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Caught in the Liberal Pragmatic Trap? How Political Parties Viewed Energy Dependence on Russia in Three European Countries 2012–2022

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Abstract

After Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, and its subsequent decision to stop its gas export to Europe, Europe's energy dependence on Russia was put on full display. In this paper, we map energy relations with Russia in three European countries that in the period of analysis between 2012 and 2022 were among the most important energy customers of Russia: Poland, Germany and the Netherlands. Moreover, we examine how this issue has been addressed – if at all – in party programs in elections in the same period. Examining party programs, we argue, brings new insights and a better understanding of how energy policies and relations with Russia were viewed in the three countries – and in the EU in general in that period. The paper identifies two ideal types – the 'liberal pragmatists', who treated strong energy interdependence as a possible conflict-mitigating measure, and the 'hard core realists', who viewed strong energy dependence on Russia as a possible source of strategic threat.

Keywords

Russia, gas, Europe, Germany, Poland, the Netherlands

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Introduction

After Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, and its subsequent decision to stop its gas export to Europe, Europe's energy dependence on Russia was recognized by most European policymakers as a real problem. With hindsight European decision-makers have been criticized by several pundits and policymakers for having allowed such energy dependence on Russia to develop (for more on history and various framings of this relationship, see Talseth, 2017). In this paper, we discuss how the issues of energy dependence and economic interdependence between the EU and Russia have been addressed in party programs in three countries – Poland, Germany and the Netherlands. These countries were in the period of analysis, 2012–2022, among the most important energy customers of Russia. At the same time and at least partly due to their differing historical experience with Russia, they represent different national approaches to energy cooperation with Russia in the EU prior to the Russian full-scale invasion of Ukraine. Germany and Poland can be said to represent

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opposite poles in the European debate on energy dependence on Russia since Germany until recently based its policy towards Russia on what we here call a 'liberal pragmatist' approach, while Poland represented a 'hardcore realist' approach. The Dutch case is included not only because of the volume of energy trade between the Netherlands and Russia but also due to political developments in the Netherlands in the aftermath of the shooting down of MH17 in 2014 that made Dutch decision makers more wary of cooperation with Russia.

In light of existing theories of interdependence in international relations, the article starts by examining the actual scope of dependence between the countries and Russia prior to the Russian full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022. We examine how the issue of interdependence is framed in the broader debate on international relations, paying special attention to the discussion on the relationship between interdependence and conflict. The main aim and the novelty of the study, however, is that it investigates how the question of energy (inter)dependence on Russia has been framed not in the expert discourses but in the national political debates in the three countries. Political parties represent various groups in democratic societies, and we argue that an examination of how various questions are addressed in party programs – in this case energy dependence on Russia – can provide some important clues on how to understand the importance of these questions in the broader political context (Laver & Garry, 2000). In this way, we build on existing scholarship that has underlined how political parties matter for foreign policy in general including when it comes to different countries relations with Russia (Onderco, 2019). The research questions to be investigated in this paper are as follows:

> What was the actual level of economic interdependence with and energy dependence on Russia in the three countries in the period under study?
>
> To what extent did political parties in the three countries view energy dependence on Russia as a political challenge prior to Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022?
>
> How did the annexation of Crimea and Russia's military intervention in Donbas in 2014 influence the framing of energy dependence on Russia in political programs of parties taking part in the electoral contest in the three countries in question?

First, we account for how interdependence has been understood in international relations. Then we discuss two diametrically different ways of framing the EU–Russia energy relations – either as a liberal pragmatic opportunity or as a serious realist concern. In the following section, we examine how these energy (inter)dependence-related questions have been addressed in national party programs in the three countries in question. We treat party programs as a primary source and use various content analysis methods to reveal how these programs approach questions related to energy dependence on Russia. Finally, we try to gauge what impact the Russian war on Ukraine has had on the debate on energy dependence on Russia and what measures have been taken by the West to address this strategic challenge. By the term 'strategic challenge' we mean a situation where actors' positions can be negatively affected by other actors that use various types of levers to influence their choices in a way that could limit their freedom of choice – for instance, Russia using European energy dependence as leverage, that is a type of 'Russian energy blackmail'.

Understanding interdependence in international relations

The term 'interdependence' is used to describe the state of being dependent upon one another. According to the Merriam-Webster dictionary, the term was used for the first time in English in 1817. A quick Google Books Ngram analysis of the 2019 corpus of American English reveals that the use of this concept grew rapidly until 1977, decreased in the period between 1977 and 2001, and increased again a bit between 2001 and 2018.[1]

There is a good explanation why this term received most attention around 1977, as this was the year when Robert Keohane and Joseph Nye (Keohane & Nye, 1977) published their seminal work on interdependence in international relations. They argued that it is not raw power that is the decisive factor shaping relations between states but rather the fact that these relations are characterized by what they dubbed 'complex interdependence'. Their conclusion was therefore that international relations are shaped not by power relations alone but rather by distribution of resources and vulnerabilities among various types of actors, states being only one of several categories of actors operating on the international stage.

The publication of this book opened a new chapter in the debate concerning the impact interdependence may have on international relations. While the realists of various persuasions contended that military power was the main 'currency' in international relations and saw the search for absolute security as the main motivation of actors, liberal institutionalists presented a more positive view on human nature and argued that the rising economic interdependence was the best way to secure peace and security among nations, military power being much less useable and relevant (Copeland, 2017; Mansfield & Pollins, 2003; Sassoon, 1981).

Later, Pevehouse (2004) revealed the complexity of questions related to the concept of 'interdependence' and its practical use in the study of international relations. According to him, the proponents of the liberal approach

argued that increasing levels of trade dependence between states will result in increasing political cooperation among those states. The liberals also claimed that higher levels of trade dependence between states will lessen the probability of political-military conflict among them. Realists, by contrast, argued that higher levels of trade dependence between states will lead to a greater probability of conflict between those states and that trade has no systematic relationship with political-military conflict. Pevehouse's conclusion was that both realists and commercial liberals were partly right, as a higher level of trade simultaneously makes the presence of small amounts of conflict more likely yet seems to restrain the outbreak of rampant fighting (Pevehouse, 2004, p. 261).

How relations among interdependent actors will develop also depends, however, on whether this interdependence is symmetrical or asymmetrical. In a situation of symmetrical interdependence where all interacting actors face the same negative consequences in the case of a conflict, and at the same time can reap similar benefits when cooperating, the stakes for undertaking any measures undermining the working cooperative status quo seem to be higher. But in situations of asymmetrical interdependence, the less dependent actor may be more willing to take measures that will have negative consequences for others (DaDalt & Park, 2020; Esakova, 2012; Farrell & Newman, 2019).

When evaluating the possible consequences that interdependence may have for the relations between Russia and the EU member states, it is therefore important to (1) establish whether the relations between those actors can be characterized as interdependence; (2) assess whether this interdependence is of symmetrical or asymmetrical nature; (3) identify resources that are crucial to Russia and the EU member states as well as vulnerabilities these actors must consider when making decisions on how to relate to each other. In the following section, we therefore present and interpret a set of data on energy trade between Russia and the EU in general to provide answers to these three crucial questions.

Framing Russia–EU energy interdependence: A liberal pragmatic opportunity or a realist concern?

Energy cooperation between the EU and Russia and its predecessor the Soviet Union has a long history and has gone through various phases. Major European economies decided to diversify their energy supplies after the shock of the oil embargo imposed by the Arab exporters in the wake of the Arab–Israeli war of 1973. The planned Soviet energy supplies were to help address this serious economic problem; however, there were also some political implications that led to a heated debate about these plans (Blinken, 1987; Gustafson, 1989; Jensen et al., 1983; Stern, 1987). On the one hand, there were those who could be labelled liberal pragmatists, who argued that providing the Soviets with access to the European energy market would help Europe diversify its energy supplies. Moreover, it would create a situation of energy interdependence that could mitigate the risk of conflict between the Soviet Union and the West, which were entangled at that time in the Cold War. On the other hand, there were also those who could be labelled hardcore realists, who argued that giving the main geopolitical and ideological Soviet rival access to the European energy market would not only provide the USSR/Russia with important political leverage and make Europe more exposed to Soviet/Russian political pressure but could also generate huge revenues to the USSR that could further be spent on increasing Soviet military capabilities.

The collapse of the Soviet Union and the following emergence of Russia as the main external supplier of energy to the enlarging EU did not put an end to this debate between liberal pragmatists and hardcore realists (Balmaceda, 2000; Baran, 2007; European Commission, 2000; Hill, 2004; Jaffe & Manning, 2001; Lane, 1999; Leijonhielm & Larsson, 2004; Matlary, 1997; Monaghan & Conflict Studies Research, 2005). On the contrary, some EU actors who depended on supplies of energy from Russia feared that Russia could also use this energy leverage to exert political influence, while others, believing in the mitigating effect of a strong energy interdependence, still argued that energy cooperation with Russia could help the West exert some positive influence on Russia (Tichý, 2019, p. 18). In the new post-Cold War situation, the liberal pragmatist wing, represented, for instance, by the German policymaking community, argued that by strengthening energy ties with the new Russia, the West would be able to push Russia in the right direction, make it adapt to the new geopolitical circumstances, and turn it, in the long run, into a full-fledged and trusted member of the enlarged liberal-democratic community. This approach informed German policy towards the new Russia, a policy often described as driven by the idea of '*Wandel durch handel*', or 'change through interaction' (Steinmeier, 2007). However, there were also those who continued to think about energy cooperation with Russia in purely realist terms (Godzimirski, 2009). They argued that energy dependence on Russia, rather than helping Europe to diversify its supply, provided Russia with a strong geopolitical leverage and constrained European choices by making the EU more exposed to Russian pressure (Busygina & Filippov, 2013). As Krickovic (2015) has argued, each side's fear of asymmetrical interdependence may spur behaviour along the lines of a security dilemma, where actions to secure one's own security interests must, as a matter of caution on the part of the other side, be met by countermeasures that rather create more and not less tension in the relationship. For its part, Russia has at

times downplayed these fears. In 2021, Russian foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov in an interview with a Hungarian newspaper responded the following to the newspaper's assertion that many European countries do not trust Russia and therefore criticize the construction of the natural gas pipe line Nord Stream 2 between Russia and Germany:

> 'We consider the Nord Stream 2 construction project purely business and a mutually beneficial project. Allegations that the pipeline will increase European dependence on Russian gas supplies are unfounded. In our opinion, it is much more appropriate to talk of it as positive interdependence since Russia is also interested in Europeans buying their products and certain energy sources' (Lavrov as quoted in Kottász, 2021).

Our first research question asked what the level of the actual economic interdependence was between Russia and the three European countries under study. The best indicator for measuring such interdependence is to look at the volume of general trade exchange between Russia and the EU.[2] In 2020, the exchange (import + export) between Russia and the EU reached the level of €174 billion, with Russia exporting goods worth €95 billion and Russia's import from the EU reaching almost €79 billion. Russia's surplus in trade with the EU reached slightly more than €16 billion. Only a year earlier, in 2019, the surplus had reached an impressive €57 billion; much higher prices for energy commodities, the main export from Russia, were the key reason for this.

In 2020, Russia ranked fifth on the list of EU trade partners and trade with Russia represented 4.8% of the total EU trade, with 5.5% of EU imports coming from Russia and 4.1% of the EU export reaching the Russian market. In the same year, the EU was Russia's *most* important trade partner, and it had 33.8% share of Russia's total trade – 33.8% of import to Russia came from the EU, and 33.7% of Russia's export went to the EU.

These trade figures may suggest an asymmetrical interdependence, with Russia being more dependent on having access to the EU for its exports and at the same time being dependent on EU-produced goods to cover its own needs. Also, the high level of trade surplus in Russia's favour suggests that Russia was more dependent than the EU – between 2010 and 2020 Russia's trade surplus with the EU reached an impressive €720 billion.

Are there any factors that can make this apparently asymmetrical economic interdependence in favour of the EU more balanced, and which could help, according to the advocates of the liberal institutional approach, limit the probability of a serious conflict between the two? To answer this question, it is important to map which sectors of the Russian economy and what Russian exporters would suffer the most if access to the EU market were to be limited as a consequence of decisions taken by the EU.

A quick examination of the data presented in Table 1 reveals that energy plays a major role in trade between the EU and Russia. It represented 63.3% of the value of all Russian exports to the EU in 2020, but also in previous years, the share of fuel in Russian export to the EU was high – 68.7% in 2019, 68.1% in 2018 and 67.6% in 2017. In 2020, however, energy represented only 13% of the EU total import (approx. €222 billion)[3] but Russia was the dominant supplier in carbohydrates and had in 2019 26.9% share in oil, 41.1% in gas and 46.7% in solid fuels imports to the EU. That said, in this short period alone, the export of fuels from Russia to the EU brought in more than €363 billion to Russian energy exporters. This represented 4.95% of the total value of the EU import in the same period but 26.6% of the total export from Russia, which illustrates a certain asymmetry in the economic relations in the EU's favour; Russia clearly depended on access to the EU market for most of the exported energy commodities, as illustrated in Table 1. The share of income from petroleum in the revenues of the federal state budget reached up to 50% in the years of the international oil boom (Ministry of Finance Russia, 2020). Many scholars thus argued that any negative developments in the energy trade between Russia and the EU could therefore constrain Russia's ability to realize ambitious state projects funded to a very large extent by that energy trade with the EU (Gaddy & Ickes, 2014, 2020; Guriev, 2020).

Nevertheless, such a high level of energy import dependence on only one supplier – Russia – with which the EU had developed more strained relations in the wake of Russia's 2014 annexation of Crimea and invasion of Donbas posed, in the opinion of many European actors, a serious security challenge (Godzimirski, 2014, 2016; Godzimirski & Græger, 2016). A possible weaponization by Russia of its energy leverage towards Europe could have severe consequences for the functioning of the EU economy and the well-being of EU citizens, as it could deprive them of access to energy needed for a smooth functioning of their societies (Godzimirski, 2016; Godzimirski & Nowak, 2018; Raik et al., 2019; Romanova, 2013). One can therefore argue that although Russia had a weaker hand in economic relations with the EU in general, the country had what could be labelled 'structural energy power' (for more on the concept of structural power, see Strange, 1987) in its relations with the EU that made the interdependence between those two actors less asymmetrical and more balanced (Krickovic, 2015; Sauvageot, 2020). However, how balanced were these relations when investigating Russia's relations with specific EU member states?

Energy dependence on Russia as a political challenge? Three EU consumers' domestic perspectives

When examining the impact of interdependence on Russia's relations with the EU, we must consider Russia's relations with individual EU member states. This has to do both with the nature of the EU itself and with Russia's preference for

Table 1. EU and Russia: Energy Resources, Energy-Related Vulnerabilities and Interdependencies.

	EU	Russia	Comments
Energy production (IEA 2020 for Russia; 2020 EU energy pocketbook for EU)	740.94 mtoe	1484.1 mtoe	
Energy consumption (IEA 2020 for Russia; 2020 EU energy pocketbook for EU)	1638.52 mtoe	759.3 mtoe	
Energy import (EU) and export (Russia) dependence[a]	61% of energy consumption	47.25% of production/ 701.3 mtoe	
Share of Russia in EU crude oil import 2019	26.9%		
Share of Russia in EU gas import 2019	41.1%		
Share of Russia in EU coal import 2019	46.7%		
Share of fuels in EU total import (crude petroleum and natural gas/energy – value)[b]	8.7%/13%		
Share of EU/Europe in Russia oil export (BP 2020)		53.5%/153 mtoe	
Share of EU/Europe in export of Russian petroleum products (BP 2020)		64.5%/106.1 mtoe	
Share of EU/Europe in Russia export of piped gas (BP 2020)		86.5%/188 bcm	
Share of EU/Europe in export of Russian LNG (BP 2020)		52%/20.5 bcm	
Share of EU/Europe in Russia coal export (BP 2020)		41%/2.41 EJ	
Share of petroleum revenues in Russian state budget[c] (average 2008–2019)		45%	Highest share: 51.28% in 2014; lowest share: 35.99% in 2016.28% share in 2020

[a]Data on EU energy import dependence and shares of Russia in imports from https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/cache/infographs/energy/bloc-2c.html#carouselControls?lang=en. Data on Russia's export dependence – authors calculation based on IEA 2020.
[b]https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Main_goods_in_extra-EU_imports and https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Extra-EU_trade_in_goods#EU_trade_by_main_product_groups.
[c]Calculated by author based on data provided by the Russian Ministry of Finance at https://minfin.gov.ru/ru/statistics/fedbud/execute/?id_65=80041-yezhegodnaya_informatsiya_ob_ispolnenii_federalnogo_byudzhetadannye_s_1_yanvarya_2006_g.

dealing with individual member states. This trend towards bilateralization has been even more obvious when it comes to energy policy and trade (Gawlikowska-Fyk et al., 2017; Westphal et al., 2017). According to Article 194 of the Lisbon Treaty, member states are responsible for the exploitation of their own energy resources, for choosing between different energy sources and for the general structure of their energy supply. The responsibility of the EU, on the other hand, is to ensure the functioning of the energy market within the union, to ensure the security of the energy supply, to promote energy efficiency and energy saving along with the development of new and renewable forms of energy, as well as to promote the interconnection of energy networks to make the internal energy market more flexible. This intra-EU division of labour and Russia's preference for dealing with individual member states rather than with the EU as a whole makes it important to examine the impact of interdependence on Russia's relations with individual member states that until recently were Russia's major energy partners.

In this subsection, we discuss how the political parties in these three countries grappled with the interdependence-related dilemmas stemming from the energy relations with Russia within the broader EU-defined regulatory and normative environment. We look at party manifestos, as these, also in the field of international relations, are recognized as a valid measure of political positions held by the population (Boekle et al., 1999; Wagner, 2020).

However, before diving into individual positions of individual states, we start by presenting key energy figures in Table 2 to illustrate how Russia mattered in the energy calculations of these three member states in the 2014–2022 period also after the Russian aggression against Ukraine in 2014 and until the Russian full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022. Then, we follow-up with a detailed examination of how major parties in the three countries in question have dealt – or not dealt – with these 'energy dependence on Russia'-related questions in their policy programs since 2012. Table 2 demonstrates not only how important energy relations with Russia were for the three countries in question before 24 February 2022 but also how crucial access to these national energy markets was for Russia and for its strategy of monetization of its energy

resources. These figures illustrate the mutual interdependence (dependence on energy/access to energy markets), how the size of national energy markets in this context matters, as well as how Russia has managed to retain its dominant position on these three national markets even after its 2014 military intervention in Ukraine.

Germany

Prior to Russia's invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, Germany had been Russia's main political and economic partner in the EU. The German approach largely falls in line with what we have described as 'liberal pragmatist'. German policies towards Russia have historically been informed by the idea that the only way to influence developments in Russia is through entering into a multifaceted cooperation, described in the German debate as *intertwining* (*Verflechtung*). Germany's energy cooperation with Russia has been viewed as essential in this context, as it was believed to be mutually beneficial in economic terms. Energy cooperation was also to serve as an instrument of conflict prevention rooted in the liberal institutional paradigm informing German policy in more general terms. The German policy towards Russia has also been driven by some strong additional commercial/mercantilist motivations and by the German self-perception as a European civilian power responsible for securing the peaceful coexistence of Russia and the EU on the continent (Adomeit, 2012; Fischer, 2020; Spanger, 2020; Szabo, 2014; Trenin, 2018; Vasiliev, 2015).

In the 2013 *Bundestag* election, there was a strong emphasis on the role of the business community in shaping

Table 2. Energy Interdependence Between Russia and Germany, the Netherlands and Poland (Key Figures).

Indicator	Germany	The Netherlands	Poland
Energy production (mtoe) (IEA 2020)	111.7	36.4	62.4
Energy consumption (mtoe) (IEA 2020)	302.1	72.9	105.8
Net energy imports (mtoe) (IEA 2020)/total energy imports EU country sheets 2021	200.3/239.8	52.5/200.3	47.2/63.5
Energy import dependence in % (net imports/energy consumption) (IEA 2020/EU country sheets 2021)	66.3/67.6	72.9/64.7	44.6/46.6
Import dependence oil (EU country sheets 2021) in%	97.3	101.6	97.3
Import dependence gas (EU country sheets 2021) in%	100.1	26	83.1
Import dependence solid fuels (EU country sheets 2021) in%	49.6	102	6
Cost of petroleum and gas import 2020 (€billion)[a]	20.2	25.2	6.9
Share of petroleum and gas in total import 2020 (% of value)[a]	5.4	8.3	9.4
Share of EU import of petroleum and gas 2020, in %[a]	13.6	16.9	4.7
Oil import total/from Russia (mtoe) 2019[b]	128.1/33.8	147/32.5	35.5/22.6
Share of oil import from Russia % of total oil import	26.3	22.1	63.7
Share of EU 28 total oil import/from Russia 2019 in %[b]	13.7/16.4	15.8/15.8	3.8/11.0
Gas import total/from Russia (bcm) 2019[c]	94.8/46.2	59.2/16.2	17.7/9.6
Share of gas import from Russia % of total gas import	48.7	27.4	54.2
Share of EU 28 natural gas import/from Russia 2019 in %[c]	19.4/27.3	12.1/9.6	3.6/5.7
Solid fuels import total/from Russia (mt) 2019[d]	43/19.3	10.5/4.3	17.1/10.8
Share of solid fuels import from Russia in % of the total import of solid fuels	44.9	41	63.2
Share of EU 28 total solid fuels import/from Russia 2019 in %[d]	29.8/33.1	7.3/7.4	11.9/18.5
2019 Primary energy consumption EJoules (BP2020)	13.14	3.51	4.28
Share of oil/Russian oil in PEC in % (BP2020)	35.6/10.8	47.0/38.8	31.3/22.1
Share of gas/Russian gas in PEC in % (BP2020)	24.3/13.7	37.9/15.4	17/8.6
Share of solid fuels/Russian solid fuels in PEC in % (BP2020)	17.5/2.4	7.7/2.0	44.6/4.2
Share of gas, oil and solid fuels imported from Russia in PEC 2019 (BP 2020)	26.9	56.2	34.9

[a]https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Main_goods_in_extra-EU_imports.
[b]Data for 2019 from imports of oil and petroleum products by partner country [NRG_TI_OIL__custom_921909], update 13.04.2021.
[c]Data for 2019 on gas from imports of natural gas by partner country [NRG_TI_GAS__custom_921937], update 13.04.2021.
[d]Data for 2019 on solid fuels from imports of natural gas by partner country [NRG_TI_GAS__custom_921937], update 13.04.2021.

the energy relations with Russia. Both major parties – the Christian-Democratic Union (CDU) as well as the Social Democratic Party (SPD) – highlighted that the responsibility for energy security primarily lies with businesses (Christlich-demokratische Union/Christlich-Soziale Union, 2013; Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschland, 2013). The Green party, on the other hand, underlined the need to move away from dependence on raw materials, including fossil fuels coming amongst others from Russia, paying special attention to questions related to the energy transition (Bündnis 90/Die Grünen, 2013). This policy, however, was driven mostly by environmental and not hard realist security concerns, which makes it difficult to place the Green party on this axis of liberal pragmatist versus hard realist concerns. The only party that explicitly advocated decreasing dependence on gas imports on a single supplier was the liberal FDP, but even then, without explicitly mentioning Russia (Freie Demokratische Partei, 2013).

The focus slightly shifted in 2017. Both CDU/CSU and SPD made references to an energy transition towards more sustainable and renewable sources but not as strongly as The Left (Die Linke) or the Greens (Bündnis 90/Die Grünen, 2017; Christlich-demokratische Union/Christlich-Soziale Union, 2017; Die Linke, 2017; Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschland, 2017). None of the parties explicitly mentioned energy supplies coming from Russia as a challenge to national or economic security, as could have been expected in light of Russia's direct military intervention in Ukraine in 2014.

In the manifestos released ahead of the 2021 elections, however, some parties made explicit references to Russia in relation to energy security. In their manifesto, the Greens called for stopping the construction of the Nord Stream 2 pipeline. Russia was not mentioned and they primarily criticized the pipeline project for 'cementing decades-long dependence on climate-damaging resources', and only secondarily opted to strengthen 'our energy policy sovereignty' (both quotes Bündnis 90/Die Grünen, 2021, p. 14).

The fact that Russia is hardly mentioned by German parties in relation to energy issues is not entirely surprising. As the data in Table 1 indicates, the cost of petroleum and gas imports from Russia represented only 5.4% of Germany's imports in total. Germany also seemed to have developed a fairly balanced policy of energy import diversification. In 2019, gas imports from Russia represented 48.7% of all gas imports to Germany, solid fuels originating from Russia stood for 44.9% of all imported solid fuels and import of oil from Russia represented 26.3% of oil imports to Germany. Altogether, the import of gas, oil and solid fuels from Russia in 2019 covered 26.9% of the primary energy consumption (PEC) in Germany. These data can therefore explain why Russia did not figure greatly in the partisan's considerations in Germany. As Duffield (2009) has argued, gas import dependence was not seen as a major security threat in Germany due to the successful attempts of German elites to downplay the threat combined with their ability to diversify supplies.

The Netherlands

The Netherlands is one of the main European importers of energy commodities. In 2020, the Netherlands was the largest importer of petroleum in the EU. Its imports of €25 billion represented 16.9 % of total EU imports from countries outside the EU, and Russia was one of the main suppliers: imports of Russian oil, gas and solid fuels represented 56.9% of the Dutch primary energy consumption in 2020.[4] The Netherlands is interesting here because the country decided to reduce, or even end, gas production from its main fields[5] and would have to find new sources of energy to meet its energy needs and supply its well-developed petroleum industry that still plays an important part in the country's economy. Between 2013 and 2018, domestic gas production in the Netherlands fell by 55% and energy import dependency increased from 29% to 72%. In 2021, the Netherlands became a net gas importer for the first time in its recent history.[6]

The Dutch policy towards Russia, however, was until 2014 similarly to the German one, driven mostly by pragmatic commercial interests. However, after the flight MH17 full of Dutch tourists was shot down over Donbas by Russia-backed separatists, the relations between the two countries worsened significantly. The tragic incident cost the lives of almost 200 Dutch citizens. It did not help that Russia denied any responsibility for the crash and, in fact, adopted a more aggressive policy towards The Hague, trying on many occasions to influence and manipulate Dutch public opinion and political processes in the country (Brattberg & Maurer, 2018; Lamond & Bergmann, 2020).[7]

While the situation in the Netherlands was very similar to that in Germany, the awareness about the risks of energy dependence appears to have been higher. During the 2012 elections, almost all parties called for decreasing dependence on oil and gas imports. Some parties – such as the liberal Party for Freedom and Democracy (VVD), the Labour party (PvdA), center-liberal D66 or GreenLeft (GL) – linked this explicitly to the climate change and energy transition (Democraten66, 2012; GroenLinks, 2012; Partij van de Arbeid, 2012; Volkspartij voor Vrijheid en Democratie, 2012). Some parties, however, also mentioned the negative effects of, and the undesirable dependence on, 'authoritarian countries' (D66) or 'repressive regimes' (GL). The GL explicitly called for decreasing the dependence on Russia and 'Arab oil' (GroenLinks, 2012) in this regard. The situation shifted slightly in 2017. The ruling VVD called for decreasing gas dependence on Russia (Volkspartij voor Vrijheid en Democratie, 2017), referring to it in its manifesto as a 'dubious regime'. PvdA did the

same and called for strengthening the role of the EU in ensuring energy independence (Partij van de Arbeid, 2017). The Christian-Democratic Appeal (CDA) called for decreasing dependence on Russia, as did the D66 and the Christian Union (CU) (Christen-Democratisch Appel, 2017; ChristenUnie, 2017; Democrats66, 2016). Despite these critical pronouncements, the Netherlands did not decrease its energy dependence on Russia prior to February 2022. The oil imports from Russia increased in 2017 only to decline slowly again, and gas imports increased too. As the investigative journalist site *Follow the Money* reported, the Dutch government strongly supported the construction of the Nord Stream 2 pipeline in this period as a commercial project. Despite VVD's electoral manifesto naming Russia a 'dubious regime', the party's ministers proceeded with pushing for the Nord Stream 2 project, in which a number of Dutch companies were involved (Keyzer & Sys, 2021).

As mentioned, an important issue in Dutch politics ahead of the 2021 elections was the phasing out of the gas exploration in the Groningen province. VVD reflected on this in its 2021 manifesto by saying that due to this phase out, 'the Netherlands would have to import more gas in the coming decades, including from Russia'. It was also stated in the manifesto that 'Billions are leaking out of the Dutch economy, and we are thereby subsidizing military armaments and the spread of intolerant ideas by Russia and Saudi Arabia'. The same party also called for a long-term investment into renewable energy as a response to the coming energy challenge (Volkspartij voor Vrijheid en Democratie, 2021, p. 74). PvdA called for decreasing dependence on Russia (Partij van de Arbeid, 2021), and similar statements were made by D66 and GL (Democraten 66, 2021; GroenLinks, 2021). One aspect which might be interesting to note is that in the Dutch context, Russia is often mentioned alongside Saudi Arabia. We therefore can observe that the Dutch parties were more irked by Russia's authoritarianism than by its foreign policy actions that are at least partly driven by the increasingly authoritarian Putin regime.

Poland

Poland is an interesting case to study in this context because the main objective of the country's energy policy has been to reduce what was viewed by the country's policymakers as asymmetrical overdependence on imports of energy resources from Russia, which was already *prior* to the 2014 annexation of Crimea and military intervention in Donbas perceived as an unreliable partner trying to use its energy supplies as political leverage (Gawlikowska-Fyk, 2019; Godzimirski, 2009). The Polish government has on many occasions expressed interest in becoming completely independent from Russia in terms of energy supplies (Naimski, 2015) and has even taken various measures to make that happen. The most important of them were the construction of the LNG terminal in Swinoujscie and the Baltic Pipe project, both of which have made it possible to import huge volumes of gas from other suppliers.

The manifestos of the leading Law and Justice Party (PiS) contain extensive references to the role of Russia in the Polish energy context. Already in 2011, PiS was heavily critical of Nord Stream 1. PiS was also highly critical of the gas agreement with Russia that was signed by the previous government in order to regulate the supply of Russian gas (Prawo i Sprawiedliwość, 2011, p. 217). Their manifesto called for the expanded exploration of shale gas in Poland, calling it 'politically comparable to Poland's NATO membership' (p.218). It was also very clear that PiS was very critical of the EU approach to energy policy, with its focus on the negative impact that fossil fuels, including Polish coal, have on the environment and climate. Whereas the Dutch parties often see the EU as a saviour who can help assure energy security, PiS has rather seen the EU energy policy as problematic. The EU policy was often presented as posing serious risks, considering that, in the opinion of the PiS policymakers, it focused too much on climate-related aspects and aimed to reduce the role of the main Polish energy commodity, coal, by introducing a special EU Emissions Trading System (ETS), which makes energy from fossil fuels more expensive and thus less competitive (Prawo i Sprawiedliwość, 2011). In 2011, PiS even proposed reversing the 'progressive tightening of climate policy' in the EU. This is in strong contrast to the position of the Civic Platform (PO). In 2011, PO saw the role of the EU as a mediator of the Poland–Russia relations. PO argued that Poland enjoys a strong position within the EU, which in turn strengthens its overall position vis-à-vis Russia (Platforma Obywatelska, 2011). In terms of energy, the position of PO is very similar to that of the centrist and center-right parties in Germany and the Netherlands – acknowledging the need for an energy transition but recognizing that the relations with Russia were needed until the transition has been completed. 'A constructive approach to Russia strengthens our position in Europe', PO wrote in its 2011 manifesto (p.94).

The positions, however, shifted ahead of the 2015 elections after Russia's annexation of Crimea and military intervention in Eastern Ukraine. No longer was Russia mentioned as a necessary energy supplier in the PO manifesto. Instead, energy policy was exclusively connected to coal mining in this period (Platforma Obywatelska, 2015). In contrast, the PiS manifesto ahead of the 2015 elections focused again on criticism of the previous government and paid special attention to coal mining and shale gas exploration as important elements of the Polish national energy policy (Prawo i Sprawiedliwość, 2014). Yet, even the PiS did not explicitly address the role of Russia, although it emphasized the importance of energy independence and self-sufficiency.

Ahead of the 2019 elections, however, PiS wrote about building a gas pipeline from Norway via Denmark to Poland as a way of putting an end to the Russian domination of the Polish gas market. At the same time, their focus on energy self-sufficiency continued, with an emphasis on the development of domestic energy sources and nuclear energy (Prawo i Sprawiedliwość, 2019). The Civic Coalition's platform focused mainly on coal mining (its phasing out) and on the energy transition (Koalicja Obywatelska, 2019).

Interestingly, the role of Russia curiously disappeared from the Polish parties' energy discourse after 2014. The dependence on Russia was no longer a major issue the parties could use to mark their specific positions, as there was a sort of political consensus on this important question. What made it to the top of the political agenda, especially in statements made by members of the ruling party PiS, was the heavy criticism of the EU's energy and climate policies that were viewed as posing a direct threat to Poland's coal mining industry (with the Eurosceptic PiS driving the debate). The absence of Russia from the discourse is still rather interesting because Polish security concerns about Russia were well known, and Poland was still dependent on energy supplies from Russia at that time. The focus on shale gas in the manifestos, however, could partly be explained by the fact that it was hoped that shale gas could make Poland less dependent on Russia. One possible explanation for Russia not being explicitly mentioned in the discourse could be the accelerated drive in Poland to decrease the dependence on Russia and the resulting increase in the search for alternative energy suppliers (International Trade Association, 2020). As Polish imports from Russia were already decreasing, the significance of Russia for its energy policy might have been decreasing in the eyes of the Polish parties. One can say that after the annexation of Crimea and the military intervention in Donbas in 2014, it became obvious that any dependence on Russia was highly problematic; there was simply no need to discuss this question in party declarations, as all mainstream political forces in Poland seemed to agree on this. In this situation of broad political consensus, the question of energy dependence on Russia simply disappeared as a political marker in the Polish public debate.

The shock of 2022 and its implications

The aim of this article has been to examine whether economic and energy relations between Russia and the EU – and the three EU member states – could be characterized as interdependence, to investigate whether such interdependence has had any positive or negative impact on their relations between 2012 and 2022, and to explore how the question of energy (inter)dependence on Russia has been addressed in political programs presented by the mainstream parties in the three countries. According to various IR paradigms examined in one of previous sections of this study, interdependence can either lower or raise the probability of conflict between involved actors.

Our examination of the energy relations between the EU and Russia – and between the three EU member states and Russia – has revealed several interesting and distinctive characteristics. First, prior to Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022 these relations could be described as relatively strong interdependence – the EU, and the three member states, depended on energy supplies coming from Russia to cover their energy needs, while Russia depended on access to the EU energy market to be able to monetize its energy resources, as it produced almost twice the amount of energy it needed to cover its own energy needs. Second, this interdependence in the energy field was asymmetric in Russia's favour as the EU had to cover more than 60% of its energy needs by importing energy from beyond its borders and Russia was for both economic and geographical reasons regarded as the most convenient external supplier of energy to the EU. However, and this is the third of the characteristics revealed and discussed in the article, from the very beginning of the development of energy relations between Russia and Europe, there were differing views on whether the idea of EU becoming dependent on this powerful neighbour was wise or bound up with high risks.

We identified two approaches to energy cooperation with Russia that we labelled (1) liberal pragmatists – represented by those willing to play the energy game with Russia based on liberal market principles, a game that could be presented as a win–win game – and (2) the hardcore realists, represented by those of the opinion that making Europe energy dependent on the USSR/Russia implied high geopolitical risks, as this would make Europe exposed to Soviet/Russian pressure and give the USSR/Russia strong political and economic leverage. The liberal pragmatists argued that trade interdependence could prevent the outbreak of a major confrontation between the EU and Russia, while hardcore realists argued that the same interdependence did not have a mitigating effect but exposed Europe to unacceptable and unnecessary pressure. These two approaches to Russia have been visible not only in the European and trans-Atlantic debate, but they have also until recently (2022) shaped national policies on energy cooperation with Russia, as demonstrated in our examination of the German, Dutch and Polish party manifestos.

The German approach was traditionally based on the idea that economic cooperation with Russia was an important element of its 'socialization', a process that would ultimately turn Russia into a full-fledged member of the democratic community sharing the norms and values of Western powers (for more on the process of state socialization, see Waltz, 1979; Alderson, 2001; Thies, 2001, 2010). Energy cooperation with Russia generated huge revenues for the Russian state and should thus give Russia incentives to seek even closer cooperation with the West.

The very same cooperation gave Germany access to what was believed by the German business community and many of the country's policymakers to be reliable and reasonably priced energy. In German party manifestos Russia was hardly mentioned in relation to energy issues in the period under examination, and when it was, it was more in the context of energy import from Russia as an obstacle towards a greener future, than as a security threat. German elites' ability to downplay the threat of dependence on Russia, combined with their ability to diversify supplies, serves as an explanation for that.

The Dutch approach to energy cooperation with Russia was driven first and foremost by purely commercial interests – Russia supplied huge volumes of crude oil that was processed in the Dutch refineries to be exported to other markets, generating high profits for the Netherlands. We see however, that while in the Netherlands some parties mentioned undesirable dependence on 'authoritarian' or 'repressive' regimes, GL explicitly wanting to decrease dependence on Russia and 'Arab oil', the Dutch government continued its liberal pragmatic approach towards Russia.

Finally, the Polish approach to energy cooperation with Russia was a result of structural necessity, as Poland had to cover its energy needs by import and Russia had traditionally been the most important supplier, despite the deep-seated fear of Russia as a potential threat to the very existence of the Polish state and nation. While Germany saw energy cooperation with Russia through this liberal pragmatic lens as a great political and commercial opportunity and the Netherlands showed awareness of the risks but accepted them, the Polish decision-makers have been increasingly sceptical and adopted a hardcore realist approach to this cooperation earlier than most of the Russian energy customers in Europe.

The interest in continuing energy cooperation with Russia was put to the test in 2014 when Russia decided to annex Crimea and invade Donbas. One could expect that this Russian aggression against one of its neighbours would have a sobering effect on those who advocated the development of strong energy ties with Russia. However, it turned out that the German liberal pragmatists and Dutch free marketeers who profited heavily from energy trade with Russia were willing to take a higher risk. They engaged in extending their energy cooperation with Russia by launching the Nord Stream 2 project that would make them even more dependent on energy coming from a country ruled by an increasingly authoritarian and aggressive regime. For Poland, on the other hand, 2014 was a real wake-up call – and the political change that took place almost at the same time strengthened the Polish government's resolve all the more – to get rid of energy dependence on Russia. In contrast to the German and Dutch case where Russia was mentioned in relation to energy matters in party manifestos after 2014, the Polish consensus that any dependence on Russia was highly problematic made the issue disappear as a political marker in the Polish public debate.

Russia's actions in Ukraine in 2014 did set off various alarm bells in the EU, particularly in the member states that recognized that their energy-related vulnerabilities made them more exposed to pressure and blackmail from Russia. This realization contributed to speeding up the EU work on a green energy transition that would serve to defend the EU from these Russian pressures. The EU and member states also looked for new sources of energy and decided to build energy relations with friendly actors, like the USA. The USA was expected to play a more important part in the EU energy market as a supplier of LNG, which was more expensive than gas coming from Russia but more safe in political and strategic terms than the gas supplied by Russia (Godzimirski & Austvik, 2019; Hafner & Raimondi, 2020; Proedrou, 2020; Raik et al., 2019; Richman & Ayyılmaz, 2019; Szulecki, 2018).

The Russian full-scale invasion of Ukraine launched on 24 February 2022 delivered a death blow to all hopes of a bright joint Russia and EU energy future. Energy and economic interdependence with EU countries proved not to be enough to persuade Russia to change its course of actions. It seems that after two years of war raging over Ukraine there are no longer any liberal pragmatists or free marketeers in Europe wanting to continue energy cooperation with Russia, while the numbers of supporters of the hardcore realist approach have grown exponentially.

That said, even with this shrinking or completely disappearing appetite for energy from Russia, it was considered that it would take some time and effort to cut all the energy bonds between the EU member states and Russia that had developed over the past decades. Russia was therefore still supplying some gas via Ukraine, and as LNG, and continued cooperation with European actors in some nuclear projects (Lorenzini, 2023). However, all the EU countries in the months following Russia's full-scale invasion supported the imposition of several rounds of EU sanctions that in the mid-term perspective should result in the almost complete phasing out of Russian energy resources from the EU energy market. Notwithstanding the commitment to this independence from Russia, the actual process has taken some time, and during the transition period from the prewar situation to the moment of full implementation of sanctions aimed at the Russian energy sector, the EU member states, including the three countries examined in this article, had to continue importing energy commodities from Russia. According to a CREA report published in September 2022 (Centre for Research on Energy and Clean Air, 2022, p. 8), Germany, the Netherlands and Poland occupied some of the top positions on the list of countries importing fossil fuels from Russia during the first six months of the full-scale Russian war on Ukraine. Germany was in second place on this list and paid

€19 billion for energy supplies coming from Russia in this period; the Netherlands was number three and bought Russian energy commodities worth €11.1 billion; while Poland, the most vociferous critic of Russian policies, was number six on this list, paying Russia €7.4 billion for its energy supplies. The hardcore realist concerns related to energy dependence on Russia strengthened after the outbreak of the Russian war on Ukraine in 2022 but were not enough to immediately stop all import of fossil fuels from Russia – there were also some purely pragmatic questions that had to be addressed before the complete ban on energy from Russia could be introduced.

The Russian military interventions in Ukraine in 2014 and especially in 2022, driven mostly by what was interpreted in the West as Russian chimerical geopolitical concerns, have shown that when the security stakes as perceived by Moscow were high enough, Russia was willing to play tough with the West – and its neighbours – all the interdependencies and expected economic costs notwithstanding. This seems to somehow prove wrong the liberal pragmatist assumption that strong interdependence could have a conflict-mitigating effect and confirm the realist assumption that interdependence – and even more so, one-way strong energy dependence – is rather part of the problem and not a panacea.

Future research should continue to study how domestic political actors – including political parties – perceive and position themselves vis-à-vis economic security issues, including energy dependence. Furthermore, as the relations between European countries and Russia undergo vast transformation, scholars should pay continuous attention to the positioning of political parties towards Russia. Lastly, future scholarly work will undoubtedly study the partisan angle in the response to the Russian invasion of Ukraine, including the support given to Ukraine to defend itself.

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Notes

1. https://books.google.com/ngrams/graph?content=interdependence&year_start=1817&year_end=2019&corpus=28&smoothing=3.
2. All data on volume of trade between EU and Russia in this part are based on European Union, Trade in goods with Russia available at https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/isdb_results/factsheets/country/details_russia_en.pdf.
3. https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Extra-EU_trade_in_goods#EU_trade_by_main_product_groups.
4. https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Main_goods_in_extra-EU_imports.
5. This decision was revised in the light of the 2022 war in Ukraine.
6. https://www.iea.org/reports/the-netherlands-2020.
7. In 2021, Dutch courts decided that Russia was responsible for the downing of the flight.

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