

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Some differences, many similarities: comparing Europe's responses to the 1973 oil crisis and the 2022 gas crisis

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Abstract

Scholars of European integration are primarily interested in explaining change and variation over time. Indeed, given that integration has progressed over 50 years and competences have been transferred to the European level in policy fields, including energy, fast and coordinated action in the face of a major external threat might have been anticipated. Yet, as this article documents, member states struggled to establish a cohesive and solidary European response to the 2022 gas crisis, just as they had failed to cooperate effectively during the 1973 oil crisis. Building on recent literature on European polity development and integration through crises, this article argues that differences in national crisis affectedness and energy structures hampered cooperation. Such asymmetries became particularly visible on the part of France and Germany, the Union's two largest member states, who could have provided regional political leadership. Consequently, both the 1973 and 2022 energy crises led to very limited steps in European integration and collectively suboptimal policy outcomes, such as high energy prices and uneven access to energy resources.

Keywords: crisis; energy; European integration; interdependence; leadership

Introduction

Sometimes, history has a way of repeating itself. When faced with the implications of Russia's war against Ukraine, including energy shortages and rising prices, policymakers within the European Union (EU) evoked comparisons with the past. France's Finance Minister, Bruno Le Maire, even explicitly referred to the 1973 oil shock (Le Monde, 2022). Back then, restrictions by Arab countries on the production and delivery of oil caused the worst economic recession in the European Economic Community (EEC) since the Second World War. Scholarship suggests that an external threat like a war in their neighborhood prompted member states to close ranks and build capacities on the European level (Kelemen and McNamara, 2022). Moreover, given the advancements in energy policy over the past 50 years and the partial allocation of policy competences with supranational institutions, like the European Commission (Herranz-Surrallés, 2019), fast and coordinated action among member states seems likely.

Yet, in many ways, member states struggled to coordinate during the 2022 gas crisis and deepen their integration, just as they had failed to find a collectively effective response to the 1973 oil crisis. In both instances, member states refrained from taking supranational measures, such as the joint purchase or saving of energy. This article argues that very limited or entirely absent integration was not due to a lack of functional demands. Given the (still) weak national capacities

in energy policy, and the varying options available for member states to cut off Arab and Russian fossil fuels, supranational capacity-building would have substituted missing or unequally distributed national means. The article demonstrates that in both crises, policymakers actually recognized functional pressures and the potential benefits resulting from supranational action. At least rhetorically, governments advocated for European cooperation and the creation or deepening of common energy policies.

However, differences in crisis affectedness and the organization of domestic energy markets hampered member-state cooperation and prevented supranational capacity-building. The key explanatory factor, therefore, concerns political willingness and the support of the national political elites. Indeed, asymmetries in terms of energy dependencies, partly due to endogenous energy decisions in the past, triggered limited political incentives among national governments to build joint capacities on the supranational level. I document the asymmetry in national affectedness and approaches to energy in both crises, focusing primarily on Franco-German political divides. Unlike in previous and later integration crises (Schramm, 2023a; Schramm and Krotz, 2023), France and Germany, the two largest energy-consuming member states of the EEC/EU, did not overcome bilateral differences and did not enable broader European compromises. Consequently, both the 1973 oil crisis and the 2022 gas crisis resulted in periods of stalling and even instances of disintegration within the EEC/EU.

The analytical model and empirical findings complement the growing literature on European polity development, state building and crisis politics in several important ways. First, this article deals with a policy field, energy, which often remains underexplored. Second, it explains the differences and continuities in a similar topic over 50 years of European integration. Indeed, unlike most scholarship which looks at variation in crisis outcomes (e.g., Anghel and Jones, 2022), this article explains patterns over time. Third, it counters the literature predicting bold European action and capacity-building in the event of an external shock (Kelemen and McNamara, 2022; McNamara and Kelemen, 2022). It also challenges accounts that expect European policy learning and 'failing forward' in the event of crises (Jones *et al.*, 2016, 2021).

Instead, this article argues that irrespective of legal competences and the formal role of supranational actors and procedures, explanatory factors including the exogeneity or endogeneity of the crisis shock, the symmetry or asymmetry in terms of crisis affectedness and/or the presence of compensating regional political leadership impacts the form and substance of European responses to crises (see also Genschel, 2022; Genschel *et al.*, 2023). In the case of the two largest European energy crises over the past 50 years, the 'political' conditions were quite unfavorable. Consequently, we have seen failure without forward movement.

The next section assesses the literature on European polity building and crisis politics and situates it in relation to developments in European energy policy. Based on functional and political conditions, I formulate expectations about European cooperation and integration in the context of crises. By carefully reconstructing events, the following two empirical sections establish similarities and differences in the European responses to the 1973 oil crisis and the 2022 gas crisis. The comparative analysis reveals that asymmetries in national crisis affectedness and dependence on energy resources, along with the partly endogenous character of the crisis and a lack of political leadership, especially from the two largest countries, France and Germany, prevented supranational capacity-building and burden-sharing. Notably, member states largely ignored proposals by the European Commission for the joint purchase of energy, common international bargaining and mandatory energy saving. The concluding section summarizes the main findings and suggests avenues for future research.

European polity development and the common energy policy

Not least in view of the many crises the EU has faced over the past decade, European integration scholarship has analyzed the driving forces behind the development of the European polity.

Recently, Kelemen and McNamara attributed the EU's uneven and incomplete nature to the historical absence of an outside threat, like a war in its neighborhood. Such security concerns, they hold, generate state formation (Kelemen and McNamara, 2022; McNamara and Kelemen, 2022). Doing so, they build on classical 'bellicist' theories (e.g., Tilly, 1975) suggesting that external threats lead to internal consolidation in the form of policy harmonization, centralized capacity-building and the institutionalization of authority.

This line of argument has faced criticism from several scholars. For instance, Freudlsperger and Schimmelfennig argue that 'transboundary crises' might be the modern-day equivalent of the threat of war for regional polity development. Member states promote supranational capacity-building if the Union promises to provide more effective solutions for the provision of public goods, such as security and economic prosperity, than the national level (Freudlsperger and Schimmelfennig, 2022). Indeed, as this article demonstrates, both energy crises provided strong functional arguments to avoid collectively suboptimal outcomes, such as higher prices and unequal access to energy resources. However, these two transboundary crises, reaching across territorial and functional lines, did not lead to effective member-state cooperation and the upgrading of supranational capacities. This is because member states were not able or willing to overcome collective action problems.

Moreover, Genschel (2022; see also Genschel *et al.*, 2023) stresses that Kelemen and McNamara's arguments only hold under certain circumstances. Contrasting 'functional' and 'political' conditions, he lists a number of factors and suggests that variation in their explanatory values determines the EU's reaction to crises. Regarding functional conditions (cf. Genschel and Jachtenfuchs, 2021), the availability and allocation of pre-existing national *capacities* determine the comparative advantage of the supranational level over the national level. When sub-central capacities are weak and/or inadequate, the central government has a functional advantage. Second, the influence and contribution of weak or reluctant member states, often considered the *weakest link* in the European chain, determines the success and strength of collective action. If collective action depends on the contribution of a small number of member states, the functional demand for supranational risk- and burden-sharing is high.

Regarding political conditions (cf. Hooghe and Marks, 2009, 2019), the *immediacy* of a threat affects the notion of loss aversion. If policymakers perceive a threat as close and immediate, they will favor fast action. Second, an *exogenous* crisis origin, characterized by the unprovoked aggression of an external actor beyond the control of the parties involved, tends to stimulate empathy and solidarity among the polity's constituent parts. By contrast, endogenously caused emergencies, resulting from past political decisions or specific foreign-policy orientations, are likely to trigger moral-hazard concerns and lower the preparedness for supranational solidarity. Finally, a *symmetric* crisis, affecting all member states mostly evenly, stimulates collective security guarantees (see also Ferrara and Kriesi, 2022). By contrast, if member states are affected asymmetrically and have unequal means to counter the crisis, the incentives for common measures will be much lower.

I take these explanatory factors as the starting point for my analysis of the EEC's response to the 1973 oil crisis and the EU's response to the 2022 gas crisis. For analytical and illustrative purposes, I follow a chronological order, starting with the crisis origin and closing with the crisis resolution and outcome. The following paragraphs further contextualize the previously introduced functional and political factors, placing them in relation to European energy policy. Starting with the most favorable conditions enables a demonstration of *when* European cooperation became complicated and *why* a collectively effective crisis response ultimately did not materialize. Indeed, as the empirical sections below document, the conditions for a common response in the recent energy crisis were even more favorable than they had been 50 years ago. However, in both cases, member states did not manage to overcome collective action problems.

To begin, the two energy crises initially appeared to be triggered by exogenous events and clearly identifiable 'perpetrators'. In the 1973 oil crisis, following the October 'Yom Kippur' war

with Israel, the Organization of Arab Petroleum-Exporting Countries (OAPEC) restricted the production of oil and announced phased delivery reductions to EEC member states. In 2022, following its full-scale invasion of Ukraine, Russia drastically reduced its export of gas to the EU. However, in reality, neither of the two energy crises was fully exogenous. In the case of the 1973 oil crisis, some national governments attributed the full oil embargo against the Netherlands to the perceived Dutch pro-Israel policy. In the 2022 gas crisis, energy prices had already been on the rise since the summer of 2021 following economic recovery in the EU and globally from the COVID-19 pandemic. More importantly, other member states notably blamed Germany for its past energy decisions and high dependence on Russian fossil fuels. The first political condition explaining the European crisis response, the crisis origin, therefore shows relatively neutral explanatory values for the two energy crises.

Second, the immediacy of the threat stemming from the two energy crises was high and therefore shows positive explanatory values. In both cases, concerns about energy security and sufficient supply initially dominated. In the spring and summer of 2022, governments feared that their gas storages would not be filled sufficiently in preparation for the winter period. Like the 1973 oil crisis, these fears were gradually replaced in some member states by primary concerns about high energy prices. Both concerns about sufficient energy availability and high prices were the expression of steady demand against the background of reduced energy supply.

Third, while energy today is a partly communized policy field, no formal European energy policy existed at the time of the 1973 oil crisis. Europe's two earliest political communities, the European Coal and Steel Community and the European Atomic Community, both dealt with aspects of energy. Europe's third and most important community, the EEC, sought to establish a single market based on the principle of free movement, including the free circulation of goods. Yet, when the oil crisis erupted, there was only a stockpile provision in place which allowed for a supply lasting 65 days, while supranational institutions had no competences in this regard. By contrast, the Treaty of Lisbon, the EU's current constitutional base, refers to a common energy policy and solidarity in the event of an emergency. Irrespective of this 'integrationist jump' in energy policy (Herranz-Surrallés, 2019), decisions on the exploitation and mix of domestic energy resources remain the prerogative of the member states. All EEC/EU member states depend on the import of energy, although in different forms and to different degrees. Hence, national capacities vary across member states. The need to secure sufficient and equal access to energy supply constituted strong functional demand for supranational capacity-building. This included initiatives such as common European bargaining with Arab countries or the joint purchase of gas.

Fourth, the 'weakest-link' problem similarly constituted strong functional demand for cooperation in both the recent gas crisis and the 1973 oil crisis. This problem refers to a small group of member states, or even a single member state, which potentially prevents the others from pursuing ambitious common measures. This is usually due to the importance of this member state's contribution, either because of its vulnerability or the potential 'contagion' effect on the entire polity. Alternatively, it can be a result of its great (economic, diplomatic, military) significance. Ironically, it was (West) Germany, the supposedly most powerful member state of the EU or the EEC at the time, which represented the weakest-link in the European chain. In the 1973 oil crisis, its dependence on the military presence of the USA (USA) on its territory led German policymakers to side with USA proposals on international energy cooperation and reject alternative European initiatives. During the recent gas crisis, Germany's high dependence on Russian energy imports stood out. Due to its large financial resources and the size of its domestic energy market, European collective action to a large extent relied on Germany's contributions.

Irrespective of these relatively strong functional demands, it is expected that the final political factor stressed by Genschel (2022) – national (a)symmetry in crisis affectedness – will carry particular explanatory power in both energy crises. The notion and implications of symmetry/asymmetry are well established in the political science literature including European integration theory and EU crisis politics (see, e.g., Ferrara and Kriesi, 2022). As liberal intergovernmentalists

also note (Moravcsik, 1998; Moravcsik and Schimmelfennig, 2019), member states are expected to cooperate and deepen their integration if they expect mutual gains from doing so. Moreover, cooperation and deeper integration are also likely to occur if they do not have more promising individual ‘outside’ options available to them. This tends to be the case if member states are affected relatively evenly by a crisis so that national preferences converge. Integration theories expect a symmetric crisis to trigger collective security imperatives and an alignment of national interests and identities (Genschel and Jachtenfuchs, 2021). By contrast, the incentives for supranational cooperation and further European integration are lower in the event of asymmetric affectedness. Here, a crisis affects member states in different ways and to different degrees. National governments thus have different means available to cope with challenges. Since this latter constellation characterized both the 1973 and 2022 energy crises, the expected explanatory value of symmetry in crisis affectedness is negative for both cases.

Some scholars hold that European cooperation and (further) integration are still possible even in the event of asymmetric crisis affectedness. Ultimately, no crisis is fully symmetric in the sense that it affects all member states evenly (Ferrara and Kriesi, 2022). Along these lines, leadership approaches (Kindleberger, 1973; Webber, 2018; Schoeller, 2019) suggest that certain actors must be able and willing to define common objectives and provide polity stability. To overcome collective action problems, they must move beyond strictly defined national interests and carry large parts of the associated burdens. In both crises under consideration, France and Germany appear as the most likely and promising candidates to provide such leadership. As the EEC/EU’s two largest member states, together they consumed most energy resources. Their ‘critical size’ (Gruber, 2000) meant that Franco-German behavior had major implications for the wider European course. Moreover, due to their privileged partnership and ‘embedded bilateralism’ in Europe (Krotz and Schild, 2013), it might be expected that France-Germany, rather than any other (coalition of) member states, would have developed joint positions to enable European-level cooperation. Indeed, in both energy crises, national governments, including leading policymakers from France and Germany, advocated common measures. They spoke out in favor of a common energy policy and the deepening of the European energy market.

However, the potential emergence and impact of Franco-German bilateralism, or the leadership provided by other actors, presuppose that these actors develop shared objectives regarding crisis resolution (Schild, 2013; Schramm and Krotz, 2023). In the two cases at hand, France and Germany differed on almost every aspect concerning energy. Most notably, they did not have a joint vision for the design and organization of the European energy market. A further impairing factor concerned their different orientations in foreign policy. In the 1973 oil crisis, France’s pursuit of a distinct European profile and greater independence from the USA alienated other EEC member states, primarily Germany. In the 2022 gas crisis, Germany’s energy model based on strong dependence on Russian fossil fuels led to mistrust among other EU member states, with France being among the strongest critics. Therefore, in both energy crises, the explanatory value of regional political leadership is negative. In turn, without strong political incentives resulting from member states’ affectedness or compensating (Franco-German) leadership, the EEC/EU faced the risk of stalling or even disintegration.

Table 1 below provides an overview of the suggested functional and political conditions, their theorized explanatory values and the expected European outcomes for the two energy crises. The following empirical analysis scrutinizes these conditions in greater detail. It starts with the 1973 oil crisis, before turning to the 2022 gas crisis. Remarkably, the two crises show strong similarities, irrespective of 50 years of European integration and changes in the legal basis and political competences involved. These similarities include the way the two crises reached the EEC/EU, how policymakers assessed and framed the situation, the kind of policy incentives they triggered and the way member states ultimately dealt with the crises.

The analysis rests on a rich and diverse set of primary sources including European and national policy documents, archival material and expert interviews. Archival material came from the

Table 1. Functional and political conditions for European supranational responses to the 1973 and 2022 energy crises

Conditions	Theorized value of condition	Expected crisis outcome
Functional:		
Weak pre-existing national capacities	High	Strong supranational activity
Weakest-link problem	High	Strong supranational activity
Political:		
Exogenous crisis origin	Moderate	Moderate supranational activity
Immediacy of threat	High	Strong supranational activity
Symmetry in crisis affectedness	Low	Weak supranational activity
Presence of regional political leadership	Low	Weak supranational activity

Historical Archives of the EU in Florence, the 'Frankreich-Bibliothek' of the French-German Institute in Ludwigsburg, and the Archive of European Integration, an online depository provided by the University of Pittsburgh. Between December 2022 and March 2023, I conducted eleven expert interviews with (former) political advisers and think tankers specializing in energy policy, who are based in Berlin, Brussels and Paris. To obtain relevant information, the interviewees were guaranteed anonymity. I complement these primary sources with press reports and relevant secondary literature on the two crises.

The 1973 oil crisis

In the early 1970s, several oil-producing countries in the Middle East and Northern Africa proceeded to nationalize large oil companies which until then had been controlled by 'Western' industrialized countries like the USA, France, the Netherlands and the UK (UK). In early October 1973, the Organization of Petroleum-Exporting Countries, a producer cartel, increased the price of crude oil by 70%, and another price increase was to follow in December. On 17 October, following the outbreak of the Arab-Israeli 'Yom Kippur' war, Arab oil-producing countries, known as OAPEC, announced an immediate reduction in oil production by 5% compared to September levels. This cutback was subsequently increased on 5 November to 25%. In an effort to gain the support of Western countries including the nine EEC member states, the OAPEC differentiated between 'friendly' countries like France and the UK; 'neutral' countries, such as Germany; and 'unfriendly' countries. Among the EEC member states, the Netherlands was the only country to be subject to a full oil embargo (Möckli, 2009: 189–191).

The combination of increased oil prices and cuts in production levels caused fears inside the EEC about the security and sufficient supply of energy resources. The immediacy of threat, the first political factor shaping the European crisis response, was thus relatively high. Governments introduced measures to save energy, such as bans on Sunday driving and limited use of lighting in shops, while a feeling of uncertainty spread in Western societies (Miard-Delacroix, 2013). Member states' strong dependence on energy imports, together with the attempt by Arab countries to divide the EEC, led contemporary observers to suggest that national governments considered the oil crisis to be a common threat requiring a common response (e.g., Lieber, 1976: 1, 8). Soon, the primary concern shifted from sufficient supplies to high energy prices as the massive outflow of 'petrodollars' exacerbated balance-of-payment problems for several member states and fueled inflation rates. Between October 1973 and January 1974, oil prices increased fourfold, causing the worst recession in Western societies since the Second World War (Chakarova, 2013: 53).

Regarding the crisis origin, most policymakers and contemporary observers considered the oil shock to be exogenous in nature. This was because of the targeted action of Arab countries and their 'weaponization' of oil (Turner, 1974: 404). At the same time, some governments blamed other states' political behavior and foreign-policy orientations. On 30 October, the Netherlands called on its partner states to pool Europe's oil supplies and share them (EEC, 1973). As the only

EEC country subject to a full Arab oil embargo, the Dutch government presented its appeal to European solidarity as a test for the viability of the Community and reminded the others that the common market guaranteed full and equal access to the Community's energy resources (Der Spiegel, 1973). However, the Dutch request for solidarity passed unheeded, with France and the UK even explicitly rejecting the distribution of oil. Pointing to the Dutch government's pro-Israel attitudes, they argued that such a step would only provoke the Arab countries and make them enlarge the embargo (Hellema *et al.*, 2004: 21, 73–81). Such references to endogenous factors and developments signaled limited preparedness for European solidarity and the sharing of energy resources.

With respect to capacities, no genuine European energy policy existed at the time of the oil crisis. The Treaty of Rome, the EEC's constitutional base, only entailed a few references and did not establish concrete European procedures related to energy (Lucas, 1977: 11–29). At the same time, energy had traditionally played a prominent role in European integration (Hager, 1976; Lieber, 1976). The Rome Treaty, seeking to establish a common market, promoted the free circulation of goods and prohibited discriminatory measures between member states. Moreover, at the Paris Summit in October 1972, the heads of state or government had stressed their commitment to a common energy policy, declaring it necessary for Community bodies to draft an energy policy 'in the near future' (as cited in Krämer, 1974: 43; my translation). Member states' heavy reliance on imported fossil fuels (see below) and their limited national capacities to deal with the oil shock, indicated the need for supranational measures that could use economies of scale and prevent externalities, such as unequal access to oil and higher energy prices for all. Policymakers' commitment to creating a European energy policy seemed to further highlight this functional demand.

The 'weakest-link' problem emerges when the contribution of a single member state determines the success of European collective action. The 1973 oil crisis essentially concerned two policy dimensions. These were the internal organization of the European energy market and the external dimension of how to conduct European foreign policy in aspects related to energy. It was crucial in the present case that France and Germany, the EEC's largest member states that could have stimulated a common crisis response, occupied extreme positions on both dimensions: with respect to the European energy market, France insisted on maintaining a national room of maneuver for the import of energy resources. Regarding foreign policy, Möckli (2009: 269) notes that Germany represented 'the weakest-link in the European chain' as it was most vulnerable to USA threats of military withdrawal. As a consequence of this, Germany was also subordinate to USA dominance on energy matters. For the EEC, political cleavages on several policy dimensions complicated supranational cooperation. Functional demands further increased as France and Germany, whose contributions were indispensable for common European measures, held extreme positions on each dimension. As a result, it appeared necessary to bridge the bilateral differences between these two states.

As noted above, this article expects (a)symmetry in crisis affectedness to have the strongest explanatory power. The EEC as a whole was highly dependent on the import of energy. In the autumn of 1973, oil accounted for 61% of the EEC's energy needs. Member states imported 95% of their oil, two-thirds of which were from Arab countries. Referring to the impact of the oil crisis, Türk (2014: 357) noted: 'Since the [economic] problems affected nearly all industrial nations and did not stop at national borders, national approaches for a solution to the problems seemed inadequate'. However, irrespective of the EEC's strong overall dependence on oil imports, member states' *individual* vulnerability varied considerably. This was for several reasons (Prodi and Clò, 1976). First, member states had different energy mixes. While the UK was the member state least affected by the Arab production cuts, as it covered 52% of its energy needs with oil, oil accounted for 79 and 73% of Italy and France's energy needs respectively. Second, member states differed concerning the availability of their own energy resources. The UK had the largest energy reserves of all member states due to the newly discovered North Sea oil.

Most importantly, member states varied in their relations with Arab oil-producing countries. France and the UK maintained good political and economic relations with the region. At the end of 1974, France had established bilateral contracts with six Arab countries for oil supplies in exchange for industrial products, armaments and nuclear power plants (L'année politique, 1974: 194–195; Turner, 1974: 410). By contrast, other EEC member states, such as Germany and the Netherlands, sided with Israel. OAPEC's categorization reflected this constellation as 'friendly' countries, such as France and the UK, continued to receive their normal oil supplies. In contrast, the 'unfriendly' Netherlands was the only EEC member state subject to a full oil embargo, while Denmark also faced sharp cuts in oil supplies. The remaining five member states, categorized as 'neutral', were subject to phased production cuts (Möckli, 2009: 190–191). Still lacking the desired solidarity from their partner countries, OAPEC only terminated their discriminatory measures against Denmark and the Netherlands in the summer of 1974.

Weak political support across member states resulting from asymmetric crisis affectedness thus goes a long way towards explaining limited supranational cooperation and the absence of integration during the oil crisis. Differences in domestic energy mixes, the exposure to the Arab oil embargo and the availability of 'outside' options amplified these asymmetries. In turn, these factors triggered incentives for national measures and reliance on 'third' actors. Accordingly, the Copenhagen meeting of national heads of state or government on 14–15 December 1973, an energy crisis summit, was a complete failure, at least from a European perspective. Seeking to placate domestic public opinion on the issue of 'our oil', Britain's Prime Minister, Edward Heath, opposed a German–Danish proposal to pool energy resources (as cited in Venn, 1999: 83). National leaders only agreed to task the European Commission with presenting proposals on the energy problem by late January 1974, with the expectation that the Council would decide on them quickly in order 'to ensure the orderly functioning of the common market for energy' (Bulletin, 1973: 11). On 13 May 1974, however, the Commission conceded defeat, withdrawing five of its six proposals, among them one on the intra-Community trade of oil products.

Although political incentives for supranational cooperation were low due to asymmetries in crisis affectedness and the partly endogenous nature of the crisis with its implications for European solidarity, regional political leadership might have compensated for these unfavorable conditions. Leadership requires actors in a position of power to define common objectives and assume disproportionate shares of the crisis burdens, thereby transcending strictly defined national preferences and incentives. Rhetorically, at least, policymakers from France and Germany were committed to a common energy policy. In a televised interview two weeks before the Copenhagen summit, Germany's Chancellor, Willy Brandt, warned that 'if the Community cannot agree on an issue like energy, it is nothing' (as cited in Frankfurter Rundschau, 1973). Similarly, following bilateral consultations on 26–27 November 1973, France's President, Georges Pompidou, declared that in view of the current challenges, Franco-German responsibility for Europe was greater than ever, and European solidarity also extended to energy (Le Figaro, 1973).

In practice, however, France and Germany did not have a shared understanding of the crisis and did not develop a concrete objective regarding crisis resolution (Schramm, 2023b). Holding different and at times opposing economic views about the organization of the European energy market, they did not emerge as regional co-leaders. France pursued a dirigiste and at times protectionist approach, seeking to stimulate the rise of its large domestic, state-owned energy companies. Emphasizing stable, state-controlled energy prices, it sought to design a European energy market that followed its national principles. In contrast, despite occasional suggestions to pool energy resources, Germany essentially pursued a liberal free-market approach, advocating for the competitive trade of energy products. Due to the absence of large domestic oil companies, it favored multilateral cooperation and was more concerned with stable supplies than energy prices (Simonian, 1985: 198–218).

Moreover, France and Germany differed on fundamental aspects concerning European foreign policy (Simonian, 1985: 198–218). Seeking to exploit its favorable position and promote its

foreign-policy approach, France suggested direct negotiations between the EEC and Arab oil-producing countries. It also advocated an autonomous, 'sovereign' European role in world politics and greater independence from the USA. In contrast, Germany wanted energy cooperation to take place within a larger group of Western oil-consuming countries. It held that the most adequate framework for international oil negotiations was not necessarily the EEC but could also include the Organization for Economic Development and Cooperation. Germany was highly reliant on the continued presence of USA military forces on its territory, and therefore also favored close transatlantic ties. These differences in foreign-policy orientations among European policymakers led to open clashes arising, particularly between German and French Ministers. At the Washington Energy Conference from 11–13 February 1974, Finance Minister Helmut Schmidt made it clear to his European colleagues that Germany was able and willing to pay, if necessary, for higher energy prices (Der Spiegel, 1974). In turn, Foreign Minister Michel Jobert opposed the creation of an oil-consumers club and thus refused to sign key parts of the Washington final communiqué (Le Monde, 1974). Additionally, France also did not join the USA-sponsored International Energy Agency, thus completing the European split in energy and foreign policy.

Regional political leadership, therefore, did not compensate for, or mitigate, the asymmetries in crisis affectedness and national incentives resulting from the oil shock. A European response to the oil crisis remained absent, despite widely voiced commitments to a common energy policy and treaty-based notions of energy solidarity. What were the consequences of this crisis outcome? Hindsight shows that the quadrupling of prices was mostly due to governments' uncoordinated behavior. Adopting a self-interested stance, a 'sauve qui peut' approach, Keohane (1984: 223) argued that EEC member states failed to master the challenges posed by collective action. Moreover, several member states proceeded to impede the export of oil to others. Italy and Belgium, for instance, despite protests from the European Commission, licensed and essentially restricted the export of refined oil products (Lieber, 1976: 17). The implementation of protectionism and the erection of trade barriers stood in stark contrast to the free movement of goods, which is a key principle of the common market. Such practices even marked instances of European disintegration (Krämer, 1974; Möckli, 2009: 249–250; Chakarova, 2013: 65).

The 2022 gas crisis

Russia's invasion of Ukraine on 24 February 2022 brought inter-state war back to the European continent. This fundamentally changed the EU's relations with Russia and member states' assessments of energy policy, especially concerning supply security. President Putin used Russia's enormous energy resources, and the EU's strong dependence on them, to exert pressure on national governments to discourage support for Ukraine. This involved the prospect of cutting supplies and the manipulation of energy markets. Facing the worst energy crisis in half a century, European consumers and businesses soon felt the consequence. In the first half of 2021, the price for natural gas at the TTF, the Title Transfer Facility, Europe's main virtual trading point, was around €25 per megawatt hour. In early September 2022, this price peaked at over €350 (Tocci, 2022).

Like the oil crisis 50 years earlier, the immediacy of the threat resulting from Russia's war and its implications for European energy was high. Concerns about sufficient supply and high energy prices again came together. Energy prices had already started to rise in the summer of 2021, following the easing of Covid-19-related restrictions and the recovery of the global economy. A combination of Russia cutting around 80% of its energy deliveries to Europe, and EU member states withdrawing from energy relationships with Russia as part of their sanction packages, amplified fears about sufficient supply. The concerns deepened in early summer 2022 when Russia announced a complete halt to energy deliveries to most EU member states. Facing a potentially cold and long winter, national governments feared that they might not be able to fill gas storages.

Meanwhile, with energy prices at record-high levels, inflation rates in several member states exceeded 20% (Pisani-Ferry, 2022).

Policymakers and political commentators largely attributed the gas crisis to an exogenous origin and attributed it to Putin. Condemning Russia's aggression, national leaders repeatedly invoked the notion of the 'weaponization of energy' (European Council, 2022). At the same time, however, some policymakers pointed to endogenous dynamics and past policy decisions by other governments. Germany, in particular, was blamed for its energy policy over the past decades and its strong dependence on Russian fossil fuels. Spain's Minister for the Ecological Transition, Teresa Ribera, argued that unlike certain member states [that is, Germany], her country 'had not lived beyond its means in previous years in respect to energy' (as cited in Matthijs, 2022). Thus, in addition to an exogenous threat (Russia's war) and a common 'enemy' (Putin), both of which could have stimulated European solidarity and unity, endogenous blame attributions limited member states' preparedness for energy solidarity.

Compared to the 1973 oil crisis, European integration had progressed considerably by the time of the 2022 gas crisis, particularly in relation to energy. Listing energy as a community policy (Art. 194 TFEU), the Treaty of Lisbon strengthens the competences of supranational actors like the European Commission (Herranz-Surrallés, 2019). Moreover, a solidarity clause (Art. 122 TFEU) calls on member states to help each other in the event of an energy emergency. Accordingly, the Commission was very active in developing and proposing instruments to address the gas crisis. Referring to the challenges at stake, two senior Commissioners urged common measures in the face of the 'symmetric energy shock' (Breton and Gentiloni, 2022). Still, decisions on domestic energy mixes remain the prerogative of the member states. Moreover, in view of Europe's high overall dependence on the import of energy resources (see below), national capacities continue to be relatively weak. The differing needs of member states' and their capacity to ensure equal access to sufficient energy supply constituted strong functional demand for supranational cooperation.

Similarly, the 'weakest-link' problem again suggested strong functional demand for such supranational cooperation. Member states differed considerably in their dependence on Russian fossil fuels and their financial ability to compensate for the loss of such fuels. Germany and Italy, the EU's largest and third-largest economy respectively, were the most dependent on Russia (see below). In absolute terms, out of all the member states, Germany had to compensate the most for the imports of Russian gas and look for alternatives. This constellation, together with its large financial resources, moved Germany center stage (The Economist, 2022a). Functional demands implied that Germany's contribution to European collective action was indispensable to avoid coordination inefficiencies and externalities, such as higher energy prices for everyone or unequal access to energy supply.

Thus, the conditions so far seemed favorable for a strong and united European response to the 2022 gas crisis. Due to the geographical proximity of Russia's war and advanced supranational competences, they were arguably more favorable than during the 1973 oil crisis. However, as the following sections show, asymmetries in crisis affectedness and national incentives, and a lack of regional political leadership, proved again to be decisive and explain the very limited supranational measures. There are remarkable similarities with the oil crisis, including ambitious (but ultimately unsuccessful) Commission proposals, member states' 'beggar-my-neighbor' behavior and France and Germany being unable to overcome bilateral differences and instead pursuing national policy options. Starting with asymmetry, the EU depended strongly on energy imports. In March 2022, the EU imported 90% of its gas consumption, with Russia providing around 45% of imports (Redeker, 2022).

Individual dependencies, however, varied considerably across member states. While Central and Eastern European countries like Latvia and the Czech Republic received all their gas imports from Russia, direct dependencies were much lower for most Western European countries. In absolute terms, Germany and Italy were the largest gas importers in the EU (Redeker, 2022). For Germany, gas accounted for more than 30% of the country's energy needs. Before the war, more

than half of its gas came from Russia. Similarly, Italy imported more than half of its gas from Russia. In contrast, Russian fossil fuels did not have a significant impact on countries like Spain and Portugal. This article expects asymmetry in crisis affectedness to impair collective security imperatives. This, in turn, will lead national incentives and priorities to prevail.

Indeed, reflecting asymmetries in crisis affectedness and individual needs, member states failed to agree or deliver on several suggested instruments. Energy experts argue that the most meaningful measures concerned reducing energy demand and purchasing energy jointly (interview #1, #3). Consider demand reduction first. On 20 July 2022, the European Commission (2022b) proposed reducing gas consumption across the EU by 15% between 1 August and 31 March the following year. Saving was to be made mandatory in the event of a supply emergency. National governments, however, did not follow the proposal, limiting the target to 5% and making additional reductions voluntary (Höpner, 2022). Next, in relation to purchasing, on 8 April, the Commission hosted the first meeting of the newly created 'EU Energy Purchase Platform'. The purpose of the platform is to secure the supply of gas, specifically for refilling storage facilities before the upcoming winter. In addition, the Commission (2022a) considered a 'joint purchasing mechanism' to negotiate and contract gas purchases on behalf of member states. Until today, however, participation in the platform is voluntary and it has been hardly used. Member states instead preferred individual contracts with gas-exporting countries. Analogous to the competitive bidding witnessed during the 1973 oil crisis, in the summer and autumn of 2022 European heads of government and ministers traveled to Northern Africa and the Middle East to secure national energy contracts (Dennison, *et al.* 2022).

Regional political leadership could have compensated for the uneven distribution of national policy incentives resulting from asymmetric crisis affectedness. Collectively suboptimal outcomes, such as elevated prices for all and unequal access to external energy suppliers, could have been avoided, or at least mitigated. After all, policymakers still pledged cooperation and to advance Europe's energy policy. However, the 2022 gas crisis saw no instances of regional political leadership. Again, the hampering impact of asymmetric crisis affectedness becomes clearest when examining France and Germany. Experts attribute bilateral divides on energy to the two countries' different economic approaches (interviews #7, #11).

Like in the 1973 oil crisis, Germany seemed less concerned about high energy prices than sufficient supply. This is not to say that the German government did not seek to lower energy prices for its businesses and citizens. However, it suggested that the European level was not the right forum to do so. In September 2022, the German government announced a massive domestic fiscal stimulus package totaling €200 billion (The Economist, 2022b). Although in relative terms similar to what other member states have mobilized, the absolute size of the German plan, notably its targeted support for the country's energy-intensive export industry, risked distorting fair competition inside the single market. Moreover, the specific timing stalled discussions on a European fiscal stimulus (interview #5). Franco-German differences also extended to the organization and reform of the European energy market. Joining 14 other member states, in autumn 2022 France called for capping gas prices at the European level. The Council of the EU, in composition of energy ministers, had to postpone a decision several times due to deep divisions between member states. Facing a qualified majority against it, and seeking to avoid being outvoted in the Council, Germany ultimately backed the decision to introduce a gas price cap in mid-December. It only did so, however, after having secured several 'safeguards' which might make the price cap irrelevant in practical terms (Hancock, 2022).

Not only did France and Germany disagree on concrete policy measures. The 2022 gas crisis also saw open clashes between the leading policymakers of the two countries. In a remarkable statement, France's President, Emmanuel Macron, at a European Council meeting in Brussels in October warned Germany not to isolate itself in Europe (Fleming *et al.*, 2022). Around the same time, the French government canceled the 'MedCat' project, which was a planned gas pipeline connecting the Iberian Peninsula with Germany and crossing France. While Macron argued there

Table 2. Conditions, observed explanatory values and concrete outcomes in the 1973 oil crisis and the 2022 gas crisis

Crisis	Conditions and their observed explanatory values	Concrete crisis outcomes
1973 oil crisis	<p>Functional pressures: Strong, due to weak pre-existing national capacities and weakest-link problem</p> <p>Political incentives: Weak, due to asymmetries in crisis affectedness, resulting differences in national 'outside' options and missing regional political leadership</p>	<p>No supranational capacity-building (failed Commission proposals for oil-sharing mechanism and joint bargaining vis-à-vis third actors)</p> <p>Collectively suboptimal policies (higher energy prices for all, uneven access to energy resources)</p> <p>Partial European disintegration (trade barriers between member states)</p>
2022 gas crisis	<p>Functional pressures: Strong, due to weak pre-existing national capacities and weakest-link problem</p> <p>Political incentives: Weak, due to asymmetries in crisis affectedness, resulting lack of European energy solidarity and missing regional political leadership</p>	<p>No supranational capacity-building (joint energy purchase remains voluntary)</p> <p>Limited supranational regulation (mandatory energy saving on small scale)</p> <p>Collectively suboptimal policies (higher energy prices for all, uneven access to energy resources)</p> <p>Primacy of national measures (energy purchase, subsidies for enterprises)</p>

was little economic value in the project, German policymakers were furious and held that the actual motivation was to sell French nuclear energy. Franco-German divides reached their peak in November when a bilateral governmental meeting had to be postponed. Media reports revealed that in addition to many differences in content, officials from the two countries could not even agree on the wording of a joint declaration (Von der Burchard, 2022).

With France and Germany unable to find common ground on important aspects related to energy, no other member state, or group of member states, filled the vacuum. Regional leadership, therefore, did not compensate for the asymmetries in crisis affectedness and the resulting different policy incentives. This was despite a continuing call for unity and common action among national governments. During the 1973/1974 oil shock, most EEC member states accepted subordination to USA proposals and internal European divides. The result was not only a partial disintegration of the common market but also higher energy prices overall. In the 2022 gas crisis, national measures overruled European cooperation again. Observers noted that European consumers and businesses were paying the price for their government's failure to overcome problems related to collective action (Pisani-Ferry, 2022). More generally, and in the long term, divisions among member states over the gas crisis might hinder the intended consolidation and deepening of the European energy market.

Table 2 below summarizes the empirical findings from the two case studies. It lists the observed explanatory values of the functional and political conditions, as well as the two concrete crisis outcomes. The table documents that weak political support reflecting asymmetries in crisis affectedness, rather than functional demand, account for the crisis outcomes.

Conclusions

This article compares Europe's handling of the two most severe energy crises it has faced over the past 50 years. In 1973, the EEC was confronted with the phased and targeted reduction in oil deliveries from Arab countries. In 2022, following its war against Ukraine, Russia stopped the export of energy to the EU, most notably in the form of natural gas. Member states in both cases struggled to find a common crisis response and largely refrained from supranational cooperation and capacity-building to deal with the energy challenges. Their failure to overcome collective action problems led to suboptimal policy outcomes, notably higher energy prices, unequal access to energy supply and setbacks in the development and consolidation of the European energy market.

Building on recent literature on European polity development, state building and crisis politics (Jones *et al.*, 2016, 2021; Kelemen and McNamara, 2022), this article theorizes and tests several conditions shaping the EU's response to major challenges. In both energy crises, the initial prospects for common and effective measures appeared quite favorable. This is because of strong functional demands originating from weak national capacities and the comparative advantage at the supranational level to provide economies of scale and avoid externalities. Functional demands also resulted from 'weakest-link' problems implying the indispensability of individual member states' contribution to collective action. Further favorable conditions originated from the exogenous origin of the two crises, at least in part, suggesting European solidarity and unity, and the immediacy of the threat, which triggered high pressure and the need for swift action to resolve the problem. Moreover, with the advancement of supranational competences and capacities and the consolidation of European energy policy, the conditions appeared more favorable in the 2022 gas crisis than they did during the 1973 oil crisis.

However, asymmetries in member states' affectedness by the two crises and differences in the availability of alternative courses of action hampered European cooperation. The political conditions for supranational capacity-building in reaction to crises, as stressed by Genschel (2022), thus proved to be more unfavorable, and more decisive, than the functional conditions. At the same time, with national governments still advocating common crisis measures and a European energy policy, regional political leadership might have compensated, at least in part, for the different national means and incentives resulting from asymmetric crisis affectedness. Regional political leadership (Kindleberger, 1973; Webber, 2018), in which actors are able and willing to assume large parts of the crisis burdens, deviate from strictly defined national preferences and pave the way for broader compromises, could have helped to overcome collective action problems. However, in both crises, neither France and Germany, Europe's two largest member states, nor any other group of countries, were able or willing to provide such leadership. France and Germany did not develop a shared objective regarding crisis resolution. Instead, they favored unilateral measures. Without minimum convergent national preferences, as the hypothetical result of greater symmetries in crisis affectedness, or compensating regional leadership, the two energy crises triggered little integration and, at times, even European disintegration.

Kelemen and McNamara (2022) suggest that an external threat to the European polity leads to internal consolidation and supranational capacity-building. This article joins other recent publications questioning the validity of such a general argument. Indeed, the scope and depth of the EU's responses to crises rest on several factors and their respective explanatory values (Genschel, 2022; Genschel *et al.*, 2023). Most notably, these include the exogenous (or endogenous) crisis origin, (a)symmetry in crisis affectedness and resulting member-state interdependence and the presence (or absence) of regional political leadership. This article is also more cautious in its assumptions than those suggesting that 'transboundary crises' act as the 'modern-day functional equivalent of war' in defining the EU's political development (Freudlsperger and Schimmelfennig, 2022). It is not crises per se, not even transboundary ones, that led the EU to consolidate its polity and advance its capacities to act. Rather, high levels of interdependence and/or powerful regional leadership are more likely in some crises than in others.

The empirical record of European integration crises suggests that policy fields involving money and member states' economies are particularly likely to fulfill these latter conditions. Therefore, this article's findings show links to C. Randall Henning's (1998) work. His 'international monetary thesis' holds that in the event of instability in the international monetary system, countries in a regional subsystem, like the EEC/EU, will launch initiatives for regional monetary integration. Importantly, they do so in so far as they have achieved the substantial integration of markets *beforehand*. Only then does the interdependence between member states tend to be sufficiently high for instabilities to affect all member states relatively evenly, so that a crisis can be considered symmetric. However, as this article has shown, in energy policy the density of integration is still

relatively limited, and many member states have more promising individual 'outside' options available compared to common European action. Similarly, for potential regional leaders, the costs of leading in matters related to energy often exceed the benefits of non-action or the pursuit of alternative policy options.

Future research should analyze European integration crises and challenges across a larger range of policy fields to substantiate or refute the above claims. Russia's war against Ukraine, with its implications for European integration, suggests several such fields including security, defense and fiscal policy. It seems to be no coincidence that the greatest advances in European integration and polity development over the past years have occurred in the context of the Euro crisis and the COVID-19 pandemic, thus in areas involving money and the single market. By contrast, advances have been much more limited in other policy fields, such as migration and asylum (Schramm and Krotz, 2023).

Research should also investigate in greater detail the EU's ongoing handling of the most recent energy crisis. Experts warn that prices continue to be volatile and will remain high for the foreseeable future (interviews #3, #6). They also attribute the EU's avoidance of the most severe energy shortages and price hikes in the winter of 2022/23 to a mixture of sheer luck, due to extraordinarily mild temperatures, and national measures, which were often at the expense of other member states (see also *The Economist*, 2023). As the next winter approaches and gas storages require refilling, discussions about adjustment costs and the financial burdens of carrying out Europe's green transition will persist. This might also raise questions again about supranational cooperation and capacity-building, including joint energy purchase and mandatory demand reduction.

List of cited interviews. #1, with energy expert based in Brussels, via Zoom, 2 December 2022
 #3, with energy expert based in Paris, via phone, 10 January 2023
 #5, with energy expert based in Paris, via Zoom, 20 January 2023
 #6, with energy expert based in Berlin, via Zoom, 24 January 2023
 #7, with senior civil servant working in the German chancellery, via phone, 25 January 2023
 #11, with former senior advisor to the French President, via phone, 31 March 2023

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