EU Energy Platform is established, allowing for joint EU action and negotiations with external energy suppliers.

framework did not include any official energy title. Responding to the Ukraine-Russia conflict and the resulting gas crises (2006; 2009), the Lisbon Treaty established shared competence between the Commission and the member states in terms of energy policy (Article 4 TFEU). The crises paved the way to anchor energy security "more firmly into the institutional architecture of the EU" (Prontera, 2017: 12). Furthermore, Article 194 TFEU outlines the legislative procedure and the objectives of the EU's energy policy (see Batzella, 2018: 110). Thus, the implementation of the Treaty allowed for more supranational decision-making. As a result, it increased the EU's capability to act in the energy security domain. Article 194 (TFEU) can provide the legal basis for the EU to implement legislative proposals and for the Union to engage in external energy negotiations.

Whereas the 2009 crisis appears to be a main factor for increased EU actorness in energy security, it did not lead to the EU acquiring full actorness in the field. Even though the Lisbon Treaty outlined the security of energy supply as one of the EU's policy-making objectives, there remained resistance among member states to provide the EU with extensive decision-making power (Keukeleire and Delreux, 2022: 250). While Article 194 TFEU presents an essential legal basis for the EU to initiate actions and introduce legislative proposals in the energy security domain, it also stresses member states' right to govern the conditions for exploiting their energy resources, their choice between different energy sources as well as the general structure of its energy supply (see Goldthau and Sitter, 2020: 114).

Two years later, €9 billion in funding for energy infrastructure was proposed by the Commission (2011) and later adopted by the Council and EP. It implied that "external energy projects for which commercial viability is doubted (but which are deemed of political importance by meeting diversification objectives) will be supported from the 2014-2020 budget" (Maltby, 2013: 441). The amount indicated a major allocation of EU funds to the energy security domain, affecting the EU's capability and, thus, its actorness in the field. As maintained by Maltby (2013: 441), EU funding regarding energy security had previously been "'highly exceptional' and minor". The new, more extensive spending appeared normalized, considering the 2009 crisis and the crisis-driven policy ambitions. In addition, COM 2011/500 outlined the creation of a Connecting Europe Facility (CEF), implemented in 2014. The CEF was a response to the crisis, seeking to advance European energy security through infrastructure development and investment in trans-European networks in energy. Here, the crisis served as a catalyst for the completion of the internal energy market, providing the Union with more access to resources and greater oversight in terms of investments. Hence, actorness was advanced by allowing the EU to utilize capabilities.

In light of the 2009 crisis, member states acknowledged in their Council conclusions (2009a) that "further actions, initiatives, and instruments, as appropriate, are needed to strengthen the development of a common approach to external energy policy." The Commission (2011a) also argued that it could not fulfill its security objectives without addressing the external dimension. By stating that "bilateral agreements of member states with third countries have a significant impact on the development of energy infrastructure and energy supply to the EU," the Commission suggested

developing an information exchange mechanism on intergovernmental agreements regarding energy (Commission, 2011a). Member states agreed to the proposal, granting the Commission to monitor agreements' compliance with EU law after their successful conclusions and, thus, advancing the EU's capability in energy security. The authority to monitor agreements enables the Commission to detect non-compliance to agreed-upon rules and safeguards EU interests in energy security. Conducting compliance assessments allows the Commission to enforce compliance and take appropriate actions if necessary. With the 2014 crisis, the Commission's actorness was advanced in the field, removing the constraint to already concluded agreements.

To sum up this section, the process-tracing shows that the 2009 crisis played a key role in advancing the EU's actorness by moving energy security to the top of the agenda. With the crisis, there emerged a political will among member states to create a more common approach to energy security. More specifically, the crisis allowed for a leap forward by helping to increase the Union's decision-making power in responding to cases of energy emergency. For instance, energy security was officially anchored in the Union's legal framework, allowing the Commission to engage more actively in the domain. In light of the 2009 crisis, the Commission also received capabilities in the form of additional funding and a more significant role in monitoring intergovernmental agreements, helping EU actorness in energy security to evolve.

Even though the crisis was an important driver for the EU to acquire actorness, it likely needed to be more severe to shift extensive decision-making power and capabilities to the EU level. Member states remained attached to their own individual energy policies (Batzella, 2018: 113). Not only was there a lack of action to complete the EU's internal energy market (Gurzu and Stefanini, 2017), but also the EU only gained limited actorness regarding international agreements, showing that member states held on to bilateral approaches to achieve energy security (Prontera, 2017: 37). As the subsequent analysis will show, several crises are required for the EU to advance its actorness in energy security – the 2009 crisis provided the first impetus.

5.2 The 2014 Russian Annexation and Its Implications on EU Actorness: The Emergence of the Energy Union

As indicated in the previous section, the Russian-Ukrainian gas disputes altered the perception of Russia as a reliable energy supplier, calling for the Commission to act regarding energy security. The 2014 Russian annexation of Crimea increased the relevance of energy security dramatically, moving the issue – once again – to the top of the political agenda. As the process-tracing will show, the deteriorating relationship with Russia represents a driving force regarding EU actorness in energy security. Even though the crisis did not directly affect EU energy imports from Russia, it showed that the EU's vulnerability in terms of energy security could "no longer be managed by downplaying or fudging the issue" (Goldthau and Sitter, 2020: 32 118). Given their energy dependence, member states were faced with the risk of Russian energy supply cuts when responding to the geopolitical crisis.

As a result of the Russian annexation of Crimea, the Council (2014) demonstrated the political will to promote energy security by calling for the intensification of "efforts to reduce Europe's high

gas energy dependency rates" and to moderate energy demand. Moreover, given member states' will to act with respect to the crisis, the Commission was tasked "to conduct an in-depth study of EU energy security" and develop "a comprehensive plan for the reduction of EU energy dependence" (Council, 2014: 10). The Council's declaration reflected a crisis-driven sense of urgency and EU-wide vulnerability. It also highlighted member states' willingness to address existing energy security concerns at a Union level, thereby presenting an opportunity for the EU to strengthen its actorness.

In May 2014, with COM 2014/330, the Commission quickly formulated a European Energy Security Strategy to "promote[s] resilience to these shocks" and "reduce[d] dependency on particular fuels, energy suppliers and routes." It reveals that the crisis is clearly driving the EU's ambitions to gain a greater say in terms of energy security, arguing for a 'hard-headed strategy' (Commission, 2014). Albeit the annexation is not explicitly mentioned, the Communication barely hides that the call for action refers to the crisis emerging from Europe's overreliance on Russian energy imports (see also Siddi, 2017: 374). By recognizing that previous achievements regarding infrastructure and diversification were insufficient when addressing the EU's vulnerability to external energy shocks, the Commission welcomed the idea of an Energy Union that was put forth by some member states[8] (Commission, 2014). It shows that the crisis brought new momentum to the Commission's energy security agenda. The emergence of the idea of an Energy Union reflected member states' political will to strengthen the EU's institutional body with respect to energy security, allowing for a more supranational approach in decision-making and, thus, more coordinated action.

The development amplifies that the 2014 Russian-Ukrainian conflict represented a new wake-up call; the renewed energy crisis symbolized the severity of the issue and called for decisive action in several directions (Commission, 2014). When tracing the Council's process, it becomes clear that member states shared a strong political will to build an Energy Union that aimed at "affordable, secure, and sustainable energy" (Council, 2014a: 10), shifting more decision-making power to the supranational level to end the Russian grip on European energy supply. To achieve the stated objectives, state leaders tasked the Commission with developing a proposal for an Energy Union to, amongst others, improve Europe's energy security (Council, 2014b). By assigning the Commission to devise a plan to address the supply crisis, there appeared to be a shift in decision-making power to the EU level. Also, it shows that the Commission forms the centre of the EU's institutional apparatus regarding energy security, acquiring the power to define goals and strategies.

With the Energy Union strategy, issued as COM 2015/080, the Commission used Article 194 TFEU to increase its presence in the energy security domain and respond to the crisis. While the Lisbon Treaty had only outlined the EU's competence in the energy domain, the Energy Union defined specific areas in which the EU can expand its decision-making power and capabilities. The project provided a framework offering a broad palette of policy objectives, namely, "energy security, solidarity,

[8] The Polish President, Donald Tusk, was the first to introduce the idea of a European Energy Union, seeking to establish a common agenda to end Russia's energy stranglehold on Europe (see Herranz-Surralés et al, 2020: 4).

and trust; a fully integrated European energy market; energy efficiency contributing to moderation of demand, decarbonizing the economy; and research, innovation, and competitiveness" (Batzella, 2018: 110). The move from the Lisbon Treaty to the Energy Union exemplifies how a new crisis allows for a leap forward – what was not feasible in 2009 became attainable in the aftermath of the 2014 crisis.

The Energy Union helped advance the EU's actorness in terms of energy security by laying a roadmap for the legislative proposals regarding energy policies, strengthening the Commission's decision-making power. By including a comprehensive governance framework, the plan allowed the Commission to play an essential role in working with member states toward energy goals and speak with 'one voice' on the international stage (see also Commission, 2019). As the crisis had re-emphasized the threat emerging from the EU's overreliance on Russian natural gas supply, the Energy Union put forth legislative ideas to strengthen European resilience to energy supply and develop a solidarity principle, emphasizing trust and solidarity among member states in terms of energy security (Austvik, 2016: 377). Without the crisis, the call for an Energy Union, highlighting a more supranational approach, appeared impossible. The project attempted to address the security threat posed by EU member states' overreliance on Russian energy imports, illustrated by the annexation of Crimea and Russia's use of energy as a foreign policy tool (Far and Youngs, 2015: 6).

Also, the central role of the crisis in creating the Energy Union becomes clear when looking at COM 2014/654 and COM 2014/669. Moreover, the crisis and the associated risk of supply shortages or disruptions provided an opportunity for the Commission (2015) to argue for a more supranational approach, contending that "joint approaches in the field of energy can make all parts of the European Union stronger." With the Regulation (EU) 2018/1999, the Commission received the capability to oversee and coordinate the coherent implementation of the Energy Union, with member states being required to report their progress toward meeting the Union's energy targets and commitments in national reports (see Article 22). Hence, it grants the Commission critical action capacity (actorness) in terms of energy security.

Despite the Energy Union having been developed in response to the 2014 crisis, it fell short in terms of creating new institutions and delegating powers (see Herranz-Surrallés et al, 2020: 4). Considering the 2014 crisis, Tusk had proposed the implementation of a mandatory joint gas purchasing will (Keating, 2015). However, the final plan of the Energy Union did not include his proposal due to member states' reluctance to provide the EU with the capability to navigate decisions regarding the energy mix. For instance, the discussions on the final proposal suggest the hesitation of some member states to give up their competencies over their energy mix (Council, 2015). It shows that member states remained reluctant to transfer capabilities – essential to their sovereignty – to the Union level. The political will does not appear strong enough to truly move towards a common approach in terms of energy security. Even though the 2014 crisis had been a main catalyst for action, advancing EU actorness in energy security, it appears there is a limit to what a crisis can achieve, indicating that full EU actorness requires several crises.

However, the Energy Union has enabled the Commission to make decisions to follow through with its outlined objectives. For instance, guided by the Energy Union objectives, the Commission was successful in proposing new energy legislation that was later implemented (Directive (EU) 2018/2001 and Regulation (EU) 2019/942). It highlights that the EU has gained essential decision-making power, successfully implementing strategies and measures regarding the security of supply. By setting a target for energy use from renewable sources (Directive (EU) 2018/2001) as well as supporting the transition of the energy system and creating competition (Regulation 2019/942), there appears to be a strong political will among member states to allow the Union to make decisions and propose joint solutions to enhance energy security.

Notably, the 2014 Ukraine crisis moved the EU's attention to gas pipeline projects. The EU has developed a strategic interest in advancing its energy security actorness regarding the Nord Stream 2 project, launched in 2015 (Siddi and Kustova, 2021: 1085). In particular, the crisis gave new impetus for the Commission to review its intergovernmental agreement strategy, demanding more transparency regarding gas undertakings to ensure supply and affordability (Commission, 2015). After the 2009 crisis, the Commission received the competence to monitor intergovernmental agreements after their closure (see **Section 5.1**). However, with the most recent crisis, the Commission (2015: 7) argued that being informed on agreements and checking their compatibility with EU law is ineffective when they are already concluded. Hence, it demanded greater involvement from an early stage – before the conclusion of an agreement (Commission, 2015). Having been successfully implemented[9], it provided the Commission with the capability to approve and reject existing and future intergovernmental agreements on energy infrastructure projects, such as pipeline projects. The implementation shows an essential transfer of capabilities to the EU level because it enables the Commission to oversee and promptly assess infrastructure plans of key relevance to energy security and, thus, actively impact their outcome. Furthermore, it enhances the EU's capability by effectively allowing the Commission to assume the right of judicial interpretation (see Thaler and Pakalkaite, 2020). Notably, it also highlights how EU actorness further advances considering an additional crisis – the outcomes of the 2009 crisis saw progress as a result of the 2014 crisis.

Of course, the implementation of the proposal remained a compromise. While the Commission had stated in its COM (2015/80) that it will "propose options to ensure that the EU speaks with one voice in negotiations with third countries," it appears that member states did not want to give up their sovereignty in terms of negotiating bilateral agreements with third countries. As stressed by the Council (2016), member states agreed to allow the Commission to take on a more active negotiation stance toward third countries, enhancing the Commission's actorness in energy security, but re-emphasized their exclusive right to make final agreements. However, the term 'compromise' indicates that member states take a step and give up some of their sovereignty to enable greater EU actorness. While it does not allow for complete actorness, the compromise displays how the EU can advance its actorness in view of a new crisis.

[9] Decision (EU) 2017/684.

In the aftermath of the crisis, several solidarity measures were introduced. For instance, the Commission (2016) proposed a Regulation (EU) 2017/1938 concerning measures to safeguard the security of gas supply. The proposal's emphasis on solidarity appears in its outline of greater regional coordination regarding risk assessments, with the EU being responsible for defining specific principles and standards. It shows that the EU uses the crisis to develop a supranational framework for minimizing the impact of energy supply disruptions on member states. It indicates a shift from addressing a crisis of energy supply at a national level toward a supranational level. By stressing member states' shared risk of supply interruptions, the underlying message is to move decision-making power, based on solidarity and trust, to a regional level and, thus, "give the EU one common voice towards Russia" (Fleming, 2018: 273- 274). Furthermore, the outlined 'transparency measures' provided the Commission with a greater say in the natural gas supply as Regulation (2017/1938) required natural gas companies to notify 38 the Commission about contracts relevant to the security of supply. Thus, it demonstrates a move of capability – monitoring energy infrastructure – to the EU level.

On another note, it is interesting to look at how much of the EU budget is allocated to the CEF, more specifically, the energy domain. As noted earlier, in 2011, the EU proposed €9 billion in funding for energy in its budget plan between 2014 and 2020. Looking at the EU's spending, there has been a remarkable rise in spending in the energy domain. While €11.4 million were spent in 2014 (accounting for 1.4 percent of the CEF), €389.8 million were spent in 2020 (accounting for 20.8 percent of the CEF) (Commission, n.d.). It can be argued that the increase in spending advances EU actorness as it enables the Union to effectively act upon its agenda regarding energy security, such as investing in renewable technologies and supporting the transition of the energy system (capability).

Overall, with the 2014 crisis in energy supply, the EU actorness in energy security has grown. With the crisis-driven establishment of the Energy Union, member states agreed to take a more common approach toward energy security, allowing the Union to increasingly speak with 'one voice.' The crisis that followed the Russian annexation of Crimea served as a critical juncture for the Energy Union to enhance the EU's decision-making power in energy security by outlining specific objectives for legislative proposals and calling for more solidarity. Furthermore, the Union's capability was improved, providing greater resources to address energy security challenges. Member states were willing to give up some of their sovereignty in exchange for the EU taking key steps, such as creating a common roadmap for energy objectives, developing a solidarity mechanism, and overseeing intergovernmental agreements towards strengthening its energy resilience and reducing its vulnerability toward Russia. Thus, the crisis acted as a catalyst for advancing EU actorness in energy security.

5.3 The 2022 Russian Invasion of Ukraine: New Urgency of Energy Security and REPowerEU

Despite legislative proposals and changes aimed at strengthening EU energy resilience with respect to the 2009 Russian-Ukrainian gas dispute and the 2014 Russian annexation of Crimea, the EU has

remained significantly dependent on Russian natural resources (Kuzemko et al, 2022: 1). Thus, with the Russian invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, the issue of security of supply has received some more do-or-die importance on the EU's political agenda. Russian cuts in energy supply and the EU's issuing of sanctions and embargoes on Russian natural gas have led to the EU being faced with an energy crisis of unprecedented proportions. As a result, the EU appears to be ready to end its import of Russian fossil fuels (EURACTIV, 2022). This objective appears to be more radical than previous measures to address crises of energy supply (2009; 2014). As such, the event suggests a more critical juncture for the EU's acquisition of actorness in terms of energy security.

The increased urgency is reflected in the Council's Versailles Declaration of March 2022. In its conclusions, the Council (2022) depicts reducing energy dependencies as the key objective and calls upon the Commission to propose a REPowerEU plan by the end of May. In particular, the Council's call for more "European sovereignty" (2022) proves member states' political will to take on a Union-based approach when addressing the issue of energy security. Moreover, it signifies the states' determination to entirely end the EU's dependency on Russian energy imports.

In April 2022, the Commission proposed the amendment of Regulation (EU) 2017/1938 by introducing a minimum storage requirement for member states to strengthen the EU's energy security in gas supply (Lambert et al, 2022: 4). With the implementation of the new Regulation (EU) 2022/1032, member states also ultimately agreed to the creation of a 'joint storage' (von der Leyen, 2022) through the implementation of a solidarity mechanism. With their agreement, member states demonstrated the political will to shift decision-making power regarding storage requirements to the EU level, advancing the Union's energy security actorness. Here, given the accelerated fear of supply disruptions, the crisis represents a vital driving force.

Due to the urgency of the 2022 crisis, the EU has put forward a new REPowerEU framework (May 2022) – exploiting a policy window. REPowerEU explicitly calls for rapid actions to reduce dependence on Russian energy imports. It suggests an action plan for energy saving, energy supply diversification, energy transition, and new investments and reforms (Commission, 2022). Even though these objectives have been highlighted previously, during the 2009 and 2014 crises, their successful implementation received new weight considering the pressing energy supply situation. The new weight allows the Union to move forward with new decisions and proposals. As COM 2022/383 indicates, with REPowerEU, the Commission seeks to transform the European energy system, phasing out Russian fossil fuels. This more radical idea of 'phasing-out' appears relatively new, given the EU's previous primary focus on a common EU energy market to address Russia. With the new task being the phase-out, the EU's actorness in energy security is advanced as it enables the Union to introduce more radical measures aimed at diversifying and transforming the energy system.

The quick creation of the REPowerEU plan shows the EU's political will to drive the decision-making process and engage in energy security. As stated by the Commission, the current crisis requires the EU to actively engage with energy security issues, hoping to avoid the "immediate impact [of]

potential further disruptions – including a complete cut-off – of Russian gas supplies" (Commission, 2022b).

Also, it is interesting to note that the plan outlines the creation of an EU Energy Purchase Platform that aims at pooling demand and coordinating infrastructure use. The goal is to coordinate action and advance global outreach by negotiating together with international partners to secure additional deliveries (see Commission, 2022b). Initiated in April 2022, the platform also prepared the EU for joint gas and hydrogen purchases. With the support of the Council (2022a; 2022b), the legal framework for the EU Energy Platform is implemented in the form of Regulation (EU) 2022/2576. The Regulation introduces joint purchasing for the first time. The setting up of a joint gas purchasing platform enables the EU's capability in terms of energy security. It represents an essential step on the EU's way to full actorness in energy security as it allows the Union to gain a greater say in external energy relations. The platform provides the EU with the capability to pool demand, coordinate actions, negotiate with third-country suppliers, and seek new partnerships. Notably, member states had previously refused to shift external power to the EU level (see Council, 2016). Hence, their agreement highlights the severity of the crisis and its implications on EU actorness in terms of energy security. However, member states' engagement in joint purchasing, as outlined in Regulation (EU) 2022/2576, remains voluntary (Commission, 2022b). Member states are not entirely ready to give up their sovereignty regarding energy security but rather allow the EU to pool more capability than before.

With the establishment of the Recovery and Resilience Facility (RRF) in 2021 [10], the Commission has received the capability to steer grants and loans to advance strategic objectives and strengthen the EU's energy security (Commission, 2022c). Furthermore, the RRF enhances the EU's decision-making power as member states need to submit their plans to the Commission to receive financing. Also, the EU receives the capability to monitor progress and performance as well as authorize payments, improving EU actorness. With the crisis, the RRF grows as the achievement of the REPowerEU aims is added to its body. The outlined objectives of the REPowerEU plan have significant implications for the EU budget (Commission, 2022d). Thus, the Commission (2022e) emphasizes the need of creating "new, additional resources." Highlighting the importance of RRF in delivering energy security solutions, the EU calls for a "combination of additional investments and reforms, both at the EU and national level," to strengthen its energy independence (Commission, 2022a). The RRF framework demonstrates the Union's capability to steer spending and act upon energy security issues. Besides, as shown in COM (2022/600), the RRF allows the EU to monitor member states' progress on energy security objectives as outlined in the REPowerEU. Hence, the Union's actorness in terms of energy security is advanced, allowing for the EU's increased capability in overseeing energy reforms. Furthermore, COM (2022/600) states that the RRF "is providing important financial support for the implementation of key reforms and investments, entailing a fiscal

[10] As a temporary recovery instrument, the RRF finances member states' reforms and investments that seek to address social and economic challenges by the end of 2026.

and reform impulse financed by the Union" (Commission, 2022f). It demonstrates how the EU takes on a greater role in navigating energy security projects.

It becomes clear how the crisis is the key driving force behind the EU's increasing decision-making power. For instance, the Commission (2022b) emphasizes that it is only possible to "effectively address the risk of serious economic difficulties resulting from price hikes or significant supply disruptions" when member states are working towards the creation of a "regulatory framework ensuring a coordinated and rapid action." The REPowerEU and the outlined transition of the European energy system are followed by several policies. Regulation (EU) 2022/869 is adopted, setting up guidelines for the quick development of a functioning energy system based on the EU's climate and energy target. The Regulation reflects a political will among member states to address energy security issues at the supranational level by working cooperatively toward shared goals. Moreover, it requires member states to implement a 90 percent filling target regarding gas storage, seeking to protect against the risk of energy supply disruptions. Another Regulation ((EU) 2022/1032) introduces a requirement regarding the certification of storage system operators. It says that operators need to be "free from external influence." Here, member states are responsible for ensuring the fulfillment of the requirement. However, the two Regulations show that the EU sets up new rules to ensure the security of supply, highlighting its growing decision-making power and, thus, actorness in energy security.

Finally, in October 2022, the sabotage of the Nord Stream pipelines accelerated the energy crisis (EURACTIV, 2022a). As a response, the Council (2022a) and Energy Council (see Commission, 2022h) called for additional, exceptional measures to address rising gas prices and supply disruptions. Here, the Council (2022a) suggested the creation of a temporary price corridor on natural gas transactions and a temporary EU framework to cut gas prices, as well as the implementation of measures to accelerate the expansion of renewables. It demonstrates member states' growing political will to move more sensitive competencies to the EU level to address the crisis in energy supply. Member states appear willing to give up some of their sovereignty to allow for exceptional measures at the EU level (see Article 122(1) TFEU).

Responding to the Council's call, the Commission proposed a framework that "aims to address the current energy crisis through immediate, focused action that accelerates the deployment of renewable energy projects which have [a] high potential of rapid and effective impact" (Commission, 2022g). Furthermore, the Commission has seized the opportunity and the Council's call by proposing a Regulation that seeks to establish a market correction mechanism, addressing excessively high prices through decoupling (Commission, 2022i). The proposal includes the idea of an EU gas price gap. In the Spring of 2022, member states like Spain had already called on the Commission to find a solution to rising electricity prices, proposing a price cap (EURACTIV, 2022b). However, other countries, such as Germany, had "long resisted the proposed EU gas price cap," fearing that their companies would be hindered in finding "alternative supplies on the global gas market" (EURACTIV, 2022b). The crisis

appears to be an essential driving motor for overcoming differences and encourages member states' political will to enhance EU actorness in energy security.

The section concludes that the 2022 crisis reflects a critical juncture for the EU's evolving actorness. Already in the aftermath of the 2009 and 2014 crises, the EU had received significant competencies in terms of decision-making power and capabilities. Still, with the 2022 crisis, these efforts are accelerated as member states actively seek to phase-out of Russian fossil fuels. Hence, projects like the EU Energy Purchase Platform and the EU gas price cap – previously unimaginable – have been introduced, allowing for EU actorness in energy security to be significantly strengthened.

5.4 Strategic Autonomy and the EU's Approach to Energy Security

As outlined in the theoretical framework (**Section 3.3**), this thesis understands ESA as an endeavor by the EU to overcome its vulnerabilities. In terms of energy, the vulnerability lies in the Union's dependence on a specific external supplier, namely, Russia. Hence, ESA implies that the EU frees itself from its overreliance on Russia. With this section, the thesis explores how ESA is manifested in the EU's approach toward energy security.

As shown by the previous analysis, the EU has evolved as an actor in energy security by reacting to crises in energy supply. Since the 2014 Russian annexation of Crimea, the EU actively seeks to move away from an overreliance on Russian energy imports to ensure the security of supply. The 2014 European Energy Security Strategy states that "the most pressing energy security issue is the strong dependence from a single external supplier" (Commission, 2014: 2). Considering the pressing context, Maroš Šefčovič (2015), Vice-President of the Energy Union, argued for diversification to ensure the security of supply.

As part of the diversification strategy, the EU seeks to "establish partnerships with additional suppliers" (Šefčovič, 2015a). More specifically, the EU aims to provide market access to regions that may serve as new potential energy suppliers, particularly fossil fuels. By diversifying energy suppliers, the goal is to establish a reliable import base to ensure the security of supply (see Šefčovič, 2015b). The ambition is also reflected in the REPowerEU plan (2022), which emphasizes the need to work with international partners to diversify the Union's supply of gas, oil, and coal. With this diversification strategy, the EU seeks to achieve non-overreliance and, thus, energy security. The goal to end the dependence on a single external supplier by diversifying the supply network is itself a testimony to the presence of ESA. In other words, ESA is manifested in the Union's plan to ensure the security of supply by establishing import alternatives.

The EU's approach toward energy security also builds on solidarity and trust among member states (Šefčovič, 2015a). With the 2015 Energy Union, the EU pushes for establishing a fully integrated, internal energy market to secure energy supply (Commission, 2015). Here, the idea is to allow energy to flow between member states freely and diversify energy routes. By aiming for a greater level of connectivity, the EU seeks to effectively address disruptions of 46 energy supply, for instance, through reverse gas flows (Anghel et al, 2020: 17). An integrated market diversifies the EU's internal

supply sources, allowing it to act more autonomously by being able to switch energy providers and work together to address external supply shocks. Hence, the project of an internal energy market underlies the idea of greater self-sufficiency and, thus, strategic autonomy.

Maroš Šefčovič (2015) maintains that "geopolitical challenges will not go away", which is why the EU needs to make sure to be "on top of them." It reflects that the Union searches for a long-term strategy to achieve energy security. Against this backdrop, one of the EU's key strategies is to replace Russian energy imports by "investing in renewable energy energies and innovative technologies" (Šefčovič, 2015a). It shows that the Union seeks to develop its own energy alternatives to fossil fuel imports in order to secure its energy supply. The idea of freeing oneself from external forces is inherent to the ESA. With the presentation of the 2015 Energy Union, the EU emphasizes the role of renewable energy regarding energy security: "To that end, strategic focus on research and innovation is being given in the implementation of the Energy Union and to making the EU the world number one in renewables" (Juncker, 2015: 37). Emerging from the strategic objectives regarding renewables, the Directive (EU) 2018/2001 promotes the use of energy from renewable sources, demanding that 32 percent of the EU's energy consumption be renewable by 2030. Given the investment in renewable to end the dependence on a third-country supplier, ESA is manifested. The alternative energy resources will reduce the need for the EU to import and establish new long-term dependencies.

In the 2016 Global Strategy Paper, strategic autonomy explicitly emerged as something the EU should strive for (Mogherini, 2016). For the first time, energy was identified as an area in which the EU should become strategically autonomous (Ryon, 2020: 241), stating that "energy 47 insecurity endanger[s] our people and territory" (EEAS, 2016: 9). In the Global Strategy Paper, the idea of ESA is manifested in the continued ambition to diversify to secure energy supply. However, with the Russian invasion of Ukraine, there appears to be new dynamism behind the EU's ambitions of achieving energy security: "This war is the driver of this acceleration in our efforts to strengthen Europe's resilience" (von der Leyen, 2022).

The 2022 REPowerEU plan tries to increase the resilience of the community's energy system by setting the objective of phasing out Russian fuels before 2030 (Commission, 2022). Also, Ursula von der Leyen's speech (2022) argues that the EU's REPowerEU strategy lies in ending Russia's energy dominance. The idea of non-overreliance is inherent to the concept of ESA. In her speech (2022), she states that "[…] with REPowerEU, we show that we can replace Russian fossil fuels […]." Like previous strategies, the plan lays out the objectives of diversifying energy imports and transitioning to renewable energy sources. However, REPowerEU adds energy saving to the energy security agenda (see Commission, 2022; von der Leyen, 2022). It appears that the Union seeks to reduce external dependence on Russia by simply saving energy and, thus, lowering its demand for energy imports. The approach underlies the concept of ESA, which seeks to end overreliance and the resulting risk of constrained political choice and action.

Also, the idea of strategic autonomy is manifested in the EU's actions regarding gas storage. As put forth by von der Leyen (2022a), the EU has been filling its gas storage to secure supply and

reduce its reliance on energy supply from Russia. The filling of gas storage also reflects a measure of energy saving to achieve energy security. By saving gas in storage, the EU can mitigate the effect of external supply disruptions and energy emergencies. A new Regulation (2022/1032) requires member states to reach a yearly 90 percent filling target by November and 48 ensure that the storage system operators are "free from external influence." The developments regarding gas storage amplify the EU's ambition to secure a steady supply of energy. Especially with the filling target, the Union seeks to avoid heavy exposure to external shocks, affirming its strategic objective.

Overall, the idea of strategic autonomy is manifested in the EU's plan to diversify, invest in renewables, reduce demand, and advance storage capacities to ensure the security of supply and, thus, energy security. With these actions, the Union tries to end its vulnerability that is emerging from its overreliance on Russia by establishing alternatives without constraints. This idea of non-dependence is inherent to strategic autonomy.

6 Conclusion

Concluding this thesis and answering the first research question of *how we can understand the main factors that have led to the EU acquiring actorness in terms of energy security*, the process-tracing has shown that moments of crisis in energy supply form the driving force behind the EU's evolving actorness in energy security. The 2009, 2014, and 2022 energy crises reflected critical junctures that required the EU to act. By reacting to the crises, the EU did not only advance its decision-making power but also its capabilities in terms of energy security (the findings are summarized in Figure 2 below). Hence, the thesis's two outlined hypotheses are confirmed.

Looking at the first hypothesis, the analysis has revealed that moments of crisis in energy supply help to form a political will to operate at a supranational level. It is reflected in member states' call upon the Commission to put forward proposals aimed at addressing the pressing situation, as well as in the Commission's successful framing of the energy crisis as a problem that requires increased community governance. As Figure 2 indicates, considering the crises, the EU receives new decision-making power as the Commission's energy security policy agenda gets expanded, allowing for a steady stream of new communications and policy proposals in the field. For instance, with the successful implementation of the Energy Union, EU actorness is advanced as the Commission gains a broader palette of policy objectives to put proposals forward. Also, with the crises, the Commission emerges as a key institutional apparatus, receiving a greater say on energy security. It becomes clear when looking at its active role in setting up strategies, proposing common rules and defining targets.

Furthermore, the analysis also confirms the second hypothesis. Looking at the three energy supply crises, the analysis demonstrates that member states – given the pressing context of a crisis – appear willing to give up their capabilities in order to empower the EU's action capacity regarding energy security and, thus, enhance the EU's actorness. For example, the Commission receives key competencies when it comes to monitoring and authorizing intergovernmental agreements, allowing it to oversee the security of supply. The crises also imply an increase in resources at the supranational level. When looking at the 2009 crisis, for example, the analysis shows that the EU received exceptional funding to act successfully upon its outlined energy security objectives. It indicates the EU's growing ability to act.

In general, all three crises help the EU to acquire actorness. It is especially through the sum of them all that EU actorness evolves, reinforcing Monnet's assumption (see quote in **Chapter 1**). That each subsequent crisis builds upon the other becomes apparent when looking at the case of the EU's capability to monitor intergovernmental agreements in the energy domain. In the aftermath of the 2009 crisis, the EU only received the capability to monitor closed agreements. However, in light of the 2014 crisis, the Commission successfully argued for more transparency in this matter and, thus, extended its capability. In general, the findings suggest that moments of crisis in energy supply help the EU to evolve as an actor in energy security as they open a policy window for the Commission and allow for member states' agreement to a more common approach.

Finally, in terms of the second research question of *how the idea of strategic autonomy is manifested in the EU's approach toward energy security*, the analysis has shown that the notion of strategic autonomy is reflected in the EU's plan to end its overreliance on Russian fossil fuels. By committing to supplier diversification, investments in renewable technologies, energy saving, and the development of gas storage, the EU seeks to free itself from external constraints and ensure the security of supply. These actions reflect the idea of strategic autonomy.

6.1 Future Research

This thesis remains a rather small contribution to the fields of actorness and energy security, focusing primarily on empirical material from the Commission. Future studies could analyze more closely the institutional processes regarding EU actorness in energy security. For instance, as member states play a key role in providing the EU with more competencies, it could be interesting to study member states' voting behavior, debates, and resistance. This would allow for some valuable insights into the EU's level of actorness in energy security.

As the Russian war against Ukraine continues, the issue of energy security remains at the top of the European policy-making agenda. Hence, the EU's actorness in the field will likely evolve further. Given this study's findings, the EU is expected to receive more decision-making power and capabilities. In this context, it could be interesting for future research to look at EU actorness in energy security at a later point in time to analyze in greater detail the actorness the EU has acquired.

	2009 Russia-Ukraine Gas Dispute	2014 Russian Annexation of Crimea	2022 Russian Invasion of Ukraine
Situation	• In January 2009, Russia and Ukraine disagreed on gas prices and supply, leading to Russia temporarily halting gas supplies to Ukraine, which also directly/indirectly impacted EU member states.	• In February and March 2014, Russia invaded and annexed Crimea, causing degradation in EU-Russia relations and altering the EU's perception of Russia as a reliable partner for energy supply.	• On February 24, 2022, Russia invaded Ukraine, resulting in a collapse of EU-Russia relations, leading to energy supply cut-offs from Russia.
Response	• Council declares *energy security* as a key EU policy objective. • Reg (EC) 663/2009: Financial assistance for EU energy plans. • Third Energy Package: Legislative package connecting the internal gas and electricity market. • Directive 2009/73/EC: Common rules for the transmission, distribution, supply, and storage of gas. • Lisbon Treaty: EU receives official energy title. • 2014-2020 Budget Plan: Extraordinary funding for (external) energy infrastructure projects. • Member states acknowledge the need for a more EU-based approach toward external energy policy.	• Council calls upon the Commission to develop a plan to reduce the EU's energy import dependency. • European Energy Security Strategy: Emergence of the idea of an Energy Union. • 2015 Energy Union: Outlines a roadmap for EU legislative proposals on energy security, emphasizing solidarity. • Regulation (EU) 2018/1999: EU receives primary responsibility for following through with the Energy Union. • Regulation (EU) 2017/1938: Transparency measure concerning gas supply. • Member states recognize the need for greater EU involvement regarding intergovernmental agreements (on gas supply). • 2014-2020: Increase in EU spending within the energy domain.	• Council calls for an EU-wide phase-out of Russian energy imports and tasks the Commission to develop a REPowerEU plan. • REPowerEU: Plan for an EU-wide transformation of the energy system. Establishment of an EU Energy Platform. • REPowerEU becomes part of the RRF body, which seeks to steer grants and loans to advance the EU's strategic objectives. • Regulation (EU) 2022/869: New guidelines for rapidly developing a functioning energy system. • Regulation (EU) 2022/1032: New requirements regarding the certification of joint storage system operators. • Regulation (EU) 2022/2576: Introduction of voluntary joint purchasing. • Proposal for an EU gas price gap.

Actorness	• EU actorness is advanced.
	• Decision-making power:
	  • Legislative powers are delegated to the Commission on completing the internal market (see Third Energy Package)
	  • Energy security is established as an official EU policy objective (Lisbon Treaty).
	• Capabilities:
	  • Extra funding for the EU to act upon its outlined objectives in energy security.
	  • Right to authorize natural gas undertakings and to oversee the security of gas supply.
	  • Right to oversee intergovernmental agreements in the energy domain after their closure.
		• EU actorness is further advanced.
		• Decision-making power:
		  • Key role in responding to the energy supply crisis: Development of a comprehensive plan to promote energy resilience.
		  • EU receives a broader palette of energy policy objectives to act upon with the ambition to increasingly speak with 'one voice' on energy matters (Energy Union)
		  • Defining targets that influence the EU energy mix (see Directive 2018/2001)
		• Capabilities:
		  • Right to oversee and coordinate the coherent implementation of the Energy Union.
		  • An increase in resources for the EU to act.
		  • Right to assess intergovernmental agreements in the energy domain in real-time.
			• EU actorness is further advanced; more extraordinary measures are taken.
			• Decision-making power:
			  • EU sets up gas storage requirements.
			  • More power shifted to the EU level – call for *extraordinary measures* to advance energy security
			  • Setting up a shared strategy (REPowerEU)
			• Capabilities:
			  • EU Energy Platform: Opportunity for the EU to harmonize external actions and engage in energy negotiations with third countries (demand aggregation and joint purchasing mechanism).
			  • RRF & REPowerEU: Right to monitor member states' progress and performance regarding energy targets. Right to authorize payments.

Figure 2: Finding of the Empirical Analysis

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