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Reframing Renewable Energy

A framing approach to the analysis of EU energy policy between 2014-2024

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Abstract

The last decade has represented a significant time in European Union (EU) energy policy. The mounting consequences of climate change have pushed the EU to the forefront of the clean energy transition. However, challenges such as the Crimean crisis in 2014, the COVID-19 pandemic and the ongoing war in Ukraine have also had implications on priorities in EU energy policy. This study aims to further the knowledge of the tumultuous time in EU energy policy between 2014-2024 by examining how the framing of renewable energy has evolved in relation to the three core goals of EU energy policy: competitiveness, energy security and sustainability. This study was conducted through a qualitative content analysis of EU policy documents, comparing the present priorities and framings of renewable energy over the past decade. The findings reveal that the framing of renewable energy has fluctuated in relation to the three core policy goals as priorities change in the EU, often in reaction to a threat framing of Russia as the primary energy supplier or the risks associated with climate change. The analysis provided insights into how renewable energy has been promoted and justified, and in turn, affected the policies that followed.

Key words*:* *Renewable Energy, European Union, Energy Policy, Framing Theory, Threat Framing*

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1 Introduction

1.1 Motivation for study

Energy as a resource inhabits a complex role in the global system. When it works well, it is simply what charges your phone, fuels your car and lights up your home. But when it doesn't, it can have far-reaching consequences on political security, economic stability and the environment.

The governance of energy has fascinated many researchers due to its fragmented nature, as it is occupied by a diverse set of actors balancing the delicate relationships between export and import countries, focusing mainly on the importance of fossil fuels in the global market. As energy security, in terms of a reliable supply of energy, is vital to national security, energy governance has remained predominantly on the national level (Van de Graaf & Zelli, 2016: 55-57). Here is where the European Union (EU) presents a specifically interesting case as a regional institution that has acquired (some) authority over supranational energy policy. Since its inception as the European Coal and Steel Community, energy has been at the core of EU integration, aiming to promote cooperation in energy issues across the region (Bocse, 2021: 36). What currently stands at 27 Member States represents as many diverging energy policy priorities, national energy mixes and varying capacities. As Member States were reluctant to relinquish sovereignty over their national energy mix, the EU gradually gathered competencies in other intersecting policy areas such as environmental policy, internal market regulation and competition policy. What started as a treaty to integrate Europe's coal and steel industries after World War II has evolved into the Energy Union, launched in 2014. This initiative integrated the EU's energy and climate policy instruments to address three central goals of collective EU energy policy: the competitiveness of EU energy markets, the security and reliability of supply and the sustainability of the

EU energy system by the promotion of renewable energy (RE)[1] sources. Over the years the priority of these three goals has varied based on deliberations between Member States, policy proposals by the European Commission (EC) and external shocks, guiding EU energy policy action in different ways (Knodt, 2023: 206; Knodt & Ringel, 2022: 123). Whilst previous research on the topic often approaches the study of EU energy policy in terms of the successfulness in implementation, this study chooses to examine the foundations of how policy action is motivated. Taking a social constructivist approach to the study of EU energy policy, this study assesses processes of framing; how the communication of an issue constructs meaning. Framing lies at the very essence of policy practices as it promotes certain perceptions of issues and obscures others, which in turn affects which solutions are presented and adopted in policy (Eriksson, 2020; Knodt, 2018: 225).

The last decade has represented a significant time in EU energy policy. Increasing global attention to the consequences of climate change has pushed the EU to the forefront of the clean energy transition, with RE reaching a 23% share of gross final consumption in 2022 (Eurostat, 2023b). However, challenges such as the Crimean crisis, the COVID-19 pandemic and ultimately the Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2022 have also had comprehensive effects on EU energy policy, and especially the promotion of RE. Since its introduction in EU energy policy discourse in the 1990s, RE has been framed as a blanket solution to competitiveness, energy security and sustainability. This makes it an interesting case to follow to further the understanding of how these three, often conflicting, policy objectives have been used to motivate and legitimize the promotion of RE in EU energy policy (Szulecki & Westphal, 2018: 178; Hildingsson, Stripple & Jordan, 2011)

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[1] This study includes all sources specified by the EU as renewable sources under the umbrella term of "renewable energy" (RE). "'Renewable energy' means energy from renewable non-fossil sources, namely wind, solar (solar thermal and solar photovoltaic) and geothermal energy, ambient energy, tide, wave and other ocean energy, hydropower, biomass, landfill gas, sewage treatment plant gas, and biogas." (European Commission, 2018-12-11a, Article 2, (1))

The clear and present task of achieving the clean energy transition lies in the efficacy of EU energy policy. Thus, the framing of RE is crucial to understand how the clean energy transition is promoted and justified and in turn affects the policies that follow. This study examines the tumultuous time in EU energy policy between 2014-2024 to evaluate how the framing of RE has evolved in relation to the three core goals of EU energy policy: competitiveness, energy security and sustainability.

1.2 Research aim and outline

The overarching goal of this study is to provide a contribution to the research on the implications of framing on EU energy policy. Focusing on the case of RE, this study aims to gain greater knowledge of how it has been motivated, justified and legitimized over the last ten years of EU energy policy. The timeframe starts with the formation of the Energy Union in 2014, as it increased the competencies of the EU as a supranational actor in energy governance, as well as furthered the integration between energy and climate policies, and ending in February 2024. The last decade has proved challenging to the EU energy system as the three often conflicting policy objectives of competitiveness, energy security and sustainability have been forced to co-function in their aims (Szulecki & Westphal, 2018: 178). The aim of this study is to provide insight into the last decade of EU energy policy and assess how the framing of RE has evolved in relation to the three core policy objectives. In line with the social constructivist approach, this study emphasizes that the framing of an issue matters in policy because how an issue is understood directly correlates to the allocation of resources, responsibilities and what actions are taken (Eriksson, 2020: 2). Thus, the framing of RE becomes a formative factor in determining the shape and pace of the EU clean energy transition. This study is guided by the following research question:

How has the framing of renewable energy evolved in relation to the EU energy policy objectives of competitiveness, energy security and sustainability since 2014?

Following this presentation of the motivation and research aim of this study, Chapter 2 will provide a brief background of the dynamics of the European energy market and EU energy policy. Chapter 3 summarizes previous research on the topic, situating the study within the field of research. Chapter 4 presents the theoretical framework utilized to analyze the EU energy policy documents, further expanding on the social constructivist approach to the study of energy policy and how framing theory is applied to inform the analysis. Chapter 5 presents a detailed outline of the methodological choices made and steps taken in conducting the study including a clarification of the relevant limitations and ethical concerns. The empirical analysis in Chapter 6 presents the findings of the study chronologically, following the evolution of RE in EU energy policy. Chapter 7 engages in a discussion of the analysis and its theoretical groundings, relating the findings to wider debates on the topic found in previous research. The final chapter concludes and presents potential avenues for future research.

2 Background

To contextualize the study situated between 2014-2024, this chapter provides an outline of the dynamics of the EU energy market, brief historical overview of EU energy policy as well as more recent developments in RE policy.

2.1 The dynamics of the European energy market

Over the last century, Europe has undergone a significant transformation in energy mix and supply dynamics. Initially, European energy demand was supplied by domestic coal, which declined in favor of imported oil after World War II. Oil, coal and natural gas is still produced within the EU but have faced a sharp decline over the last 20 years, approximating a 40% decrease (Siddi, 2022: 9; Eurostat, 2023a, figure 1). Imports of fossil fuels have concurrently increased, as well as the domestic production of energy from renewables. In 2017, the EU produced 45% of its energy demand domestically, whilst 55% was imported (Hafner & Raimondi, 2022: 740).

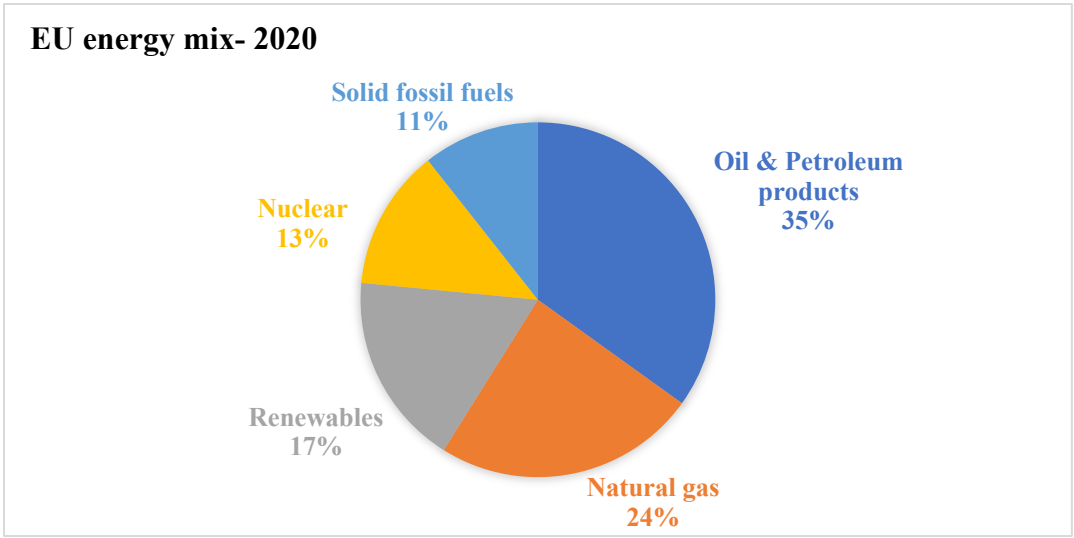

Figure 1. EU energy mix in 2020. (Eurostat, 2022)

Before the invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, Russia was the EUs largest supplier of natural gas, oil and coal, accounting for 40%, 27% and 46% of total consumption per energy source (European Commission, 2022-3-8, p. 1). Overall, the import dependency rate of the EU in 2020 surmounted to 95.6% for oil, 83.4% for natural gas and 83.4% for petroleum products (Eurostat, 2022). Whilst the EU imports from many other countries, such as the US, Norway and Saudi Arabia, the EU is particularly vulnerable to disruptions from Russia due to the vast network of pipelines exporting oil and gas, and the lack of infrastructure to replace Russian pipeline-supply (Hafner & Raimondi, 2022: 741).

In 2006 and 2009 disputes between Russia and Ukraine regarding gas prices and Ukraine's role as transit country resulted in temporary disruptions in EU supply, as approximately 80% of EU supply flowed through Ukraine. The Annexation of Crimea in 2014 triggered the EU to seek diversification away from Russian supply, resulting in the Southern Gas Corridor from Azerbaijan and the establishment of Liquified Natural Gas (LNG) terminals to promote import of non-Russian gas independent of pipelines. However, in the years following the Crimean crisis Russian imports actually increased, due to decreasing domestic oil and gas production in the EU, lower Russian gas prices and the limited availability non-Russian LNG (Siddi, 2020: 6-10). The invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 entailed an overhaul of the EU energy market. Imposed sanctions on oil and coal, coupled with Russia's own restriction on exports to the EU, resulted in a decrease in gas imports from 40% in 2021 to 8% in 2023 (European Council, 2024a).

2.2 A brief history of EU energy policy

Energy policy is considered to be one of the earliest issues dealt with through European integration. The EU of today has its precedence in the 1951 European Coal and Steel Community and the 1958 European Atomic Energy Agency, two treaties with the goal of promoting cooperation and integration of energy matters

across the Europe (Knodt & Kemmerzell, 2022: 6). Though despite its historical significance, energy as a policy issue has always been torn between the sovereignty of Member States and growing competencies of the EU. It was not until after the 1986 Single European Act, which established the goal of the single economic market, that an internal energy market was added to the initiative to help reduce volatile energy prices across the EU. The 1992 Maastricht Treaty increased the EU's authority in energy policy through the Trans-European Networks, an initiative that aimed to promote transnational energy infrastructure across the Union. As Member States remained unwilling to increase competences to the EU in energy policy, the EU was granted powers in other issues such as internal market regulation, competition policy and environmental protection. As these policy areas intersected with energy, it influenced national energy policy indirectly (Bocse, 2021: 36-37; Kanellakis, Martinopoulos & Zachariadis, 2013). The policy goal of the internal market, based on the principle of free competition between economic actors, lies at the core of the EU's increasing authority over energy policy. By evoking the goal of the internal market, the EC began the process of liberalizing the EU electricity and gas markets in the late 1990s (Boscse, 2021: 38). This is a continues project in EU energy policy to this day. Furthermore, whilst the increasing EU mandate in environmental policy couldn't directly change Member States energy mix, it could steer Member States towards the increasing deployment through RE consumption and emission reduction targets. Whilst energy and climate are inherently linked, the policy areas were often discussed separately in the EU context. With the growing evidence of climate change and the United Nations Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) entering into force in 1994, the EU began to gradually integrate energy and climate policy (Siddi, 2023: 4-5). The Eastern Enlargement presented challenges to EU energy security, as the new Member States increased overall import dependency which enhanced EU vulnerability to gas supply disruptions from Russia. In combination with the gas supply disruptions in 2006 and 2009, the 2009 Lisbon Treaty reflected the increased focus on energy security (Bocse, 2021: 38-39). The Lisbon Treaty, through the addition of Article 194, significantly increased the EU's authority in the sector of

energy through a new governance framework that outlined the overarching goals of EU energy policy linking the objectives of competitiveness, security of supply and sustainability (Szulecki et al., 2016; European Commission, 2008). Whilst the three core goals of EU energy policy presented an opportunity for greater integration and cooperation in energy and climate policy at a supranational level, it also accentuated the diverging policy priorities of the Member States. The next Commission under the presidency of Jean-Claude Juncker initiated the establishment of the Energy Union in 2014, an initiative designed to help overcome the divergences between the Member States policy priorities and address competitiveness, energy security and sustainability as a tripartite goal (Knodt & Ringel, 2022: 123; Knodt, 2023: 206). As such, 2014 represents a significant stepping-off point as the EU received greater authority in EU energy policy and implementation, aiming to address the three, often conflicting, policy objectives together. Competitiveness, energy security and sustainability has remained central goals to this day, receiving varying amounts of attention during different periods and guided EU policy through the last decade of unprecedented challenges to the EU energy system.

2.2.1 Renewable energy policy in the EU

RE has been part of the EU energy discourse for a long time; however, it was not until the discourse on climate change intensified in the early 1990s that renewables received proper policy attention in the EU (Schoenefeld & Knodt, 2021). Aiming to establish a leadership role at international climate negotiations after the UNFCCC came into force in 1994, the following years the EC proposed a series of binding and non-binding RE targets which were consecutively shot down by the Member States. Similarly afflicted by the divergent policy priorities and capacities of the Member States discussed in section 2.2., the promotion of RE was heavily debated. After a long process, in 2001 the EU adopted the Directive on Electricity Production from Renewables with the goal to achieve a 12% share of RE in total EU consumption by 2010, focusing only on the electricity sector. The Directive

lacked specific national targets as Member States were reluctant to bind them. Despite resulting in limited progress in renewables deployment, the 2001 Directive did represent a considerable leap forward regarding the integration of renewables in EU energy policy (Dekanozishvili, 2023: 61-65). In 2009 the EU adopted the 20-20-20 targets: to reduce emissions by 20% compared to 1990 levels, increase energy efficiency by 20% and reach 20% share of RE in total EU consumption by 2020. Solorio & Bocquillon (2017: 33) argue that the motivation for the EU to present itself as a climate leader during the Copenhagen Climate Summit the same year was key in retaining high ambition and the binding targets of the RE Directive, resulting in more multidimensional goals, including heating, cooling, transport as well as the electricity sector. In the wake of the 2009 financial crisis, the costs of the clean energy transition were heavily debated. There was a push to re-nationalize RE policy, especially from Central and Eastern Member States which wanted to limit the EU's control of their national energy mixes, prioritizing national security of supply. In response, the 2030 Climate and Energy Framework adopted in 2014 put emphasis on the cost-efficiency of integrated market solutions to promote RE and a more flexible 27% RE target without binding national targets (Solorio & Bocquillon, 2017: 35; Knodt, 2018: 233-235). Coinciding with the creation of the Energy Union, the 2030 Climate and Energy Package further integrated climate and energy policy into EU governance. RE policy in the EU has, since its inception, been a balancing act between the divergent policy priorities of the Member States and the overarching EU goals of competitiveness, energy security and sustainability. Consequently, RE deployment has been promoted as a solution to all three policy goals, fluctuating in priority in relation to the balancing between Member States priorities and overarching EU goals, time period and external events (Hildingsson, Stripple & Jordan, 2011).

3 Previous research

This chapter outlines what is already known about EU energy policy, focusing on different approaches to framing in previous scholarship. This section will begin with an outline of how different approaches to framing are broadly used in policy research, thereafter, narrowing in on its applications and implications on the research topic.

3.1 Approaches to framing in policy research

The social constructivist perspective in political science research increased in popularity as traditional approaches gradually diminished in explanatory power following the Cold War. Facing difficulties in explaining major changes and developments in international politics not following the logic of realist or liberal approaches, increasing research attention was paid to power of communication and its impact on actors' perception of their social reality. Proponents of this approach argue that social constructivist analysis facilitates a more comprehensive understanding of complex contemporary political issues (Peoples & Vaughan-Williams, 2014: 18; Jung, 2019). Likewise, the field of policy analysis shifted from positivist examinations focusing on evaluating the effectiveness of implemented policy to how communication affects the policy process itself (Valentine, Sovacool & Brown, 2017).

Framing theory is a popular approach in constructivist policy analysis. First introduced in the 1970s and often associated with the work of sociologist Erving Goffman. Framing is essentially the "definition of a situation"; how people negotiate the meanings of their interactions. Frames provide insight into how actors perceive their social realities and in turn inform and structure their choices (Goffman, 1974: 10; Saurugger, 2018: 25). Martin Rein and Donald Schön's (1977) adaptation of framing to policy research the late 1970s contributed to the analytical

capacity of framing theory as they operationalized the ideas presented by Goffman, aiming to present a more comprehensive framework of the processes that go into framing. Broadly, policy framing is accomplished by three processes: naming, selecting and storytelling. This gives a problem a name, selecting its features so it can be set apart from others and attaching it to the larger story to bind the elements of the problem into coherent and graspable pattern (Rein & Schön, 1977: 243; Van Hulst & Yanow, 2016: 96-97). As such, a framing approach allows for insight into how matters in policymaking are legitimized as policy issues and how the related actions are justified (Saurugger, 2018: 25-26). Interest in the EU as a case for policy-framing research emerged in the late 1990s. The EU system is characterized by divergent policy communities and priorities, hence capacity to frame issues in policy becomes telling of the allocation of political authority (Daviter, 2018: 91). Since its inception in the 1970s, framing theory has been applied to address various different elements of the policy process, broadly delaminated by three types of studies: experimental studies, content analysis and strategic framing (König, 2021).

Firstly, experimental studies aim to assess the influence of frames on people's attitudes and opinions towards policy. This can be done in a more controlled setting, using made-up material, or providing the study participant with real news stories or political communications to gauge their attitude towards certain framings presented (Carnahan, Hao & Yan, 2019: 6). Huber, Wicki & Bernauer (2019) examined public support regarding policy aimed at reducing emissions from vehicles in Switzerland by surveying over 2000 citizens. By providing seven different policy instruments to the participants they found that policies evoking frames of effectiveness, unobtrusiveness and fairness elicited most support for emission reduction policies.

Secondly, content analysis refers to studies examining the presence of frames in different forms of communication, and how actors employ certain frames in discourse. This is the most popular application of framing theory, common in both analyses of media communications and political discourse (König, 2021). Laffan

(2014) utilized this approach when analyzing the framing of the 2008 financial crisis by the EU institutions, how the problem was framed and how it affected the policies addressing the crisis in the coming years. They found that the predominant problem-framing was of sovereign debt crises, specifically allocating blame to more indebted countries such as Greece and Ireland. This framing would result in measures which dealt with sovereign debt rather than the underlying causes of highly interdependent EU financial markets and limited responsibility allocated to the banking system. Eriksson & Reischl (2019) find in their analysis of the framing of climate change comparing the Intragovernmental Panel on Climate Change and the International Energy Agency that climate change is framed as a growing threat with inherent implications on energy security. Additionally, they find that a "positive" framing of climate change, highlighting the gains on climate change mitigation on energy security, has greater potential in converging the goals of climate and energy policy.

Thirdly, strategic framing refers to analyzing communication with the specific intention to provide insights into how political actors use framing strategies to shape certain policy outcomes. Contrary to the previous approaches, here the process of framing is assumed to be intentional, a way to manipulate the policymaking process to reflect the values of the frame entrepreneur (König, 2021). The book "Framing Europe: The Policy Shaping Strategies of the European Commission" by Mark Rhinard (2010: 2-9, 207) utilizes this approach. Throughout the book they analyze the EC as a frame entrepreneur, and how it's role as EUs "agenda-setter" affects the framing of two policy areas: agricultural policy and biotechnology policy. Through interviews and document analysis, they find that when facing opposition to policy proposals, the EC has been skilled in strategically reframing the issue to build external support or gather internal consensus, leading to policy outcomes closer to the EC's preferences.

3.2 Implications of framing in EU energy policy

Whilst framing theory has been applied to energy policy in other contexts, the EU presents a specifically intriguing case as it faces unique challenges in policy framing due to the governance structure characterized by strongly divided policy communities, both in terms of national priorities and divisions within the different EU institutions. Florian (2010) examines the different framing strategies of the EC, European Parliament (EP) and the European Council aiming to address potential explanations for the lack of a common EU foreign energy policy. The study identifies three primary frames in the material; "energy as security", "energy as solidarity" and "energy as climate change". They find that the EC and the EP increasingly utilize the frame of "energy as security" to promote integration of EU foreign energy policy in relation to the 2006 and 2009 Russian gas disruptions. The European Council prioritizes Member States sovereignty and maneuverability in the energy market, finding that the increased use of the frame "energy as security" has instead enhanced the priority of energy security as a national security matter, strengthening the determination to maintain sovereignty over energy policy. The framing of the policy objective and understanding of energy security has been the primary focus of research. Since energy as a resource is heavily ingrained in the functioning of the economic and political domains it is specifically sensitive to external shocks. Consequently, the priority of energy security as a policy objective often fluctuates depending on external distress (Mišík, 2022). Research focusing on the framing of energy security often add an element of securitization theory to the analysis, as to assess if the heightened priority of energy security in EU policy correlates to securitizing moves in EU policy discourse (Sattich, Morgan & Moe, 2022). This often relates to the EU's relationship with Russia as a supplier. Natorski & Surrallés (2008) focus exclusively on the framing of energy security by the institutions after the Russian gas supply disruptions in 2006. By combining framing theory with securitization theory, they aim to understand why the increased

prioritization of energy security did not surmount to more radical measures. Similarly, to Florian (2010) they find that energy security was framed as a threat to a greater extent and the EC and EP use increasingly securitized rhetoric. However, certain Member States emphasis on sovereignty over energy policy and lack of trust for the EU to address energy security, dampened the effect of the strategic framing practices by the EC and EP.

However, since "emergency measures" as specified by securitization theory, on the energy market can have far-reaching consequences on economic and political stability, measures rarely exceed ordinary political procedure (Henrich & Szulecki, 2018: 40). This is exemplified by Hofmann & Staeger (2019), arguing that the EC has failed to promote EU integration in energy policy by employing a securitizing rhetoric in framing energy security. The securitization of energy policy after the gas disruptions in 2006 and 2009 failed because the audience (Member States) rejected the proposed exceptional measures which would entail heightening the risk of economic insecurity connected to supply disruption. Similarly, whilst the annexation of Crimea in 2014 significantly increased the threat framing of energy security in relation to Russia, the actions that followed did not result in securitization of energy policy in the EU. Instead the EU Energy Union proposals evoked an economic framing to increase energy security by lessening dependency on external supply, by highlighting the costs associated with high dependency rates and competitive benefits of an integrated EU energy market. Furthermore, sustainability as a frame became more prominent by motivating RE as a tool to substitute imported fuels. In conclusion, whilst energy security as a policy issue did not become securitized, the increasing threat framing of energy security became a motivating factor in economic and sustainability framings that promoted EU integration in energy policy. More recent research has diverted from the sole focus on energy security, highlighting the impacts of other frames on EU energy policy. Knodt & Ringel (2022: 123-130) follow the development of the three central frames presented in EU energy policy; security of supply, competitiveness and sustainability. They provide an analysis of how the three frames have been

prioritized over time, and what consequences it had on policy. They find that the competitiveness frame has had significant staying power as it is undergrounded by the liberal ideals of the EU internal energy market. The framing and prominence of energy security have gained in prominence during periods of increased supply insecurity. As the issue of climate change rose on the agenda during the same time, energy security and sustainability were often perceived as contradicting goals. Previous research has shown that there has been a resistance to addressing climate change as a part of energy policy (Bang, 2010). As climate change is framed as a global issue it loses salience in policy debates compared to the national security imperatives of measures to ensure energy security (Nyman, 2018).

The framing of RE has received limited scholarly attention in the EU context. However, Hildingsson, Stripple & Jordan (2011) provide an overview of how RE has been promoted in EU energy policy between 1980s and 2010. They find that since the 1990s RE has been promoted as "blanket solution" to the three central goals of EU energy policy; energy security, sustainability and competitiveness. Promotion of RE has been hampered by the difficulty in striking a balance between these three goals, especially with the diverging priorities of Member States on energy security and sustainability. Therefore, they find that the increasing economic integration of EU energy markets has provided the strongest impetus for the promotion of RE in Member States whilst EU-wide binding renewables targets were first introduced in the 2009 RE Directive. Other research on the framing of RE has mainly focused on public opinion, which is of crucial importance to the implementation of RE (Bolsen, 2022). Aklin & Urpelainen (2013) find that even though public support for clean energy solutions are growing, equally strong counter frames has the capacity to "cancel out" increasing public support. Diamond & Zhou (2022) discuss which motivations are most successful in providing broad support for RE deployment, arguing that policymakers should frame it in terms of the co-benefits of emission reductions and job creation. Previous research on the framing of RE has mainly focused on the national perspective. Focusing this study

on EU-level policies thus provides a new avenue for broad-based framing of RE in the unique governance structure and context that EU energy policy entails.

4 Theoretical framework

The goal of this study is to further the understanding of how the framing of RE has evolved in relation to the policy objectives of competitiveness, security of supply and sustainability in EU energy policy since 2014. To do so it employs a social constructivist approach to policy by analyzing the material through the perspective of framing theory.

4.1 Social constructivist approaches to the study of energy policy

This study takes a social constructivist approach to energy policy. The fundamental assumption of the social constructivist perspective is that human reality is socially constructed through intersubjective processes. In essence, humans are perceived as social beings who intersubjectively create their reality filtered through pre-existing social frameworks, institutions, and most importantly, communication (Peoples & Vaughan-Williams, 2014: 16). That being said, apart from the more critical approaches, conventional social constructivism does not necessarily deny the importance of more traditional political issues such as geopolitical tensions, the significance of the state as a central actor or market-based incentives. However, it does pose that realist and liberal approaches underestimate the importance of social construction in its understanding of these issues, and how it is used in policy. As such, analyzing communication is central to social constructivist studies as it bears evidence of how issues are constructed and understood (Peoples & Vaughan-Williams, 2014: 6, 16-22; Saurugger, 2018: 20-22).

Conventional approaches to studying energy policy often provide narrow conceptions of what "matters" in policy; prioritizing quantitative measures such as import dependency rates, emission reduction targets, or efficiency of new energy infrastructure (Valentine, Sovacool & Brown, 2017). Furthermore, conventional

approaches to studying energy policy which often focus on the supply and demand of fossil fuels is losing explanatory power in a world where energy sources and their associated risks are becoming increasingly diversified. Merely analyzing energy policy in terms of a country's rate of oil import dependency is not enough to account for the perceived issues associated with the political, economic, and environmental impacts that the current energy system has on society through policy (Valentine, 2011).

By taking a social constructivist perspective on energy policy, this study aims to encapsulate more dimensions of how the framing of RE has evolved in EU policy. This approach does not seek to objectively measure the impact of renewables on energy security, competitiveness or sustainability but understand how the EU frames it from within their own context. As such, energy systems and policy are not viewed as strictly objective phenomena but as political constructs which are defined and shaped by social actors, whose choices reflect their inherent interests, priorities and perception of threats (Szulecki, 2018: 10-12).

4.2 Framing theory

As discussed in section 3.1, there is no singular understanding or approach to framing theory. This has been a point of contention in regard to conceptual ambiguity; where studies use the concept of framing without defining how and what is framed. Therefore, it is especially relevant here to be specific in the chosen theoretical application of framing theory and methodologically rigorous in providing detailed accounts of coding procedures and their relevance to the analysis (König, 2021; Entman, 1993: 51).

The approach to framing utilized in this study is based on Entman's (1993) four functions of framing, as it harkens back to the foundational works of Goffman

(1974) and Rein & Schön (1977) in its understanding of how the perception of social realities affect policy whilst specifying a framework clarifying the functions of what a frame does in a text.

> "To frame is to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular *problem definition*, *causal interpretation*, *moral evaluation*, and/or *treatment recommendation* for the item described."
>
> (Entman, 1993: 52; emphasis added)

This approach emphasizes that frame analysis does not only identify the problems, causes, allocations of blame or responsibility and the presented suggestions in a text but that framing has the capacity to effect policy through promoting and legitimatizes certain courses of action (Knodt, 2018: 225). Entman specifically highlights that framing is fundamental to the exertion of political power and by detecting and critically assessing frames, one can identify the most prominent actors and interests present in the text (Entman, 1993: 55; Eriksson, 2020). Figure 2. illustrates the four functions of framing and how they instruct the analysis in assessing the frames present in the empirical material.

Entman's (1993) four functions of framing	
	Guiding questions:
Problem definition	• What problem is the material addressing? • How is the problem conceptualized?
Causal interpretation	• What forces are determined to cause the problem according to the material?
Moral evaluation	• Which actors are presented as responsible for causing the problem? • Which actors are presented as responsible for addressing the problem?
Treatment recommendation	• Which solutions are proposed and how are they justified in the text? • What are the predicted effects of the solutions and how are they presented?
Threat framing • Does the function of framing communicate danger, risk or urgency? • Is it communicated as a structural or antagonistic threat framing?	

Table 1. Components of the theoretical framework and guiding questions for empirical analysis

This approach analyzes frames by assessing what is highlighted and selected in a text. Salience is a key concept here defined as "…making a piece of information more noticeable, meaningful, or memorable to audiences." (Entman, 1993: 53). The salience of a certain frame can be evaluated by its cultural resonance and/or magnitude. Frames that employ more culturally resonant terms, meaning words and themes that are noticeable, memorable and emotionally charged, are more likely to impact readers as well as policy. Magnitude refers to the prominence and repetition of certain words or themes. It is essential to add that frames are not only constructed by what is highlighted in a text but also what aspects are obscured. Therefore, the analysis will take note of what is seemingly missing from the four functions as well as any inconsistency between them (Entman, 2003).

Studies utilizing framing theory often refer to the concept of "master frames". These are described as broad ideational frameworks that prioritizes certain issues, meanings and values which allow actors to employ the master frame to promote

and legitimize their goals. As such, evoking a master frame elucidates more meaning as it includes the inherent values and beliefs of the master frame. What differentiates master frames from "normal frames" is their broad adoption where they can be applied to multiple policy contexts (Stanbridge, 2002: 529). Analyzing diverging master frames in a policy context can provide insights into path dependencies, furthering the understanding of how an issue is motivated based on the values of the utilized master frame. Whilst evoking a master frame in a certain issue provides legitimacy to it in a policy context, it could also result in policy inertias where certain problem definitions, causes and solutions are so ingrained in a certain master frame that it becomes difficult to break with previous policy practices or integrate it with other master frames (Eriksson & Reischl, 2019).

This study utilizes three master frames that represent the core goals of EU energy policy which are: competitiveness, energy security and sustainability. Evaluating the framing of RE in relation to the three master frames provides insight into how RE has been promoted and legitimized in EU energy policy between 2014-2024, assessing frame continues and changes over the analyzed timeframe. Table 2. illustrates and defines the master frames based on the work by Knodt & Ringel (2022: 123-130) as well as the policy objectives described by the EC in the Communication "An Energy Policy for Europe" (European Commission, 2007).

Table 2. Description of master frames

Master frames		
	Definition:	Descriptions of policy objectives in "An Energy Policy for Europe" (European Commission, 2007)
Competitiveness	Emphasizes economic issues and solutions in policy. Often associated with liberalizing energy markets, mitigating price shocks, keeping EU energy-intensive industry competitive and retaining EU market and innovation leadership in energy technologies	• Ensuring that energy market opening brings benefits to consumers and to the economy as a whole while stimulating investment in clean energy production and energy efficiency • Mitigating the impact of higher international energy prices on the EU economy and its citizens

		• Keeping Europe at the cutting edge of energy technologies.
Energy Security	Emphasizes political issues and solutions in policy. Often associated with dependence on external energy supply, supply diversification, resilience to supply shocks and internal measures to control demand such as domestic energy production	• Tackling the EU's rising dependence on imported energy through: • An integrated approach – reducing demand, diversifying the EU's energy mix with greater use of competitive indigenous and RE sources, and diversifying sources and routes of supply of imported energy • Creating the framework which will stimulate adequate investments to meet growing energy demand • Better equipping the EU to cope with emergencies • Improving the conditions for European companies seeking access to global resources • Making sure that all citizens and businesses have access to energy
Sustainability	Emphasizes environmental issues and solutions in policy. Often associated with the development of renewable or low-carbon energy sources, curbing energy demand and leading global efforts in mitigating climate change and environmental degradation	• Developing competitive renewable sources of energy and other low-carbon energy sources and carriers, particularly alternative transport fuels • Curbing energy demand within Europe • Leading global efforts to halt climate change and improve local air quality.

4.2.1 Threat framing

This study aims to assess how framings of RE in relation to the master frames gain and lose saliency in political discourse. "Threat framing" is especially effective in increasing salience of a certain frame in policy as the perception of crisis or threat often prelude policy change and can leave significant legacies in policy to come (Laffan, 2014). Threat framing entails a problem definition which communicates

danger, risk or urgency to a policy issue. By framing a policy issue as a threat, it effects what actions are taken, how responsibility is determined, and which solutions are presented (Eriksson, 2020). The concept of threat framing occurs throughout social constructivist policy analysis, such as security studies and crisis research. Threat framing, and framing theory at large, share some common denominators with Copenhagen School securitization theory. By moving the conception of what a security issue is beyond the state and military-centric focus of realist or liberal security studies, securitization theory poses that anything can be constructed as a security issue if framed as one (Buzan, Wæver & De Wilde, 1998: 23-24). The process of threat framing shares this constructivist understanding of how problem definitions evoking elements of threat and urgency can elevate any issue into a security issue.

However, conventional securitization theory focuses quite narrowly on the requirements for "successful securitization"; securitizing speech acts presented by securitizing actors, motivation for extraordinary measures in policy and finally audience acceptance moving the issue from the politicized to the securitized sphere. However, due to the vast consequences "extraordinary measures" can have on energy markets and political security, measures rarely exceed ordinary political procedure in EU energy policy (Henrich & Szulecki, 2018: 40) Thus, threat framing provides a broader focus on the power of evoking frames of urgency, threat and risk in problem definitions that relate to all three master frames and in turn how that affects the diagnosis of causes, moral evaluations and presented solutions in policy.

Threat framing distinguishes between antagonistic threat frames and structural threat frames. Antagonistic threat frames have an already identified culprit, making it easier to allocate blame and thus more likely to motivate stronger policy measures to meet the threat. On the contrary, structural threat frames have more abstract sources which makes it more difficult to allocate blame and may lead to more diffused policy measures. Antagonistic frames are often represented by an external threat. One example that is prevalent in the context of EU energy policy is the

geopolitical risks associated with dependence on Russian energy imports. An example of a structural threat is climate change, as it is perceived as a threat but what consequences it will have is unpredictable and there is no one culprit. (Eriksson, 2020)

The use of framing theory as well as the concept of threat framing benefits this analysis by assessing the empirical material on two different levels. Whilst framing theory captures a wide range of frames in regard to RE in relation to the three master frames competitiveness, energy security and sustainability, threat framing makes the analysis sensitive to more minute discursive frames that express risk and urgency across all frames (Knodt & Ringel, 2022: 123-130; Eriksson, 2020).

5 Methodology

This chapter outlines the research design and methodological choices of this study. It expands on the process of qualitative content analysis and coding procedures as well as clarifies the relevant limitations and ethical considerations.

5.1 Research design

This study aims to assess how the framing of RE has evolved in relation to the three master frames of competitiveness, energy security and sustainability in EU energy policy between 2014-2024. By employing a single case study longitudinal design, it allows the study to analyze how the conception of RE has evolved over time by charting development and patterns in relation to different periods and priorities in the EU (Haperin & Heath, 2020: 234; Yin, 2018: 51; Marczyk, DeMatteo, & Festinger, 2005: 143). Whilst critique against the single case study design include lack of generalizability, the EU as a unique supranational institution in the policy area of energy warrants a narrower and more detailed approach, especially within the spatial limitations of this thesis (Bryman, 2016: 399). Furthermore, whilst the findings from this study will be specific to this case, they can add valuable contextual knowledge to further research into the energy policies and discourses in EU Member States, as their energy and climate policies are closely aligned.

The social constructivist approach to the study does not view the empirical material as a reflection of objective reality, instead in the way it reflects the constructed social reality. Consequently, policy problems are not merely an accumulation of the facts of a situation but matters of interpretation and social construction. How an issue is portrayed, which dimensions are highlighted or obscured, has consequences for how it is responded to (Cobb & Elder, 1980: 172; Laffan, 2014: 267). As such, interpreting policy documents can be a tool to discern the values and motivations

of the EU as well as defining which of the master frames are used to promote certain framings of RE (Tichý & Dubský, 2024).

5.2 Methodology and material

The study utilizes qualitative content analysis (QCA) to collect, categorize and analyze EU policy documents along the lines of the theoretical framework which guides the coding procedures and informs the analysis. EU policy documents were chosen due to the accessibility to study the evidence over the timespan. The material includes finished policy and communications on upcoming policy packages by the EC (Bowen, 2009; Siddi & Prandin, 2023). Whilst public documents cannot give full insight into the internal workings of an organization (Bryman, 2016: 561), the public nature of the material benefits this study as framing relies on the presentation of a dominant understanding of an issue. As such, these documents provide a channel to most effectively promote, discount or change framing in energy policy.

5.2.1 Qualitative content analysis

QCA was chosen to conduct this study as it enables a detailed and systematic analysis of the empirical material as well as sensitivity to the context in which they were produced. Whilst quantitative content analysis often analyses manifest content in text, quantifying certain words or phrases, QCA is concerned with latent content. It assumes that it is possible to expose meanings, interests and purposes embedded within material (Haperin & Heath, 2020: 276). There is no standardized approach to QCA, rather it can be adapted to the needs of the study (Mayring, 2014: 39). To structure the analysis of the empirical material, this study follows Halperin & Heath's (2020: 376-384) four steps to QCA in combination with elements of Mayring's (2014; 2022) approach to deductive and inductive category assignment.

Step 1- Selecting the material to be analyzed

This refers to the process of identifying the sample of material that can provide information and evidence relevant to the research aim and question. Further elaboration on this process in section 5.2.2.

Step 2- Defining categories

This step aims to define what the study is examining the texts for. This study utilizes both deductive and inductive categories. Following the instruction of Mayring (2022: 89-93), a deductive category assignment was conducted prior to coding, based on the master frames presented by Knodt & Ringel (2022, p. 123) as well as previous scholarship on the topic. A first round of coding was conducted based in the deductive codes whilst mapping the material for emergent frames relevant to the analysis. This benefits the analysis as inductive coding formation picks up on more minute context-specific frames (Mayring, 2022: 81-82, 93-94). The second round of coding combined the deductive categories, derived from the theoretical framework, and the inductive categories formed from analyzing the empirical material. This creates a more context-specific and specialized coding scheme which benefitted a more detailed second round coding and analysis. See appendix 1. for coding guidelines.

Step 3- Selecting a recording unit and coding unit

This step determines what unit of content to apply to a code. QCA often code for themes, rather than singular words or phrases. Themes in this context refer to a single idea presented, this could be an argument, statement, presentation of certain values or attitudes towards an issue (Haperin & Heath, 2020: 378). In this study themes are referred to as frames, as these coding units point towards a certain constructed understanding of RE in relation to the master frames. The recording unit refers to a whole policy document, which is relevant to this longitudinal study

as multiple policies are analyzed over time and the context in which they were created are important factors in understanding why framing evolves.

Step 4- Coding

Coding is the process of identifying passages of text and labeling them according to the thematic idea they represent in the study. Coding text allows for the evidence to be examined and compared to each other, which is especially useful in longitudinal research designs. As described in Step 2, this study employed two rounds of coding. The first applied the theoretically informed deductive categories and mapped the material, as well as examined for relevant inductive categories emergent from the empirical material. The coding scheme was revised for the second round of coding which provided a detailed and context-specific examination of the material. The software NVivo was used to aid in the coding procedures.

5.2.2 Empirical material and sampling

The empirical material for this study is publicly available EU documents relevant to RE and more broadly EUs energy and climate policy. As this study focuses on the EU-level policy, it disregards material specific to Member States debates on the topic. Whilst the European Parliament and the European Council are very influential in EU energy and climate policy, this study focus on material deriving from the EC. The benefit of focusing on the EC for the purpose of this analysis is its capacity to shape policies for the longer term, which is especially significant in energy and climate policy, as it does not represent a specific national electorate but acts in the interest of the EU as a whole (Skjærseth, 2021). Additionally, the final Regulations and Directives are made in concert with the Parliament and Council which makes these documents good excerpts of the EUs overall strategies (Siddi & Prandin, 2023). The selected timeframe spans from the formation of the Energy Union in 2014, as it entailed a greater competence over energy and climate policies for the EC, to February 2024. This timeframe was chosen to provide a

comprehensive understanding of how framing of RE has evolved over time. The past decade has entailed significant changes to the context of energy and climate policies in the EU requiring the often-conflicting policy objectives of competitiveness, energy security and sustainability to co-function their aims (Szulecki & Westphal, 2018: 196-198).

Since the timeframe is relatively long and material on energy and climate policy is abundant in the EU context, a purposive sampling method has been employed. This method selects material based on its qualities and ability to provide information relevant to the research question (Bryman, 2016: 408). Sampling of relevant material begun with the literature review of previous scholarship, mapping which policy packages and initiatives were most prominent in EU discourse. Appendix 2. provides a summary of all empirical material sampled for analysis. The documents were retrieved from Eur-Lex, the official EU website for legislation and other public documents.

5.3 Data analysis

The analysis will examine the empirical material utilizing framing theory and the concept of threat framing to identify and assess the framing of RE in relation to the master frames competitiveness, energy security and sustainability. Assessing the master frames over time provides indications of the values and motivations used in policy to frame RE. Entman's four functions of framing; problem definition, diagnosis of causes, moral judgements and suggested remedies will guide the analysis in identifying and evaluating the evolving framing of RE concerning the master frames.

The saliency of the frames found in the empirical material will be evaluated by cultural resonance, as this study aims to provide a detailed and contextual analysis of the empirical material. Magnitude refers to the repetition of certain words or

themes. However, since the different policy packages analyzed contains various numbers of policy documents and lengths of the material, as well as changes in cultural resonance of certain frames, a quantitative frequency analysis of key words or coded frames would not be representative of how framing changes over time. The empirical analysis is presented chronologically to provide a comprehensive analysis of each period.

5.4 Limitations and delimitations

Qualitative research as a whole often receives the critique of being too subjective to produce replicable and generalizable results, consequently, so does research with a social constructivist basis (Bryman, 2016: 398-399; Andrews, 2012: 41-42). There are many ways of interpreting the empirical material, which makes the concepts of reliability and validity of utmost importance when conducting this study. As this thesis is an individual project, shortcomings such as intercoder reliability had to be mitigated through other means. As such, this study presents a detailed theoretical framework and grounding in its coding guidelines as to ensure transparency and relevance to the research aim in the coding procedures. Firstly, two rounds of coding were conducted of all the material to ensure a detailed mapping and understanding of the policies. Secondly, the steps taken in developing the final coding scheme are described as well as any implications to the analysis are highlighted. Finally, the coding scheme provides both anchor examples as well as a series of coding rules as to ensure transparency and consistency in the coding procedures (Mayring, 2022: 89-90, 173-177; Yin, 2018: 45-46). See appendix 1. for coding guidelines. Whilst full replicability of a qualitative study is difficult to achieve, this study aims to provide as detailed description as possible of the theoretical groundings, analytical procedures as well as adhering to rigorous coding guidelines which is key in increasing the reliability and validity of the results. This benefits the reader, who can follow the line of inquiry in the study as well as

encourages further research on the topic to build on the procedures and findings in this study.

Due to the limited spatial and time constraints, some further delimitations had to be made to fit the scope of the thesis. A more expansive timespan could track how frames have evolved over a longer period of time. However, the timespan of the study starting in 2014 was chosen due to the implications of the Energy Union, increasing the EUs authority in energy policy governance. In terms of material this study disregards policy proposals, speeches, and interviews. Whilst the addition of such materials or comparative analysis between the EU institutions would have given a more complete understanding of how the framing of RE has changed in relation to the master frames in the EU as a whole, this study aims to provide a more detailed perspective focusing on EU-level policy. These delimitations were necessary due to the spatial and time constraints of this thesis but could also be considered as promising avenues for future research on the topic.

5.5 Ethical considerations and positionality

QCA of documents is generally perceived as an unobtrusive method of data generation. Since the material is already produced, it limits the bias in generating the empirical material as compared to obtrusive methods such as interviews or ethnographies. However, the potential biases and ethical considerations of the researcher themselves remain. As such it is essential for a researcher utilizing QCA to be reflexive about one's own biases, as well as provide comprehensive description of the theoretical and methodological underpinnings of one's conclusions. (Halperin & Heath, 2020: 374; Mason, 2018: 102)

In terms of positionality I regard myself as engaged in issues of climate change and energy, both as a student and as an individual. This interest, I believe, partly comes

from my studies on the topic during both my bachelor's and master's, but also stems from an awareness of the particular challenges that energy as a resource poses to climate change. As a European myself I would say I share many of the values presented by the EU in terms of the clean energy transition and the 2050 climate neutrality goal. However, I do believe that considering how these values are presented they must be accompanied by corresponding action.

6 Empirical analysis

This chapter summarizes the findings of the study. To informatively follow the evolution of the framing of RE in relation to the master frames and policy objectives of competitiveness, energy security and sustainability the empirical findings will be presented chronologically. The analysis examines all four of Entman's (1993) functions of framing: problem definition, diagnosis of causes, moral judgements and suggestions for remedies, as well as any instances of threat framing in relation to the three master frames. The findings are analyzed through the lens of the theoretical framework, utilizing excerpts from the empirical material as well as secondary sources to contextualize the findings.

6.1 2014: The 2030 Package and the European Energy Security Strategy

> "The European Union's prosperity and security hinges on a stable and abundant supply of energy."
>
> (European Commission, 2014-05-28 p. 2)

2014 represents a significant year in the transformation of EU energy and climate policy. Following the failure of EU international climate leadership at the Copenhagen Climate Summit in 2009, in preparation for the upcoming Paris Climate Conference in 2015, and the impending deadline for the 20-20-20 Package, discussions regarding the post-2020 energy and climate framework emerged (Dekanozishvili, 2023: 155). As a result, in January 2014 "A policy framework for climate and energy in the period from 2020 to 2030" (henceforth referred to as the 2030 Package) was presented by the EC. The 2030 Package sets out the energy and climate goals for the EU between 2020-2030, with the overarching goal to ensure

"… competitive, secure and sustainable energy…" (European Commission, 2014-01-22, p.18) in the EU. Consequently, setting a greenhouse gas (GHG) emission reduction target of 40% by 2030 relative to 1990 levels, a RE target of 27% of energy consumption within the EU. Whilst the goals in the 2030 Package do suggest a greater prominence of climate change as an issue, the most prominent problem definition lies in a competitiveness framing, highlighting the costs of dependency on imported fossil fuels as well as the vulnerability to price shocks.

> "Rising demand for energy at global scale and insufficient competition in EU energy markets has sustained high commodity prices. In 2012, Europe's oil and gas import bill amounted to more than €400 billion representing some 3.1% of EU GDP compared to around €180 billion on average in the period 1990-2011. This increases the EU's vulnerability to supply and energy price shocks. "
>
> (European Commission, 2014-1-22, p. 11)

The cause of these issues is framed in terms of economic barriers, stressing the lasting effects of the 2008 financial crisis and its effect on Member States' capacity to invest in the clean energy transition (European Commission, 2014-01-22, p. 2). Consequently, the framing of RE mirrors the priority of cost-efficiency in the problem definition.

> "It confirmed the conclusions of the Energy Roadmap 2050, namely that the costs of a low carbon transition do not differ substantially from the costs that will be incurred in any event because of the need to renew an aging energy system, rising fossil fuel prices and adherence to existing climate and energy policies."
>
> (European Commission, 2014-01-22, p. 4)

If renewable energies' impact on the environment is part of the motivation, it is along the lines of a co-benefit rather than an incentive in itself. These competitiveness-based framings are challenged in the European Energy Security Strategy published in May 2014. It was presented in response to the rising political tensions due to Russia's annexation of Crimea in March the same year. At this point, Russian natural gas exports surmounted to 27% of EU consumption (European Commission, 2014-05-28, p. 2) Furthermore, Russia was projected to remain a key supplier until least 2030 and long-term contracts had taken into consideration when fashioning a response to increasing energy insecurity in the European neighborhood. Siddi (2023: 35) poses that the dependency on Russia contributed to the EU's relatively "mild" rhetoric regarding the annexation of Crimea and accompanying gas supply disruptions. In light of Russia's objection to certain emergency measures of the EU Energy Security Strategy, such as reversed flows or aggregated gas purchasing, there was a fear that political tensions would worsen, or the EU could suffer more significant gas disruptions due to their support of Ukraine. Whilst the energy security master frame increased in salience in the EU Energy Security Strategy compared to the 2030 Package, it did not result in any significant diversification from Russian supply. This correlates with Hofmann & Staeger's (2019) findings, arguing that the threat framing of Russia as an unreliable supplier after the annexation of Crimea failed in fully securitizing energy policy. Ultimately, the risk was perceived as too high to pursue a more radical diversification strategy away from Russian supply, in light of the EU's significant dependence on Russian imports. Instead solutions presented to decrease energy insecurity were framed mainly in terms of cost-efficiency, such as energy efficiency measures or short-term resilience measures meant to insulate the EU energy market from price shocks or sudden disruptions in supply.

> "The EU has an overriding priority: to ensure that the best possible preparation and planning improve resilience to sudden disruptions in energy supplies, that strategic infrastructures are protected and that the most vulnerable Member States are collectively supported."

(European Commission, 2014-05-28, p. 4)

The measures presented to address the issues of energy insecurity are also framed with an increasing urgency and focus on risk preparedness. For example, “stress tests” simulating a major gas disruption. This is explicitly stated as preparation of the event of a major gas supply disruption the winter of 2014/2015 (European Commission, 2014-05-28, p.4). Other short-term measures such as increasing gas stocks, developing emergency infrastructure and reverse flows, reducing energy demand and identifying possible additional suppliers which is not dependent on gas-pipeline infrastructure all points to an increasing threat framing of Russia as the primary supplier of energy to the EU. However, whilst the master frame of energy security increased in salience compared to the 2030 Package, one can question the staying power of energy security as the primary framing of RE in the Energy Security Strategy. RE is partly framed as a tool to decrease dependence on energy imports, along with both exploitation of conventional oil and gas resources, as well as unconventional hydrocarbons such as shale or “clean coal”. Similarly, to the 2030 Package, here the environmental benefits of diversifying to renewable energies are seen as a co-benefit rather than a motivating factor.

> “In the long term, the Union's energy security is inseparable from and significantly fostered by its need to move to a competitive, low-carbon economy which reduces the use of imported fossil fuels. This European Energy Security Strategy is, therefore, an integral part of the 2030 policy framework on climate and energy and also fully consistent with our competitiveness and industrial policy objectives.”

(European Commission, 2014-05-28, p. 3)

However, the competitiveness framing is also prominent in the solutions presented for increasing RE deployment. The EC promotes raising the targets for RE consumption compared to the 2030 Package, highlighting that deployment should

take a “market-based approach”; stipulating that it should be commercially viable (European Commission, 2014-05-28, p. 13). Furthermore, the benefits of RE are primarily framed by cost-efficiency and how much imported energy costs it would replace; “Avoided imported fuel costs due to increasing use of RE amount to at least some EUR 30 billion a year.” (European Commission, 2014-05-28, p. 12).

The evolution in framing from the 2030 Package and 2014 Energy Security Strategy is telling in how persistent the competitiveness master frame is in justifying RE, but also how weak the sustainability framing is comparatively. The energy security master frame and increasing threat framing of Russia as a supplier was effective in motivating diversification strategies and risk-preparedness measures. For example, comparing the motivations for other sources of energy or suppliers, such as support for the Southern Gas Corridor or new investments in LNG infrastructure, is practically devoid of incentives to “avoid imported fuel costs”. Here the incentive of diversifying supplies away from Russia is justified to motivate investment. Conversely, the sustainability benefits associated with RE is framed as a co-benefit to both increased competitiveness and energy security in EU energy policy.

6.2 2015: The Energy Union

EC President Jean-Claude Juncker initiated the proposal for an Energy Union in 2014. With the Eastern Enlargement in 2004 and 2007, climate and energy policy had become increasingly politicized. The Energy Union initiative was designed to overcome the dissonance between 28 Member States energy policy priorities. Broadly, a cleavage had emerged between states in the Eastern EU which prioritized energy security, due to their greater energy dependence and history with Russia, whilst Northern and Western Member States increasingly focused on sustainability (Bocse, 2021: 40). Initial proposals for the Energy Union focused heavily on the internal and integrated energy market’s prospects for increasing energy security, in terms of security of supply, expressed in reaction to Russia’s annexation of Crimea.

However, with the goals set out in the 2030 Package and the interests of Northern and Western Member States, a greater emphasis on sustainability was added to the finalized Energy Union Package (Knodt, 2023: 206-208; Skjærseth, 2021: 31-32). The Energy Union Package contains five dimensions:

> "- Energy security, solidarity and trust;
> - A fully integrated European energy market;
> - Energy efficiency contributing to moderation of demand;
> - Decarbonizing the economy, and
> - Research, Innovation and Competitiveness"
>
> (European Commission, 2015-02-25, p. 4)

The shift in energy policy objectives regarding the rejection of energy security as the primary justification for greater integration of energy policy is evident in the framing present in the 2015 Energy Union Package. Whilst energy security in terms of access and supply security of fossil fuels is still a prominent problem definition across the Package, there has been a significant shift in the measures presented to mitigate energy insecurity. Compared to the 2014 Energy Security Strategy, here the causes of energy insecurity are increasingly framed as an internal issue rather than that of external shocks.

> "The key drivers of energy security are the completion of the internal energy market and more efficient energy consumption. It depends on more transparency as well as on more solidarity and trust between the Member States. The EU's energy security is closely linked with its neighbors."
>
> (European Commission, 2015-02-25, p. 4)

As a result of this move towards an internal focus on energy security it significantly shifts how, and which actors are framed as responsible to remedy these issues. Firstly, a fully integrated energy market is framed as a way to internally withstand supply shocks and address external energy security issues with a unified EU approach. Secondly, whilst supply diversification away from Russian supply remains the primary strategy, an emergent frame is the focus on curbing demand. This internal measure to limit the effect of supply disruptions shifts the responsibility to mitigate the issue from supplier to consumer. Throughout the Energy Union Package there is an increasing focus on the role of the "empowered consumer"; making informed decisions regarding their energy services through energy labeling and eco-design as well as curbing demand (European Commission, 2015-02-25, p. 11-12). Thirdly, diversification strategies entail new suppliers and alternative energy sources. Similarly, to the Energy Security Strategy this communication promotes a stronger LNG strategy as well as domestically produced energy. Here RE is presented as one of the alternative sources contributing to decreasing EU's import dependence along with conventional and unconventional fossil fuels European Commission, 2015-02-25, p. 5).

Decarbonization is one of the five dimensions presented by the Energy Union Package. The increasing use of RE is described as integral to both EU climate and energy policy. Whilst the prominence of the competitiveness framing remains, the justifications presented for renewables differ slightly. Compared to the primary motivations centered around the cost-efficiency presented in previous policy packages, here framing centers around the growth potential of the clean energy transition.

> "An innovation-driven transition to a low carbon economy offers great opportunities for growth and jobs. New business sectors, new business models and new job profiles will emerge. Technological leadership must be followed by the development of industrial production capabilities or technology supply chains across Europe.

> This requires bringing together research, industry, the financing sector and public authorities. An efficient industrial strategy along these lines will enable the EU industry to benefit from the first-mover advantage, both domestically and within international technology markets, with the resulting positive effects on competitiveness and job creation."

A reoccurring frame presents the EU as a leader in the clean energy transition, both in terms of leadership in international climate change negotiations and competitiveness in the market. Whilst the sustainability framing in relation to RE continues to be secondary to the master frames of competitiveness and energy security, the commitments to EU emission reduction targets are reiterated throughout the Communication. This was published before the Paris Climate Conformance but indicates the EC's intention of entering a leadership role in the negotiations promoting more ambitious targets (European Commission, 2015-02-25, p. 14). Yet, the most prominent framing in terms of EU leadership refers to RE innovation and global market competitiveness (European Commission, 2015-02-25, p. 16). The green growth-framing of RE is coupled with the objectives of the internal market to provide the necessary preconditions. The Energy Union further integrates regulation as well as extends cross-border infrastructure which would lower the costs of integrating RE into the internal market (European Commission, 2015-02-25, p. 15). The focus lies in market-based measures that promote competitive renewables with cost-efficiency still being the primary prerequisite for deployment.

> "In line with the Environmental and Energy Aid Guidelines, renewable production needs to be supported through market-based schemes that address market failures, ensure cost-effectiveness and avoid overcompensation or distortion."

(European Commission, 2015-02-25, p. 15)

Overall, the framing of RE has shifted slightly since 2014. Whilst the energy security framing is prominent throughout the Energy Union Communication it has diminished in comparison to the previous framing of RE as a tool for energy independence presented in the EU Energy Security Strategy. The competitiveness framing has remained strong in relation to RE, evolving from being perceived as a cost-efficient measure, with environmental co-benefits, to a green growth imperative. There has also been a significant shift in the allocation of responsibility to address energy security issues. The focus on internal solutions in the form of an integrated and resilient EU energy market has shifted the focus from supply to demand side measures. The role of the consumer is highlighted as central to curb demand and consequently mitigate import dependence. This is problematic, as energy demand encompasses far more than households. Whilst individual consumption does have an effect on emissions, allocating responsibility with the consumer risks obscuring the responsibilities of industries or states in leading demand-side measures. (De Almeida & Esposito, 2023)

6.3 2016-2019: Clean Energy for all Europeans

> "This package presents an opportunity to speed both the clean energy transition and growth and job creation."

(European Commission, 2016- 11-30, p. 4)

The "Clean Energy for all Europeans", sometimes referred to as the "Winter Package", was initiated by the EC in 2016. It consisted of eight legislative proposals aiming to implement the five goals of the Energy Union strategy and further

integrate EU energy and climate governance through law. After two years of negotiations the Clean Energy for all Europeans Package was adopted in 2019. It included the Governance Regulation of the Energy Union, updated Energy Performance of Buildings and Energy Efficiency-Directives, two regulations on the internal market for electricity and two regulations on Risk Preparedness of the energy system and the establishment of a European Union Agency for the Cooperation of Energy Regulators. Whilst this package still fell short of the necessary ambitions to fulfill the Paris Agreement, it did significantly update and integrate EU energy and climate policy (Siddi, 2023: 41-42). The communication presents three main goals of the forthcoming policy package: "Putting energy efficiency first, achieving global leadership in renewable energies and providing a fair deal for consumers" (European Commission, 2016-11-30, p.3).

Sustainability has significantly moved up in priority, as the goals are striving to deliver upon the newly ratified Paris Agreement. However, whilst the clean energy transition is framed as the overarching goal the motivations and the presented solutions rely heavily on the competitiveness frame. The problem definition most prominent across the Clean Energy for all Europeans Package is the framing of the energy system as vital for the European economy, as this excerpt illustrates:

> "The energy sector is important for the European economy: energy prices affect the competitiveness of the whole economy and represent on average 6% of annual household expenditure. It employs close to 2.2 million people, spread over 90,000 enterprises across Europe, representing 2% of total added value. Behind it stands a prosperous manufacturing industry delivering the necessary equipment and services, not only in Europe, but worldwide."
>
> (European Commission, 2016- 11-30, p. 4)

This problem definition is echoed in the framing of RE encapsulated by the central goal "achieving global leadership in renewable energies". Whilst previous policy packages mainly framed RE as cost-efficient, the Clean Energy for all Europeans package has entirely adopted the framing of green growth. In this case, green growth does not only refer to the decoupling of emissions from economic growth but the creation of industries, jobs and increasing market share for EU RE products. RE is no longer solely framed as a tool in achieving green growth but as a commercial imperative for European business and the economy at large. This is significant due to the incentives presented for the deployment of RE, which change based on the type of competitiveness framing. When framed mostly as cost-efficient, such as in the 2014 European Energy Security Strategy, in terms of "saved fossil fuel import costs", it does not invoke the same market-based incentives associated with economic growth. The finalized 2018 RE Directive instead highlights "The opportunities for establishing economic growth through innovation and a sustainable competitive energy policy…" (European Commission, 2018-12-11a, (61)). However, it is important to underscore the inherent limitations to the green growth frame presented in the Clean Energy for all Europeans Package. Whilst RE is framed increasingly in terms of a positive economic effect rather than cost-efficient measure, it is still secondary to market rationalities. For example, EU support schemes for RE deployment are promoted to a larger degree but should be applied in "…a market-based and market-responsive way, while avoiding unnecessary distortions of electricity markets as well as taking into account possible system integration costs and grid stability.*"* (European Commission, 2018-12-11a, Article 4, 2.). Though the finalized 2018 RE Directive does frame RE primarily in relation to the competitiveness master frame focusing on green growth, there are references to a more multidimensional framing of RE.

> "The increased use of energy from renewable sources also has a fundamental part to play in promoting the security of energy supply, sustainable energy at affordable prices, technological development and innovation as well as technological and industrial leadership

> while providing environmental, social and health benefits as well as major opportunities for employment and regional development, especially in rural and isolated areas, in regions or territories with low population density or undergoing partial deindustrialisation."
>
> (European Commission, 2018-12-11a, (3))

As this excerpt illustrates, the master frames of energy security and sustainability are not entirely excluded but compared to the 2014 Energy Security Strategy and 2030 Package they have significantly decreased in salience. Time passed from the Annexation of Crimea and the subsequent shock to perceived EU energy security have reduced the threat framing of Russia as an unreliable supplier. Compared to previous policy packages analyzed, The Clean Energy for all Europeans Package does highlight the effect the current energy systems effect on climate change and the necessity of renewable energies which showcases a significant change from the earlier framing where environmental benefits were merely a co-benefit to the objective of cost-efficiency (European Commission, 2016-11-30, p. 3). However, there are scarce findings of threat framing in relation to climate change, even in terms of costs associated with mitigation and adaptation. Conversely, the potential of the green growth framing of RE are presented to address both sustainability and energy security issues, through market-based solutions.

In terms of RE, it is also significant to discuss the shifting priorities in various energy sources, as innovation and investment in a few sources are highlighted. In the Energy Union Package, energy efficiency was framed mainly as a tool to moderate demand as the "quickest" way to reduce dependency on external energy sources. Here energy efficiency is presented as an energy source in itself, motivated as the cheapest and cleanest source of energy is energy that is not used in the first place. The "Energy Efficiency First Principle" is frequently referenced and entails a prioritization of energy efficiency in all energy planning, policy and investment decisions. Energy efficiency is particularly highlighted across the policy package

but most prominent in the Directive of Energy Efficiency (European Commission, 2018-12-11b) and the Directive on the Energy Performance of Buildings (European Commission, 2018-05-30). Energy efficiency is framed both on the basis of the competitiveness and sustainability master frames, as a cost-efficient pathway to phase out fossil fuels over time through efficiency measures whilst RE is growing in capacity. Sources such as solar, hydropower and wind are often discussed in terms of integration into the electricity market, highlighting the importance of an integrated regulatory framework and market-based incentives which is conducive to the deployment of renewables. This includes technological and infrastructural upgrades such as improving grid connections between countries to ensure flexibility and security of supply of electricity across borders and better storage solutions to do the intermittency of some renewable sources (European Commission, 2019-06-5a (61)). These measures are primarily framed and motivated by creation of conditions necessary to integrate renewable electricity in a cost-efficient way, mitigating transaction costs in the internal EU market and providing a regulatory framework that encourages innovation and competitiveness. (European Commission, 2019-06-5b, Article 3, g; European Commission, 2019-06-5a, Article 1)

> "The Union would most effectively meet its RE targets through the creation of a market framework that rewards flexibility and innovation. A well-functioning electricity market design is the key factor enabling the uptake of RE"
>
> (European Commission, 2019-06-5a, (9))

Bioenergy is given increasing importance in the 2018 RE Directive as a key resource in achieving the 32% RE target for 2030. Bioenergy is the main source of RE in the EU, accounting for 59% of RE consumption in 2021(European Commission, 2021). Whilst bioenergy is considered to be a RE source in EU policy, it does produce GHG emissions but at significantly lower levels than fossil fuels

(Siddi, 2023: 14). Bioenergy is framed and promoted in the RE Directive as key to achieving the targets, specifically in terms of alternative fuels for transportation (European Commission, 2018-12-11a, (106)). These hard-to-abate sectors are not only emission-intensive but also framed as essential to the EU economy, as such biofuels has the additional motivation based in the competitiveness master frame. Whilst framing bioenergy as essential to both domestic electricity production and replacement of fossil fuels for transportation, the heightened risk of environmental damage due to increased land-use on the production of biomass is highlighted (European Commission, 2018-12-21, Article 29). Carbon Capture, Utilization and Storage (CCUS)[2] technologies are gaining in prominence in relation to the residual emissions generated by bioenergy, justifying the increasing use of bioenergy in relation to the RE targets.

The final goal of the Clean Energy for all Europeans Package refers to providing a fair deal for consumers, referring to both businesses and citizens. The increasing focus on the consumer is evident across the Directives and Regulations of the Package, especially in relation to RE. An article on the EU website even refers to the Package as "…new rules for consumer centred clean energy transition" (European Commission, 2016). The competitiveness framing of RE, tied to the logic of supply and demand, places a lot of responsibility on the consumer as the final arbiter of how the resource fairs in the internal energy market.

> "By empowering consumers and providing them with the tools to participate more in the energy market, including participating in new ways, it is intended that citizens in the Union benefit from the internal market for electricity and that the Union's RE targets are attained."
>
> (European Commission, 2019-06-5a, (10))

[2] Carbon capture, utilization and storage refers to the process of capturing emissions, often from industry or power generation, and utilizing it in other industrial processes or stored as to not release the emissions into the atmosphere. (International Energy Agency, 2024)

By 2021, households accounted for 27.9% of final energy consumption in the EU, whilst industry and transport accounted for 25.6% and 29.2% respectively (Eurostat, 2023a, figure 10). On the one hand, the rules presented to increase transparency for consumers engaging in the energy market present a new opportunity for citizens to become more involved in their energy choices. It also presents new opportunities for self-production of energy through renewables and the prospect of selling energy back to the market. On the other hand, by placing primary responsibility of the clean energy transition on the consumer it obscures the responsibilities for other actors such as industry or measures that could be more efficient in increasing RE deployment such as more stringent regulation on high-emission sectors in leading the transition (De Almeida & Esposito, 2023).

In conclusion, the Clean Energy for all Europeans Package leans heavily on the master frame of competitiveness. The problem is defined as the sustainable energy transition being an economic imperative to sustain EU economic growth, the creation of jobs and at the forefront of the renewable technologies market. The framing of RE shares this problem-framing, highlighting the potential of RE in promoting green growth. Whilst the sustainability frame is evident in the more ambitious RE, energy efficiency and emission reduction targets it has lost salience since the 2030 Package. Similarly, the antagonistic threat framing in relation to Russia as the primary energy supplier has decreased salience evident in the limited references to RE as a tool to mitigate import dependence. The identified causes mainly relate to the competitiveness master frame; pointing to inefficiency in fragmented EU energy markets, specifically electricity markets. This relates to RE by framing inefficient markets and aging infrastructure as bottlenecks to cost-efficient deployment. The solutions presented follow this line of reasoning by promoting market-based measures and regulations to keep EU energy markets competitive through the energy transition. The centrality of RE in generating green growth is reiterated here, not only framed as cost-efficient but as a commercial opportunity for EU industries. Whilst responsibility is difficult to allocate in terms of inefficient internal EU energy markets some references refer to lacking previous

integration efforts on the part of Member States. However, this Package provides evidence of the increasing prominence of the consumer as a central actor in the sustainable energy transition.

6.4 2019-2021: The European Green Deal and Fit for 55

> "Turning an urgent challenge into a unique opportunity"
>
> (European Commission 2019-12-11, p. 2)

In 2019 the newly appointed President of the EC, Ursula von der Leyen presented the European Green Deal as one of the first major policy announcements of her presidency. The European Green Deal consists of a set of policy initiatives aimed at making the EU climate-neutral by 2050. This is a long-term strategy for the decarbonization of the EU the economy, and as the energy sector represents 80% of EU GHG emissions it is central to the initiative (Bruch, Ringel & Knodt, 2022: 383-384). Whilst the new goal of climate neutrality by 2050 would mean amending the newly finalized Clean Energy for all European Package, this was the first time the EC placed climate and environmental objectives at the center of more comprehensive EU strategies outside of energy and climate policy (Skjærseth, 2021). As COVID-19 struck in early 2020 it significantly shifted political priority from the Green Deal to handling the ongoing crisis. This delayed the finalization of policy proposed by the Green Deal to 2023, which in turn was heavily influenced by the Russian invasion of Ukraine (Mišík & Nosko, 2023). The centrality of climate change in the Green Deal has significant implications for the framing of RE during this period.

The communication on the Green Deal published in December 2019 identifies the central problem to be addressed in the first paragraph:

> "This Communication sets out a European Green Deal for the European Union (EU) and its citizens. It resets the Commission's commitment to tackling climate and environmental-related challenges that is this generation's defining task. The atmosphere is warming and the climate is changing with each passing year. One million of the eight million species on the planet are at risk of being lost. Forests and oceans are being polluted and destroyed"
>
> (European Commission, 2019-12-11, p. 1)

This problem definition differs significantly from earlier periods of EU policy as it primarily evokes the sustainability master frame, highlighting climate change as the main problem. Furthermore, whilst climate change has been framed as a structural threat before it has not been framed as urgently. The three goals of the Green Deal are net-zero GHG emissions by 2050, decoupling economic growth from resource use and a just and inclusive transition (European Commission, 2024c). Evoking a threat framing of climate change in the Green Deal is significant as it places another level on urgency to its goals. By highlighting the limited timeframe to address climate change before it's "too late" increases the salience of the framing of climate change as a threat, aiming for swifter and more radical policy change.

Decarbonizing the energy system by phasing out fossil fuels and diversifying to renewables are framed as essential in achieving these goals. In relation to renewables, the major cause presented for slowing down the transition is presented as inefficient infrastructure that cannot integrate RE in a cost-efficient way. Here the economic framing returns by highlighting the need for competitiveness of the RE as to stimulate the clean energy transition (European Commission, 2019-12-11, p. 6). However, the priority of competitiveness as a policy goal is challenged

throughout the Communication by emphasizing that it is impossible to reach the set goals if there is not revision of the value given to restoring and protecting the natural environment. For example, in reference to the high-emissions sector of transport it states that: “The price of transport must reflect the impact it has on the environment and on health.” (European Commission, 2019-12-11, p. 10). Additionally, in relation to tax reforms it states that; “At national level, the European Green Deal will create the context for broad-based tax reforms, removing subsidies for fossil fuels, shifting the tax burden from labor to pollution, and taking into account social considerations.” (European Commission, 2019-12-11, p. 17). The priority of sustainability, especially in profitable sectors suggests increasing salience of the sustainability master frame, related to the increasing urgency to address emissions in hard-to-abate sectors. Whilst the competitiveness framing is still prominent through the centrality of sustainable and inclusive growth in the Green Deal, it does provide more of a whole system approach stressing the need for transformation in all sectors.

In comparison to previous policy packages, the Green Deal takes a more multidimensional approach to moral judgments. A reoccurring frame in the Communication is the “global challenge of climate change”, often highlighting the responsibility of other countries to join the EU in ambitious emission reduction. Furthermore, the EU frames itself in a leadership position in terms of “climate diplomacy”, engaging with and supporting other nations in promoting the clean energy transition.

> “The EU will continue to engage with the economies of the G20 that are responsible for 80% of global greenhouse gas emissions.”
>
> (European Commission, 2019-12-11, p. 20)

The responsibility to address the clean energy transition have often been motivated through a competitiveness framing bound to the market logic of supply and demand,

highlighting the consumer as central to the transition through engagement in their energy choices as well as regulation and market incentives making RE more competitive in the energy market. In line with the problem definition emphasizing sustainability, the Green Deal presents a more multidimensional allocation of responsibility focusing on industry.

> "About half of total greenhouse gas emissions and more than 90% of biodiversity loss and water stress come from resource extraction and processing of materials, fuels and food. The EU's industry has started the shift but still accounts for 20% of the EU's greenhouse gas emissions."

(European Commission, 2019-12-11, p. 20)

The economic framing remains, underlining that energy-intensive industries are indispensable to Europe's economy and motivating the clean energy transition through the prospects of economic growth and job creation. The framing of green growth is prominent but shifts slightly compared to the Clean Energy for all Europeans Package where the focus lies on the promotion and profitability of new renewables technologies and the EU as a market leader. The frame of EU as a leader based on the comparativeness master frame remains, however the Green Deal additionally prioritizes the decarbonization of energy-intensive industries such as steel and chemicals (European Commission, 2019-12-11, p. 7). The solutions presented are thus focused less on consumer behavior as previously prioritized in the Clean Energy for all Europeans Package. Regulatory measures outlined in the Green Deal and Fit for 55 Package include the Circular Economy Action plan, extending the ETS to include emissions from buildings and transport as well as a

proposal for a Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM)[3] to mitigate carbon leakage from EU imports. Thus, focusing the costs of the transition on the most polluting actors (European Commission, 2019-12-11, p. 5; European Commission, 2021-07-14, p. 7; Scheuing & Kamm, 2022; Szulecki, Overland & Smith, 2022).

The Green Deal has a wider whole-systems approach dealing with the overarching transformation of the economy towards sustainability emphasizing a circular economy and carbon removals, both in terms of the preservation of natural carbon sinks and CCUS technologies (European Commission, 2018-11-28, p. 1). These solutions are justified primarily by evoking the sustainability and the competitiveness frame, posing that circular practices will not only make EU industry and households more sustainable but also lower costs in production. Few references are made to the energy security master frame, mainly in relation to critical raw materials needed for the clean energy transition. EU has very limited domestic mining or refinement capacities, the majority of which comes from China (Tomala & Urbaniec, 2024; Le Mouel & Poitiers, 2023). The 2023 European Commission report on critical raw materials state that: "Dependence of critical raw materials may soon replace today's dependence on oil." (Grohol & Veeh, 2023: 1). To limit the risks of creating new dependency relationships the Green Deal promotes diversifying supply (European Commission, 2019-12-11, p. 8).

The Fit for 55 Package presented in July 2021 shifts the framing of RE slightly compared to the Green Deal. Since the Fit for 55 Package focuses on a shorter timeframe, with the aim to decreased GHG emissions by at least 55% by 2030, the urgency expressed in relation to climate change is still prominent.

[3] Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism refers to the regulation of carbon-intensive imports to the EU. It adjusts the carbon price of certain imports, such as cement, steel, aluminum, electricity and hydrogen, to the carbon price of domestic production. The CBAM came into force 17 May 2023 and will be gradually implemented to differnet products. (European Commission, 2024d)

> "Acting before we reach irreversible tipping points will allow us to design that transformation rather than react and adapt to it. While the cost of non-action is clearly higher than the cost of fulfilling our climate ambitions, sterile numbers cannot capture the stark consequences of continuing business-as-usual."

(European Commission, 2021-07-14, p. 1)

However, taking into account the significant spike in energy prices due to COVID-19 there is a resurgence of competitiveness and energy security motivations presented in relation to RE. The sustainability master frame diminishes in salience as the economic recovery and higher demand for gas resulted in increasing energy prices. Natural gas prices are a determinant of electricity prices throughout the EU, and unfortunate weather conditions resulted in lower production of renewables as well. The far-reaching effects of higher energy prices; on industry, food prices and employment are communicated with increasing urgency. There are elements of threat framing referenced throughout the communication largely revolves around price volatility and its effects on the EU economy. RE is framed as a solution to decrease demand for energy imports and as such be less vulnerable to external price shocks (European Commission, 2021-10-13, p. 2).

> "The clean energy transition is the best insurance against price shocks like the one the EU is facing today. It's time to speed up."

(European Commission, 2021-10-13, p. 20)

In conclusion, there has been a significant shift from the utilization of the master frame of competitiveness in the Clean Energy for all Europeans Package to a much stronger emphasis on sustainability in the Green Deal. The framing of RE was significantly affected by the shift towards the sustainability master frame. The problem was defined largely from the perspective of sustainability, posing climate

change as the greatest threat to the EU. The increasing threat framing of climate change imbued the Green Deal with urgency in its policy proposals, especially in the deployment of RE. The Green Deal is similar to previous iterations framing climate change as a global issue, requiring global action, as well as highlighting the EU in a leadership role in the clean transition. However, it differs in allocating responsibility internally, focusing more on industry to bear the costs of the transition rather than the consumer. COVID-19 challenged the salience and urgency of the sustainability framing as increasing energy prices triggered threat framings in regard to competitiveness and energy security of EU energy markets. Consequently, the primary framing of RE was motivated by its capacity to mitigate external energy dependency and vulnerability to price volatility.

6.5 2022-2024: REPowerEU

Russia's invasion of Ukraine on 24 February 2022 and the ongoing war have had widespread implications on EU energy policy. By 2021, the EU imported 40%, 27% and 46% respectively of its total gas, oil and coal consumption from Russia (European Commission, 2022-3-8, p. 1). Shortly after the invasion, the EU imposed a series of sanctions on oil and coal, and gas supplies were largely cut by Russia's own restriction of supplies. The invasion of Ukraine had turned the ongoing energy crisis into a structural issue, requiring a fundamental overhaul of EU energy supplies (Siddi, 2023: 103,109). The REPowerEU Plan presents three central goals: saving energy, diversifying supplies and accelerating the energy transition (European Commission, 2022-5-18b, p. 1). More than two years later, the war in Ukraine is still ongoing and the EU is continuously working on diversifying energy supplies away from Russia and mitigating price volatility in an unstable market. Whilst aiming to fulfill the emission reduction targets in line with the Fit for 55 Package and the long-term 2050 climate neutrality goal (European Commission 2022-5-18b, p. 2.)

The onset of the war in Ukraine drastically shifted the problem definition in EU energy policy. Whilst sustainability and competitiveness are still integral to the REPowerEU Plan, the Russian invasion of Ukraine, and its effects on EUs energy security, is framed as the primary issue.

> "Russia's unprovoked and unjustified military aggression against Ukraine, has massively disrupted the world's energy system. It has caused hardship as a result of high energy prices and it has heightened energy security concerns, bringing to the fore the EU's over-dependence on gas, oil and coal imports from Russia."
>
> (European Commission 2022-5-18b, p. 2)

Energy security has always been a central issue in EU energy policy, however, it has fluctuated in priority, often in relation to high dependency rates and relations with external suppliers (Mišík, 2022). Whilst tensions in the interdependent relationship between the EU and Russia have only grown since the gas disruptions in 2006 and 2009, the threat framing of Russia as a supplier increased in relation to the annexation of Crimea in 2014 (Hofmann & Staeger, 2019). Comparatively, the REPowerEU plan presents a far more salient threat framing of Russia as the cause of EU energy insecurity. However, whilst Russia is framed as the primary instigator of the current energy insecurity, the underlying cause is framed in terms of the high dependency rate built over several decades. Without high dependence on Russian energy supply the EU energy system would not have been as heavily affected by the war in the European neighborhood and less vulnerable to price shocks. There is also a wider geopolitical security consideration of EUs external energy dependence, where Russia is perceived to use EU's dependence as an economic and political weapon. As such, Russia is no longer presented as a reliable energy supplier to the EU and new trade relationships have to be forged (European Commission 2022-5-18b, p. 20). The threat and urgency communicated by evoking the energy security

master frame in relation to the invasion of Ukraine also permeates the framing in relation to sustainability. Similarly, to the framing presented in the Green Deal, where climate change is framed with increasing urgency:

> "The European Union and the world are facing the existential threat of climate change and a burgeoning energy crisis. If we do not accelerate the fight against climate change and combat biodiversity loss, the targets agreed in Paris will be out of reach and with that, the possibility to avoid a full-blown climate crisis with devastating consequences for the people and the environment across the globe."
>
> (European Commission 2022-5-18a, p. 1)

The combined structural threat framing of climate change and the antagonistic threat framing of Russia in relation to energy security provides a highly salient problem definition and causal interpretation which permeates the allocation of responsibilities and solutions presented in relation to RE after the invasion.

The clean energy transition is framed as "…the only way to simultaneously ensure sustainable, secure, and affordable energy worldwide." (European Commission 2022-5-18a, p.1). The accelerated clean energy transition is primarily motivated by increasingly evoking its benefits to energy security, highlighting its role in substituting imported fossil fuels and consequently decreasing dependency. A series of measures are presented to accomplish the clean energy transition. Firstly, amending the 2018 RE Directive, increasing the binding target for RE in final gross consumption from 32% to 42.5%, aiming for 45% (European Commission, 2024a; European Commission, 2023-10-31, (5)). Secondly, presenting the EU Solar Energy Strategy which aims to double solar power in the EU by 2030 by lessening the regulatory, financial and practical barriers to deployment (European Commission 2022-5-18c, p. 8). Thirdly, accelerating the deployment of alternative low-carbon sources such as renewable hydrogen and bioenergy, especially in hard-

to-abate sectors such as transport and industry. Overall, these measures are communicated with a sense of urgency, all aiming to facilitate the energy transition at a faster pace, motivated by the threat framing based in both the sustainability and energy security. Whilst this combined framing may increase the urgency and thus deployment of RE there is some inconsistency between REPowerEU's goals. Whilst diversification to renewable energies is highlighted as the only long-term solution, often motivated by the frame "energy independence", the rapid shift away from Russian supply will necessitate new fossil fuel supply relationships in the short-term. The Communication "EU external energy engagement in a changing world" published alongside the REPowerEU Plan highlight the diversification strategies of future EU fossil fuel supply. Here it highlights new LNG agreements with large producers such as the US, Qatar and Egypt as well as the burgeoning producers of LNG and hydrogen in Senegal, Angola and Namibia (European Commission 2022-5-18a, p. 3-4). The REPowerEU Plan states that these are short term solutions spanning to the end of the decade that would not lead to carbon lock-in or stranded fossil fuel assets (European Commission 2022-5-18b, p. 13). Siddi (2023: 107) highlights that whilst diversified LNG supply would mitigate current energy supply issues, the transportation from these more distant suppliers, often by shipping, would be more environmentally damaging compared to pipelines. Furthermore, increased demand has the potential of delaying the energy transition and creating carbon lock-in in production countries due to increased extraction and investment in fossil fuel infrastructure as EU demand increases. The plan also mentions reviving the cooperation with Algeria and Azerbaijan for pipeline deliveries of natural gas to the EU though the Southern Gas Corridor (European Commission 2022-5-18a, p. 3). The exclusive focus on Russia as a geopolitical threat has disregarded the fundamental risks of new dependency relationships, both in terms of its negative effect on emissions and the inherent geopolitical risks of dependence on other non-democratic states (Siddi, 2023: 107).

Responsibility to address the goals of the REPowerEU Plan is quite diverse, depending on the measure. Energy saving is framed as the quickest and cheapest

way to mitigate the energy crisis. This is both achieved by behavioral changes in consumption patterns and by raising energy efficiency standards for households and industry. Similarly, to the Green Deal, industry is given more responsibility in decarbonization than in previous policy packages. Here the competitiveness framing is prominent, presenting that early adoption of RE in hard-to-abate sectors will not only limit emissions, bit insulate industry from volatile fossil fuel markets and stimulate international technology leadership (European Commission 2022-5-18b, p. 8). Whilst energy security remains the most central motivator, competitiveness increases in salience in later Communications. Published in February 2024, the Communication "Securing our future- Europe's 2040 climate target and path to climate neutrality by 2050 building a sustainable, just and prosperous society" proposed a 90% net GHG emission reduction target by 2040 as a milestone towards the 2050 climate neutrality target (European Commission, 2024b). This was published after the Global Stocktake at COP28, aiming to reaffirm the EU's commitment to the climate neutrality goal after a few years of turbulent energy markets. Here the competitiveness framing of climate change as a threat is quite strong, quantifying the costs in terms of future inaction and previous economic losses.

> "Inaction would lead to far larger and growing costs in the coming decades. Although estimates of the costs of extreme weather events are uncertain, the impact assessment estimates conservatively, without taking account of possible tipping points, that such costs could lower GDP by about 7% by the end of the century. Over the period 2031-2050, the cumulative additional GDP cost of a pathway leading to worse global warming could amount to EUR 2.4 trillion in the EU, compared to the costs under a pathway compatible with the 1.5°C objective of the Paris Agreement."
>
> (European Commission, 2024-02-06, p. 9)

> “The costs and human impacts of a changing climate are large and growing. Climate-related extreme events have risen between 1980 and 2022, causing 220 000 deaths and EUR 650 billion in economic losses over the period in the EU, of which about EUR 170 billion over the past 5 years only”
>
> (European Commission, 2024-02-06, p. 9)

The global responsibility to address climate change is restated, along with the framing of the EU as market and innovation leader in the renewables sector. RE is often motivated by an economic framing, highlighting the competitiveness of industry based on RE (European Commission, 2024-02-06, p. 11).

Overall, the framing of RE shifted significantly after the onset of the war in Ukraine. The focus of energy policy as a whole shifted towards energy security as the primary policy goal. The combined threat framing of Russia as the cause of energy insecurity, in terms of supply and price volatility, and the ever-growing risks associated with climate change created an undercurrent of urgency in the policies that followed. In this case RE is not only framed as the most sustainable solutions but motivated and justified through the frame of “energy independence”. Substituting fossil fuel imports, specifically from Russia, with domestically produced RE is presented as the only long-term strategy to mitigate the effects of the high dependency rate and accomplish the climate neutrality target by 2050. However, whilst the accelerated deployment of RE is motivated by its benefits to both sustainability and EU energy security, other solutions presented in the REPowerEU Plan are contradictive to these combined goals. The short-term supply diversification strategy relies on new fossil fuel import relationships which poses the risk of further carbon lock-in and stranded assets in the EU as well as production countries. The proposal of the 2040 target showcases a staying power in the salience energy security and a policy objective, as it is more prominent and embedded in the long-term goals compared to previous policy packages.

6.6 Summary of findings

The findings of the empirical analysis show that there has been a significant evolution in how RE has been framed in relation the master frames and policy objectives of competitiveness, energy security and sustainability over the past decade. Firstly, the competitiveness master frame has remained a salient motivator for RE in EU energy policy, legitimizing deployment through the market-based measures. Early policy packages mainly framed RE in terms of cost-efficiency, which was gradually replaced by a green growth framing, reaching its height in the Clean Energy for all Europeans Package. However, whilst the primary framing of RE shifted away from competitiveness in the European Green Deal and REPowerEU Plan towards the focus on sustainability and energy security, the focus on market-based measures to promote the deployment of renewables has remained strong throughout the analyzed timeframe. Secondly, the energy security master frame has mainly been utilized to promote RE in reaction to events of external supply disruptions, often implicitly or explicitly referenced in relation to Russia as the EU's primary supplier. As such, the prominence of the frame of RE as a tool for energy independence has corresponded to the fluctuating antagonistic threat framing of Russia as an unreliable supplier. These have been most prevalent in the 2014 Energy Security Strategy and the REPowerEU Plan in reaction to the 2014 Annexation of Crimea and Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2022. Thirdly, whilst the sustainability master frame has been present in terms of the inherent environmental benefits of the increased deployment of renewables throughout the timeframe it has remained relatively weak compared to the justifications based on the competitiveness and energy security master frames. The structural threat framing of climate change significantly increased the salience of the sustainability master frame, highlighting the necessity and urgency of the clean energy transition. However, the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 and the Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2022 undermined the sustainability master frame as the primary justification for RE. Policy focus diverted to price volatility and the swift

diversification away from Russian supply, both through the faster deployment of renewables and the diversification to other fossil fuel suppliers. Overall, later policy packages place greater emphasis on RE as a whole.

7 Discussion

This chapter discusses the findings of the empirical analysis in relation to the theoretical framework, previous research as well as the wider topic of EU energy policy. It follows the structure of Entman's four functions of framing, beginning with a discussion on the importance of problem definition and it's consequent effects on the diagnosis of causes, moral judgments and suggestions for remedies, and discussing patterns and inconsistencies between the functions and the master frames in relation to the framing of RE in EU energy policy between 2014-2024. The last section reflects on the future of RE in the context of EU energy policy.

7.1 Patterns and inconsistencies between the four functions of framing

The problem definition is the driving force behind the process of framing as it determines how, and if, an issue is conceptualized as a problem. Depending on the values and beliefs that the problem definition evokes through the use of a master frame, it can legitimize and promote how it is addressed. This study shows that the problem definition in relation to RE fluctuates according to the policy priority of that period. While a problem definition does not necessarily have to engage a threat framing of an issue to make it salient, threat framings often justify stronger repositioning in policy. This is exemplified in the antagonistic threat framing of Russia as an unreliable supplier in EU energy policy. The framing of RE as a tool for energy independence only occurs in policy packages that present a threat frame of Russia, such as the 2014 European Energy Security Strategy and the REPoweEU Plan. However, the staying power of a threat framing is variable as it loses salience the further away it gets from the external event that caused it. For example, the antagonistic threat framing in regard to energy security after the Annexation of Crimea in 2014 did not necessarily result in any radical diversification strategies

away from Russian supply and gradually lost salience until it reoccurred in relation to the 2022 invasion. In line with previous research focusing on the possible securitization of EU energy security policy this study similarly finds that threat framing can have a fleeting effect on the framing of RE in relation to energy security (Natorski & Surrallés, 2008; Florian, 2010). As a policy objective, energy security is difficult to ensure on a supranational level as Member States face vastly different circumstances in terms of dependency rates or potential for domestic energy production. This may be why it does not have the same staying power in EU-level policy, as many Member States highly value their sovereignty in energy policy as it is closely tied to their national security concerns (Nyman, 2018). This study additionally finds that the structural threat framing of climate change also lacks staying power in EU energy policy, as exemplified by the shift from the threat framing presented in the Green Deal compared to the resurgence of the competitiveness framing as the EU faced higher energy prices due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Overall, whilst threat framing can rapidly shift the problem definition in energy policy in line with the current policy priority, it lacks staying power as new crises perceived as more urgent will inevitably take over the policy discourse. Consequently, this study finds that problem definitions more broadly applicable across Member States have had greater staying power. The competitiveness framing is central to the liberal ideals of EU integration efforts, where the energy market is a central sector to eliminate barriers to free trade and promote fair competition (Knodt & Ringel, 2022: 125). Competitiveness has also been the most prominent master frame in the promotion of RE, highlighting the costs of imported energy, fragmented internal energy markets as well as the economic benefits of the clean energy transition for consumers´ as well as the growth potential for EU renewables industries.

The diagnosis of causes and moral judgments are sometimes difficult to distinguish from each other when discussing the framing of an issue as they are closely tied together. RE is often promoted as a solution through the competitiveness master frame, highlighting its economic benefits, but it does not provide a very motivating

causal interpretation. Throughout the empirical analysis, this study found little evidence of the causal interpretation or moral judgments pointing internally to the EU as the responsible actor, other than the failure to previously integrate markets or update infrastructure to make renewables deployment cost-efficient. Here is where antagonistic threat framing has a streamlining effect in policy, as it converges the framing around one clear "antagonist", legitimating the cause and allocation of blame. For example, the antagonistic threat framing of Russia in the REPowerEU Plan significantly shifts the problem definition in line with the energy security master frame, presenting Russian aggression in Ukraine as the cause of energy insecurity. Consequently, the allocation of blame streamlines the suggested remedies to focus on one singular issue: diversifying away from Russian supply. Threat framing can lead to swift action, for example EU imports of Russian gas dropped from 40% in 2021 to approximately 8% in 2023 (European Council, 2024a). However, it could also obscure other causes for high dependency rates and which actors' responsibility it is to address it. As discussed in section 6.5., the focus on energy security in REPowerEU Plan significantly shifted the framing of RE. Whilst the clean energy transition was perceived as a core diversification strategy, the urgency of the energy crisis fostered the need to create new import relationships for fossil fuels. This resulted in contradicting policy outcomes where the environmental benefits of a faster transition could potentially be outweighed by carbon lock-in and stranded assets with new fossil fuel suppliers. Furthermore, increasing demand from the EU could potentially slow down the clean energy transition in production countries (Siddi, 2023: 107). This also has implications for the framing of the EU as a leader in the clean energy transition. Often framed as a leader in international climate change negotiations and mitigation efforts, little responsibility is allocated to the EU as demand center. In 2021, total EU consumption (emissions linked to the final demand of products, accounting for the emissions it creates in the country of origin, export and final consumption) amassed to 3.5 billion tons of CO_2 emissions, representing 9% of worldwide emissions. 1.1 billion tons of these emissions originate outside of the EU as a result of EU demand and imports (Eurostat, 2024). The framing of EU as a global leader in climate

change mitigation mainly highlight technological leadership, profitability of RE products and the potential of renewables stimulating green growth. It was not until the Green Deal, with the introduction of the Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism that the EU's carbon footprint outside of its borders was highlighted in policy (Szulecki, Overland & Smith, 2022). Thus, the antagonistic threat framing of Russia in the REPowerEU Plan has the potential of far-reaching consequences. The urgency in diversifying away from Russian supply has obscured the fundamental cause of high dependency rates; the intrinsic dependence on fossil fuels, and could potentially contribute to the slowdown of the clean transition in the EU as well as other nations. Compared to the structural threat framing of climate change, where the cause is framed as a global issue, the cause and allocation of blame become much more diffused. In line with the framing of the EU as a leader in global climate change mitigation, it highlights the responsibilities of other nations in addressing climate change and implementing the clean energy transition (Eriksson, 2020: 10; European Commission, 2019-12-11, p. 2).

Whilst problem definitions, perceived causes and moral judgments of RE have fluctuated over the past decade, the suggestions for remedies have remained predominantly within the competitiveness master frame. Though RE has been justified as a remedy in itself to all three policy objectives, the measures presented to promote RE deployment has often been market-based. As Member States retain their sovereignty over national energy mixes, there is a limit to what the EU can enforce in terms in terms of RE deployment. But as the EU increased it authority in other policy areas it indirectly effected national energy policy (Bocse, 2021: 36-37; Kanellakis, Martinopoulos & Zachariadis, 2013). Other than raising emission reduction and RE targets, EU action often centers around making RE competitive through market-based incentives such as the ETS, the RE Financing Mechanism and the implementation of support schemes (European Commission, 2024e; European Commission, 2024f). The invasion of Ukraine in 2022 increased the urgency to speed up the RE transition. Resultingly, the REPowerEU Plan presented new regulations for faster permitting of RE projects (European Council, 2022).

7.1.1 REPowerEU as a stepping-off point- thoughts of the future of renewable energy in EU energy policy

This study has established that the continued evolution in framing RE in EU energy policy, especially in relation to antagonistic threat frames, has the potential of rapidly shifting policy focus. As the antagonistic threat framing of Russia is currently dominating the energy policy discourse, it is probable that focus will remain on the master frame of energy security until the war in Ukraine comes to an end. As diversification strategies away from Russian supply have significantly lessened the EU dependency rate and energy prices have grown less volatile compared to the beginnings of the invasion, the EU is reinforcing its new import relationships, both for fossil fuels and the materials needed for the clean energy transition. The access and availability of critical raw materials needed for RE technologies is highlighted in more recent policy documents. Aiming to "broaden and deepen partnerships with reliable international suppliers, including neighbourhood countries, to ensure its long-term energy security and predictability of supply throughout the energy transition. This will help reduce external dependencies and costs while de-risking supply chains." (European Commission, 2024-02-6: 5). Critical raw materials are sourced and refined predominantly outside of the EU, and the EU rely heavily on Chinese supplies (European Council, 2024b; Le Mouel & Poitiers, 2023). The risk of new dependency relationships is layered; as access to critical raw materials is necessary for the clean energy transition, it is a necessity to break out of current fossil fuel dependency relationships. There is a possibility that the urgent need to diversify away from Russian supply could result in the creation of new dependency relationships impeding the EU clean energy transition and the possible transposition of the threat framing of Russia to the threat framing of China in EU energy policy.

Furthermore, in line with the findings of this study, threat framings in relation to RE in EU policy can be unpredictable as new emergencies often take over the policy discourse. With the ever-increasing consequences of climate change, it is also

possible that the current structural threat framing of climate change will turn increasingly antagonistic in terms of mounting urgency to address the mitigation and adaptation to global warming. Which in turn could affect the framing and faster deployment of RE sources. It could also affect the increasing use of low-carbon energy sources such as nuclear, biofuels or hydrogen to address hard-to-abate sectors.

8 Conclusion

The overarching aim of this study was to provide further insight into what implications framing can have in EU energy policy, specifically focusing on the evolving framing of RE over the timeframe 2014-2024. The EU was chosen as a case due to its unique governance structure in supranational energy policy, where the direction of policy is channeled through the diverging policy priorities of 27 Member States, effects of external events and the three overarching energy policy goals of the EU: competitiveness, energy security and sustainability. By approaching EU energy policy evolution through the theoretical framework of framing it promotes further understanding of the fundamental elements of the policy process- how communication of an issue constructs meaning and promotes action. Based in Entman's (1993) four functions of framing it provides a framework to assess how an issue is defined which in turn affects the diagnosis of causes, moral evaluation and the suggested remedies. The concept of threat framings is added to the analysis as to further the understanding of how discourses of urgency and threat can affect the framing of issues in EU energy policy. Utilizing the three policy goals as master frames in EU energy policy allows the analysis to assess how they have been prioritized over time, by examining the related four functions of framing. RE represented a specifically fascinating case as it has been motivated from the perspective of all three policy goals. The last decade has represented a significant time in EU energy policy through the increasing attention on climate change, the subsequent integration of energy and climate policy as well as considerable challenges such as the Crimean crisis in 2014, the COVID-19 pandemic and the 2022 invasion and ongoing war in Ukraine. This motivated the research question of this study: *How has the framing of renewable energy evolved in relation to the EU energy policy objectives of competitiveness, energy security and sustainability since 2014?*

The main findings of this study indicate that there has been a significant evolution in the framing of RE in relation to the three policy objectives. The promotion of RE

as a whole has been increasingly prioritized in policy over time, however the motivations and justifications utilized to stimulate deployment have fluctuated in line with the policy priorities of certain time periods. The competitiveness master frame has remained a salient motivation for RE, mostly evident in the market-based solutions presented to promote it throughout the timeframe. Earlier policy initiatives framed RE mainly as a cost-efficient measure which gradually evolved to the framing of RE as imperative to green growth. Contrary to the relative stability of the competitiveness master frame in relation to the suggestion of remedies; problem definitions, diagnosis of causes and moral evaluations has fluctuated in reaction to external events. Whilst the threat framing of climate change has contributed to the framing of RE as one of the primary tools to mitigate climate change, it has often been overshadowed by threat framings in relation to energy security. The 2014 Crimean crisis and the Invasion of Ukraine in 2022 contributed to the threat framing of Russia as the primary threat to EU energy security which led to the emergence of the framing of RE as a tool for energy independence. Lastly, this study has found that the framing of RE can shift rapidly in reaction to external events, mostly relevant to the energy security master frame. Antagonistic threat framing is particularly salient, as it has a streamlining effect on the problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation and suggested remedies by focusing attention on one specific issue. Whilst this can lead to swift action on a policy issue, it can also lead to the occlusion of other relevant risks to the future of the clean energy transition in the EU.

8.1 Avenues for future research

The Russian invasion of Ukraine and subsequent energy crisis has renewed scholarly interest in EU energy policy, primarily on the topic of energy security and the supply of fossil fuels. To further advance the study of framing in the context of EU energy policy there needs to be an expansion of cases and analyses at different

levels of the decision-making process. Although outside of the scope of this study, an investigation of strategic policy framing utilizing interviews with relevant EU stakeholders could provide further insights into the very beginnings of the framing process of RE. Additionally, a closer investigation of alternative energy sources would add to the understanding of framing in the context of EU energy policy. Approaching the current debate on nuclear energy from a framing perspective presents an interesting case. The recent urgency in diversifying away from Russian energy supply has reawakened the debate on the promotion of nuclear energy between EU Member States as it represents a domestic energy source free of emissions, but harbors a long-term debate from a safety and sustainability perspective following the Chernobyl and Fukushima accidents as well as the disposal of nuclear waste.

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Appendices

Appendix 1. Coding guidelines

Coding guidelines		
Coding label	Coding rules	Anchor examples
Master frame: Competitiveness		
Deductive codes:		
Market liberalization	Highlights energy market integration or cross border cooperation as a means of creating a profitable internal EU energy market.	” Competition on energy markets must also be enhanced through greater liberalization, completion of the internal energy market including the development of energy transport infrastructure including cross-border interconnectors that may be more efficient in ensuring security of supply than support for domestic generation capacity.” (European Commission, 2014-1-22, p. 12)
Affordability	Highlights cost reduction in energy prices to benefit households and/or industry	“Rising fossil fuel prices hit energy-poor or vulnerable household consumers particularly hard, who spend a high share of their total income on energy bills1, exacerbating the disparities and inequalities in the EU. Businesses, in particular energy intensive industries, as well as the agri-food sector face higher production costs.” (European Commission, 2022-3-8, p. 1)
Competitiveness of EU industry	Highlights the importance of stable energy prices to the competitiveness of EU Industry.	“The cost of energy impacts on our choice of energy mix, our household spending, and on Europe's competitiveness.” (European Commission, 2016-11-30, p. 10)
Inductive codes:		
Renewable energy as cost effective	Promotes renewable energy as cost-saving or cost-effective measure	“There is a significant cost-effective potential for renewable electricity and renewable heating to further reduce natural gas use in a number of sectors by the end of this decade.” (European Commission, 2014-05-28, p. 12)
Renewable energy stimulating green growth	Promotes renewable energy for its potential to stimulate green growth (decoupling	“The green transformation of Europe’s energy system will strengthen economic growth, reinforce its industrial leadership, and put Europe on a path

	economic growth from emissions)	towards climate neutrality by 2050." (European Commission, 2022-05-18, p. 20)
Renewable energy as a profitable industry	Promotes renewable energy industry as profitable for EU businesses	"Electrification will open up new horizons for European companies in the global clean energy market worth today ca. € 1.3 trillion. Several sources of renewable energy are still to be harnessed, notably ocean energy. For the EU, which currently hosts 6 of the 25 largest renewable energy businesses and employs almost 1.5 million people (out of 10 million worldwide), this will be a unique business opportunity." (European Commission, 2018-11-28, p. 9)
Master frame: Energy security		
Deductive codes:		
Supply diversification	Highlights diversification of energy supplies (fossil or renewable) as a means of securing energy supply. Referring to both domestic and international supply diversification.	"Diversification of energy sources, suppliers and routes is crucial for ensuring secure and resilient supplies to European citizens and companies." (European Commission, 2015-11-18, p. 11)
Risk preparedness	Highlights the importance of resilience to external shocks to the EU energy system. Referring to safety of physical infrastructure, emergency stocks/storage and price volatility.	"In a context of interlinked electricity markets and systems, electricity crisis prevention and management cannot be considered to be a purely national task. The potential of more efficient and less costly measures through regional cooperation should be better exploited. A common framework of rules and better coordinated procedures are needed in order to ensure that Member States and other actors are able to cooperate effectively across borders, in a spirit of increased transparency, trust and solidarity between Member States." (European Commission, 2019-06-05 (3))
Energy access	Highlights the importance of energy access, in terms of adequate and reliable supply for both citizens and industry.	"While the difference across options in costs for households is limited (notably thanks to higher energy efficiency in Option 3 that limits energy purchases), the post-2030 policy framework should include adequate policy measures to ensure affordable energy prices and access to decarbonised solutions." (European Commission, 2024-2-6, p. 8)
Inductive codes:		
Renewable energy as a tool to promote energy independence	Promotes renewable energy as a means to ensure	"Accelerating the green transition will reduce emissions, reduce dependency on imported fossil

	security of supply and geopolitical security.	fuels, and protect against price hikes." (European Commission, 2022-3-8, p. 1)
Renewable energy creating new dependencies (critical raw materials)	Highlights the risks of new dependency relationships regarding critical raw materials in the clean energy transition.	"Access to resources is also a strategic security question for Europe's ambition to deliver the Green Deal. Ensuring the supply of sustainable raw materials, in particular of critical raw materials necessary for clean technologies, digital, space and defence applications, by diversifying supply from both primary and secondary sources, is therefore one of the pre-requisites to make this transition happen." (European Commission, 2019-12-11, p. 8)
EU energy policy integration	Promotes EU internal market as a solution to external insecurities. Highlights the importance of solidarity and trust between the Member States.	"This is the time to implement many long pending projects, with a particular focus on cross-border connections to build an integrated energy market that secures supply in a spirit of solidarity." (European Commission, 2022-05-18, p. 12)
Master frame: Sustainability		
Deductive codes:		
Renewable energy deployment	Highlights the deployment of renewable and low-carbon sources in the EU. This refers to electrification, fully renewable sources such as solar, wind and water energy sources, sustainable transport fuels, hydrogen and bioenergy.	"Renewable Energy Sources (RES) contribute to climate change mitigation through the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions, achieve sustainable development, protect the environment and improve citizens' health. Moreover, renewable energy is also emerging as a driver of inclusive economic growth, creating jobs and reinforcing energy security across Europe." (European Commission, 2017-02-23, p. 2)
Decreasing demand	Highlights the importance of energy efficiency in decreasing demand.	"Reducing energy consumption through higher efficiency is a vital component of the clean energy transition which increases the resilience of the EU economy and shields its competitiveness against high fossil fuel prices." (European Commission, 2022-05-18, p. 3)
EU as leader in global climate change efforts	Highlights the EU as a leader in international climate change efforts, promoting ambitious mitigation targets in international climate negotiations as well as providing support t other nations.	"The European Union (EU) has long been worldwide leader in the promotion and development of renewable energy, steering the effort to combat climate change, encourage the shift to a low-carbon economy and stimulate high-potential economic growth." (European Commission, 2017-02-23, p. 2)
Inductive codes:		

Renewable energy as a tool to mitigate climate change	Promotes renewable energy as the primary tool to mitigate climate change by lowering emissions.	"Renewable energy is, currently, the only decarbonisation option in the power sector deployed at a rate that is close to what is required under long-term International Energy Agency (IEA) scenarios to limit global temperature rise to 2◦C above pre-industrial levels" (2017-02-23, p. 9)
Climate change as a security threat	Highlights climate change as a security threat as well as specifically refers to the energy security risks associated with climate change.	"Climate change is a serious concern for Europeans. The current changes in our planet's climate are redrawing the world and magnifying the risks for instability in all forms. The last two decades included 18 of the warmest years on record. The trend is clear. Immediate and decisive climate action is essential." (European Commission, 2018-11-28, p. 2)
Benefits of mitigating air, land, water pollution	Promotes renewable energy as tool to mitigate and preserve natural environments as well as associated health benefits.	"Although the transition to more sustainable systems has started, feeding a fast-growing world population remains a challenge with current production patterns. Food production still results in air, water and soil pollution, contributes to the loss of biodiversity and climate change, and consumes excessive amounts of natural resources, while an important part of food is wasted. At the same time, low quality diets contribute to obesity and diseases such as cancer." (European Commission, 2019-12-11, p. 11)

Appendix 2. Empirical material

Title of document	Publication date	Available at
2030 Package & EU Energy Security Strategy		
COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND THE COUNCIL European Energy Security Strategy	2014-05-28	https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52014DC0330
COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, THE COUNCIL, THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMITTEE AND THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS A policy framework for climate and energy in the period from 2020 to 2030	2014-01-22	https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52014DC0015
Energy Union		
ENERGY UNION PACKAGE COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, THE COUNCIL, THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMITTEE, THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS AND THE EUROPEAN INVESTMENT BANK A Framework Strategy for a Resilient Energy Union with a Forward-Looking Climate Change Policy	2015-02-25	https://eur-lex.europa.eu/resource.html?uri=cellar:1bd46c90-bdd4-11e4-bbe1-01aa75ed71a1.0001.03/DOC_1&format=PDF
COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION State of the Energy Union 2015	2015-11-18	http://web.archive.org/web/20210512080454/https:/eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?qid=1449767367230&uri=CELEX%3A52015DC0572
Clean Energy for all Europeans Package		

COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, THE COUNCIL, THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMITTEE, THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS AND THE EUROPEAN INVESTMENT BANK Clean Energy For All Europeans	2016-11-30	https://eur-lex.europa.eu/resource.html?uri=cellar:fa6ea15b-b7b0-11e6-9e3c-01aa75ed71a1.0001.02/DOC_1&format=PDF
DIRECTIVE (EU) 2019/944 OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL of 5 June 2019 on common rules for the internal market for electricity and amending Directive 2012/27/EU	5/6/2019 (a)	https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32019L0944
REGULATION (EU) 2019/943 OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL of 5 June 2019 on the internal market for electricity	2019-06-5b	https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32019R0943
REGULATION (EU) 2019/941 OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL of 5 June 2019 on risk-preparedness in the electricity sector and repealing Directive 2005/89/EC	2019-06-5c	https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32019R0941
DIRECTIVE (EU) 2018/2001 OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL of 11 December 2018 on the promotion of the use of energy from renewable sources	2018-12-11a	https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32018L2001
DIRECTIVE (EU) 2023/2413 OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL of 18 October 2023 amending Directive (EU) 2018/2001, Regulation (EU) 2018/1999 and Directive 98/70/EC as regards the promotion of energy from renewable sources, and repealing Council Directive (EU) 2015/652	2023-10-18	https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=OJ:L_202302413
DIRECTIVE (EU) 2018/2002 OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL of 11 December 2018 amending Directive 2012/27/EU on energy efficiency	2018-12-11b	https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32018L2002
DIRECTIVE (EU) 2023/1791 OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL of 13 September 2023 on energy efficiency and amending Regulation (EU) 2023/955 (recast)	2023-09-13	https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32023L1791

DIRECTIVE (EU) 2018/844 OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL of 30 May 2018 amending Directive 2010/31/EU on the energy performance of buildings and Directive 2012/27/EU on energy efficiency	2018-05-30	https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32018L0844
REGULATION (EU) 2018/1999 OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL of 11 December 2018 on the Governance of the Energy Union and Climate Action	2018- 12-11c	https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32018R1999
REGULATION (EU) 2017/1938 OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL of 25 October 2017 concerning measures to safeguard the security of gas supply and repealing Regulation (EU) No 994/2010	2017-10-25	https://eur-lexDirecthe.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32017R1938
COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, THE COUNCIL, THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMITTEE, THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS AND THE EUROPEAN INVESTMENT BANK Second Report on the State of the Energy Union	2017-02-1	https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/HTML/?uri=CELEX:52017DC0053&from=GA
COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, THE COUNCIL, THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMITTEE, THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS AND THE EUROPEAN INVESTMENT BANK Third Report on the State of the Energy Union	2017-11-23	https://commission.europa.eu/document/download/9115e7de-a85d-47d2-9b0f-5ddfba36921b_en?filename=third-report-state-energy-union_en.pdf
European Green Deal		
COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, THE EUROPEAN COUNCIL, THE COUNCIL, THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMITTEE, THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS AND THE EUROPEAN INVESTMENT BANK A Clean Planet for all A European strategic long-term vision for a prosperous, modern, competitive and climate neutral economy	2018-11-28	https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52018DC0773&from=EN
COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, THE EUROPEAN COUNCIL, THE COUNCIL, THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND	2019-12-11	https://eur-lex.europa.eu/resource.html?uri=cellar:b828d165-1c22-11ea-8c1f-

SOCIAL COMMITTEE AND THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS The European Green Deal		01aa75ed71a1.0002.02/DOC_1&format=PDF
COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, THE COUNCIL, THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMITTEE AND THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS Stepping up Europe's 2030 climate ambition- Investing in a climate-neutral future for the benefit of our people	2020-09-17	https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52020DC0562
COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, THE COUNCIL, THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMITTEE AND THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS 'Fit for 55': delivering the EU's 2030 Climate Target on the way to climate neutrality	2021-07-14	https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52021DC0550
COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, THE EUROPEAN COUNCIL, THE COUNCIL, THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMITTEE AND THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS Tackling rising energy prices: a toolbox for action and support	2021-10-13	https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=COM%3A2021%3A660%3AFIN
REPORT FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, THE COUNCIL, THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMITTEE, THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS AND THE EUROPEAN INVESTMENT BANK Fourth report on the State of the Energy Union	2019-04-9	https://commission.europa.eu/document/download/141e2bd6-9d48-4dc4-bb63-917f000e6fe5_en?filename=fourth-report-state-of-energy-union-april2019_en.pdf
REPORT FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, THE COUNCIL, THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMITTEE AND THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS 2020 report on the State of the Energy Union pursuant to Regulation (EU) 2018/1999 on Governance of the Energy Union and Climate Action	2020-10-14	https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?qid=1602743359876&uri=COM:2020:950:FIN
REPowerEU Plan		

COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, THE EUROPEAN COUNCIL, THE COUNCIL, THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMITTEE AND THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS REPowerEU: Joint European Action for more affordable, secure and sustainable energy	2022-03-8	https://eur-lex.europa.eu/resource.html?uri=cellar:71767319-9f0a-11ec-83e1-01aa75ed71a1.0001.02/DOC_1&format=PDF
COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, THE EUROPEAN COUNCIL, THE COUNCIL, THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMITTEE AND THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS REPowerEU Plan	2022-05-18b	https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=COM%3A2022%3A230%3AFIN&qid=1653033742483
JOINT COMMUNICATION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, THE COUNCIL, THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMITTEE AND THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS EU external energy engagement in a changing world	2022-05-18a	https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52022JC0023
COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, THE COUNCIL, THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMITTEE AND THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS EU Solar Energy Strategy	2022-05-18c	https://eur-lex.europa.eu/resource.html?uri=cellar:516a902d-d7a0-11ec-a95f-01aa75ed71a1.0001.02/DOC_1&format=PDF
COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, THE COUNCIL, THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMITTEE AND THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS Securing our future- Europe's 2040 climate target and path to climate neutrality by 2050 building a sustainable, just and prosperous society	2024-02-6	https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=COM%3A2024%3A63%3AFIN
REPORT FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, THE COUNCIL, THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMITTEE AND THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS State of the Energy Union 2021 – Contributing to the European Green Deal and the Union's	2021-10-26	https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:52021DC0950

recovery (pursuant to Regulation (EU) 2018/1999 on the Governance of the Energy Union and Climate Action)		
REPORT FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, THE COUNCIL, THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMITTEE AND THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS State of the Energy Union 2022 (pursuant to Regulation (EU) 2018/1999 of the Governance of the Energy Union and Climate Action)	2022-10-18	https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A52022DC0547&qid=1666595113558
REPORT FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, THE COUNCIL, THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMITTEE AND THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS State of the Energy Union Report 2023 (pursuant to Regulation (EU) 2018/1999 on the Governance of the Energy Union and Climate Action)	2023-10-24	https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=COM%3A2023%3A650%3AFIN&qid=1698237100377