
Security of supply and the external dimension of a European energy policy?

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The concept of energy security, mainly security of supply, is making a big comeback on the European scene. Recent events and energy crises have jolted the European Union into debating the development of a comprehensive European Energy Policy. Europe's strong feeling of insecurity has increased tenfold due to the Ukraine-Russia gas dispute; the tremendous increase of energy prices; the uncertain and controversial state of energy reserves; the disequilibrium between the increase of demand and the contraction of the offer; and finally its reliance on chronically unstable energy suppliers. Europe's increasing energy dependence, together with a decrease of its indigenous energy production and a limited combined contribution from renewable and nuclear energies, have added further to the urgency of this debate.

The issue of security of energy supply has become a major long-term geopolitical, economic, environmental and social concern for Europe. In this unstable energy landscape of the twenty-first century, the question for the European Union is especially how current developments can match this scenario. In this 'hostile' environment, the EU urgently needs to develop an enhanced common approach to the security of energy supplies and look for new means to reduce its external energy dependence.

The concept of energy security has indeed been turned to fit any case. Different consumer, producer, developed or developing countries, being dependent or not on energy imports, have different priorities, interests and needs. For some, it is important to secure energy supplies to their markets, whilst for others it is more crucial to secure access to the European market for their energy resources, and some seek to stabilize energy prices at a high level, others at a low level.

Amongst these differing and from time to time competitive approaches to energy security, the European Union is developing its own concept. The energy security concept of the European Union as conceived, aims at *“ensuring the uninterrupted physical availability of energy products on the market at an affordable price for all consumers, whilst respecting*

environmental concerns and looking towards sustainable development” (Towards a European strategy for the security of energy supply, Commission Green Paper, COM(2000)769). However, it remains difficult to view the European Union as a vast homogeneous consumer and importer block. Until now, the national energy sectors of the twenty-seven European Member States reflect high levels of disparity and asymmetry, with different energy cultures, structures and external policies.

In short, the core of the analysis in this article regards the external dimension of any European energy policy, with the objective of securing energy supplies for Europe. The first part addresses the ongoing evolution of the European concern regarding security of energy supply since its initial stage. The second, third, fourth and fifth parts respectively describe the existing bilateral, regional and multilateral cooperation with energy producer, transit and consumer countries. The final part provides conclusions and puts forward some remarks for the future.

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