



# «Reshaping European Energy Geopolitics: The EU- Russia Decoupling in times of Crisis».

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**Abstract:**

The reshaping of the existing geopolitics of energy brought about by the war is characterized by multidimensional shifts in power and crises of international scope. The Russian invasion of Ukraine marked a turning point for the European Union's energy policy, triggering a comprehensive revision of its strategic orientation. The long-standing energy dependence on Russia, which had been consolidated through interstate agreements and extensive pipeline networks, was fundamentally challenged, as revisionist Russia leveraged energy resources as a means of pressure and geopolitical influence. In response to this situation, the EU sought to strengthen its energy sovereignty through a complex strategy combining the diversification of suppliers, the restructuring of the existing supply chain, and the acceleration of the green transition.

This process unfolds within a broader geopolitical environment, where the gradual disengagement from the Russian energy sphere reshapes power balances across the European continent. The weakening of Russian influence enhances the role of other geopolitical actors, such as the United States, as well as regional partners in North Africa and the Eastern Mediterranean. At the same time, the shift toward renewable energy sources makes access to raw materials of high strategic value increasingly critical, creating new forms of dependence and competition at the global level. Overall, the EU's energy strategy is no longer confined to technical or environmental dimensions; it now emerges as a tool of political and geoeconomic power, integrated into the broader effort to build a more resilient and strategically autonomous Europe.

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**Introduction:**

In the contemporary globalized environment, the pursuit of security is constant. Challenges to international security are increasingly linked to the need to manage multi-layered crises, which directly affect the geopolitics of energy and the balance of the international system. Modern “poly-crises” , the simultaneous emergence and interaction of crises of different nature, have radically reshaped international relations and the functioning of the global economy<sup>1</sup>. The energy -among others- crisis triggered by the war, following the COVID-19 pandemic, clearly demonstrated the transition from fragmented, isolated crises to interconnected “mega-crises,” revealing the need for resilient national and supranational mechanisms, especially in the field of energy and fossil fuels<sup>2</sup>. Within this context, the geopolitics of energy acquires central importance.

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<sup>1</sup> Karatrantos, T. and Tsakonas, P. (2023). “Designing the Internal Security Strategy: Challenges and Prospects”. <https://www.eliamep.gr/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/Policy-paper-130-Tsakonas-and-Karatrantos-EL-final.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> Karatrantos, T. (2024). “Seeking Security in an Era of Crises: The Misinterpreted Right and the New Social Contract”. <https://www.politeianet.gr/el/products/9786182044650-triadafulllos-karatrados->

The energy crisis that emerged as a result of the war exposed the EU's structural vulnerability, forcing it to seek alternative suppliers and new privileged partnerships. This article examines the extent to which the EU is attempting a complete decoupling from Russian fossil fuels during the ongoing war crisis, and explores whether this process may lead to the creation of a new form of energy dependence — particularly on the United States — through new transatlantic energy partnerships.

## 1. Energy Restructuring:

The invasion of 24 February 2022 marked the beginning of a new historical era. The outbreak of the war deeply disrupted relations between the West, Russia, and the United States, highlighting the expansion of the energy crisis, the environmental impacts of hostilities, and the geopolitical consequences of this confrontation<sup>3</sup>. At the same time, climate change continued to act as a catalyst magnifying existing crises — a “threat multiplier.” The deterioration of climatic conditions increases the vulnerability of states, creates new sources of insecurity, and intensifies conflicts at regional and international levels<sup>4</sup>. These consequences degrade the environment and quality of life, while also influencing internal and external security dynamics.

Within the changing international landscape, the European Union was compelled to reassess fundamental aspects of its strategic autonomy, as well as its current policies on energy security and cooperation. In this framework, it seeks to accelerate the energy transition through Renewable Energy Sources and secure access to critical raw materials, in order to achieve climate neutrality and reduce dependence on Russian fossil fuels. Under these conditions, the EU prioritizes energy disengagement from Russia as a response to the geopolitical pressures caused by the invasion.

Simultaneously, the integration of green policies and the development of alternative energy routes — primarily through renewables — gain significant importance. The EU committed to achieving climate neutrality by 2050 and full energy decoupling from Russia by 2027, embedding environmental action within broader strategies for energy security and strategic autonomy.

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<sup>3</sup> Aligiazaki, E, (2018). Energy Policy and EU Law. <https://www.sakkoulas.gr/el/editions/a-aligiazaki-energeiaki-politiki-kai-dikaio-tis-ee-2018/?srsltid=AfmBOop395nfCErV6m7kxulxcU7hGQTL34cdVO-5uNqxYGxalu3VaNwX>

<sup>4</sup> Dokos, T, (2019). “The path is made by our steps”.

[https://www.academia.edu/104272807/%CE%9F\\_%CE%94%CF%81%CF%8C%CE%BC%CE%BF%CF%82\\_%CE%B5%CE%AF%CE%BD%CE%B1%CE%B9\\_%CF%84%CE%B1\\_%CE%92%CE%AE%CE%BC%CE%B1%CF%84%CE%AC\\_%CE%BC%CE%B1%CF%82\\_%CE%9F%CE%B4%CE%B9%CE%BA%CF%8C%CF%82\\_%CE%A7%CE%AC%CF%81%CF%84%CE%B7%CF%82\\_%CE%95%CE%B8%CE%BD%CE%B9%CE%BA%CE%AE%CF%82\\_%CE%91%CF%83%CF%86%CE%AC%CE%BB%CE%B5%CE%B9%CE%B1%CF%82\\_%CE%B3%CE%B9%CE%B1\\_%CF%84%CE%B7%CE%BD\\_%CE%95%CE%BB%CE%BB%CE%AC%CE%B4%CE%B1\\_%CF%84%CE%BF%CF%85\\_%CE%9C%CE%AD%CE%BB%CE%BB%CE%BF%CE%BD%CF%84%CE%BF%CF%82](https://www.academia.edu/104272807/%CE%9F_%CE%94%CF%81%CF%8C%CE%BC%CE%BF%CF%82_%CE%B5%CE%AF%CE%BD%CE%B1%CE%B9_%CF%84%CE%B1_%CE%92%CE%AE%CE%BC%CE%B1%CF%84%CE%AC_%CE%BC%CE%B1%CF%82_%CE%9F%CE%B4%CE%B9%CE%BA%CF%8C%CF%82_%CE%A7%CE%AC%CF%81%CF%84%CE%B7%CF%82_%CE%95%CE%B8%CE%BD%CE%B9%CE%BA%CE%AE%CF%82_%CE%91%CF%83%CF%86%CE%AC%CE%BB%CE%B5%CE%B9%CE%B1%CF%82_%CE%B3%CE%B9%CE%B1_%CF%84%CE%B7%CE%BD_%CE%95%CE%BB%CE%BB%CE%AC%CE%B4%CE%B1_%CF%84%CE%BF%CF%85_%CE%9C%CE%AD%CE%BB%CE%BB%CE%BF%CE%BD%CF%84%CE%BF%CF%82)

The Russian invasion served as a turning point, prompting the European Commission to adopt the “REPowerEU” plan<sup>5</sup>. This program is based on three pillars: (a) energy saving and demand reduction, (b) strengthening renewable energy production, and (c) restructuring supply routes and energy networks through the expansion of international partnerships.

Also, the «RED III» directive stipulates that by 2030, renewable sources should cover at least 55% of the energy mix, aligned with the “Fit for 55” strategy<sup>6</sup>. By 2023, the EU’s dependence on Russian natural gas had dramatically decreased — from 45% to about one-third of total demand. At the same time, the European Commission announced its goal of full disengagement by 2027 according to the «REPowerEU» roadmap<sup>7</sup>. Yet, the legal framework for implementation remains unclear, as compliance mechanisms and transitional exemptions have not been fully defined.

The legislative proposal of 17 June 2025 stipulates that the Union’s energy independence will come into force on 1 January 2026, except for contracts concluded before that date. The European Union Agency for the Cooperation of Energy Regulators will oversee national energy plans, while member states must submit national strategies aligned with REPowerEU by 1 March 2026<sup>8</sup>. It also includes a ban on new LNG import contracts with Russian companies or their subsidiaries.

Russia had long been the main supplier of oil, natural gas, and solid fuels to the EU, and in certain cases provided uranium for nuclear energy. Despite political tensions, energy flows increased, with rising Russian gas exports until 2025<sup>9</sup>.

## 2. Sanctions Imposed on Russia

The war crisis triggered an unprecedented international response expressed through a wide range of economic, energy-related, and financial sanctions. Since 2022, the European Union decided to suspend the certification of the Nord Stream 2 pipeline, marking the beginning of a new phase of energy distancing from Russia. During the same period, the United States and the United Kingdom imposed bans on Russian oil imports, while in May 2022 an embargo on maritime shipments of Russian oil to Europe was adopted. The sixth EU sanctions package in June 2022 established a complete embargo on seaborne Russian oil imports, while granting temporary exemptions to certain member states with high dependence on Russian energy, such as Hungary, Slovakia, and the Czech Republic. At the same time, the EU and its allies

<sup>5</sup> European Commission, (2022). “REPowerEU: Roadmap to fully end EU dependency on Russian energy”. Available at: <https://commission.europa.eu>

<sup>6</sup> European Commission, (2022). “European Commission (2022). Fit for 55: Delivering the European Green Deal”. Available at: <https://commission.europa.eu>

<sup>7</sup> European Commission, (2025). “Roadmap for the EU’s Full Independence from Russian Energy”. [https://commission.europa.eu/news-and-media/news/roadmap-fully-end-eu-dependency-russian-energy-2025-05-06\\_el](https://commission.europa.eu/news-and-media/news/roadmap-fully-end-eu-dependency-russian-energy-2025-05-06_el)

<sup>8</sup> ACER (2011). “About the Agency”. Available at: <https://www.acer.europa.eu/the-agency/about-acer>

<sup>9</sup> Insider, (2025). “Natural Gas: Russian supply to account for 40% in 2025 – Consumption increases.” <https://www.insider.gr/oikonomia/387939/fysiko-aerio-sto-40-meridio-toy-rosikoy-kaysimoy-2025-ayximeni-i-katanalosi>

decided to exclude major Russian banks from the SWIFT system, restricting Russia's access to the international financial environment and hindering its commercial transactions<sup>10</sup>.

Beyond economic measures, export bans on technologies and equipment linked to key industrial and energy sectors were imposed, aiming to undermine Russia's technological and production base. Sanctions also expanded to maritime and insurance activities, prohibiting European companies from transporting or insuring Russian oil. In response, in September 2022 Russia significantly reduced natural gas flows through Nord Stream 1 and cut off energy supplies to several member states, leveraging its energy privilege as a tool of pressure. In December of the same year, the G7 countries, in cooperation with the EU, imposed a price cap on Russian oil, aiming to reduce Moscow's state revenues<sup>11</sup>.

Facing this sanctions regime, Russia redirected its energy strategy toward new markets in Asia, primarily China and India. This geoeconomic shift further intensifies global competition and contributes to the broader confrontational dynamic between the United States and China. Meanwhile, in the Eastern Mediterranean, a new energy cooperation framework is emerging, centered on the «EastMed» pipeline designed to transport natural gas to Europe through cooperation between Israel, Cyprus, and Egypt<sup>12</sup>. In this context, Greece acquires an upgraded role as an energy hub and transit corridor, while the development of alternative routes may act as a counterbalance to Egypt's growing influence through LNG exports<sup>13</sup>.

These sanctions constitute a coordinated mechanism of pressure aiming to limit Russia's economic and energy power while restricting its ability to finance the continuation of the war.

### **3. The Role of Natural Gas Pipelines and Energy Restructuring**

Undoubtedly, the energy dimension of the war in Ukraine highlighted the strategic importance of natural gas pipelines for European supply security and of energy itself as a tool of pressure. The sabotage of the Nord Stream 1 and 2 pipelines in the Baltic Sea in September 2022 symbolized the radical shift in Europe's energy landscape, revealing how critical these infrastructures are for the balance of power between the

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<sup>10</sup> European Consilium (2025). "Sanctions imposed by the EU on Russia".

<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/el/policies/sanctions-against-russia/>

<sup>11</sup> European Commission (2022). "G7 agrees oil price cap: reducing Russia's revenues, while keeping global energy markets stable". [https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/it/ip\\_22\\_7468](https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/it/ip_22_7468)

<sup>12</sup> Dagoumas, A., & Flouros, F. (2017). "International Journal of Energy Economics and Policy: Energy Policy Formulation in Israel Following its Recent Gas Discoveries". <http://www.econjournals.com>

<sup>13</sup> Bahgat G., (2011). Israel's Energy Security: Regional Implications. Middle East Policy: Journal. <https://www.proquest.com/openview/a014d631afd0815891e73020bd33d8ef/1?cbl=31168&pq-origsite=gscholar> DOI: DOI:10.1111

EU and Russia<sup>14</sup>. The loss of Nord Stream operations caused major disruption in European energy markets, triggering sharp price increases, inflationary pressures, and significant fiscal burdens for member states. Governments adopted extensive support measures for citizens and businesses to mitigate the socio-economic effects of the crisis<sup>15</sup>.

Before 2022, Russia supplied roughly 45% of the EU's natural gas needs, while Gazprom — a state-controlled company — produced nearly two-thirds of domestic output and controlled key energy infrastructure<sup>16</sup>. According to Eurostat, the EU imported nearly 90% of the natural gas and 97% of the oil it consumed, with annual EU–Russia energy trade exceeding €99 billion. Germany, as the main European recipient of Russian gas, was particularly affected by the disruption. Its long-standing policy of energy cooperation with Moscow, which had bolstered industrial competitiveness through low-cost energy, proved structurally vulnerable in times of crisis<sup>17</sup>.

Beyond Nord Stream, the TurkStream and Blue Stream pipelines continue to transport Russian gas through Turkey and the Balkans, while the development of TAP and TANAP strengthened the strategic importance of Southeastern Europe — especially Greece — as a transit hub, connecting the EU to supply routes from Azerbaijan and the Middle East<sup>18</sup>.

To address immediate needs, the EU turned to LNG imports from the United States, Qatar, Norway, and Algeria. This new dependence may create long-term geoeconomic vulnerabilities, influencing the trajectory of European strategic autonomy. For this purpose, the EU invested in energy infrastructure, including new LNG terminals in Rotterdam, Brunsbüttel, and Alexandroupolis.

The energy crisis became a turning point for European security policy, leading to a redefinition of priorities regarding self-sufficiency and resilience. The new architecture is based on network interconnection, joint gas storage, and the acceleration of the green transition. Europe aims to build a unified and resilient energy space capable of responding to crises without reliance on single suppliers.

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<sup>14</sup> Zhiznin, S., Z & Timokhov, V., M (2019). "Economic and Geopolitical Aspects of the NordStream2 Gas Pipeline". Available at: <https://cyberleninka.ru/article/n/economic-and-geopolitical-aspectsof-the-nord-stream-2-gas-pipeline/viewer>

<sup>15</sup> ScienceDirect (2020). Geopolitics of the Nord Stream 2 pipeline. [Online] Available at: <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0030438720300259>

<sup>16</sup> Mikulska, A. (2020). "Nord Stream 2: between monopoly and diversification". [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/338895725\\_Nord\\_Stream\\_2\\_between\\_monopoly\\_and\\_diversification](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/338895725_Nord_Stream_2_between_monopoly_and_diversification)

<sup>17</sup> Chikhladge, D. (2022). "The Geopolitics of Energy in Russia-Germany Relations: A Neorealist Interpretation". <https://ntnuopen.ntnu.no/ntnu-xmlui/handle/11250/3003324>

<sup>18</sup> Baconi, T. (2017). "Pipelines and Pipedreams: How the EU can support a regional gas hub in the Eastern Mediterranean". [https://ecfr.eu/publication/pipelines\\_and\\_pipedreams\\_how\\_the\\_eu\\_can\\_support\\_a\\_regional\\_gas\\_hub\\_in\\_7276/](https://ecfr.eu/publication/pipelines_and_pipedreams_how_the_eu_can_support_a_regional_gas_hub_in_7276/)

#### 4. LNG, Alliances, and New Dependencies

The gradual disengagement of the EU from Russian energy coincided with the parallel rise of the United States as a global energy power. Within a few years, the U.S. transformed from importer to one of the world's largest exporters of oil and natural gas, reshaping international energy balances. This evolution strengthened Washington's geoeconomic influence and reconfigured its relations with Russia and China.

During the war, both the U.S. and Russia found themselves in advantageous positions with regard to exploiting the crisis. Russia, despite sanctions, benefited from soaring global energy prices and maintained significant revenues<sup>19</sup>. The U.S. filled the European supply gap, becoming the EU's primary LNG provider. This new reality enhanced transatlantic energy cooperation but also raised concerns about the emergence of a new dependency. Through its energy diplomacy, Washington acquires strategic control over European flows, partially limiting the EU's autonomy.

U.S. energy strategy also forms part of a broader effort to constrain Russian and Chinese influence. The U.S. uses its energy dominance to expand its role in low-carbon technologies, green hydrogen, batteries, and critical minerals. Thus, the U.S.–China–Russia competition extends into the core of the green transition. Within this environment, the EU seeks to enhance its strategic autonomy by creating a resilient and diversified energy model. The “energy trilemma” — sustainability, security, affordability — guides this effort.

The energy crisis acted as a catalyst for forging a new European identity, where energy policy links directly to strategic autonomy and geopolitical independence<sup>20</sup>. The challenge lies in ensuring the energy transition without replacing one external dependence with another. To secure reliable alternatives, the EU strengthened relations with both traditional and emerging partners. Upgraded cooperation is evident with the U.S. (LNG), Norway (pipeline gas), Algeria, Qatar, and various African states for renewable projects<sup>21</sup>. Relations with Asian partners have also expanded, especially in green hydrogen technologies and energy infrastructure such as the “European Hydrogen Bank”<sup>22</sup>. These shifts generate a new energy landscape where dependency relations increasingly transform into cooperation frameworks, guided by geopolitical stability, EU strategic autonomy, technological innovation, and climate commitments.

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<sup>19</sup> Howarth, R, (2024). “The greenhouse gas footprint of liquefied natural gas (LNG) exported from the United States”. <https://doi.org/10.1002/ese3.1934>

<sup>20</sup> Blavoukos, S, & Pagoulatos, G, (2022). “Europe in the aftermath of Putin's war: The European Union within the new European security architecture.” <https://www.eliamep.gr/i-evropi-meta-ton-polemou-poutin-i-ee-sti-nea-evropaiki-architektoniki-asfaleias-spyros-blavoukos-kai-giorgos-pagoulatos/>

<sup>21</sup> Trans European Policy Studies Association, (2025). What future for Europe's partnership with the United States? <https://tepsa.eu/policy-advice/what-future-for-europes-partnership-with-the-united-states/>

<sup>22</sup> European Commission, (2022). “European Hydrogen Bank”. [https://energy.ec.europa.eu/topics/eus-energy-system/hydrogen/european-hydrogen-bank\\_en](https://energy.ec.europa.eu/topics/eus-energy-system/hydrogen/european-hydrogen-bank_en)

## 5. The War as a Poly-Crisis and International Security

A central question concerns the impact of the EU's disengagement from Russian fossil fuels on international security and the geopolitics of energy. The gradual decoupling constitutes a profound geoeconomic shift. The war accelerated the emergence of a new European energy policy aimed at enhancing resilience and preventing external dependence from fossil fuels. This transformation reconfigures trade flows, alliances, and the existing status quo. Energy policy becomes a decisive tool of foreign policy with direct consequences for the international security system<sup>23</sup>.

However, the EU's pivot toward the U.S. raises questions about the emergence of a new dependency and a new energy superpower dynamic. Meanwhile, energy prices soared as the EU moved to more flexible — but more expensive — alternatives. In the field of technology and international (in)security, the energy crisis has heightened vulnerabilities: cyberattacks, propaganda, drone warfare, and hybrid threats in Ukraine underline the need for strengthened protection of energy and digital infrastructures<sup>24</sup>. Investment in green hydrogen, LNG terminals, and gas storage became crucial to strengthen EU self-sufficiency.

In the broader international context, expectations for resolving the conflict remain modest. Following the 2025 «Washington Summit», the U.S. expressed willingness for support for Ukraine through security guarantees and military assistance. Yet, guarantees remain insufficient without legally binding frameworks. The EU must act as an active geopolitical player, defending the foundations of the European project and the principles of international law.

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## Conclusion

In conclusion, the EU's energy dependence on Russian fossil fuels has long constituted a major geopolitical vulnerability. The “mega-crisis” of the Russia–Ukraine war reshaped global geoeconomic relations and established new dynamics for the European security environment. Achieving full energy disengagement from Russia remains a complex and demanding objective, given the global interdependencies. Emerging reliance on alternative energy suppliers risks: constraining the EU's strategic autonomy, limiting its capacity to shape its geopolitical trajectory and challenging its ability to manage internal crises effectively.

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<sup>23</sup> Lukas, S., (2025). Who Should Phase Out Fossil Fuels First? A Geopolitical Approach to Determining the Sequencing of Fossil Fuel Phaseouts. Διαθέσιμο στο:

<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/14650045.2025.2517785#abstract>

<sup>24</sup> Borch, O, & Heier, T, (2024). Understanding hybrid threats. Available at:

<https://www.taylorfrancis.com/reader/download/c80504b0-1d4c-4488-83bb-4bcb4d13ea9f/chapter/pdf?context=ubx>