

Exploring Germany's Foreign Policy on Russian Gas Imports in the
Context of the War in Ukraine: A Comparative Analysis in the lenses
of Realism, Liberalism, and Constructivism.

By

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Submitted to

Central European University

Department of International Relations

In partial fulfillment of the requirements of the degree of Master of Arts

International Relations (1 year)

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Vienna, Austria

2024

Abstract

The aim of this thesis is to dive into the complex interplay of German foreign policy specifically regarding Russian gas imports following the beginning of the war in Ukraine. This thesis will use three prominent International Relations theoretical frameworks—Realism, Liberalism, and Constructivism—to construct a better understanding of Germany’s stance on this extremely impactful geopolitical issue. This will be done by conducting a comparative analysis, which aims to shed light on how each theory can explain the motivations, decision-making processes, and outcomes of the policies that Germany has adopted regarding Russian gas imports amidst the ongoing war in Ukraine. This thesis will synthesize the important aspects of the three international relations perspectives, to further create a better understanding of the interplay of state interests, international norms, and idealization in the shaping of what we now call contemporary foreign policy.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank everyone involved in helping me with the completion of this thesis. Moreover, I would like to thank Professor Michael Merlingen for having given me the time needed to complete this thesis as well as his support and patience.

I would also like to thank my parents for having given me the opportunity to do my studies in Vienna.

Finally, I would like to thank Lara and David for being there for me and supporting me in completing this milestone.

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Introduction

Germany has had an incredibly complicated and strategic relationship with Russia in regard to their gas import needs after the war in Ukraine was started in fact, the geopolitical risks to the energy and climate security of Germany had markedly increased after Russia's annexation of Crimea in 2014¹, this in turn caused Germany to have a complete (Zeitenwende) for Germany's conduct of foreign affairs². Germany's foreign policy towards Russian gas imports, in particular, has been reviewed significantly by the scholarly community, specifically the policy interests of Germany in the light of the ongoing war in Ukraine³. The War in Ukraine, additionally referred to by some scholars as a crisis⁴, arguably began with the annexation of Crimea in 2014⁵, as Russia made major military moves into the Eastern area of Ukraine. This strategic move from Russia can be studied, to explain the consequences of war in the 21st century. This war has underscored the hidden complexities of energy geopolitics in Europe and its multifaceted roots. Germany is one of the leading actors in the European Union (EU)⁶, and with the actions that have been taken by Russia in its invasion of regions within Ukraine⁷, it

¹ Martin Vladimirov, Ruslan Stefanov, and Marius Köppen, "Study: Phasing out Russian Economic Influence in Germany," September 2023, <https://www.freiheit.org/strategic-decoupling-phasing-out-russian-economic-influence-germany>.

² Bernhard Blumenau, "Breaking with Convention? Zeitenwende and the Traditional Pillars of German Foreign Policy," *International Affairs* 98, no. 6 (November 2, 2022): 1895–1913, <https://doi.org/10.1093/ia/iia166>.

³ Isabel Muttreja and Bernhard Blumenau, "How Russia's Invasion Changed German Foreign Policy | Chatham House – International Affairs Think Tank," November 18, 2022, <https://www.chathamhouse.org/2022/11/how-russias-invasion-changed-german-foreign-policy>.

⁴ Caroline Kuzemko et al., "Russia's War on Ukraine, European Energy Policy Responses & Implications for Sustainable Transformations," *Energy Research & Social Science* 93 (November 1, 2022): 102842, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.erss.2022.102842>.

⁵ Ogbonna Onyebuchi Okemini, "RUSSIA-UKRAINE CONFLICT AND THE HUMANITARIAN CRISIS IN EUROPE, 2014-2022," *SOUTH EAST POLITICAL SCIENCE REVIEW* 8, no. 1 (May 6, 2024): 248, <https://journals.npsa-se.org.ng/index.php/SEPSR/article/view/150>.

⁶ Eurostat, "Natural Gas Supply Statistics," accessed June 20, 2024, https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Natural_gas_supply_statistics.

⁷ "Russia Invades Ukraine," *The Economist*, February 24, 2022, https://www.economist.com/europe/2022/02/24/russia-invades-ukraine?utm_medium=cpc.adword.pd&utm_source=google&ppccampaignID=18151738051&ppcadID=&utm_campaign=a.22brand_pmax&utm_content=conversion.direct-response.anonymous&gad_source=1&gclid=CjwKCAjwhIS0BhBqEiwADAUhczLLcleVPIWjRx4XEIT3psATQaKZWxiCUolxusFSdW4zZBnWn6qQShoCvugQAvD_BwE&gclsrc=aw.ds.

finds itself in an incredibly complex situation, where it has to reevaluate its strategic, economic, and normative choices in regard to Russia and their actions in eastern Ukraine. This interplay can be studied by looking at the various decision-making processes⁸ within Germany and their importance in the future stability of the country.

This thesis will investigate how the different theoretical frameworks of Realism, Liberalism, and Constructivism can be used to explain Germany's foreign policy on Russian gas imports during the war in Ukraine. The research question at hand is: How do Realism, Liberalism, and Constructivism help explain the development of Germany's foreign policy on Russian gas imports in the context of the war in Ukraine? This research question will be answered by the use of a comparative analysis of these theoretical frameworks, with the aim of uncovering the motivations, decision-making processes, and outcomes that have shaped Germany's current stance.

It is important to create a nuanced perspective and understanding of all the different factors that drive a country in times of war and uncertainty. When it comes to decision-making and policy changes or adjustments it is extremely important and very relevant to delve into the different changes that occur or are discussed. With this being said, Germany's approach to Russian gas imports should definitely be studied as it can help create a better understanding of the policy-making strategies and help shed a light on the stakeholders involved in European energy security and geopolitics. By using different International Relations (IR) lenses, we can create a nuanced view of the interplay between power politics, ideational factors, and economic interests that shape contemporary foreign policy dynamics. Furthermore, with the findings of this thesis, new forms of debates in the world of energy diversification or even new forms of discourse can be developed to further amplify our knowledge on such cases.

⁸ Simone Burkhart and Matthias Lehnert, "Between Consensus and Conflict: Law-Making Processes in Germany," *German Politics* 17, no. 3 (September 2008): 223–31, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09644000802300023>.

The thesis will be structured as follows: Chapter 1 will provide the three theoretical frameworks of Realism, Liberalism, and Constructivism, and their perspective of Germany's foreign policy, which will be followed by a comparative analysis of the theoretical frameworks while focusing on the development of Germany's foreign policy on Russian gas imports in the context of the war in Ukraine. Chapter 2 will focus on a historical overview of the relationship between Germany and Russia regarding gas imports, looking at the evolution of their energy-focused relationship in the context of the war in Ukraine. Chapter 3 will dive into the Realist, Liberalist, and Constructivist perspectives, and will look at how each of the theories conceptualizes what drives Germany's foreign policy choices in regard to Russia. Chapter 4 will focus on a case study of the two Nord Stream pipeline projects, which will help visualize the complex and long-held relations between Germany and Russia regarding energy cooperation. The following Chapter 5 will form a synthesis of the findings in the prior chapters and analyze the implications of the findings in theory and practice. Lastly, there will be the conclusion where a summary of the key findings of this thesis will be outlined, and the possibilities of further research on the topic.

1. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS

1.1 Realism

Realism is a well-known theoretical approach in the world of international relations, it emphasizes the importance of power politics and the pursuit of national interests which in turn shapes state behavior⁹. Realism assumes that all states are rational actors, which are driven by the pursuit of their own survival within the ever-so-competitive anarchic international system that they are part of¹⁰. The key principles of Realism include the concept of the state as the primary unit of analysis, conflict as an inherent feature of interstate relations, and the importance of relative power capabilities¹¹.

With this being said, in the context of Germany, the foreign policies on Russian gas imports in a Realist lens would argue that the energy security considerations and geopolitical calculations are extremely crucial and highly significant in ensuring its survival in the international system¹². Therefore, Germany's position and reliance on Russian gas from a Realist perspective, is a strategic move to ensure its energy security is stable by having a stable source of energy with the supply Russia has to offer¹³. This in turn ensures Germany has access to critical resources. Scholars who take on a realist perspective, argue that Germany's approach in regard to energy diplomacy focuses on broadening their strategies of balancing power interests to then in turn, maximize their own strategic autonomy in European affairs¹⁴.

⁹ John J. Mearsheimer, "Reckless States and Realism," *International Relations* 23, no. 2 (June 2009): 245, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0047117809104637>.

¹⁰ Jack Donnelly, *Realism and International Relations*, Themes in International Relations (Cambridge [England] ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 7.

¹¹ John A. Vasquez, *The Power of Power Politics: From Classical Realism to Neotraditionalism*, 1st ed. (Cambridge University Press, 1999), 24, <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511491733>.

¹² Kenneth N Waltz, "Structural Realism after the Cold War," *The MIT Press* 25, no. 1 (2000): 38.

¹³ Stylianos A. Sotiriou, *Russian Energy Strategy in the European Union, the Former Soviet Union Region, and China* (Lexington Books, 2014), 136.

¹⁴ Kirsten Westphal, "German–Russian Gas Relations in Face Of the Energy Transition," *Russian Journal of Economics* 6, no. 4 (December 14, 2020): 411, <https://doi.org/10.32609/j.ruje.6.55478>.

1.2 Liberalism

Liberalism in international relations theory puts its focus on the role of economic interdependence, normative frameworks, and institutional cooperation in shaping state behavior¹⁵. In comparison to Realism, mentioned previously, which puts emphasis on power dynamics and security means, Liberalism focuses on the likelihood and potential for cooperation and mutual gains with the tools of diplomacy and multilateralism¹⁶. Liberalists believe that peace can be fostered with efficient market mechanisms and democratic governance. With these central beliefs, there can be prosperity and stability in the international arena. A liberal take on Germany's foreign policy on Russian gas imports would underscore the importance of economic interdependence and its normative considerations. In this case, Germany's engagement with Russia in the energy sphere would a liberal lens arguably be driven by economic rationale and the pursuit of mutual gain for both countries through trade and investment, in several different areas not only the gas exchange¹⁷. Therefore, in this perspective, the German policymakers should view energy cooperation with Russia, not only as a reliable and secure supply but as an opportunity for them to, in result, not only prompt some economic growth which will enhance their competitiveness in the international sphere but also foster better regional integration within the European Union.

Looking through the Liberal lens, the role of international institutions, such as the European Union and the World Trade Organization are extremely valued as they reinforce the underlying conditions for example for cooperation by providing perhaps information necessary for bilateral bargains¹⁸, and by doing so they help in shaping the scope of energy trade and

¹⁵ Andrew Moravcsik, "Taking Preferences Seriously: A Liberal Theory of International Politics," *International Organization* 51, no. 4 (1997): 513–53, <https://doi.org/10.1162/002081897550447>.

¹⁶ Moravcsik.

¹⁷ Vladimirov, Stefanov, and Köppen, "Study."

¹⁸ Barbara Koremenos, Charles Lipson, and Duncan Snidal, "The Rational Design of International Institutions," *International Organization* 55, no. 4 (2001): 766, <https://doi.org/10.1162/002081801317193592.th>

investment for the countries. Germany's cooperation and success in keeping in line with EU regulations and its constant support and drive for multilateral initiatives¹⁹ aiming to enhance energy security in Europe can be interpreted as a commitment to the liberal norms and values. Germany seeks to mitigate risks of possible geopolitical conflict, by incorporating energy cooperation within the outskirts of the European integration and rule-based governance framework²⁰, by doing so it would, in turn, promote a more stable and prosperous environment for cooperation and mutual gains.

1.3 Constructivism

Constructivism takes on a perspective in which it views that in international relations there is an emphasis on the role of ideational factors, social norms, and identity formation²¹, which takes on the role of shaping state behavior. To distinguish it from Realism and Liberalism, which focus mostly on material interests and institutional structures of a country, Constructivism rather focuses on what sets of ideas or discourse, shape the beliefs, preferences, and actions of the actors in the international system²². A central point to constructivism is the notion that identities are in fact, socially constructed through processes of interaction and interpretation, which then naturally evolve over time in response to the constantly changing circumstances and experiences.

¹⁹ Auswärtiges Amt, "Germany as Depositary of Multilateral Treaties," German Federal Foreign Office, accessed May 26, 2024, <https://www.auswaertiges-amt.de/en/aussenpolitik/themen/-/231370>.

²⁰ Commission European, "New Economic Governance Framework - European Commission," April 26, 2023, https://economy-finance.ec.europa.eu/economic-and-fiscal-governance/new-economic-governance-framework_en.

²¹ Ted Hopf, "The Promise of Constructivism in International Relations Theory," *International Security* 23, no. 1 (July 1, 1998): 175, <https://doi.org/10.1162/isec.23.1.171>.

²² Sarina Theys, "Introducing Constructivism in International Relations Theory," *E-International Relations* (blog), February 23, 2018, <https://www.e-ir.info/2018/02/23/introducing-constructivism-in-international-relations-theory/>.

In the context of Germany's foreign policy on its imports of Russian gas, through a constructivist lens, one could highlight the role that identity formation and normative contestation have in shaping a state's preferences towards its policy choices with Russia. If we take on a constructivist perspective, it could be argued that Germany's approach to energy diplomacy is trying to portray its self-image as an actor committed to the promotion of peace, stability, and human rights in its international affairs. Continuing on this path, German policymakers may strategically prioritize environmentally sustainable initiatives, human rights, and democratic governance when looking at their affairs with Russia and energy cooperation due to their citizens increased interest in these subject matters²³. Furthermore, with a constructivist lens, we can see the importance of public opinion in the shaping of foreign policy debates²⁴. Due to the fact that Germany engages with civil society actors, environmental groups, and different human rights advocates, it shows their incredible responsiveness to the societal norms and needs that exceed state interests²⁵. Germany hence seeks to create a transparent environment where it can prove the reasoning of its foreign policy choices and therefore, prove its accountability and legitimacy in its dealings with Russia and other international partners.

²³ Julian Wettengel, "Polls Reveal Citizen Support for Climate Action and Energy Transition," Clean Energy Wire, May 23, 2024, <https://www.cleanenergywire.org/factsheets/polls-reveal-citizens-support-energie-wende>.

²⁴ World Nuclear News, "Wide Public Support for Keeping German Reactors Online, Say Polls : Nuclear Policies - World Nuclear News," July 8, 2022, <https://www.world-nuclear-news.org/Articles/Wide-public-support-for-keeping-German-reactors-on>.

²⁵ Rebecca Staudenmaier, "Ukraine War Sparks Major Shift in Germany's Energy Opinions – DW – 04/07/2022," dw.com, April 7, 2022, <https://www.dw.com/en/ukraine-war-sparks-major-shift-in-germanys-energy-opinions/a-61401277>.

1.4 Comparative Analysis of Theoretical Frameworks

This chapter will delve into a comparative analysis of Realism, Liberalism, and Constructivism in explaining Germany's foreign policy on Russian gas imports, while still keeping into consideration their respective insights, strengths, and limitations.

If we start with Realism, we can see that it provides valuable insights into the importance of power politics and security needs in shaping state behavior²⁶. Furthermore, Realism highlights the importance of strategic calculations and relative power dynamics in energy diplomacy, and hence Germany's chosen approach and strategies in dealing with the changes. However, Realism's shortcomings, in the topic of Germany and Russia's relations, include overlooking the significance of economic interdependence, normative considerations, and ideational factors in the shaping of foreign policy choices regarding Russia.

On the other hand, using Liberalism to understand Germany's stance, can help create a deeper understanding of the framework and role that economic interdependence, institutional cooperation, and normative frameworks have in shaping state behavior. With emphasis on the potential for cooperation and mutual gains of countries, through trade and diplomacy²⁷, a liberalist lens can be used to see why Germany has had such previous engagement with Russia concerning its energy needs. With this being said, Liberalism does overlook the importance that power politics play in policy choices. In addition to this, there are other factors on which liberalism falls short, those being, the security concerns of countries and the different identity formations that shape state preferences and their choices.

Lastly, we have Constructivism, which offers a completely nuanced perspective on the role of ideational factors, social norms, and identity formation in shaping state behavior.

²⁶ W. Julian Korab-Karpowicz, "Political Realism in International Relations (Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy)," Winter 2023, <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/realism-intl-relations/#HansMorgRealPrin>.

²⁷ Jeffrey W. Meiser, "Introducing Liberalism in International Relations Theory," *E-International Relations* (blog), February 18, 2018, <https://www.e-ir.info/2018/02/18/introducing-liberalism-in-international-relations-theory/>.

Constructivism focuses on highlighting the importance of discursive contestation, identity formation, and normative considerations, and offers an understanding of the state's willingness to concentrate on those topics²⁸. This way, constructivism can shed light on the complexities of Germany's foreign policy on Russian gas imports. Nevertheless, constructivism can be criticized, for example, for overlooking the different power asymmetries that may limit the state's capability to act in the international system.

Finally, by comparing the three theoretical IR perspectives, and in doing so constructing a better understanding of the nuts and bolts of how foreign policy can be structured and its limitations and advantages in doing so, it is evident that Germany's foreign policy on Russian gas imports is shaped by a complex and constantly changing interplay between material interests, ideational factors, and institutional dynamics²⁹. As described earlier we can visualize the different aspects of each theory and how it is relevant to Germany's decision-making processes. Realism emphasizes the importance of power politics and security needs. Liberalism values the potential for cooperation and mutual gains through economic interdependence and cooperation between institutions. Constructivism highlights the role of identity formation in the international sphere and normative contestation and discursive dynamics in the forming of state preferences and policy choices.

²⁸ Martin Griffiths, ed., *International Relations Theory for the Twenty-First Century*, 0 ed. (Routledge, 2007), 63, <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203939031>.

²⁹ Ahmed Jasmine, "THE THEORETICAL SIGNIFICANCE OF FOREIGN POLICY IN INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS- AN ANALYSES," *Journal of Critical Reviews* 7, no. 02 (January 1, 2020): 789, <https://doi.org/10.31838/jcr.07.02.144>.

2. GERMANY'S FOREIGN POLICY ON RUSSIAN GAS IMPORTS: A HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

2.1 Evolution of German-Russian Energy Relations

Germany and Russia's economic ties can be seen dating back as far as the year 1991 with the fall of the USSR³⁰ with the change of the political and economic system. With this being said, if we look at the energy sector, we can see that in fact, the relations between Germany and Russia date as far back as the Cold War era, when West Germany at the time, relied on Soviet natural gas to sustain its energy needs³¹. After the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991³², Germany continued to increase its energy cooperation with Russia, by constructing major gas pipelines, such as the Yamal-Europe Pipeline³³ and the Nord Stream Pipelines³⁴. With the War in Ukraine, Germany's reliance on Russian Gas imports was brought to the attention, as the Russian aggression toward Ukraine disrupted the traditional transit routes for Russian gas supplies to Europe. As the tensions between Russia and Ukraine grew, Germany looked for other routes to diversify its energy sources stemming from Russia as Germany relied starkly on gas imports with almost two-thirds of Germany's natural gas coming from Russia in 2020³⁵. By creating the Nord Stream 2 pipeline, Germany ensured that the pipeline would not transit through countries that were vulnerable to geopolitical instability instead flowing directly

³⁰ Hans-Hermann Höhmann, Christian Meier, and Heinz Timmermann, *Russia and Germany in Europe: Recent Trends of Political and Economic Relations*, vol. 38–1997, Berichte / BIOst (Köln: Bundesinstitut für ostwissenschaftliche und internationale Studien, 1997).

³¹ Halit Hamzaoglu, "Post-Cold War Russian-German Relations: The New Balance of Powers in Europe?," *The Journal of Social Science* 6, no. 12 (September 25, 2022): 227, <https://doi.org/10.30520/tjsosci.1138650>.

³² Roger Keeran and Thomas Kenny, *Socialism Betrayed: Behind the Collapse of the Soviet Union* (iUniverse, 2010), 461.

³³ "Yamal – Europe Gas Pipeline - Hydrocarbons Technology," accessed March 30, 2024, <https://www.hydrocarbons-technology.com/projects/yamal-europegaspipel/>.

³⁴ "Nord Stream's Twin Russia-Europe Pipelines Begin Operation," October 7, 2013, <https://www.hydrocarbons-technology.com/uncategorised/news-nord-streams-twin-russia-europe-pipelines-begin-operation/>.

³⁵ Eurostat, "Natural Gas Supply Statistics."

from Russia to Germany by way of the Baltic Sea³⁶. Nord Stream 2 further amplified the cooperation between Germany and Russia yet also created the opportunity for Russia to have more control over natural gas exports to Germany. The new pipeline ensured that it would bypass Ukraine and directly connect Russian gas fields to the European market. Although the ideas behind the pipeline were successfully viewed, the Nord Stream 2 pipeline was completed in September 2021 but never commissioned due to the Russia-Ukraine conflict³⁷. Nevertheless, the prior controversies, from actors such as Ukraine, as the Nord Stream 2 pipeline would work against them, Germany went forth in creating it only to then later close the connection before it ever went into use after completion.

2.2 Impact of the War on Ukraine on Gas Trade Dynamics

The War on Ukraine had an incredible impact on the dynamics of gas trade in Europe. This war resulted in a complete reassessment of Germany's energy security strategy; this came to the forefront of Germany's priorities due to the geopolitical uncertainties that came with it. From the annexation of Crimea by Russia and the continuous attacks and war on Ukraine, a constant rise of concern about the reliability of transit routes for Russian gas suppliers came. Germany had to adapt and explore alternative supply options and infrastructure projects to enhance its energy resilience.

Furthermore, the war in Ukraine amplified the existing tensions between Russia and the European Union. This in turn complicated efforts to create common energy policies. Germany found itself in an extremely tight situation where it found itself caught between

³⁶ Mark Temnycky, "The Security Implications of Nord Stream 2 for Ukraine, Poland, and Germany | Wilson Center," March 17, 2021, <https://www.wilsoncenter.org/blog-post/security-implications-nord-stream-2-ukraine-poland-and-germany>.

³⁷ Projects, "Nord Stream 2 Pipeline from Russia to Europe through the Baltic," *Offshore Technology* (blog), March 8, 2024, <https://www.offshore-technology.com/projects/nord-stream-2-pipeline/>.

competing imperatives of economic cooperation with Russia and on the other hand its solidarity with its European partners³⁸. This clash of necessities led Germany into debates and disagreements within the EU over the appropriate response to Russian aggression in Ukraine³⁹. In addition to these tensions between Germany and the EU partners, there have been large protests and an increase in public dissatisfaction with Germany's continuous partnership with Russia⁴⁰.

2.3 Key Actors and Decision-Making Processes

To better understand the different aspects of energy diplomacy between Germany and Russia amidst the war in Ukraine, we must take into account that Germany has relied on different institutional mechanisms and stakeholder engagements to shape their foreign policy choices. The key actors that are involved in the decision-making processes in Germany are government agencies, regulatory bodies, energy companies, civil society organizations, and several international institutions⁴¹. From all these organizations, the German government plays the central role when it comes to formulating energy policy objectives, when negotiating with its Russian counterparts, and making sure to represent its national interests and additionally in the multilateral forums. The energy companies, such as Gazprom and RWE⁴², possess significant influence on Germany's approach to Russian gas imports, as they have interests in maintaining stable energy trade to ensure the long-term supply they need. Several civil society

³⁸ Euronews, "As Nord Stream 2 Is Completed, Ukraine Pledges to Continue Its Fight," euronews, September 10, 2021, <https://www.euronews.com/2021/09/10/nord-stream-2-construction-completed-but-ukraine-pledges-to-continue-fight>.

³⁹ Anders Åslund, "What Will the Impact Be If Nord Stream 2 Is Completed?," *Atlantic Council* (blog), April 27, 2021, <https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/in-depth-research-reports/issue-brief/what-will-the-impact-be-if-nord-stream-2-is-completed/>.

⁴⁰ Wettengel, "Polls Reveal Citizen Support for Climate Action and Energy Transition."

⁴¹ European Commission, "Private Sector Interaction in the Decision Making Processes of Public Research Policies Country Profile: Germany" (European Commission, 2010), https://ec.europa.eu/invest-in-research/pdf/download_en/psi_countryprofile_germany.pdf.

⁴² "RWE | Our Energy for a Sustainable Life.," accessed January 21, 2023, <https://www.rwe.com/en/>.

organizations⁴³ and multiple environmental groups actively campaign against the continuous expansion of Russian gas infrastructure throughout Europe, as they stand for a Europe that does not associate itself with aggressor states, disregards environmental degradation, and is involved in human rights abuses. In addition to this, these groups focus on the fact that some of Germany's decisions have led the country to have a dependency solely on Russian sources which has already created issues for the country but has the possibility of creating more major issues for the country and its people in the future.

Several different international institutions play a crucial role in the regulation of energy markets, the promotion of competition, and the advancement of common energy security objectives. These institutions such as the European Commission and the European Parliament work within the European Union to ensure its stability and governance.

Germany shows its dedication toward addressing global energy challenges with its participation in the Energy Union⁴⁴ and the signing of the Paris Agreement⁴⁵, striving for rule-based governance and collective action to ensure a better outcome and future.

⁴³ "TAT-2020-Leben-Politik-politische Teilhabe | Facts about Germany," accessed June 30, 2024, <https://www.tatsachen-ueber-deutschland.de/en/living-germany/political-and-social-involvement>.

⁴⁴ European Commission, "Energy Union," accessed March 12, 2024, https://energy.ec.europa.eu/topics/energy-strategy/energy-union_en.

⁴⁵ UNFCCC, "The Paris Agreement | UNFCCC," 2016, <https://unfccc.int/process-and-meetings/the-paris-agreement>.

3. THREE INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS PERSPECTIVES

3.1. *Realist Perspective: Power Politics and Security Imperatives*

3.1.1 “Realpolitik” and Energy Security

When looked at from a Realist perspective, Germany’s foreign policy on Russian gas imports can be interpreted through the lens of “Realpolitik”, a lens which has been interpreted through different ways over centuries although always keeping the same core elements to it⁴⁶. The word Realpolitik stems from German, and was a term coined, although the beliefs of Realpolitik already existed before this term was used under the umbrella word of Realpolitik one could argue that it has kept the same definition for an extensive amount of time. The first use of the word Realpolitik⁴⁷ can be seen in “Grundsätze der Realpolitik, angewendet auf die staatlichen Zustände Deutschland” written by August Ludwig von Rochau published in 1853. By using a realist lens one could argue that a state will prioritize the accumulation of power and resources to enhance its security and hence likelihood of survival in the anarchic international system in which it finds itself. In Germany’s case, constant access to reliable energy supplies is deemed essential for them to continue maintaining economic competitiveness, domestic stability, and productivity within their industries therefore, the pipeline projects are incredibly important and useful for the survival of the state under this lens. Germany’s strategic calculation to diversify its energy sources is reflected by its stark reliance on Russian gas imports, this is a move that can be understood as a means to mitigate the risk of supply disruptions from other sources of gas imports. With this being said, by using a Realist lens we can assume that Germany is still willing to engage with Russia in the energy sphere,

⁴⁶ Henry C. Emery, “What Is Realpolitik?,” *International Journal of Ethics* 25, no. 4 (1915): 448–68.

⁴⁷ August Ludwig von Rochau, *Grundsätze der realpolitik: angewendet auf die staatlichen zustände Deutschlands ...* (K. Göpel, 1853).

regardless of the ongoing conflict in Ukraine and without focusing on the public and citizens opinion on the matter, while also disregarding Germany's dependency on these imports. With long-term supply contracts with Russia, Germany is trying to create a safety blanket protecting its energy interests and minimizing its risk of vulnerability to possible external causes. This calculation is not taking into account the possibility of Russia completely shutting off its natural gas sources to Germany.

3.1.2 Balance of Power Dynamics

Another very important aspect of Realist theory is the crucial role that the balance of power dynamics plays in the decision-making processes of states. When we look at the case of gas imports between Germany and Russia, and put it in the context of European geopolitics, we can see that Germany's position as currently one of the leading economic powers in Europe⁴⁸, is able to leverage itself with its agreements between Russia, allowing it to have favorable terms with its energy trade dealings⁴⁹. This raises concerns about the potential problems that such great reliance on another country may entail. This dependence that Germany has amounted to on Russian gas exports may lead to possible manipulation and coercion by Russia, especially in times of crisis or conflict in which it currently finds itself⁵⁰. If we take the case of the Nord Stream pipeline projects, we can see the interplay of power politics and energy geopolitics in Europe. In Realist terms, Germany's complete disregard of current conflicts and possible future escalations can be seen as calculations done by Germany to ensure that the Nord Stream 2 would work even during difficult times, bypassing transit countries and establishing complete and direct access to Russian gas reserves. This strategic

⁴⁸ "Economic Key Facts Germany - KPMG Germany," accessed June 30, 2024, <https://kpmg.com/de/en/home/insights/overview/economic-key-facts-germany.html>.

⁴⁹ "Facts on Trade with Russia," Federal Statistical Office, accessed April 30, 2024, https://www.destatis.de/EN/Press/2022/02/PE22_N010_51.html.

⁵⁰ Petra Sorge, "Germany Still Trades Russian Gas as Canceling Costs €10 Billion - Bloomberg," October 19, 2023, <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2023-10-19/germany-still-trades-russian-gas-as-canceling-costs-10-billion>.

plan, although starkly criticized by the international community, reflects the system of decision-making that bases its decisions on one main goal, survival. This being said it is criticized that these projects lead to a possible risk of divisions within Europe, by undermining the importance of solidarity with Eastern European allies and reinforcing its dependence on Russian gas supply.

3.1.3 Strategic Calculations in German-Russian Relations

When looking at Germany's foreign policy on Russian gas imports, it is important to see the calculations taking place and the trade-offs that come with the relations established with Russia. There is a very interesting interplay between economic interests, diplomatic engagements, and security concerns which mix and match in extremely complex ways, in turn leading to the shaping of the engagement between Germany and Russia within the energy sphere⁵¹. Using a Realist lens, one could argue that Germany seeks to maintain cooperation with its Russian partner⁵², with its continuous need for energy stability, while still balancing its responsibilities and commitments regarding its European integration, solidarity, and international norms.

The war in Ukraine has created an extremely tricky situation for Germany and challenges the decision-making of such a center-stage country. The balance of relations between the East and the West has been proven crucial in navigating through cooperation with Russia and its European counterparts. From a Realist lens, one could argue that Germany's response to the war in Ukraine, simply reflects the balancing between Germany's dialogue with Russia and advancing their common interests, while also maintaining solidarity with Ukraine by upholding European unity in the face of the Russian aggressions and war on Ukraine.

⁵¹ "Germany Takes New Steps to Tackle the Energy Crisis," World Economic Forum, August 24, 2022, <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2022/08/energy-crisis-germany-europe/>.

⁵² Kuzemko et al., "Russia's War on Ukraine, European Energy Policy Responses & Implications for Sustainable Transformations."

3.2 Liberal Perspective: Economic Interdependence and Normative Frameworks

3.2.1 Interdependence Theory and Economic Rationality

Using a Liberalist lens, Germany's foreign policy on its Russian gas imports can be understood by taking the perspectives from the interdependence theory. This theory argues that through trade a country can have mutual benefits such as economic cooperation and the potential for peace⁵³. Liberalism would argue that economic interdependence fosters cooperation, reduces the likelihood of potential conflict, and can promote prosperity by having shared common interests by states, providing beneficial exchanges between each other. If we take a look at Germany, due to its heavy reliance on Russian gas imports it mirrors the logic used for economic rationality and comparative advantage, as both Germany and Russia stand to gain from trading with each other.

To make sense of why Germany had to create such a strong trading bond with Russia, one must understand the strategic calculations Germany had to make on different crucial topics, such as cost-effectiveness, resource optimization, and efficiency in energy supply. These considerations had to be made in order for Germany to meet its energy needs while still being able to maximize the economic benefits for its citizens and businesses. In a liberal lens, the cooperation between Germany and Russia fosters opportunities for a win-win situation, wherein Germany is able to have sufficient energy sources at the right price for them, and Russia on the contrary is offered revenue and investment opportunities for its energy companies⁵⁴. This creates a mutually beneficial system for both Germany and Russia.

⁵³ Jon C. Pevehouse, "Interdependence Theory and the Measurement of International Conflict," *The Journal of Politics* 66, no. 1 (2004): 247–66, <https://doi.org/10.1046/j.1468-2508.2004.00150.x>.

⁵⁴ Griffiths, *International Relations Theory for the Twenty-First Century*, 21.

3.2.2 Normative Considerations: European Integration and Market Dynamics

Taking on the Liberalist lens, in addition to the economic considerations, there is a considerably large emphasis on the importance of the several normative frameworks that are in place, such as European integration and market dynamics which shape Germany's foreign policy on Russian gas imports. As Germany is part of the European Union, it has several sets of principles to which it has to be committed, these vary from free trade, and competition, to regulatory convergence⁵⁵. This in turn has a substantial effect on its approach to its energy diplomacy towards Russia. Germany is constantly trying to promote stability, prosperity, and democracy in the region, by embedding its energy cooperation within the framework of European integration.

One could therefore argue that the construction of the Nord Stream pipelines is a sign of Germany's commitment to their market-based solutions and regional cooperation in addressing challenges of energy security. Large-scale projects such as the Nord Stream pipelines can be seen as a contribution to the diversification of supply routes, leading to a more integrated European energy market, and hence the enhancement of competition within. This in turn benefits consumers and promotes efficiency in resource allocation. Furthermore, Germany's constant support for multilateral initiatives, such as the Energy Union⁵⁶, and the Paris Agreement⁵⁷, shows its commitment to the ever-growing energy challenges faced globally. In doing so Germany is facing these challenges through collective action and rule-based governance in line with the European Union standards.

⁵⁵ "Aims and Values | European Union," accessed May 30, 2024, https://european-union.europa.eu/principles-countries-history/principles-and-values/aims-and-values_en.

⁵⁶ "ENTRUST- Europeanisation of National Policy Dialogues on Energy Pathways.," October 31, 2016, Ref. Ares(2016)6211412.

⁵⁷ UNFCCC, "The Paris Agreement | UNFCCC."

3.3 Constructivist Perspective: Identity, Ideas, and Discourse

3.3.1 Identity Formation in German Foreign Policy

By taking a look at Germany's foreign policy on Russian gas imports with a Constructivist lens, one can dive into the decisions taken concerning Germany's identity formation, ideational factors, and various discursive dynamics. In Constructivism, it is argued that state behavior is shaped by socially constructed identities, norms, and narratives which in turn are what affect the way in which these actors perceive themselves and others in the international system⁵⁸. Germany relies strongly on keeping its identity, playing a significant role in shaping its foreign policy preferences, values, and priorities. In this case, identity is central to Germany's approach to energy diplomacy with Russia.

Germany is well known for its commitment to peace, and democracy, and its approach toward human rights. With this being said, as an actor committed to the causes mentioned above one can see the different aspects taken into consideration in response to the War in Ukraine and Germany's cooperation with Russia after such a geopolitical crisis. In fact, looking at this case through a Constructivist lens, with Germany's historical experiences, collective memories, and national narratives, the cause of security concerns being so highly prioritized, the increase of national interests, and possible threats in the energy sphere can be observed rising. If one were to frame energy security as a common interest of the European Union which emphasizes the importance of dialogue, cooperation, and conflict resolution, then Germany's strategic moves can be understood as methods to reconcile its national identity with its commitments to the European Union's interests and create broader international peace.

⁵⁸ Alexander Wendt, "Anarchy Is What States Make of It: The Social Construction of Power Politics," *International Organization* 46, no. 2 (1992): 401.

3.3.2 Norm Entrepreneurship and Discursive Contestation

Two extremely interesting and relevant topics that have to be analyzed when looking at Germany's foreign policy choices and interactions with Russia are norm entrepreneurship⁵⁹ and discursive contestation⁶⁰. Germany manages to engage largely with civil society actors, different environmental groups, and also with human rights advocates, in turn, reflecting its responsiveness to societal norms and values that follow state interests. Constructivists believe that policymakers' foreign policy decisions and their perceptions of risks, opportunities, and priorities are shaped by public debates, media narratives, and political discourse.

The controversy surrounding the Nord Stream pipeline projects illustrates the complexities of normative contestation and discursive dynamics in German-Russian energy relations. Constructivists would argue that the generic public debate over the Nord Stream 2 pipeline, provided an interesting reflection on the different interpretations of energy security, environmental sustainability, and geopolitical implications amongst the several different stakeholders. While the stakeholders that leaned towards the creation and establishment of the second Nord Stream pipeline emphasized the economic benefits and technical feasibility of the projects, critics raised concerns about the significant environmental implications, the possible geopolitical dependencies it could lead to⁶¹, and the human rights implications by creating closer energy ties with Russia.

⁵⁹ "Human Rights Mechanisms: Norm Entrepreneurship," June 13, 2022, <https://www.freiheit.org/southeast-and-east-asia/norm-entrepreneurship>.

⁶⁰ Zane Šime, "The Potential of EU Connectivity through Missions and Smart Specialization," *Comentario Internacional: Revista del Centro Andino de Estudios Internacionales*, no. 21 (2021): 51–75, <https://doi.org/10.32719/26312549.2021.21.3>.

⁶¹ Westphal, "German–Russian Gas Relations in Face Of the Energy Transition."

3.3.3 Role of Public Opinion and Civil Society

To better understand Germany's foreign policy on Russian gas imports, one can analyze some of the important aspects contributing to the shaping of state behavior and policy outcomes through a constructivist lens. Under the constructivist lens, it is emphasized that topics such as public opinion, civil society mobilization, and discursive framing are key contributors to shaping a state's behavior. Germany is focused on its transparency when dealing with Russia and other international partners and has databases available for statistics to be made on their progress⁶², which shows its commitment to engaging with civil society actors, different environmental groups, and human rights advocates, by putting so much emphasis on these extremely valuable aspects Germany can reassure their accountability and democratic legitimacy to its citizens and partners⁶³. There are several aspects shaping the way in which things develop, in a constructivist lens, one would argue that public debates, media narratives, and political discourse would play a crucial role in shaping the specificities of foreign policy debates, and hence, influence policymakers and their perception of risks, opportunities, and priorities as a result.

According to several public opinion polls and surveys conducted in Germany, the public is divided on issues related to the energy cooperation between Germany and Russia⁶⁴, this divide reflects the competing narratives and ideological orientations within the country⁶⁵. This divide in narratives on what Germany should proceed with creates an extremely volatile environment in an already extremely unstable situation. Some segments of society believe that by creating closer ties with Russia one can create greater energy security with these pipeline projects. In contrast, on the other hand, we have others who express major concerns on the

⁶² "POLITICO Poll of Polls — German Polls, Trends and Election News for Germany," POLITICO, February 15, 2022, <https://www.politico.eu/europe-poll-of-polls/germany/>.

⁶³ Wettengel, "Polls Reveal Citizen Support for Climate Action and Energy Transition."

⁶⁴ Wettengel.

⁶⁵ Staudenmaier, "Ukraine War Sparks Major Shift in Germany's Energy Opinions – DW – 04/07/2022."

environmental impact, geopolitical implications, and, human rights violations associated with the possible deepening Germany's integration with Russia. There is a common theme of distrust and negative thought toward the expansion of Russian gas infrastructure within Europe, several civil society organizations, environmental activists, and human rights advocates call for greater transparency, accountability, and ethical standards in energy diplomacy⁶⁶. Germany shows its commitment to democratic governance, participatory decision-making, and normative principles, in its response to the public concerns and societal pressures it is faced with. Constructivists would argue that civil society engagement and discursive contestations contribute to the legitimacy and responsiveness of Germany's foreign policy decisions, which holds policymakers accountable to democratic norms, needs, and values. Germany uses different methods to bridge societal divides and build consensus which then fosters greater transparency and accountability, leading Germany to higher democratic legitimacy in its dealings with Russia and its other international partners. It ensures this by engaging in dialogue and debate with its different stakeholders.

⁶⁶ "EU Trade Sanctions in Response to Situation in Ukraine," accessed June 30, 2024, <https://enterprise.gov.ie/en/publications/eu-trade-sanctions-in-response-to-situation-in-ukraine-.html>.

4. CASE STUDY: NORD STREAM PIPELINE PROJECTS

4.1 Nord Stream 1: Origins and Controversies

The Nord Stream pipeline projects can be used to understand the complexities of German-Russian energy cooperation amidst geopolitical tensions and debates on norms on the international stage. Nord Stream 1, operationalized in 2011⁶⁷, was built to connect Russian gas fields in Siberia to the German coast going through the Baltic Sea, bypassing countries such as Ukraine and Poland. This project was created as an initiative to enhance European energy security and diversify the supply routes. In doing so, it would ensure a decrease in dependency for Germany on transit countries, which are vulnerable to political instability. Although the creation of the Nord Stream 1 pipeline, seemed to be extremely valuable and smart on paper, it sank into controversy ever since its creation, due to several concerns about its environmental impact, different geopolitical implications, and regulatory compliance. It has been argued that the pipeline is a tool of reinforcement to Europe's dependency on Russian gas supplies, it also acts as a tool that undermines the solidarity Germany has with its Eastern European allies and bypasses the established transit routes that contribute to the economic development and security of neighboring countries in need such as the Ukraine and Poland⁶⁸. Furthermore, the Nord Stream 1 pipeline has been criticized due to its potential threat of undermining European unity and cooperation by putting priority on bilateral energy relations between Germany and Russia over the shared collective European interests and values.

⁶⁷ Nord Stream AG, "Our Story," Nord Stream AG, accessed March 22, 2024, <https://www.nord-stream.com/the-project/history/>.

⁶⁸ Sofia Jonsson, "The Rise and Fall of the Nord Stream Pipeline: A Brief History (Part 1: The Rise)," *Transformative Humanities* (blog), October 17, 2022, <https://www.kth.se/blogs/hist/2022/10/the-rise-and-fall-of-the-nord-stream-pipeline-a-brief-history-part-1-the-rise/>.

4.2 Nord Stream 2: Geopolitical Implications and Policy Debates

The construction of the billion-euro Nord Stream 2, was seen as an expansion to the existing pipeline system⁶⁹. This expansion created a cascade of old debates over energy security, geopolitics, and the normative frameworks in Europe. The creation of Nord Stream 2 aimed to double the capacity of the already functioning Nord Stream 1 pipeline, in doing so Europe's reliance on Russian gas imports would increase drastically, as it would bypass the same previously mentioned countries of the Nord Stream 1: Ukraine and Poland. One could argue that the creation of Nord Stream 2, is a tool to enhance energy security, perhaps also promote market competition, and could contribute to economic growth and prosperity in the job sector in Europe, however, it has faced a multitude of opposition from Eastern European Countries, the United States, and further European Union member states, who disregard any significance in the creation of the Nord Stream 2 pipeline and view it as a geopolitical tool crafted by Russia to expand its influence and division within Europe⁷⁰. If Nord Stream 2 had been activated after its construction, one could argue that it would have caused significant involvement in the areas of international politics. With Nord Stream 2 in use, it could have weakened Ukraine's position as a transit country, reinforcing dependency on Russian energy supplies, which Russia could exploit to gain political leverage. Moreover, Nord Stream 2 had raised concerns about its environmental impact, compliance with European Union energy regulations, and alignment with European values and norms which are all extremely important aspects to take into consideration when creating such structures⁷¹.

⁶⁹ Åslund, "What Will the Impact Be If Nord Stream 2 Is Completed?,".

⁷⁰ Julian Wettengel, "Nord Stream 2 – Symbol of Failed German Bet on Russian Gas," Clean Energy Wire, March 8, 2023, <https://www.cleanenergywire.org/factsheets/gas-pipeline-nord-stream-2-links-germany-russia-splits-europe>.

⁷¹ Åslund, "What Will the Impact Be If Nord Stream 2 Is Completed?"

4.3 Germany's Positioning and Policy Responses

The responses Germany made in regard to the two Nord Stream pipeline projects, are a great example to showcase the complexities that arise from balancing economic interests, taking geopolitical considerations into account, and the normative frameworks that need to be reviewed, this was shown with its energy diplomacy toward Russia⁷². The creation of the Nord Stream 2 project was justified by German Policymakers, by seeing it as a commercial project that would enhance energy security, promote market competition, and would contribute to European integration. Arguments by policymakers were made, on the pipeline's compliance with European Union regulations, the meticulous planning that went into assessing the impacts that such a pipeline would have on the environment, and how it will adhere to international legal standards. In addition to the several points and arguments made, there were several counter arguments and the general thought turned to be negative⁷³. When the Nord Stream 2 pipeline was in planning, German officials engaged in several diplomatic dialogues and negotiations with stakeholders, focusing on topics such as transparency, accountability, and governance, related to the possible issues with energy cooperation with Russia⁷⁴. Germany also supported initiatives enhancing European energy solidarity, the diversification of supply routes, and promoting the strengthening of regulatory frameworks, which would help mitigate the risks of geopolitical coercion and market distortion. This would come in handy as the War in Ukraine would block the Nord Stream 2 pipeline completely before it could ever be used.

⁷² "Germany Takes New Steps to Tackle the Energy Crisis."

⁷³ Aliona Osmolovska, "Why the Seven Arguments Used to Justify Nord Stream II Are Just Plain Wrong," *Atlantic Council* (blog), May 1, 2018, <https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/ukrainealert/why-the-seven-arguments-used-to-justify-nord-stream-ii-are-just-plain-wrong/>.

⁷⁴ Paul Hansbury, "Nord Stream 2 Will Help Not Hinder Europe's Energy Security - Minsk Dialogue," October 21, 2021, <https://minskdialogue.by/en/research/opinions/nord-stream-2-will-help-not-hinder-europe-s-energy-security>.

5. SYNTHESIS AND ANALYSIS

5.1 Comparative Evaluation of Theoretical Explanations

By creating a synthesis of the insights taken from the three international relations theories Realism, Liberalism, and Constructivism, one can see that each perspective offers valuable insights for learning the complexities of Germany's foreign policy on Russian gas imports in the context of the War in Ukraine. Realism focuses on highlighting the role of power politics, security imperatives, and strategic calculations in shaping Germany's approach to energy diplomacy with Russia. Liberalism emphasizes the importance of economic interdependence, normative frameworks, and institutional cooperation in promoting stability, prosperity, and peace through the utilization of trade. Finally, Constructivism highlights the significance of identity formation, and discursive dynamics in the shaping of state preferences, values, and policy choices.

With this being said, each theoretical approach has its share of limitations, when used to explain Germany's foreign policy choices. Realism may overlook the important influence that ideational factors⁷⁵, social norms, and discursive dynamics have in shaping state behavior. Realism may focus mostly on looking at material interests and power dynamics⁷⁶ while overlooking the rest. Liberalism may overlook how significant power politics, security concerns, and identity formation are in shaping a state's preferences and policy outcomes while emphasizing the potential for cooperation and mutual gains through trade diplomacy. Lastly, Constructivism may end up overlooking the material constraints and different power asymmetries that can limit the agency of states within the international system. In doing so they

⁷⁵ Alfredo Castro Moreira, "IR Theory and The Ontological Depth of the Material-Ideational Debate," *E-International Relations* (blog), May 31, 2021, <https://www.e-ir.info/2021/05/31/ir-theory-and-the-ontological-depth-of-the-material-ideational-debate/>.

⁷⁶ Hans. J. Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace*, 5th ed. (Scientific Book Agency, n.d.).

would rather emphasize the role of ideas and discourse at the expense of material interests and strategical calculations.

5.2 Factors Shaping Germany's Foreign Policy Choices

While analyzing the several factors contributing to shaping Germany's foreign policy, in regard to Russian gas imports, it has become evident that there is a complex interplay between material interests, different ideational factors, and the institutional dynamics that influence its behavior and policy outcomes⁷⁷. Germany approaches its energy diplomacy with Russia combining economic considerations, geopolitical calculations, normative frameworks, and societal pressures, all of the different assets help shape a concise and competitive decision usually unanimously viewed by the majority of the population and decision makers. These approaches are the leading factors in addressing Germany's energy needs. The engagement Germany has with Russia is shaped by Germany's energy security concerns, economic interests, and strategic partnership plans in the energy sphere, whereas Germany's normative values, democratic principles, and European integration need to shape Germany's way of responding to the geopolitical crises and normative debates coming after the War in Ukraine started.

Furthermore, Germany's foreign policy choices can be narrowed down to different mechanisms, be they institutions or stakeholders, they all are used to mediate between the different interests, values, and priorities that Germany has during the changing course of events. The way in which energy diplomacy is dealt with in Germany is influenced strongly by different agencies, or regulatory bodies⁷⁸ which in the end have a grip on the final policy outcomes. Germany manages to use dialogue and debate strategies with different stakeholders

⁷⁷ Ortwin Renn et al., "Public Participation in Decision Making: A Three-Step Procedure," *Policy Sciences* 26, no. 3 (1993): 192–93.

⁷⁸ Dirk Zeitz, "Better Regulation in Germany as Quality Assurance System: Recent Development and Current Challenges," *Nall*, 2016, <https://doi.org/10.5553/NALL/000025>.

to understand competing interests and have a consensus while also fostering transparency for the country at the international level. With the use of dialogue and debate with stakeholders, Germany tries to frame its competing imperatives and narratives while also building a universal consensus to have a fair and legitimate system in place while dealing with Russia and other international partners.

5.3 Implications for Theory and Practice

The topics focused on in this thesis are crucial to further understand theoretical debates in international relations and different policy debates also in energy geopolitics⁷⁹. With the use of Realism, Liberalism, and Constructivism, one can highlight the need for a multidimensional approach to understanding state behavior and policy outcomes in the international arena. By creating a holistic framework, and understanding the diverse theoretical traditions in addition to analyzing the empirical evidence from real-world case studies to learn from what works and what fails, policymakers can adopt a new lens (a mix between the three theoretical frameworks that were discussed in this thesis), that will improve their decision-making and therefore better the world systems we live in. To better understand the complexities of energy geopolitics in Europe one must take on a nuanced lens combining different aspects of IR theory to then develop a context-specific solution to the problems. The foreign policy dynamics between Germany and Russia in regard to gas imports cannot be understood clearly without the understanding of the various highly relevant topics discussed in this thesis which have an effect on its outcome. There are geopolitical dynamics that play crucial roles in the formation and change of foreign policies. The war in Ukraine for example had an immense impact on the way in which Germany changed its course towards its relations with Russian gas imports⁸⁰. Such

⁷⁹ Sören Becker and Matthias Naumann, "Energy Democracy: Mapping the Debate on Energy Alternatives," *Geography Compass* 11, no. 8 (2017): e12321, <https://doi.org/10.1111/gec3.12321>.

⁸⁰ Staudenmaier, "Ukraine War Sparks Major Shift in Germany's Energy Opinions – DW – 04/07/2022."

topics which change on a daily basis, for instance, war, have an incredibly large impact on the way a country acts. More often than not, in situations like the one Germany finds itself in, actions towards policy changes are crucial to maintaining international support and peace. The various factors affecting policy changes can also be used to highlight the opportunities countries have that can completely change their position in the international arena.

In this thesis, many topics have been put in the spotlight, which can be used to incentivize future research to deepen the understanding of Germany's future policy changes on Russian gas imports and the broader implications it may have for European energy security and geopolitics. In addition to this thesis, it would be interesting to conduct a comparative case study where one analyzes other European countries' approaches to energy diplomacy with Russia and hence, identify possible patterns in terms of policy preferences or interests and their respective outcomes. By doing so, one can develop a better understanding of not only what this thesis developed, rather also, of the drivers and dynamics shaping the whole European energy geopolitics. Furthermore, the elaborations made in this thesis can be used to further explore the role that external actors such as the United States or international organizations have in shaping Germany's energy diplomacy and the implications it has for global energy governance. Due to factors such as the increasing interdependence of energy markets, spike in renewable energy technologies, and constant rise in globalization, new faults arrive in the world of geopolitics, which in turn needs new forms of multilateral cooperation and collective action to address the shared energy challenges across the world.

A general topic of further discussion, with the use of the theory in this thesis, could be that of technological innovations, and the impact such advancements have on the different energy security strategies that Germany has implemented. With the development in the industrial and scientific fields and the creation of a more diversified and sustainable energy source, Germany is faced with both opportunities and possible challenges for their energy

diplomacy and engagement with Russian energy suppliers. A term used for the recent energy transition that Germany turned to is known as *Energiewende* (in the German language)⁸¹, which has had major implications on Germany's foreign policy priorities, commitments, and partnerships both within Europe and other countries outside of Europe. Recently, Germany has made major changes in its structure⁸², ranging from its decarbonization plans, its expansion of renewable energy sources, investments in possible alternative resources, and the phasing out of nuclear power. These transitions pose new challenges for Germany and its overall energy security is affected largely.

As examined in the thesis, Germany has a lot of complex interplay when it comes to its foreign policy on Russian gas imports in the context of the war in Ukraine, when looking at these complexities through the three International Relations theoretical approaches: Realism, Liberalism, and Constructivism we can foster a deeper understanding on how the world systems work and how complicated it is for a country to make major changes to their established policies even when War is involved in it. By synthesizing insights from the three theoretical lenses and analyzing various evidence-based facts with the use of specific case studies such as that of the two Nord Stream pipeline projects, we can provide a more comprehensive understanding of the interplay between material interests and institutional dynamics in the shaping of contemporary energy geopolitics. Stakeholders can look further into the policy dialogue and work towards new solutions that can move Germany into a more sustainable and secure energy system which can in turn advance the interests of more actors in the international community.

⁸¹ Erik Gawel et al., "Die Zukunft der Energiewende in Deutschland," in *Die Energiewende verstehen - orientieren - gestalten*, ed. Armin Grunwald, Ortwin Renn, and Jens Schippl (Nomos Verlagsgesellschaft mbH & Co. KG, 2017), 425–46, <https://doi.org/10.5771/9783845278957-425>.

⁸² "What the Government Is Doing for the Climate," Website of the Federal Government | Bundesregierung, accessed June 28, 2024, <https://www.bundesregierung.de/breg-en/issues/climate-action/government-climate-policy-1779414>.

CONCLUSION

Summary of Findings

This thesis has delved into the developments and important aspects of Germany's foreign policy on Russian gas imports in the context of the war in Ukraine. With the use of three International Relations theoretical frameworks: Realism, Liberalism, and Constructivism, the interplay between material interests, normative considerations, and institutional dynamics could be studied and analyzed. Valuable insights into the complexities of contemporary energy geopolitics in Europe were put into the spotlight.

From a Realist lens, Germany's engagement with Russia in the energy sphere reflects several strategic calculations regarding power politics and security imperatives, which were driven by the pursuit of national interests. On the other spectrum, we have the Liberalist lens which emphasizes the importance of economic interdependence, different institutions, and their cooperation, and the frameworks of different norms are affecting the approach Germany has towards its energy diplomacy with Russia. It highlights the potential for cooperation and mutual gains through the act of trading and investing. Finally while using the Constructivist lens there is significant weight given to the role that identity formation has, and also how discursive contestation helps shape Germany's foreign policy choices. With Constructivism, there is a stark emphasis on the importance of ideational factors and social norms that influence state behavior.

By looking at case studies such as the ones used in this Thesis on the Nord Stream pipeline projects, one can illustrate the complexities of Germany's energy diplomacy with Russia and how these relations have major implications for European energy security and other topics such as dynamics in regard to geopolitics, and normative frameworks. The two Nord Stream pipeline projects have been looked at to further understand the complexities of

Germany's energy diplomacy with Russia and the different effects it has on European energy security. The Nord Stream 1 and Nord Stream 2 projects have faced extreme criticism⁸³ from scholars highlighting the several factors which come into existence when dealing with both European countries and Russia after the War in Ukraine was unleashed following Russia's attacks. With this being said, Germany's energy relations face challenges of balancing economic interests while still needing to take on geopolitical considerations and sticking to their normative commitments all at once.

Contributions and Limitations

This thesis tries to adopt a multidimensional analytical approach by integrating insights from three of the main International Relations theories: Realism, Liberalism, and Constructivism. By doing so a comprehensive understanding is made of the factors shaping Germany's foreign policy on Russian gas imports. By creating a comparative analysis of the way in which the three theoretical frameworks view Germany's relation and trade with Russia, one is given the opportunity to see exactly how complex state behavior can be and how policy outcomes can foster change in the international system.

With this being said, there are some limitations to this thesis. Focusing solely on Germany's foreign policy on Russian gas imports may limit this thesis to how generalizable the findings may be, and whether they can be used to explain other state behaviors. Future research for instance could explore similar theoretical frameworks and how they apply to other countries' energy diplomacy with Russia, and what kind of implications those have for both regional and global energy security. Another point may be the reliance this thesis has on

⁸³ Hansbury, "Nord Stream 2 Will Help Not Hinder Europe's Energy Security - Minsk Dialogue"; Osmolovska, "Why the Seven Arguments Used to Justify Nord Stream II Are Just Plain Wrong"; Jonsson, "The Rise and Fall of the Nord Stream Pipeline"; Åslund, "What Will the Impact Be If Nord Stream 2 Is Completed?"

secondary sources and case studies as this may introduce possible gaps in the analysis, as I am only able to find sources in German, Italian, English, and Spanish, the lack of Russian language may have drawn me back from the Russian perspective on gas imports and their relation with Germany. Further research on this topic could also include an opposing perspective from a Russian native speaker, to create perhaps a competitive analysis with the use of the findings from this Thesis. By doing so, it would ensure a new and nuanced understanding of the issues examined here in this thesis.

Future Research Directions

To further build on the findings and insights of this thesis would be extremely interesting. Several different topics and research questions could further deepen our understanding of the relations of countries and how foreign policy influences relations all around the world, and also identify new findings to create an even bigger picture on energy politics. Moreover, one could focus on the long-term impacts that the energy transition has on Germany and its foreign policy priorities, as well as how these could affect European energy governance and global energy sustainability.

Another topic of interest could be to investigate the geoeconomic dimensions of Germany's energy diplomacy with Russia, which focuses on the role of economic interests, or market dynamics, while also looking for the different strategic calculations that were used to shape the state's behavior and the latter policy outcomes.

Lastly, future research could look at the normative contestation surrounding the energy governance in Europe, further looking at the possible implications this may have for Germany's foreign policy choices, while also highlighting the role of discursive struggles, and how these may also pose a threat to the policy outcomes.

Overall, this thesis on Germany's foreign policy on Russian gas imports in the context of the War in Ukraine acts as a means for looking at the different complexities of modern energy geopolitics and the way in which they affect international relations. By taking on the theoretical frameworks and creating a better understanding with the use of empirical analyses in regard to these issues, future research can contribute to more informed policymaking and a more enhanced regional cooperative system that promotes global energy security and sustainability.

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