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Winter is coming: Russian gas, Italy and the post-war European politics of energy security

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ABSTRACT

By focussing on the Italian case and on transformations in state-market relations in the natural gas sector, this article examines the post-war European politics of energy security. It argues that rather than fostering EU-level path-breaking measures, the war has brought back the ‘partner state’ in the EU energy realm. This model, which supported the structuration of East-West energy interdependence during the Cold War, envisages direct modes of state intervention and closer government-energy company cooperation at home and abroad. Although the return of the (partner) state is helping Western European consumers by reducing their dependence on Russian gas, it has negative implications. It favours intra-European competition, limits further supranational integration in the energy sector and risks undermining the EU climate goals. This latter risk can be amplified by the encounter of the partner state with right-wing populist climate-sceptic parties, while it can be mitigated by the ‘greening’ of the partner state.

KEYWORDS Energy security; gas supply; Italy; Russia; EU energy and climate policy

Winter is coming, and it will be tough. We will pay a price for our support to Ukraine as a consequence of the sanctions and of course the fact that Russia uses energy as a weapon.

Jens Stoltenberg,
NATO Secretary General,
interview with Zdf, 23 August 2022

When Russia invaded Ukraine, several European Union (EU) member states in both Western and Eastern Europe found themselves in the very difficult position of being highly dependent on Moscow’s energy supplies. This situation was particularly alarming in the natural gas sector, where infrastructural constraints make diversification a complex and long business. Hence, it is hardly surprising that the EU sanctions placed on Russia

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did not target its gas export to the continent. However, with the launch of the RePowerEU initiative, on March 2022, the EU clearly stated its willingness to ‘eliminate’ its dependency on Russian fossil fuels ‘well before’ 2030 and formulated a set of short, medium and long-term measures to achieve this goal (European Commission 2022: 5). Only the overt Russian invasion of Ukraine made such a paradigm shift possible – in 2021, about 43% of the EU’s gas imports and 27% of its oil imports came from Russia – one that was not even contemplated after the 2014 Moscow annexation of Crimea. Indeed, after war broke out in Eastern Ukraine in 2014, the larger EU energy consumers and major importers of Russian gas – i.e. Germany, Italy and France – continued to deepen their energy links with Moscow.¹ This position was consistent with their traditional approach to the matter: after all, East-West energy interdependence was initiated and expanded in the challenging context of the Cold War period.

The decision to eliminate Russian supplies from the EU energy mix is not the only innovation prompted by the invasion. The energy crisis aggravated by the conflict has also triggered a rethinking of the single energy market project championed by the European Commission since the end of the 1980s. This project was supported by a market approach to energy policy which saw the liberalisation of the EU energy sector, the break-up of national gas monopolies, along with the shift from long-term contracts to spot markets as means to reduce energy prices and increase energy security in the continent. With energy prices skyrocketing all over Europe, also because of Russia’s use of the energy weapon, several member states, particularly in Southern Europe, have asked for a revision of this market perspective. After long negotiations, however, only in December 2022 did the Council of the EU agree to more limited Commission proposals for a temporary (one-year) ‘Market Correction Mechanism’ for natural gas – a price cap that might be activated from January 2023 under very specific circumstances – and for common gas purchases equivalent to 15% of EU member states’ respective storage filling obligations (under Regulation 2022/1369) through an EU Energy Platform (Council of the European Union 2022). The EU was also able to adopt other measures for the short-term management of the supply crisis – with Regulation 2022/1369 on coordinated demand-reduction measures for gas and Regulation 2022/1369 on gas storage – as well as for targeted financial support to energy infrastructures² (e.g. the upgrading of an underground gas storage facility in Romania and studies for a new liquefied natural gas terminal in Poland). These measures were in line with previous decisions on the matter (Regulations 715/2009/EC and 2017/1938 on gas storage and security of gas supply, respectively), as well as the Trans-European Networks for Energy (TEN-E) and the Connecting Europe Facility for Energy (CEF-E) initiatives. Abroad, the European Commission

launched new rounds of energy talks with the United States and Canada (March 2022) and signed new memorandum of understandings with gas producers such as Egypt (June 2022) and Azerbaijan (July 2022). However, the EU was not able to agree on path-breaking structural measures, such as an actual common approach to the diversification of supply and external energy relations that would allow the bloc to actually speak with ‘one voice’ and leverage its market power. This outcome is consistent with the traditional difficulties encountered by the EU in this area, which, also because of the different interests and views of the member states, has long evolved in incremental steps (e.g. Herranz-Surrallés, Solorio and Fairbrass 2021; Schubert, Pollak and Kreutler 2016). However, this stands in contrast to the urgency required by the new exceptional situation caused by the war. In other words, only very limited signs of EU-level (supranational) capacity-building were visible after the invasion, despite the energy policy field being ‘the most likely candidate’ for such change (Freudlsperger and Schimmelfennig 2023: 866). Meanwhile, particularly the larger consumers in Western Europe began to mobilise national capacities to ensure their energy security and avoid serious risks in the coming Winter season. This includes old-fashion nationalisation of energy companies – France (fully) nationalised *Électricité de France*, and Germany did the same with the fossil fuel company *Uniper* – and state-backed energy diplomacy aimed at signing long-term contracts for gas volumes with producers.

Against this evolving background, the literature on the post-war European energy politics (e.g. Kuzemko *et al.* 2022; Osička and Černoch 2022), as well as several commentaries (e.g. Goldthau and Sitter 2022), have pointed to a ‘return of the state’ in the EU energy realm. To be sure, especially in the area of energy security, European governments had never disengaged from the sector, even in the liberalisation era. However, the shock caused by the war has prompted a shift towards more interventionist approaches by member states. In this article, I endeavour to contribute to this emerging debate by clarifying the analytical and empirical contours of this ‘return of the state’ as well its wider implications for European energy politics after the invasion. What does a ‘return of the state’ mean in this context? How can we trace with greater accuracy the shift triggered by the war? What are the possible broader consequences of this ‘return of the state’ for European energy politics and EU integration? And, finally, what are the implications of this shift as the EU seeks to increase its energy security while promoting ambitious climate goals as confirmed by the REPowerEU initiative?

To address these questions, I adopt a conceptual framework based on international political economy (IPE) and the notion of forms of state. On the one hand, an IPE approach to energy politics is particularly suitable to capture state-market relations and their changes over time (e.g. Keating *et al.* 2012; Van de Graaf *et al.* 2016); on the other, the notion of forms

of state has a long tradition in the study of European politics and EU integration (e.g. Caporaso 1996; Majone 1997). Empirically, I focus on the Italian case and the natural gas sector, which is at the core of the post-war energy crisis. Unlike the oil market – a global and liquid market – trading in natural gas is much more rigid and more regional (e.g. Hulbert and Goldthau 2013). It relies on large and costly infrastructures – international pipelines and liquefied natural gas (LNG) export and import terminals – with sunk costs for investors that can only yield returns on the basis of long-term and stable energy relations. This favours interstate cooperation and creates mutual dependence between consumers and producers. However, it also renders diversification and flexibility highly problematic. Italian-Russian energy relations stretch back to the Cold War. Since that initial phase, these relations have grown steadily, with Italy second only to Germany as the EU's largest Russian gas buyer. Italian dependence on Russian gas reached approximately 40% of domestic consumption in 2021 (MITE 2022a). Natural gas accounts for about 35% of Italian industrial energy demand and contributes to 50% of power generation (compared to 15% in Germany). This is why, in the wake of the invasion, the Italian government led by Mario Draghi, while supporting EU initiatives to eliminate Russian gas supplies, took immediate action by mobilising its national champions that had 'survived' the liberalisation period to address its energy security needs. Hence, the Italian case has both practical and analytical significance for understanding the post-war European energy politics. The inability to address the energy crisis linked to the war could undermine Italian support for the EU sanctions regime and the Ukrainian government. Analytically, the study of the Italian case allows us to trace the evolution of East-West energy interdependence from a long-term perspective. More importantly, as the war prompted a reorientation of the Italian approach to energy security, with transformations in state-market relations, the Italian case offers an 'extreme' example (Seawright and Gerring 2008) of the phenomenon under investigation (i.e. the return of the state in European energy politics), and as Flyvbjerg (2006: 229) explains, extreme cases are particularly suitable for generalisation: they reveal more information because they activate more actors and study more key mechanisms of the situation.

Although it is quite common for energy crises to cause shifts in state-market relations, I illustrate this dynamic evolution by specifying and discussing three different forms of state which exemplify three different patterns of state-market relations in the energy realm: the *partner state*, the *regulatory state* and the *catalytic state* (Prontera 2017, 2018, 2021). Specifically, I argue that after a period during which Italian energy security resembled the catalytic state model, the war in Ukraine favoured a shift back towards the partner state. This model, which is based on a *faire*

approach to energy policy and in which national champions and triangular diplomacy play key roles, is not new for Italy: this was the original model that facilitated the construction of East-West energy interdependence during the Cold War. After the invasion, this model, although embedded in a new context, emerged (again) as an effective strategy for eliminating Russian gas supplies. However, the re-emergence of the partner state also has negative implications. It favours intra-European competition, which is detrimental in the current seller's market for gas dominated by producer states and big consumers, such as China and India, and further limits integration in this area. Moreover, it risks undermining the EU climate goals as closer relations between governments and traditional national companies augment the possibilities of 'capture' of decision-makers by fossil fuel interests, delaying decarbonisation targets. This problem could be amplified by the rise of right-wing and radical right populist climate-sceptic parties. Whether this can be mitigated by the 'greening' of the partner state, a recent phenomenon that deserves further investigation.

The article is organised as follows. In the next section, I illustrate the IPE conceptual framework used in the study. In this section, I also clarify the definition of energy security that I adopt – i.e. long-term security of supply – as well as the key factors affecting state-market relations in this field. Then, I apply the conceptual framework to (briefly) illustrate the emergence and evolution of Italian energy security and East-West energy relations in the natural gas sector from the Cold War to the Russian annexation of Crimea. This illustration provides the necessary background to understand the changes triggered by the invasion. These changes will be analysed in the following section, which shows how the war has brought back the partner state in Italy. The risks and wider implications of this shift for EU energy and climate policy are then also discussed by extending the empirical focus beyond Italy, with insights from Germany and France, as the return of the (partner) state is visible in these two other major Western consumer states as well. Finally, in the Conclusions section, I briefly reassess the lessons learned and highlight avenues for further research stemming from this study.

Conceptual framework

IPE and energy security

Energy security is a recurrent theme in politics and international relations scholarship. Attention to this topic follows the ups and downs of global energy markets and usually reaches its apex in the context of energy crises and supply disruptions. In the early 2000s, this old issue re-entered the agenda of scholars and policymakers alike. This return of attention to

energy security has been paralleled by an extension of this notion to cover new aspects beyond the traditional focus on the security of supply (e.g. Sovacool 2011). These new dimensions, which are now commonly integrated into the concept of energy security, are environmental stewardship (which addresses the links between fossil fuel consumption and climate change) and questions of social and human security, including such issues as equity, justice and energy poverty. This widening of the concept of energy security has been instrumental in illustrating the many interconnections among the various facets of the current energy challenge (e.g. Kuzemko, Keating and Goldthau 2015; Dannreuther 2017). Although I am aware of these interconnections and, in what follows, discuss the energy-climate nexus, in this article, I use the term *energy security* in line with its traditional definition focussed on the security of supply. A simple distinction, however, is needed between those measures designed to manage (from a short-term perspective) supply crises – such as strategic reserves, storage capacity, emergency plans, contingency plans and mechanisms of solidarity among consumer countries – and those designed (from a medium-long-term perspective) to prevent them. The latter include diversification of suppliers and supply routes and the promotion of those investments necessary to develop adequate resources and infrastructure to match national energy demand. These measures to prevent supply crises, in particular, will be the focus of this article.³ Their aim is to ensure adequate supply to sustain the economic development of consumer countries, and many of them imply some form of dialogue and cooperation among consumer and producer states and between governments and energy companies.

The last wave of attention on energy security has also been instrumental in bringing ‘energy into IPE again’ (Van de Graaf *et al.* 2016: 4; see also Keating *et al.* 2012). As Stoddard (2013) has reminded us, recalling an IPE tradition which goes back to the seminal work of Susan Strange (1988), energy security is typically provided by a ‘nexus’ of market actors and political authorities. Energy companies provide the bulk of the production knowledge, production capacity and financing, and political authorities provide diplomatic and political support and shape the institutional framework in which market actors operate. The way in which these elements combine in different periods and contexts is, in the end, the crucial question for scholars of energy politics.

The concept of ‘forms of state’ has a long tradition in IPE scholarship and in the historical institutional perspective (e.g. Clift 2014). This concept has been widely used to understand transformations in the state-market nexus and in the patterns of interactions among state and market actors in the wake of complex changes in the ideational and market structures in which they operate (e.g. Cerny 1997; Cox 1981). Forms of states, however, should not be considered as settled realities but as

ideal-typical characterisations of an emerging process of transformation (Clift 2014: 172; see also Jessop 2002). As suggested by Caporaso (1996: 31) forms of states should be considered less as discrete category and more as an emphasis, that is 'something to be accented rather than something to sort into categories'. Moreover, the forms-of-state perspective must be applied in a manner that is sensitive to particular national legacies and ideational contexts through historically contextualised qualitative analysis that can capture the complexity of state-market nexuses and their evolutions (Clift 2014: 197).

Shifts in state-market relations are quite common in the energy realm. The metaphor of the pendulum has been applied to characterise the periodic oscillations between a more interventionist and a more market-oriented perspective (e.g. Dannreuther 2015; Finon 1994; Helm 2005). These oscillations are triggered by developments in the international energy markets, supply crises and evolving perceptions about the risks related to energy dependence on other countries. The latter, in particular, are affected by amity/enmity patterns, which are important because they influence consumers' perception of the country on which they are dependent – beyond simple objective data, such as the level of import from a third state – along a continuum between 'energy security threat' and 'energy security guarantor' (Maltby 2015). When Russia invaded Ukraine, the international energy markets were already under stress caused by the combination of the COVID-19 crisis and the post-COVID-19 economic recovery. The war aggravated this situation worldwide. However, the more severe effects of the war were concentrated in the EU gas sector due to its heavy dependence on Russian supplies, which turned into an immediate threat to European energy security. It is no surprise then that this event favoured another swing of the energy pendulum towards a more interventionist role for the state in Europe.

Forms of state and energy security

Originally, in the energy realm, the concept of forms of state was applied to studying producer states. The focus was on rentier-states or petro-states and their distinctive features (e.g. Beblawi and Luciani 1987; Karl 1997). More recently, however, the forms of state conceptualisation have been extended to consumer countries. Randall (2005), for example, has described the US experience in the oil sector, from World War II to the 1990s, recurring to the model of the *associational state*. Conversely, in a series of previous works, I have contrasted the models of the *partner state*, *regulatory state* and *catalytic state* to illustrate the origins and transformations of the politics of energy security in Western Europe amid the process of European integration in the natural gas sector (Prontera 2017, 2018, 2021) (Table 1).

In particular, the model of the partner state describes the traditional features of energy politics from the 1960s to the late 1980s. This was the formative phase of the Eurasian gas market, a period in which the role of the EU (then the European Community) in the energy realm was minimal and state interventionism was the norm, along with competition among (Western) European consumers for external supplies. In the partner state model, national governments create and protect ‘national champions’ at home and support their activities abroad negotiating with producer states. At the domestic level, this model relies on direct forms of state intervention: a *faire* approach typically manifested in the forms of public ownership, direct state financial support and long-term planning. Ideationally, the guiding principles of the partner state consider state (direct) intervention as a necessary condition to defend and promote the public interest, which is assured neither by private agents nor by market mechanisms. This perspective extends to the sensitive area of infrastructural projects such as international pipelines and LNG import terminals – which are essential for the security of gas supply and diversification – where the role of public authorities is to provide financial resources and/or create demand in the domestic market to match external supplies. Moreover, in this model, the relationships between government and energy companies are ‘mutually supportive’ in the sense that national champions’ and states’ objectives reinforce each other. States protect these companies in the domestic market and grant diplomatic and foreign policy support to their activities abroad. In return, the international activities of energy companies and their financial and organisational strength are instrumental in helping states to achieve their energy security objectives. Externally, the modes of energy diplomacy of the

Table 1. Forms of state and energy security.

	<i>Partner State</i>	<i>Regulatory State</i>	<i>Catalytic State</i>
Guiding principles	Defending/promoting public interest (<i>faire</i> approach)	Avoiding/preventing market failures (<i>faire-faire</i> approach)	Supporting/facilitating market actors (<i>faire-avec</i> approach)
Public authorities’ role in energy projects	Demand creator/state-backed financing	Rule-making and enforcing	Catalyst and provider of supplemental resources
Relationships between government and energy companies	Mutually supportive	Neutral	Indirectly supportive
Policy tools	Direct forms of state intervention (e.g. planning, ownership)	Regulatory and market-oriented policy instruments	Public-private partnerships, financial instruments aimed at leveraging private funding
Energy diplomacy	Triangular diplomacy (to back national companies)	Multilateral diplomacy (to promote international agreements and institutions)	Network diplomacy (to facilitate the implementation of specific projects)

Source: Adapted from Prontera (2018).

partner state are well-illustrated by the so-called ‘triangular diplomacy’ framework (Stopford and Strange 1991). This framework focuses on government-to-government, government-to-company and company-to-company negotiations. It also considers backing national companies to be the main purpose of the state’s energy diplomacy.

The partner state model has been challenged – since the early 1990s – by the ‘rise’ of the regulatory state in Western Europe and the parallel process of liberalisation and privatisation of the EU energy sector (Majone 1996, 1997). Ideationally, the regulatory state was supported by the diffusion of the market paradigm in the energy realm. This model is based on a *faire-faire* approach and focuses on avoiding and preventing market failures. The role of public authorities is indirect: they provide and enforce the rules for market actors, which, in end, are those responsible for investing in energy projects and infrastructure. The regulatory state also disrupts the privileged relationship between government and national companies. It maintains a ‘neutral’ stance towards energy companies: energy security is provided by a well-functioning market rather than specific companies and their resources. Its preferred policy tools are regulatory and market-oriented policy instruments. Important functions in this model are delegated to independent regulatory agencies rather than core actors from the executives and line ministries. This should also contribute to solving the ‘credible commitments’ problem and favours those (private) investments needed to develop energy projects and infrastructures for diversification and security of supply. Externally, the regulatory state aims to export its ‘market-plus-rules’ approach to energy security. It favours multilateral diplomacy, with the goal of promoting international agreements and institutions to regulate energy transactions. In Europe, this model has been championed by the European Commission especially, which, in parallel with the measures for creating the single energy market (e.g. the three energy legislative packages of 1998, 2003 and 2009), has sought to export its market rules and build (regional) international institutions for governing energy relations (e.g. Goldthau and Sitter 2014).

Finally, the catalytic state can be conceptually located between the two previous models. According to Lind (1992: 3), a catalytic state is one that pursues its objectives less by relying on its own resources than by acting as a dominant element in multi-actor coalitions while retaining its distinct identity and its own goals (i.e. like a ‘catalyst’ that acts as a stimulus in bringing about a result). This model differs from direct government action (*faire*) of the partner state, but also from the *faire-faire* perspective of the regulatory state, in which private actors assume the state’s responsibility and public authorities focus on setting and enforcing rules for market actions. The catalytic state is based on a *faire-avec* approach (Colli, Mariotti and Piscitello 2014), which implies collaboration with market

actors to pursue government objectives. The state in this model plays a 'catalytic role' aimed at facilitating market actors by providing supplemental resources and incentives for the realisation of investment and infrastructural projects. This approach works through hybrid policy tools, such as public-private partnerships and consortia, and financial mechanisms to leverage private sector funding (e.g. guarantee and blending) that differ from the direct financial state backing granted under the partner state model. In the catalytic state model, hence, the government does not delegate energy security to markets alone nor does it establish privileged relationships with specific companies. Rather, its role is 'indirectly' supportive of energy companies. That is to say that rather than establishing privileged links with national champions, the government is ready to support different companies as long as their commercial objectives are instrumental in promoting the country's energy security. In terms of modes of energy diplomacy, the catalytic state embraces a form of network diplomacy – or 'catalytic diplomacy' (Hocking 1999) – in which governments engage in negotiations with many public and private actors to pursue their policy goals by facilitating the implementation of specific investment projects. This form of diplomacy differs from both the multilateral diplomacy of the regulatory state – where governments try to promote rules and negotiate treaties rather than supporting energy companies – and the triangular diplomacy of the partner state, where the main diplomatic actors are national decision-makers, represented by national executives and managers of national energy companies.

The catalytic state model is particularly useful in understanding how the larger Western European consumer states have responded to the single energy market project and EU integration in the energy sector (e.g. Prontera 2017, 2018). Governments such as those of France, Germany and Italy have implemented the single energy market provisions, liberalised their energy markets and shifted towards the regulatory state model to a certain extent. However, they have also granted support to several energy companies, on an *ad hoc* basis, to implement their energy security agenda when these companies' commercial strategies were in line with governmental goals. At the same time, they have promoted public-private alliances to promote energy infrastructures and diversification of gas supplies. Moreover, rather than relying on EU multilateral efforts, they have embraced forms of network (energy) diplomacy in order to facilitate the implementation of these projects, negotiating with a variety of private and public actors. Network diplomacy, indeed, is especially important within the context of the 'EU multi-layered political-diplomatic environment' (Hocking 2004). This includes the European Commission which, along with its 'market-plus-rules' approach, has expanded its role in the area of external energy relations and infrastructural development thanks to the TEN-E and CEF-E funding schemes.

Italian energy security and East-West energy relations during the Cold war and beyond: from the partner state to the catalytic state

The partner state and the structuration of East-West energy relations

The Italian partner state was instrumental in the structuration of East-West energy relations during the Cold War (Prontera 2021). After World War II, Italy created a state-owned energy company – Ente Nazionale Idrocarburi (ENI) – with the statutory goal of ‘promoting and enforcing initiatives in the national interest in the field of hydrocarbons and natural gas’ (Law No. 136 of 10 February 1953). Domestically, ENI obtained *de facto* monopoly positions over gas imports, transport and sales. Abroad, supported by the government – in line with the triangular diplomacy framework – ENI negotiated with producer states and their national companies. It signed long-term gas supply contracts with the Netherlands, Libya, Algeria and the Soviet Union and helped to build the necessary infrastructure (international pipelines and LNG terminals) to import gas into the Italian market. Italy, along with Germany and France – and their national energy companies, i.e. Ruhrgas and Gaz de France – especially supported the penetration of ‘red’ gas in Western Europe in the wake of the 1970s oil shocks by providing financial and diplomatic backing (Högselius 2012). Despite the Cold War, these three major consumer countries perceived Soviet supplies as a guarantee rather than a threat to their energy security. Domestically, during the 1980s, the Italian government enacted several measures to ‘create’ greater gas demand in the national market (for example, favouring the substitution of oil with natural gas in the power sector) to accommodate the larger volumes imported by ENI. With the abandonment of the nuclear programme after the Chernobyl disaster, natural gas became the ‘Italian way’ of reducing dependency on Middle Eastern oil. Italy contributed to the structuration of East-West energy interdependence (Table 2). And Moscow’s gas soon became a key component of the Italian security-of-supply architecture: in the early 1980s, Soviet gas accounted for almost 30% of national consumption, and this number was even higher at the end of the decade (Table 2).

After the end of the Cold War, East-West energy relations developed further: Russian gas exports to Western Europe rose from about 58 billion cubic metres (bcm) at the beginning of the 1990s to more than 80 in the early 2000s (Table 2). The Italian partner state again contributed extensively to this trend. In the mid-1990s, ENI and Gazprom signed new long-term supply contracts, increasing the volumes of Russian gas imported into the Italian market. Italian policymakers considered closer ties with Moscow as a way to improve the country’s energy security. The legacy of more than two decades of energy cooperation, the idea of Russia as a reliable partner and previous patterns of amity between the two countries fostered a positive perception in Italy of dependence on Moscow for gas.

Table 2. Soviet/Russian natural gas export to Western Europe (WE) 1970-2015 and the role of Italy (volumes in billion cubic metres, bcm).

	1975	1980	1985	1990	1995	2000	2005	2015
Export to WE (volumes in bcm)	8	25,5	31,3	58,8	69,4	80,1	91,4	104,7
Major consumers in WE (volumes in bcm)								
Germany	3,1	10,7	12,5	24,4	32,1	34,1	36	45,2
Italy	2,3	7	6,3	14,5	14,3	21,8	22	27,6
France	0	4	7,3	11,4	12,9	12,9	13,2	9,5
Italy as % of total Soviet/Russian exports to WE	29	27	20	25	20	27	24	27
Soviet/Russian gas as % of total Italian gas consumption	11	28	21	33	28	33	27	43

Sources: Author's elaboration from Stern (1990, 2005) and BP statistics, various years. Notes: Western Europe = Finland, Austria, Switzerland, France, West Germany/Germany (after 1990), Italy + Belgium, Greece, and Netherlands (after 2000).

The rise of the catalytic state and the deterioration of East-West energy relations

During the 1990s, the liberalisation of the Italian energy sector began, in accordance with the provisions of the single energy market project. This was paralleled by the (partial) privatisation of the former gas (ENI) and electricity (ENEL) monopolies (at the end of the process, the Italian state's ownership in ENI and ENEL was respectively reduced to about 30% and 20%). An independent regulatory agency for the electricity and the gas sector was set up in 1997, and in 2001, ENI was forced to separate the gas network from the gas import and distribution business; consequently, the ownership and operation of the Italian gas network were transferred to Snam (which became a fully independent company 30% owned by the Italian state in 2012). According to the ideational climate of that period, with the market paradigm spreading in the energy policy realm, ENI ceased to be an 'instrument' for Italian energy security. Contrary to the 1953 law that created ENI, in the new 1995 statute for the company – which had become a joint stock company in 1992 – there was no mention of promoting the national interest in the energy sector.

Despite these innovations, Italy was not converging towards the regulatory state model. The Italian partner state was still operating during the 1990s and 2000s. ENI, in particular, again supported by the government, deepened its cooperation with Libya and Russia. In 2004, a new pipeline, the so-called Green Stream, built by ENI and the Libyan National Oil Company (NOC), began operations connecting Libya to Sicily, while ENI signed new deals with Gazprom to extend the contracts for Russian gas supplies to Italy. However, important developments occurred in this same period: Italian energy politics was shifting towards the catalytic state model (Prontera 2018, 2021). The government enacted several measures to reduce ENI's market power, such as antitrust ceilings, compulsory gas release programmes and mandatory pipeline upgrades (Honoré 2013).

These measures signalled a major change from the previous partner state model, in which the protection of national champions in the domestic market was instrumental in promoting the country's energy security. The interests of the incumbent and the policy goals of the government increasingly diverged. To be sure, ENI continued to maintain a prominent position in the Italian gas industry and regarding the security of the supply architecture. However, the new measures progressively allowed new companies to import gas into the Italian market (ENI's share of total gas imports in Italy decreased from about 90% in 2000 to 50% in 2018).

To further reduce ENI's market power, starting from the mid-2000s, several of these companies proposed the construction of new gas import infrastructures. These projects were opposed by ENI (Luciani and Mazzanti 2006; Skalamera 2015), but they were consistent with the country's energy security strategy, which aimed to enhance the diversification of suppliers and routes. The government therefore offered its diplomatic cover by supporting the companies in their negotiations with producer states and promoting their investment projects within the emerging EU framework for energy security and infrastructure development. Many of the proposed projects, in the end, were not realised (the economic downturn that hit Italy after the 2008 global financial crisis contributed to this outcome, causing flat gas demand). However, two new LNG terminals were built near Rovigo (in 2009 by the Adriatic LNG) and Livorno (in 2013 by OLT) (Table 3). The Trans Adriatic Pipeline (TAP) entered into operation in 2020, completing the Italian gas import architecture with a new route from Azerbaijan (Table 3). Unlike previous infrastructure projects, developed under the partner state model, these new ones have been realised in line with the catalytic state model, by consortia of public and private companies – without (for the first time) the involvement of ENI (Table 3) – and according to the network diplomacy framework (Prontera 2018, 2021). Additional financial resources for the TAP consortium were also provided under the TEN-E and CEF-E schemes and the European Investment Bank, under an EU guarantee.

The opening of new (pipeline and LNG) import routes, however, did not reduce the centrality of Russia in the Italian security of supply architecture.⁴ During the 2010s, Russian gas – imported mainly by ENI – averaged 28 bcm/y, and Moscow has continued to represent the foremost Italian gas supplier (Table 3). Rome-Moscow energy cooperation was not even affected by the 2014 Russian annexation of Crimea. Despite the deterioration of EU-Russia (and US-Russia) relations in the wake of that event, the position of Italian policymakers on Russian gas had not changed. In 2021, with 29 bcm, Russia still accounted for 40% of total Italian gas imports, followed by Algeria (30%), Azerbaijan (10%), Qatar (10%) and Libya (4%) (MITE 2022a).

Italian energy security after the war: bringing back the partner state

As soon as the war began, it became clear that Italy's high dependence on Russian gas represented a potential threat to the country. This expectation was confirmed in the following months when Russian supplies to Italy were significantly reduced (Sharples 2022). The gravity of the situation prompted the government led by Mario Draghi to take immediate action: Italy simply could not wait for the definition of a common EU response regarding its energy security needs. In this context, the partner state model emerged again. This was manifested both at the ideational level and in the government's internal and external actions, with a shift towards a *faire* approach and triangular modes of energy diplomacy. In particular, just a month after the Moscow invasion, the government formulated a strategy based on two main pillars for eliminating Russian gas supplies in (about) three years: building new LNG import terminals and negotiating new gas volumes with key producers. The implementation of this strategy, however, required closer cooperation between the government and national champions such as ENI and Snam. In the National Energy Security Strategy enacted by the Italian government in 2013 and 2017, there was no mention of any special role for these companies. On the other hand, after the war, the Parliamentary Committee for National Security clearly stated that national energy companies represented the 'pillars' on which Italy should build its energy security strategy (COPASIR 2022: 25). It also highlighted that the possibility of relying on their assets represented 'an undeniable advantage' that allowed the country 'to hold a position of strength' (COPASIR 2022: 8).

Timing, indeed, was key to the success of the government strategy. Competition among European consumers was expected both for gas volumes and for the acquisition of LNG infrastructure; particularly Floating Storage and Regasification Units (FSRUs), which are ship-terminals capable of storing and regasifying natural gas that can be deployed in a relatively short time compared to on-shore LNG facilities. At the end of 2021, there were 48 FSRUs in operation worldwide, and only 25 of significant capacity (GIIGNL 2022). The context was very problematic for additional gas supplies as well. The 2022 IEA Gas Market Report warned that the prospect of additional gas supply appeared 'limited as incremental export capacity relies on a limited number of projects' (IEA 2022: 7).

With regard to new gas supplies, ENI became (again) the main partner of the Italian government. Intense triangular energy diplomacy was conducted by key actors from the executive during the first months of the war, in close cooperation with ENI's managers (Table 4). This external action focussed on important producers where ENI was already involved in the gas business, i.e. Algeria, Qatar, Egypt, Angola, Congo, Mozambique

Table 3. The Italian gas import architecture (1971–2021).

Pipelines (year)	Origin of gas	Transit countries	Capacity (bcm/y)	Developers (ç)	Gas imports in bcm/y (average 2010–2020) (*)	Gas imports in bcm in 2021 (*)
TENP/Transitgas (1974)	Netherlands/Norway	Germany/France/Switzerland	20 (^^)	ENI	9	2
TAG (1974)	Russia	Ukraine/Slovakia/Austria	40 (^^^)	ENI	28	29
Transmed (1983)	Algeria	Tunisia/Mediterranean Sea	34 (^^^)	ENI, SONATRACH	16	21
Green Stream (2004)	Libya	Mediterranean Sea	10	ENI, NOC	6	3
TAP (2020)	Azerbaijan	Greece/Albania/Adriatic Sea	8	Axpo, E-On, Statoil	–	7
LNG terminals (year)	Origins of gas (in 2021)	Capacity (bcm/y)	Developers (ç)	Gas imports in bcm/y (average 2010–2020)	Gas imports in bcm in 2021	
Panigaglia, Liguria (1971)	Qatar (70%)	3.5	ENI	8	10	
Rovigo, Veneto (2009)	Algeria (14%) US (8%)	8	Adriatic LNG: Qatar Petroleum, Edison (°), Exxon-Mobil			
Livorno, Tuscany (2013)	Others (8%)	3.75	OLT: Uniper (former E-On), Iren (°°), Golar			

Notes: (^^) = TENP/Transitgas capacity has been increased in 1994 and 1997. (^^^)^ = a second minor (1.5 bcm/y) entry point for Russian gas is located at Gorizia (Friuli), where arrives part of the gas transiting towards TAG via Slovenia; (^^^)^ = Transmed capacity has been doubled in 1997 with the construction of a second line. (*) = author's elaboration from MITE (2022a). (ç) = companies involved in the early stages of the project's development. (°) = Until 2012, Edison was 30% owned by Italian municipalities. (°°) = Iren is a multiutility company 50% owned by Italian municipalities.

and Libya. New long-term gas deals were signed with these countries and, in several cases, ENI committed to increasing investment in the further development of their gas resources (Table 4).

The only exception to this triangular energy diplomacy is represented by the case of Azerbaijan, which was visited by the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs in April 2022 (ENI is not involved in the Azeri gas business). However, the bulk of the Italian response after the war has been in line with the partner state model, which sees the government focussed on backing national champions' activities abroad. Thanks to this partnership – and additional measures for promoting national gas production – the Italian government expects to eliminate Russian gas imports by 2025 (Table 5).

Table 4. Italian triangular energy diplomacy after the invasion of Ukraine (February–August 2022).

Date	Notes
28 February 2022	The Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the ENI's CEO visited Algeria to start discussion on increasing gas supplies to Italy
5–6 March 2022	The Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the ENI's CEO visited Qatar to discuss increasing LNG supply to Italy for additional 5 bcm/y
12–13 March 2022	The Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the ENI's CEO visited Congo and Angola to discuss LNG export deals
11 April 2022	The Italian Prime Minister, the Ministry for Ecological Transition and the ENI's CEO visited Algeria to enhancing cooperation in the energy sector ENI and SONATRACH reached a deal to increase Algerian gas exports to Italy of 3 bcm in 2022 and 9 bcm/y by 2023/24
13 April 2022	ENI signed a framework agreement with the Egyptian state energy company EGAS to enable up to 3 bcm of LNG to be exported to Italy (and elsewhere in Europe) in 2022–23
20 April 2022	The Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Ecological Transition and ENI's CEO visited Angola reaching a deal for accelerating gas production in the country with the view of potentially export to Italy up to 1.5 bcm/y of LNG
21 April 2022	The Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Ecological Transition and the ENI's CEO visited Congo for discussing LNG export ENI signed a deal with Congo to accelerate gas production in the country with the view of potentially export to Italy up to 4.5 bcm/y of LNG by 2023
26 May 2022	The Algerian President visited Rome and discussed improving Algerian-Italian energy cooperation with the Italian President and the Italian Prime Minister ENI and SONATRACH signed a Memorandum of Understanding for accelerating the development of Algerian gas resources to increase export to Italy
June 2022	ENI entered into a cooperation with QatarEnergy for the expansion of the North Field East project, which is expected to begin operations in 2025
June 2022	ENI begun operations at the Coral Sul Floating Liquefied Natural Gas facility that will allow Mozambique to become an LNG exporter (see also below)
5 July 2022	The Italian President visited Mozambique to strengthen energy cooperation
August 2022	The ENI's CEO and the CEO of the Libyan National Oil Company (NOC) met in Rome to discuss the upgrading of ENI investment in Libya and the expansion of gas export to Italy

Sources: Author's compilation from press sources and companies' websites. Notes: in the case of Egypt the Italian government maintained a low profile, avoiding official visit to Cairo because the so-called 'Regeni case' (Egypt repeatedly refused to cooperate with Italy in the proceedings against four Egyptian officials who are accused of killing Giulio Regeni, an Italian researcher, in Cairo, in 2016). In the case of Libya as well, due the unstable political situation of the country, negotiations involved mainly ENI and NOC managers.

Table 5. The Italian plan for eliminating Russian gas supplies.

	Origin	Expected volumes in billion cubic metres (bcm)		
		2023	2024	2025
Gas	Algeria*, Azerbaijan, national production ^o	8,9	11,9	11,9
LNG	Egypt*, Qatar*, Congo*, Angola*, Nigeria*, Indonesia*, Mozambique*, Libya*	7,9	9,5	12,7
	Total	16,8	21,4	24,6

Sources: Author's elaboration from MITE (2022b). Notes: (*) = countries in which ENI operates; (^o) = National gas production is expected to double from the 2021 level (3 bcm). The difference between the 29 bcm of gas imported from Russia (in 2021) and the 24,6 bcm envisaged by the government for 2025 should be covered expanding renewable energy production and increasing energy efficiency.

Whereas for external gas supplies, the Italian government cooperated with ENI in a 'mutually supportive' way, for the new LNG import terminals – essential to receiving the larger LNG volumes expected in the coming years – it turned to Snam. At the end of March 2022, the Italian Ministry for Ecological Transition tasked Snam with realising two FSRU import facilities. This task was not easy because of the growing competition among consumers in the international shipping market (Dominelli 2022). However, between June and July 2022, Snam finalised the acquisition (for a total of about 700 million euros) of two FSRU vessels, each with a regasification capacity of 5 bcm/y (the *Golar Tundra* and the *BW Singapore*). According to Snam's plans, the *Golar Tundra* is to be located near Piombino (in the Tuscan province of Livorno) and commence operation by the spring of 2023. The *BW Singapore* is to be located near Ravenna (in Emilia Romagna) and commence operation by 2024. When fully operative, these FSRUs could cover up to 13% of Italian gas demand. To support Snam's plans, the government enacted a new law (Law Decree no. 50 of 17 May 2022), which provided financial aid for the FSRUs projects (30 million euros granted each year by the Ministry of Economy and Finance from 2024 to 2043) and an acceleration of the administrative authorisation procedures needed for their realisation.

In sum, the Italian response to the energy security challenges posed by the war in Ukraine brought back the partner state. As scholars of historical institutionalism, such as Krasner, explain, the role of the state in policymaking is path dependent, because the range of options available to policymakers at any given time is a function of the 'capabilities' at their disposal, capabilities put in place during some earlier period and possibly in a different environment (Krasner 1988: 67). When the invasion of Ukraine began, the Italian government turned to its national (gas) champions that had 'survived' the liberalisation period. These were the main capabilities it could (quickly) mobilise to improve the country's security of supply and dismantle dependence on Russia. Thanks to ENI's engagement, at the beginning of the summer of 2022, Algeria had already

become the first Italian gas supplier. This trend continued in the following months – in November 2022, 40% of Italian gas import were provided by Algeria, 27% were covered by LNG, whereas Russia's share was only 3% (MITE 2022a) – under the newly appointed (on October 2022) right-wing government led by Giorgia Meloni, which followed through on the energy security strategy initiated by the Draghi government.⁵

The return of the (partner) state and the post-war European energy politics

The return of the (partner) state is not limited to Italy. As with previous energy crises, that triggered by the Russian invasion has favoured a swing of the pendulum towards more interventionist approaches in major consumer countries. To be sure, the idea of recurring shifts in energy policy suggested by the pendulum metaphor does not imply a cyclical pattern of events in which each new setting simply mirrors the preceding period. This is because of the diversity of materials as well as ideational conditions and different starting points. As illustrated, since the liberalisation era, ENI no longer holds a monopolistic position in the Italian gas market. The company – which has become a joint stock company – has also importantly changed its organisational structure from that of the original partner state period, particularly after the separation from Snam. Similar transformations in the market and industrial structures of the gas business have happened in all the EU countries with the implementation of the single energy market. The European gas sector today is very different from the 1960s–1970s when the partner state first appeared. Moreover, although state interventionism in the EU member states has increased with the post-COVID-19 recovery plans – and the EU itself had shifted towards more interventionist approaches to energy and climate policy since the mid-2010s (e.g. Quitzow *et al.* 2023) – the current ideational climate is obviously different from the post-World War II period as far as the role of the state in economic governance is concerned. Hence, when I argue that the war in Ukraine brought back the partner state, I want to stress the re-emergence of certain key features of this model rather than present a simple replica of the original situation. Such features are visible beyond the Italian case. After the war, as previously mentioned, the French government (fully) nationalised its energy giant Électricité de France, and Berlin did the same with Uniper. Both France and Germany also embraced triangular energy diplomacy to find substitutes for Russian gas imports. Germany negotiated long-term LNG supply deals with Qatar, backing its national companies Uniper and RWE (Reuters 2022a). In France, the leading roles were played by Engie (formerly Gaz de France, 24% state-owned) and the French oil major TotalEnergies, which,

supported by Paris, negotiated gas deals with Algeria and Qatar (Reuters 2022b, 2022c). As in Italy, the French and German governments also worked in close partnership with national companies to realise new LNG import infrastructures. The French government tasked Engie, through its subsidiary GRTgaz, and TotalEnergies to realise a new FSRU import facility. In Germany, the Scholz government tasked Uniper and RWE to realise four (two each) FSRU import facilities (Germany had no LNG import infrastructure in place when the war began). It provided direct financial backing (2.94 billion euros were granted by the Federal Minister for Economic Affairs to lease the four FSRUs) and passed a law (i.e. the so-called ‘LNG Acceleration Act’) to speed up the construction of these infrastructures. Governmental agents and company managers worked in a ‘mutually supportive’ way to achieve this goal. As pointed out by RWE managers, for the FSRU plans, the company was acting ‘on behalf of and in the name of the German government’ (Afanasiev 2022).

The re-emergence of the partner state has been instrumental in helping major Western European consumers to reduce their dependency on Russian gas. However, this development brings with it new problems as it interacts with a context that is different from that of the first appearance of this model. First of all, the re-emergence of the partner state risks fostering intra-European competition. This is the case not only for FSRU facilities but also for external gas supplies. When Italy and ENI started negotiations with Algeria for additional gas volumes, Spain – which imports gas from Algeria *via* two pipelines: Gaz Maghreb Europe and MEDGAZ – expressed concerns: higher flows to Italy might result in fewer resources for Spain (Bloomberg 2022). Similar competition among European consumers might arise around LNG supplies as additional export capacity is limited and time is needed to develop it. After the war, particularly Qatar – given its leading role in the LNG market – has become the preferred target of European countries’ rush for gas. Unlike in the previous period, in the current seller’s market phase, these uncoordinated efforts can undermine the bargaining position of European consumers vis-à-vis producer states.⁶ National measures to protect national companies in the domestic market could also undermine the development of intra-EU gas interconnections, which are essential for the further integration of the single energy market. This is the case with the MidCat pipeline, which could allow Spain (where there are six LNG import terminals) to export gas to the continent – particularly to Germany, which actually supported this project – although this has been blocked by France (Messad 2022).

Secondly, the most serious challenge posed by the return of the partner state is related to the energy-climate nexus. The partner state risks undermining the EU decarbonisation objectives. In the original period, mutually supportive relations between governments and national companies were

facilitated by the fact that their goals were, in the long-term, similar: increasing gas supplies from different sources. However, in the current context, governments have to balance security of supply objectives with their climate targets. Closer relations with traditional energy companies increase the risks of governmental capture by fossil fuel interests – something which happened in the previous period (e.g. Högselius 2012; Di Nucci and Russolillo 2019). These risks are amplified by the fact that to address the energy crisis, policymakers are reluctant to undermine their national champions as their strength increases their bargaining position vis-à-vis producers. This strength, however, can result in a further delay, or even in a reversal, of the energy transition. Investments in new gas infrastructures and long-term supply contracts can have lock-in effects detrimental to decarbonisation objectives. For instance, Snam has requested permission to moor its FSRUs at Piombino and Ravenna until 2048 (Ricciardi 2022). ENI's CEO has even suggested that Italy should build another four LNG import facilities to improve its energy security (*Milano Finanza* 2022). The simple fact that when the energy crisis began, the Italian government was able to turn for solutions to ENI and Snam has side-lined other potential and more climate-friendly alternatives, such as path-breaking investments in renewables or energy efficiency, which have been suggested by environmental NGOs (e.g. Legambiente, Greenpeace and WWF 2022). In Germany as well, LNG policy has been criticised by environmental NGOs and climate activists, despite the Scholz government – which is also supported by the Bündnis 90-Die Grünen (the Greens) – seeking to reassure them regarding its commitment to the country's climate targets. The risks of capture could be further aggravated if the new centrality acquired by companies operating in the fossil fuel business is matched by the rise of right-wing, or radical right, populist parties, which because of their ideology tend to have climate-sceptic positions (e.g. Lockwood 2018). The new Italian coalition government led by Giorgia Meloni is mainly supported by similar radical right populist parties – i.e. Fratelli d'Italia and Lega (e.g. Garzia 2023) – that show less interest in climate issues (ECCO 2022), raising concerns about the future evolution of the country's decarbonisation efforts. One of the first measures enacted by the Meloni government to tackle the energy crisis, Law decree No. 176/2022, has relaxed the previous ban on exploration for gas fields at sea. Overall, the possible encounter between the partner state and right-wing, or radical right, populist parties represents a serious political challenge to EU climate ambitions.

On the other hand, governments can try to 'green' the partner state by steering and accelerating national champions' shift towards low-carbon technologies (a process that is still in its infancy). In new deals negotiated with Algeria, Qatar and Egypt, Italy, Germany and France have included cooperation in the area of renewables and green hydrogen. With the LNG

Acceleration Act, the German government has also mandated energy companies to build newly planned LNG facilities in such a way that they can be successively switched over to carbon-neutral products, such as hydrogen. It is too soon to assess the actual impact of such innovations. However, they represent a departure from the traditional fossil fuel focus of the partner state.

Conclusions

With this article, I have endeavoured to contribute to the emerging literature on the post-war European energy politics by adopting an IPE perspective on state-market relations and focussing on the Italian case. When the invasion began, Italy was highly dependent on Russian gas. Rome was also a traditional energy ally of Moscow, which was considered a key guarantor of the country's energy security. The war drastically changed Italy-Russia amity/enmity patterns: within a few weeks, Russian supplies became a threat to Rome. Dismantling the Russian energy weapon required immediate action in order to prevent a supply crisis and prepare the country's energy system for the 2023 winter season and beyond. The partner state – a specific state-market nexus in the natural gas sector – emerged as the main Italian response to this challenge. I have suggested that a similar return of the (partner) state characterises other major consumers in Western Europe, such as Germany and France. Put simply, I have argued that the East-West energy interdependence built during the Cold War, thanks to the partner state, would be dismantled (mainly) according to a similar state-market nexus: i.e. with the mobilisation of national capacities in a partner-state fashion rather than through market mechanisms or supranational (EU) capacity building.

Certainly, the re-emergence of the partner state in the energy realm is a matter of emphasis. European countries continue to be, of course, regulatory and catalytic states to a certain extent. At the same time, the crisis favoured further integration in the EU energy sector, although still at an incremental pace. In the coming years, the EU Energy Platform, if significantly upgraded, might finally help the EU to develop more fully a common approach to the security of supply and external energy relations. I have discussed, however, certain challenges for EU energy and climate policy linked to the return of the (partner) state. If the mobilisation of national capabilities by larger Western consumers proves effective in addressing the crisis, and as the turmoil in energy markets diminishes, the imperative of additional supranational (EU) action might be reduced. The new centrality acquired by national energy companies could also undermine efforts to further integrate the single energy market. However, the most serious challenge of the return of the (partner) state is to EU climate ambitions. The shift towards the partner state could augment the risk of fossil fuel capture and lock-in, which is a problem that could be additionally aggravated by the alignment of the return

of the (partner) state with the rise of right-wing and radical right populist (climate-sceptic) parties. At the same time, the greening of the partner state appears an interesting avenue for research, along with the study of the varieties of post-war state (energy) interventionism in different EU countries – i.e. the varieties of the partner state – and of the interactions between the re-emergence of this state-market nexus and the well-established, although evolving, regulatory setting of EU energy and climate policy.

Notes

1. From 2004 to 2015 Germany, Italy and France were the major EU importers of Russian gas, receiving respectively about 390, 228, and 94 billion cubic meters (Poland occupied the fourth position in this EU ranking with about 88 billion cubic meters) (BP statistics, various years).
2. From 2023, member states can also include REPowerEU chapters in their recovery and resilience plans for targeted support to energy infrastructures.
3. The article thus does not cover national and EU measures for managing sudden supply disruptions, such as the ‘European Gas Demand Reduction Plan’. Nor does the article focus on the debate on the EU price cap for gas. This measure as well adopts a short-term perspective aimed at (temporarily) reducing the price of gas imported into the EU.
4. For a recent critical review of the Italian-Russian energy partnership, see Siddi (2012) and Clò (2022). On the role of ENI in the Italian foreign policy towards Russia, see also Coticchia, Giacomello and Sartori (2011).
5. The former Minister for Ecological Transition, Roberto Cingolani, was appointed as Energy Advisor of the Meloni government. In addition, the former Vice-Minister for Economic Development of the Draghi government, Gilberto Pichetto Fratin, was appointed as the new Minister of the Environment and Energy Security (formerly the Minister for Ecological Transition). Moreover, on January 2023, Giorgia Meloni and ENI’s CEO (Claudio Descalzi) visited (again) Algeria and Libya to strengthen energy cooperation.
6. A similar issue has become even more pressing in the aftermath of the so-called ‘Qatargate’ scandal, which (among other things) exposed traditional problems related to EU energy dependency on non-democratic fossil fuel producers (e.g. Youngs 2009).

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