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The Neglected Integration Crisis: France, Germany and Lacking European Co-operation During the 1973/1974 Oil Shock

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Abstract

When does European co-operation and (further) integration *not* happen in the face of a major integration crisis? When do France and Germany *not* emerge as regional stabilizers, forging and uploading bilateral compromises to the European level? By developing a combined theoretical framework based on liberal intergovernmentalism and leadership approaches, this article analyses the European Economic Community's (EEC) reaction to the 1973/1974 oil crisis. Despite some favourable conditions, differences in domestic energy markets and relations with Arab oil-producing countries complicated member state co-operation. In turn, divergent economic philosophies and foreign policy priorities prevented France and Germany from filling the European leadership vacuum. As a consequence, the EEC did not find a unified stance on the Arab oil embargo, subordinated itself to US-American dominance and undermined its common market via export restrictions for oil. The findings suggest that without minimum convergent member state preferences or compensating regional leadership, European integration and today's European Union risk stalling or even disintegrating.

Keywords: European integration; France; Germany; leadership; liberal intergovernmentalism; oil crisis

Introduction

The Washington Energy Conference from 11 to 13 February 1974 saw an open clash, including personal animosities, between leading policy-makers of France and Germany, which were the two largest and supposedly most influential member states of the European Economic Community (EEC). The German Finance Minister, Helmut Schmidt, declared that if he had to choose between Europe and the United States (US), he would opt for the latter. This led the French Foreign Minister, Michel Jobert (1976, p. 383), to call Schmidt and other European policy-makers assembled in Washington 'traitors'. For academic observers, the Washington Energy Conference, convened by the US government to address the ongoing oil crisis in 'Western' industrialized countries, marked a historical low point in European integration and Franco-German relations post-World War II (e.g., Simonian, 1985, pp. 193–218). Others noted that the constellation of Germany explicitly siding with the US, and against France, in matters of foreign policy was extraordinary, both for Franco-German bilateralism and for European politics (Türk, 2014).

What were the reasons for, and the consequences of, the Franco-German and broader European split at Washington? Why and how did the EEC of nine member states reach such a point of disunity? This article argues and demonstrates that, despite some favourable conditions, differences in crisis exposure and the availability of 'outside' options complicated a European response. Moreover, there was no regional stabilizer to compensate for the limited co-operation incentives to forge a common stance. Emphasizing the high obstacles to (further) European integration in the event of asymmetric interdependence between member states, liberal intergovernmentalism (LI) correctly explains the initial political deadlock (Moravcsik, 1993, 1998). Yet, national governments continued to advocate for unified action and the creation of a common energy policy. A second theoretical step, building on leadership approaches (Ferrera et al., 2021; Kindleberger, 1973), is therefore necessary to fully account for lacking European co-operation and the failure of prior commitments, both in energy and in foreign policy.

In the early 1970s, several oil-producing countries proceeded to nationalize the large oil companies, which had previously been controlled by 'Western' industrialized countries like the US, the United Kingdom (UK), France and the Netherlands. In various rounds, the Organization of Petroleum-Exporting Countries (OPEC) – a producer cartel – increased the price for the export of oil. Also, following the outbreak of the Arab–Israeli 'Yom Kippur' War on 6 October 1973, the Organization of Arab Petroleum-Exporting Countries (OAPEC) curbed the production of oil. Seeking to move Western countries including the nine EEC member states to support the Arab cause, the OAPEC differentiated between 'friendly' countries like France and the UK; 'neutral' countries, such as Germany; and 'unfriendly' countries. Amongst the EEC member states, the Netherlands was the only country to be subject to a full oil embargo due to its supposedly pro-Israel policy (Möckli, 2009, pp. 190–191).

Production cuts, increased prices and the 'weaponization' of oil caused fears inside the EEC about the security and sufficient supply of energy resources. Governments introduced measures to save energy, like bans on Sunday driving and limited lighting of shops. A feeling of uncertainty and awareness of a looming economic recession spread in Western societies. Against this background, policy-makers and scholars urged the EEC member states to address the crisis jointly to increase Europe's international bargaining power and limit the overall costs of oil (Lieber, 1976; Simonet, 1975). The European Commission made proposals for a common energy policy and called on national governments to show solidarity, particularly with the Netherlands, in the form of an oil-sharing mechanism. Hindsight has shown that the quadrupling of prices was mostly due to governments' unco-ordinated behaviour (Keohane, 1984, pp. 182–216). The EEC member states did not find a common stance on energy, with restrictions on the export of oil even undermining the free movement of goods and thus a key principle of the European market. National positions also diverged with respect to foreign policy. When the US-sponsored International Energy Agency (IEA) was formally established in November 1974, France decided not to join.

Why did European co-operation prove to be so difficult and, ultimately, impossible in the 1973/1974 oil crisis? Scholars have argued that national preferences and the intergovernmental bargaining situation determine the course of European integration (Moravcsik, 1993, 1998). From an LI perspective, member state agreement and progress in integration are possible if national preferences converge and member states do not have more promising alternatives than European action. This tends to be more likely if interdependence is fairly symmetric and if few credible 'outside options' are available (Moravcsik and Schimmelfennig, 2019; Schimmelfennig, 2015). Alternatively, political leadership in a regional organization, like the European Union (EU), implies efforts to stabilize and advance the polity (Ferrera et al., 2021; Kindleberger, 1973). Political leaders who are willing and able to bear a disproportionately high crisis burden might compensate for the limited functional pressures resulting from low levels of interdependence (Schoeller, 2019). Scholars have noted that, as the two largest and founding member states, France and Germany, acting together, are often of a 'critical size' and have indispensable resources to overcome intergovernmental deadlock (Gruber, 2000). Stressing their special responsibility for the European polity given their privileged bilateral relationship, these two countries might develop a joint objective for crisis resolution and policy preferences beyond strictly defined national interests (Krotz and Schild, 2013).

In the 1973/1974 oil crisis, however, bilateral leadership and (further) European integration did not materialize. This was because of two reasons: first, reflecting LI expectations, differences in domestic energy mixes and in exposure to the Arab oil embargo complicated European co-operation. Low and asymmetric levels of member state interdependence created incentives for national measures and reliance on third actors, like the US. Second, France and Germany did not share a joint objective for crisis resolution. Different economic views on the organization of the European energy market prevented them from emerging as regional co-leaders. Opposing priorities in foreign policy made a European response to the oil crisis even more unlikely. Therefore, regional leadership did not compensate for member states' fairly asymmetric interdependence and different national incentives resulting from the oil shock. Despite widely shared commitments for a common energy policy and treaty-based notions of European solidarity, a European response and solution to the oil crisis ultimately failed to materialize.

The next section develops the theoretical framework, suggesting a sequence and complementarity between LI and leadership approaches, especially in times of crisis. It holds that without convergent member state preferences *or* regional stabilization, European co-operation and (further) integration are very unlikely. Setting the scene for the empirical analysis, the subsequent section demonstrates developments and competences in European energy and foreign policy before the oil crisis. The following two sections trace, in turn, European disagreements on energy and foreign policy, and the inability of France and Germany to overcome them. A lack of bilateral and European co-operation turned out to be very costly for both the EEC's role in global politics and internal aspects related to the common market. The concluding section summarizes the main findings and lists a number of theoretical and empirical implications for European integration, not least concerning the EU's most recent gas crisis.

I. Co-operation and (Further) Integration in European Crisis Politics

Especially in intergovernmental and loosely integrated policy fields like energy at the time of the 1973 oil crisis (see below), member states are expected to be the most relevant actors. This article, therefore, takes LI as the starting point for its analysis. According to its main representatives, LI has become the 'baseline' theory to explain the form, substance and timing of major integration decisions (Moravcsik and Schimmelfennig, 2019; Schimmelfennig, 2015). LI assumes member states and their government representatives to shape the course of European integration. As rational and self-interested actors, member states agree on (further) integration if they expect gains from it. They decide to pool policy competences if the benefits resulting from European co-operation trump alternative courses of action. Conversely, member states might at least preserve the status quo if they consider

European disintegration to threaten their key preferences (Moravcsik and Schimmelfennig, 2019).

More concretely, LI expects European integration to happen in three stages (Moravcsik, 1993, 1998, pp. 3–10): first, member states define their national preferences. Their international, primarily macro-economic position, together with the interests of powerful domestic constituents, determines the stances that member states take on a given policy issue. Second, when entering European bargaining rounds, national governments negotiate the terms for co-operation. Member states that are least affected by a crisis have the most relevant resources available. Furthermore, states that are closest to the status quo have the largest bargaining power in negotiations. Third, member states make institutional choices to lock in their agreement and secure compliance. The first and second stages are arguably the most important ones because they decide whether or not European co-operation happens (Schimmelfennig, 2015). However, if member states disagree on fundamental objectives or the distribution of costs, co-operation fails. This might happen even if the eventual outcome is collectively suboptimal.

LI is rooted in functional efficiency-based considerations: european integration progresses if there is a convergence in member states' preferences and positions. It assumes a particular political setting for European negotiations, such as clearly defined national preferences and an environment rich in information. This might hold for intergovernmental conferences on the creation or revision of European treaties, against which LI was originally developed, but it tends to be less applicable to situations of crisis that are characterized by high levels of threat, urgency and uncertainty (Boin et al., 2017). Three further points suggest that LI alone might fall short of an analytical framework explaining European (non-)co-operation in the face of a major integration crisis. First, due to its functional assumptions, it lacks elements of political agency. According to LI, integration essentially occurs when there is demand for it amongst member states due to functional pressures. However, LI's notion of power resources and differences in national capacities should be pushed further. As scholars have argued (e.g., Gruber, 2000), some member states are of a 'critical size' and can stimulate the demand for (further) integration by taking the lead and changing the status quo for others to follow.

Second, LI assumes that member states make rational cost–benefit calculations and hold rather stable policy preferences. In doing so, it gives little space to other elements that might equally motivate member state behaviour. Indeed, (some) member states might go beyond allegedly short-term benefits for the sake of longer-term regional stability. For instance, efforts towards regional stabilization in the face of a major crisis might still prompt common action (Ferrera et al., 2021). Third, and relatedly, LI tends to underestimate that European co-operation and, eventually, integration are still possible even under rather unfavourable conditions. Ultimately, no crisis hits member states completely evenly, meaning that there is no full symmetry in their level of impact or the distribution of costs (Ferrara and Kriesi, 2022). Therefore, political leadership efforts can compensate for the limited functional incentives resulting from rather low levels of member state interdependence.

France and Germany have shaped the European integration process and the development of today's EU polity more than any other (group of) member states. Acting together, France and Germany have large resources available and bargaining power, including administrative, diplomatic and financial capacities (Pedersen, 1998). Moreover, as founding members, France and Germany share special responsibility for the stability and thriving of the integration process, which policy-makers from both countries regularly stress. In the form of their 'embedded bilateralism' (Krotz and Schild, 2013), France and Germany also maintain institutional and political ties at different levels of government, which are unique in international relations and EU politics. The Franco-German 'Elysée' Treaty of Friendship from 1963 even stipulates regular meetings between policy-makers and civil servants from both countries and the establishment of joint positions ahead of European-level meetings. These political, institutional and symbolic underpinnings set France–Germany apart from other (large) EEC member states, like the UK or Italy.

One might thus expect France and Germany to play a prominent and potentially decisive role in European crisis politics. Indeed, the 1973/1974 oil shock displayed some further favourable conditions in this respect: first, the potential for bilateral leadership is greatest in policy fields which are characterized by intergovernmental dynamics and where supranational actors have few competences. In these rather informal settings, Franco-German joint economic and financial weight and bargaining power come to the fore most clearly (Krotz and Schild, 2013, pp. 44–45). Second, France and Germany were in a 'middle group' of member states in terms of dependence on external energy sources (see below). This structural proximity might have increased the potential for bilateral agenda-setting. Third, France and Germany differed in their individual preferences. Empirical research suggests that initially divergent bilateral policy positions open the prospects for broader European compromises because they are likely to coincide with the preferences of other member states (Webber, 1999, pp. 16–17).

At the same time, the emergence and potential impact of Franco-German leadership in European crisis politics rest on some more fundamental conditions. Most importantly, the two countries must share a joint objective for crisis resolution. With respect to the Euro crisis, for instance, Schild (2013) has shown that France and Germany held *different preferences* on individual policy aspects. Yet, both countries shared the *common objective* of saving and stabilizing the single currency. A second factor relates to the number of policy dimensions concerned. Research shows that France and Germany are more likely to reach an agreement and forge compromises when there is a single policy conflict (Schild, 2013). This is because the actor constellation becomes more complex in multidimensional conflicts so that a single compromise is not sufficient to overcome intergovernmental deadlock. Moreover, in this latter constellation, France and Germany are unlikely to represent the same camp of member states along the various policy dimensions. Consequently, the room for potential 'win sets' and mutually satisfying solutions is more limited, both at the bilateral level and at the European level (Krotz and Schild, 2013, pp. 46–47).

European integration literature tends to downplay instances of failed European co-operation and absent bilateral leadership. This relates to a larger problem of scholarship, which often focuses on cases of 'successful' crisis resolution and 'more' integration (Gilbert, 2008). However, to obtain a more complete picture of the phenomenon of interest, instances of less integration and unsuccessful leadership are just as telling. These 'negative' cases help to (re-)define the scope of the conditions for the phenomenon and reveal how a theorized relationship plays out, or not (see also Schoeller, 2018). The 1973/1974 oil crisis is such a case. The most authoritative overviews of European integration history have frequently overlooked or downplayed its significance (Dinan, 2014; Gilbert, 2021; Loth, 2015).

Moreover, most scholars consider the (early) 1970s as one long period of crisis in the shadow of other, broader developments such as globalization, monetary turmoil and national economic decline (e.g., Warlouzet, 2018). The 1973 oil shock has thus rarely been considered or analysed as a European integration crisis (although see Hoerber, 2013). However, as this article documents, the 1973 oil shock had important European dimensions and consequences. It also had further implications regarding transatlantic relations and the shape of the European energy market. At the same time, the 1973 oil shock did *not* lead to European co-operation, let alone further integration. The reason is that the two conditions for an effective European response to a major integration crisis, developed above, were not met: there was no minimum convergence of national preferences on the policy challenges at stake. In addition, France and Germany, as the two largest and supposedly most influential member states, did not provide regional leadership and stabilization.

Based on the theoretical elaborations, Table 1 provides an overview of the analytical strategy. The empirical part conducts process tracing in the form of combining 'theory-revision' with 'theory-building' (Beach and Pedersen, 2019, pp. 274–275). This means that I start with a specific theory – LI – and analyse how well it can explain the observed outcome, namely, European non-co-operation. However, due to the assumed incompleteness of this theory, I introduce a second theoretical perspective: political leadership. These methodological steps enable a full explanation of the observed outcome. Accordingly, Table 1 lists the different crisis stages, together with the prevailing theoretical approaches, their respective explanatory factors and observable implications. Table 1 illustrates a hypothetical path for a European response to the oil crisis. It shows that the initial conditions for such a common response were quite favourable. It further indicates that even the less favourable conditions, as stressed by LI, did not necessarily have to lead to lacking European co-operation. However, the additional absence of regional political leadership ultimately weakened the EU polity.

This article builds on a large range of primary data from French, German and English-speaking sources. These include national, bilateral and European policy documents, speeches and the memoires of leading policy-makers. Conclusions and preparatory texts from European Council meetings, Council of Ministers sessions and international summits were found in the Historical Archives of the European Union in Florence. Notes from Franco-German ministerial meetings and extensive press coverage of important events for the period from summer 1973 to late 1974 were collected in the 'Frankreich-Bibliothek' of the French-German Institute in Ludwigsburg. This article complements these primary data with relevant secondary literature.

II. European Integration in Energy and Foreign Policy Before the Oil Crisis

No genuine European energy policy existed at the time of the oil crisis in 1973. The Treaty of Rome, the EEC's legal basis, only entailed a few explicit references and did not establish concrete European procedures related to energy (Lucas, 1977, pp. 11–29). In the years prior to the crisis, the European Commission had called for common energy measures at various points. For instance, in a memorandum from October 1972, it warned of the EEC's high energy dependence on third countries (Commission, 1972). The Commission (1972) further suggested a unified Community oil market, the creation

Table 1: Crisis Stages and Theoretical/Observable Implications.

Crisis stage and theoretical 'turf'	*Explanatory factor*	*Observable implications*
Crisis shock	External or internal Identifiable 'perpetrator'	In the event of external shock and identifiable perpetrator: shared, simultaneous feeling of threat; little internal blame attribution
Liberal Intergovernmentalism	Relevant power resources	Material, institutional and/or political capacities
	Level of member state interdependence	Asymmetric due to different affectedness
	Availability of outside options	Different qualities of relations with Arab oil-producing countries
Leadership approaches	Shared objective for crisis resolution	Different economic ideas for organization of European energy market
	Number of policy cleavages	Energy policy; foreign policy relations with US and Arab worlds
	European 'prerogative': disproportionate burden-carrying	European 'breakdown' less bad than alternative options
Crisis resolution	European-level solution to crisis challenge	Preference for national measures, (partial) European disintegration, reliance on/subordination to third actors

of energy reserves, a crisis allocation system and a dialogue with other oil-importing countries, like the US and Japan (p. 16). However, when the oil crisis started, the only instruments in place were a stock-pile policy obliging member states to build up reserves equivalent to 65 days of consumption and an agreement on domestic measures for energy rationing in the event of a supply shock (Hager, 1976, pp. 38–39).

At the same time, energy had traditionally played a prominent role in European integration (Hager, 1976; Lieber, 1976). Two of the three communities at the time, the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) and the European Atomic Energy Community (EURATOM), explicitly dealt with matters of energy. The ECSC Treaty notably stipulated that member states and consumers should have 'equal access' to the community's coal and steel reserves. The EEC Treaty, in turn, seeking to establish a common European market, promoted the free circulation of goods and prohibited discriminatory measures between member states. Moreover, in the late 1960s and early 1970s, member states repeatedly stressed their commitment to developing a common energy policy. At the Paris Summit in October 1972, the heads of State or Government declared it necessary for Community bodies to draft an energy policy 'in the near future' (as cited in Krämer, 1974, p. 43; my translation).

Energy policy thus exhibited an 'open decision-making' situation at the time of the oil crisis. On the one hand, the sparse treaty provisions established few institutionalized procedures and provided the EEC's supranational actors, like the Commission, with few competences. On the other hand, the notion of a common market and respective member states' declarations suggested common action in the event of an energy emergency. Such intergovernmental decision-making procedures bring national governments to the fore. As suggested above, the visibility and potential influence of large member states, like France and Germany, are even higher in policy fields characterized by informal politics (Krotz and Schild, 2013, p. 44). Leadership approaches further suggest that actors with relevant resources and political will are needed to define and pursue regional (European) objectives and overcome collective action problems, such as how to prevent or at least mitigate suboptimal policy outcomes. This applies especially when national positions diverge and when there are stronger incentives for individual measures than common ones (Kindleberger, 1973; Schoeller, 2019). As the two largest member states, France and Germany together accounted for more than half of the EEC's overall oil consumption. If Europe was to find a common response to the oil crisis, the role of France and Germany would be crucial.

As a whole, the EEC was highly dependent on the import of energy. In the autumn of 1973, oil accounted for 61% of the EEC's overall energy needs. Member states imported 95% of their oil, two-thirds of which was from Arab countries. This strong dependence, together with the 'weaponization' of oil by Arab countries and their targeted attempt to divide the EEC, led contemporary observers to suggest that member states considered the oil crisis as an external threat requiring a common response (Lieber, 1976, pp. 1, 8). As Türk (2014, p. 357) notes: 'since the [economic] problems affected nearly all industrial nations and did not stop at national borders, national approaches for a solution to the problems seemed inadequate.'

Despite the EEC's great overall dependence on the import of oil, member states' *individual* vulnerability varied considerably (Prodi and Clô, 1976, p. 95). This was for several reasons. First, member states had different domestic energy mixes. In 1973, the UK, for example, covered 52% of its energy needs with oil and was thus the member state least affected by the Arab production cuts. In contrast, oil accounted for 79% and 73% of Italy's and France's energy needs, respectively. Second, member states differed in terms of the availability of their energy resources. Germany, Belgium and the UK still consumed large proportions of domestic coal, whilst coal was less available in other member states. Overall, the UK had the largest energy reserves of all member states due to the newly discovered North Sea oil. To a lesser extent, domestic energy was also available for the Netherlands in the form of the Groningen gas fields.

Most importantly, member states varied in the quality of their political and economic relations with the Arab oil-producing countries. France and the UK maintained good relations with the region, which found expression in industrial investments and pro-Arab attitudes. By contrast, other EEC member states like Germany and the Netherlands tended to side with Israel. This constellation was reflected in OAPEC's categorization: as 'friendly' countries, France and the UK continued to receive their normal oil supplies. The 'unfriendly' Netherlands was the only EEC member state subject to a full oil embargo, whilst Denmark, too, faced sharp cuts in oil supplies. The remaining five member states, grouped as 'neutral', were subject to phased production cuts (Möckli, 2009, pp. 190–191).

The second conflict dimension, foreign policy, showed a similar picture. The EEC's Treaty basis assigned no competences to supranational actors. A European foreign policy in the narrower sense did not exist. However, in the years before the oil crisis, member states had undertaken several steps to strengthen the EEC's foreign policy profile (Möckli, 2009, pp. 13–94). At the Hague Summit in 1969, the national Heads of State or Government established the European Political Cooperation (EPC). The EPC provided a forum, outside of primary law, for regular consultations amongst member states. National governments were to co-ordinate and harmonize their foreign policies to reach unified European positions. Moreover, in 1973, member states developed and eventually signed a 'Declaration on European Identity' (Bulletin, 1973a, pp. 12–13). This declaration stressed the EEC's role as an actor in global politics and member states' determination to speak with a single voice. The declaration also underlined a certain commitment on the part of national governments to emancipate themselves from US dominance in matters of energy and foreign policy (Gfeller, 2012).

The 1973 oil crisis thus provided the first test case for the EEC to make use of these new instruments and prove its ability, and willingness, to act as a unified actor in international affairs. This second, external dimension of the crisis essentially concerned two types of international actors. First, the EEC member states were to take a stance on the Arab–Israeli conflict, where their individual ties and traditional attitudes varied. At the same time, they all advocated for a rapid ending of the war. Member states were also ready, at least to a certain extent, to accommodate Arab demands given their dependence on oil. Second, and more consequentially, the EEC member states differed in their relations with the US. Here, France and Germany occupied the opposite ends of the spectrum of member states' positions (Simonian, 1985, p. 196): France advocated for greater independence and a more distinct European profile in international politics. Germany, on the other hand, was highly reliant on US security guarantees and the continued presence of American military forces on its territory.

Overall, an external shock like the Arab oil embargo and cuts in oil production, which hit the EEC, could be expected to trigger a general interest amongst member states in co-operation and the avoidance of undesirable, collectively suboptimal outcomes, namely, supply shortages and the sharp rise in oil prices. At the same time, as emphasized by LI, member states' varying degrees of affectedness by the crisis and the (partial) availability of other, individual alternatives set incentives for unilateral measures. This is where political leadership comes in. As the EEC's largest and most influential member states, France and Germany, moving beyond strictly defined national interests and carrying disproportionate burdens, might balance such incentives and still pave the way for a common crisis response. Indeed, a Franco-German agreement appeared as the precondition for a broader European stance on the oil crisis. This applied to both the EEC's position with respect to the Arab oil-producing countries and its relationship with the US.

III. European Disintegration in Energy Policy

In the early 1970s, several oil-producing countries in North Africa and the Middle East, grouped as the OPEC, nationalized the production of oil and started challenging the dominance of the multinational, 'Western' oil companies. In early October 1973, the Persian Gulf producers increased the price of crude oil by 70%, whilst another price increase followed in December (Möckli, 2009, pp. 189–190). On 17 October 1973, as a direct response to the Arab–Israeli 'Yom Kippur' War, Arab oil-producing countries, teamed up as the OAPEC, announced an immediate cutback of 5% in oil production compared with September levels, which on 5 November increased to 25%. This was followed by further monthly cutbacks of 5% until Israel withdrew to its 1967 borders. In doing so, the Arab countries sought to force 'Western' oil-importing countries into supporting the Arab position in the war with Israel (L'année politique, 1973, p. 276; see also Möckli, 2009, pp. 189–190).

The combined effect of increased oil prices and cuts in production levels was dramatic. At first, concerns about energy security and sufficient supplies prevailed. As noted above, the EEC was highly dependent on the import of oil. In the course of the crisis, concerns shifted towards high energy prices (Lieber, 1976, p. 29). The massive outflow of 'petrodollars' would exacerbate the balance-of-payment problems of some member states and further fuel inflation rates. Between October 1973 and January 1974, oil prices increased fourfold, causing the worst recession in Western societies since World War II (Chakarova, 2013, p. 53).

On 30 October 1973, as the only EEC country subject to a full Arab oil embargo, the Netherlands called on its partner states to pool Europe's oil supplies and share them, if necessary (EEC, 1973a). Uncertain of how long the embargo would last and whether domestic energy reserves would suffice to cover demand, the Dutch government presented its appeal to European solidarity as a test for the viability of the Community and the nascent common identity of the Nine. The Dutch government also reminded the others that the European common market guaranteed full and equal access to the Community's energy resources and thus did not allow for discriminatory measures against a single member state (Der Spiegel, 1973; Hellema et al., 2004, p. 85). The call occurred just a few days after the President of the European Commission, François-Xavier Ortoli, had assured the Netherlands of their partners' support (Chakarova, 2013, p. 69). However, the Dutch request for solidarity passed unheeded. France and the UK even explicitly rejected the distribution of oil, arguing that such a step would only provoke the Arab countries and make them enlarge the embargo. Instead, they declared the oil embargo to be the consequence of Dutch pro-Israel policy in the Middle East and that, therefore, no appeal to the common market was justified (Hellema et al., 2004, pp. 91–92).

Profound disagreements between member states on questions of energy became visible at the Copenhagen meeting of national Heads of State or Government on 14–15 December 1973. This meeting, which originally had been called for by France's President, Georges Pompidou, to discuss foreign policy, was finally convened by the Danish EEC Council Presidency at the time and turned into an energy crisis summit. In a television interview 2 weeks before the summit, Germany's Chancellor, Willy Brandt, had warned that 'if the Community cannot agree on an issue like energy, it is nothing' (Frankfurter Rundschau, 1973). Similarly, following their bilateral governmental consultations on 26 and 27 November, Pompidou declared that in view of the Copenhagen meeting, Franco-German responsibility for Europe was greater than ever and European solidarity also extended to energy (Le Figaro, 1973). In Copenhagen, however, national leaders were unable to agree on any meaningful measures to tackle the oil shock. Rather than defining and pursuing a collective response, member states followed an independent approach. To placate domestic public opinion on the issue of 'our' oil, the British Prime Minister, Edward Heath, opposed a German–Danish proposal to pool energy resources (as cited in Venn, 1999, p. 83). National leaders could only agree to task the Commission with presenting proposals on the energy problem by late January 1974, which the Council should decide upon quickly in order 'to ensure the orderly functioning of the common market for energy' (Bulletin, 1973b, p. 11).

During the next months, member states were even unable to transform the few commitments made at the Copenhagen Summit and the subsequent Commission proposals into concrete action. On 31 January, the Commission explicitly warned that the Nine would miss their objectives of achieving European unity if concrete actions on a common energy policy remained absent, and it stressed that Europe was now 'in a state of crisis – a crisis of confidence, of will and of clarity of purpose' (Bulletin, 1974a, pp. 10–16). It presented several proposals including a mechanism for oil-sharing and joint co-operation with producer countries and other consuming countries. National governments, however, were eager to maintain their individual room for manoeuvre. On 13 May, the Commission conceded defeat, withdrawing five of its six proposals, including the one on intra-Community trade of oil products (Bulletin, 1974b, p. 57).

Given the reduction in oil supplies and the rise in prices, several member states proceeded to impede the export of oil to other member states. Italy and Belgium, for instance, despite strong criticism from the European Commission, licensed and thus essentially restricted the export of refined oil products (Lieber, 1976, p. 17). Protectionism and the erection of trade barriers stood in stark contrast to the free movement of goods inside the European common market and, as such, violated the EEC Treaty. Articles 30–34 of the Treaty explicitly prohibited the introduction of any trade restrictions amongst member states or other 'measures having the equivalent effect' (as cited in Chakarova, 2013, p. 65). In addition, France and the UK intensified their diplomatic and economic ties with the Arab countries. They concluded several bilateral contracts for armament and industrial products in exchange for stable oil supplies. By the end of 1974, France established bilateral contracts with Algeria, Iran, Iraq, Libya, Syria and Saudi Arabia for oil supplies in exchange for industrial products, armaments and nuclear reactors (L'année politique, 1974, pp. 194–195; see also Lieber, 1976, p. 32).

Why did the EEC not develop a common position on energy issues? And why did member states even accept the partial disintegration of the European market, despite the external shock posed by the Arab oil restrictions? LI offers parts of the explanation. Several national governments considered their interdependence to be asymmetric in that they had 'outside' options available and did not rely on (further) European integration as much as others. At the same time, all member states still advocated for European co-operation and the development of a common energy policy. Most notably, the French and German governments publicly stressed the importance of developing and pursuing a European energy policy (Le Figaro, 1973). However, they held different opinions on what such an energy policy should look like. Leadership approaches thus provide the missing part in the explanation for lacking European co-operation during the oil crisis.

France and Germany took different positions on almost every aspect concerning energy. Most significantly, the EEC's two largest member states did not develop a common objective regarding crisis management and resolution. To a large extent, this was the consequence of the contrasting organization of their national energy markets and differing economic principles (Simonian, 1985, pp. 198–218). On the one hand, France pursued a dirigiste and at times protectionist approach. It stimulated the rise of large domestic, state-owned companies. France prioritized the organization of a European energy market based on its national principles, which included controls on energy imports, and made it a prerequisite for a common European energy policy. It also emphasized stable, state-controlled energy prices (Le Monde, 1973). Germany, on the other hand, pursued a liberal, free-market approach. It advocated for the open, competitive trade of energy products. Germany did not have large oil companies but favoured multilateral co-operation. It was also more concerned with stable supplies than energy prices. Recent divides in autumn 2022 between France and Germany, and EU member states more generally, on aspects related to the European energy markets – such as a cap for gas prices – again show differences in national economic principles and approaches.

In 1973 and 1974, bilateral contracts with Middle Eastern countries and competitive bidding against each other were the clearest expression of lacking co-operation between the EEC member states. Keohane (1984, p. 223) argued that the large oil-importing countries, adopting a self-interested stance – a 'sauve qui peut' approach (save yourself, if you can) – failed to overcome the dilemma of collective action. This is exactly the opposite of what would be expected from effective political leadership. Instead, member states contributed to the quadrupling of prices by seeking to secure preferential oil supplies individually and imposing restrictions on oil exports. Still lacking the desired solidarity from their partner countries, the OAPEC only terminated its discriminating measures against the Netherlands and Denmark in the summer of 1974. The Netherlands was subject to a full embargo until July, longer than any other oil-consuming country.

It was only due to the decision of the multinational oil companies to reallocate oil supplies roughly on a pro-rata basis that there was no severe supply shortage in the EEC member states. This decision happened irrespective of the embargo imposed by the Arab countries, and at times, even against the will of national governments. The oil companies, therefore, limited the supply shortages for individual member states, like the Netherlands, and saved European consumers from the full consequences of their governments' nationalist actions. In this respect, '[t]he transnational networks of the companies succeeded where intergovernmental politics had failed' (Keohane, 1984, p. 223). However, although the oil companies mitigated the overall damage for the EEC, their calculations were still based on commercial interests. Distribution across member states was thus not as equitable as a politically established and supported allocation mechanism for oil could have been (Prodi and Clô, 1976, p. 98).

IV. Failure of European Foreign Policy

France and Germany also differed with respect to foreign policy (Simonian, 1985, pp. 198–218). France suggested direct talks and negotiations between the EEC and the Arab oil-producing countries. It considered internal European energy measures as a prerequisite for any talks with other oil-importing countries. Most importantly, France advocated for a more autonomous European role in global politics and more independence from the US. In contrast, Germany wanted energy co-operation to happen within a larger group of Western oil-consuming countries. At various points, it signalled that the most promising framework for international oil negotiations was not necessarily the EEC but could also include meetings between national leaders and ministers of the largest industrial countries in the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). In view of the given challenges, Germany also favoured even closer ties to the US. Again, parallels become apparent to more recent debates concerning a more 'sovereign' European profile in global politics, as suggested by France, or the deepening of transatlantic ties, as favoured by most German policy-makers.

Like the internal dimension concerning energy, in terms of foreign policy, France and Germany could not compensate for the rather limited functional pressures in 1973/1974 resulting from the member states' asymmetric interdependence. Again, regional leadership, in the form of moving beyond strictly defined national interests and forging European unity, did not replace the incentives for national and unilateral measures. The reason was not primarily the different preferences that France and Germany had on individual policies. As this article's analytical framework suggests, and as other European integration crises have shown, the potential for Franco-German leadership is greatest if both countries take opposite stances at the onset of the crisis because this constellation might encompass a larger spectrum of national preferences (Schild, 2013; Webber, 1999). Instead, regarding the foreign policy dimension, France and Germany also lacked a common objective for crisis management and resolution. This mostly concerned the role of the US and the preferred form, and depth, that the European–American relationship should take.

The only common initiative on the part of the EEC was the 'Declaration on the Middle East' from 6 November 1973, in which the member states called all parties to the conflict to 'return immediately to the positions they occupied on 22 October' (EEC, 1973b). Scholars and the European public largely interpreted the declaration as pro-Arab, with some accusing the EEC of giving in to Arab demands and appeasing the producer countries to safeguard oil supplies (Gfeller, 2012, p. 96; Möckli, 2009, p. 340). Along these lines, the European Commissioner responsible for energy, Henri Simonet (1975, p. 451), criticized that in the face of a sustained oil embargo and its economic and political consequences, member states chose 'the path of appeasement at any price'. Common European action remained limited to such normative, diplomatic declarations with little to no practical follow-up.

Matters became more complicated and divisive again once substance was concerned, namely, international co-operation on oil. On 12 December 1973, the US Secretary of State, Henry Kissinger, proposed that the EEC and the US, together with Canada and Japan, should set up an Energy Action Group. This group was to be composed of senior national representatives and tackle the oil crisis as a transatlantic issue. France opposed this initiative due to concerns about US domination. It instead suggested a larger international conference that would also include developing and oil-producing countries in addition to the Western industrialized countries (Venn, 1999, p. 86). Against this background, in mid-January 1974, the US President, Richard Nixon, invited the five largest EEC member states – France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands and the UK – to a conference to take place the following month in Washington to further discuss the idea of a consumer's club. The EEC member states insisted that all of them, together with the European Commission, should be represented. They also negotiated a common mandate for the Washington Conference. On 5 February, the Nine agreed upon a collective position on the procedure as put forward by the US. France insisted that the purpose of the conference was preliminary talks about consumer-country co-operation and technical matters and that it would not involve the creation of any new formal institutions (Gfeller, 2012, pp. 123–124).

From 11 to 13 February, the Washington Energy Conference brought together representatives from 13 oil-consuming countries to discuss ways to jointly address the oil crisis. The US objective was to move the EEC member states towards institutionalized energy co-operation in the form of a consumer's organization, which could balance the power of the OPEC. The US underpinned its objective with considerable pressure, suggesting a link between transatlantic co-operation on energy and the continuing presence and protection of US military forces, which most EEC member states relied upon (Venn, 1999, p. 87). As a consequence, European divisions arose and further deepened during the conference, as all but one member state agreed with the US proposal. It was France that refused to sign the essential parts of the final communiqué. Notably, the French government did not endorse formulations on a distributing system in times of emergency, consumer-country co-operation and institutionalized follow-ups to the conference (Le Monde, 1974).

The European divide in Washington was largely due to general differences in member states' preferences, dependencies and priorities in aspects of foreign and energy policy. More concretely, however, it was the result of Franco-German clashes. Möckli (2009, pp. 268–279) notes that Germany played a key role in Washington, for two reasons: first, as the EEC's biggest economy with a strong industrial basis and a large market of energy consumers, Germany's choice would be of great importance to the European handling of the oil crisis. Second, Germany represented 'the weakest link in the European chain' (Möckli, 2009, p. 269) because it was more vulnerable to US threats of military withdrawal than any other member state. As a result, when forced to side with either France or the US, Germany's Finance Minister, Schmidt, promised to back the American proposal. According to the memoirs of the French Foreign Minister, Jobert (1976, p. 380; my translation), Schmidt declared that '[i]f I must choose between Europe and the

Table 2: Franco-German Differences and Their EEC-Level Consequences in the 1973/1974 Oil Crisis.

Overall objective	*Policy dimension*	*France*	*Germany*	*Consequences*
Lack of joint/shared objective regarding crisis resolution	Energy policy (including economic philosophies)	Interventionist, creation of national champions; main concern about prices (Italy)	Liberal market model; main concern about supply (Denmark, the Netherlands)	No common response to oil crisis: (internal) European disintegration, failure of EPC
	Foreign policy (including political orientations)	Bilateral contracts with oil producers (UK); multipolar relations, equidistance to the US, European Energy Agency (Belgium)	Consumer–country negotiations with producers; multilateral, transatlantic co-operation (Denmark, the Netherlands)	

Abbreviations: EEC, European Economic Community; EPC, European Political Cooperation; UK, United Kingdom; US, United States.

United States, I choose the United States, let me be clear about this'. Schmidt also bluntly told his European colleagues that due to its strong economic and monetary position, his country was able, and willing, to pay for higher energy prices without running into balance-of-payment difficulties (Der Spiegel, 1974). Germany's Foreign Minister, Walter Scheel, speaking in his capacity as acting President-in-office of the EEC Council, also backed the US proposals.

Such remarks and decisions led the French Foreign Minister to note that at the first opportunity, he would welcome his European colleagues with the words: 'good morning, you traitors!' (Jobert, 1976, p. 383; my translation). The French delegation in Washington considered Scheel to have overstepped his mandate and, through his partisanship in favour of the US, to have deviated from the common position agreed by the Council a few days before (Nouvel Observateur, 1974). Türk (2014, p. 361) called the Washington Conference, from an EEC perspective, 'a total disaster'. Möckli (2009, p. 272) argues that the conference 'witnessed the open collaboration of [West] Germany with the United States against France', which was a most unusual constellation, both for transatlantic relations during the Cold War and for European integration matters. Yet, this constellation reflected the different political priorities amongst the Nine and the lack of a shared bilateral and broader European objective on how to address the crisis. Unsurprisingly, as no other member state, or coalition of member states, was able to step in, a common EEC stance and a European response to the oil crisis remained absent.

The Washington Conference closed on 13 February with a final communiqué that, due to the lack of a joint European paper, followed the basis of the American proposal (Möckli, 2009, p. 274). The conference set up an Energy Coordinating Group, to be composed of senior national representatives, to discuss energy initiatives. As an alternative, for a short time, France suggested the creation of a European Energy Agency within the EEC to deal with questions of energy conservation and the development of alternative energy sources (Türk, 2014, pp. 365–366). This proposal, however, never gained sufficient support from the other member states. Instead, the Energy Coordinating Group became the basis of the International Energy Agency (IEA), which was formally established in November 1974 (Keohane, 1978). The IEA was affiliated with the OECD, which was evidenced by the fact that the IEA was located at the OECD headquarters in Paris. It comprised 16 member states, whilst France refused to become a full member. The IEA was dominated by the US and embodied a counterpart to the oil-producing countries assembled as the OPEC. Its institutionalization also marked and solidified the European split on the foreign policy dimension of the 1973/1974 oil crisis (Keohane, 1984, pp. 220–222).

Conclusions

Following the 'Yom Kippur' War of October 1973 and Arab restrictions on the production and delivery of oil, European supplies dropped by 10%, whilst oil prices increased by a striking 400% within 4 months. According to one analyst, in late 1973 and early 1974, 'the [European Economic] Community plunged into one of its deepest crises, marked by tendencies of re-nationalization, fragmentation, and desolidarization' (Möckli, 2009, pp. 249–250). A contemporary observer even referred to the oil shock as the EEC's 'deepest crisis since its existence' (Kaiser, 1974; my translation). Originating from political and economic conditions outside of Europe, the oil crisis unexpectedly hit the EEC as a whole. Hence, at first sight, the conditions for a common European response to the crisis did appear rather favourable. This is because of attempts made in previous years to create a European foreign policy and initiatives for a European energy policy. Moreover, general affectedness, intra-European solidarity and, most notably, the embargo against one of their partners might have led member states to consider the oil crisis as a common challenge requiring a common response (Lieber, 1976, p. 1).

Yet, national positions, priorities and initiatives varied and further diverged 'precisely at the moment when a unified response was most urgently needed' (Prodi and Clô, 1976, p. 91). This was largely due to differences in the organization of national energy markets and the availability of individual 'outside' options compared with common European action. Member states also varied in their preferences regarding European foreign policy. Therefore, the EEC did not manage to establish and pursue a common approach to the Arab–Israeli conflict, emancipate itself from US dominance, nor address and moderate the Arab oil embargo. Most consequentially, with respect to energy policy, member states established restrictions on the export of oil. The open undermining of the free movement of goods, as a key principle of the European common market, even marked (partial) European disintegration. Taking LI as a baseline approach, this article has argued that this outcome was largely due to different national policy preferences and asymmetry in member state interdependence.

However, LI alone does not provide a full explanation for absent and even decreasing European integration in the face of the oil crisis, for two reasons: first, as everyone was in favour of a common European energy and foreign policy, member states still advocated co-ordinated action. Second, European treaty provisions and the notion of solidarity suggested that especially the Netherlands, facing severe supply difficulties, should have been able to count on its partner states to help with their oil supplies (see also Krämer, 1974, p. 48). Therefore, even in the light of different, and at times divergent national preferences, a common response and (further) European integration during the oil crisis still seemed possible. Indeed, leadership approaches (Kindleberger, 1973; Schoeller, 2019) suggest that actors with crucial resources and political will are necessary to define common objectives and overcome collective action problems.

France and Germany, as the EEC's two largest member states with most (financial and political) resources and the biggest shares in the European energy market, were the most likely candidates to play such a leadership role. As in other major European integration crises, their action was decisive for any course that member states would take (see also Kaiser, 1974). However, France and Germany did not compensate for the rather limited functional pressures resulting from low levels of member state interdependence as they did not go beyond strictly defined national interests and lacked a common objective for crisis resolution. For its part, Germany turned out to be very vulnerable in European foreign and energy policy, primarily because of its high reliance on the US for defence. France, in turn, opposed new transatlantic frameworks and fought for an autonomous, 'sovereign' European approach in both foreign and energy policy. At the same time, it was not ready to restrict its own national room for manoeuvre in dealing bilaterally with the Arab countries. Therefore, in addition to few functional pressures, co-operation failure and European disintegration were due to the 'total lack of political will', especially on the part of France and Germany (Kohl, 1978, p. 112). Table 2 gives an overview of Franco-German differences in the oil crisis, in both energy and foreign policy-related aspects. Based on archival research and publicly available information, like-minded EEC member states are put into paratheses.

What are the broader implications of this study's findings, both concerning European integration theory and the EU's most recent energy crisis? Theoretically, this article has established the reasons for failed European co-operation. The literature predominantly focuses on instances of successful crisis management, which tends to provide an incomplete and biased picture of European integration. For European co-operation and (further) integration to happen, at least one of two conditions must be met: as LI, the 'baseline' approach to explain European integration (Moravcsik and Schimmelfennig, 2019), suggests, high functional pressures might suffice for member states to agree on policy and institutional innovation. Alternatively, political leadership, the definition and pursuit of joint objectives for polity stabilization (Ferrera et al., 2021; Kindleberger, 1973), might still stimulate common action. Thus, a correlation and potential complementarity exists between factors stressed by LI and leadership approaches: in 'open' intergovernmental decision-making situations, such as European integration crises, moving beyond strictly defined national preferences and carrying disproportionate crisis burdens becomes more important, and more demanding, when member state interdependence tends to be asymmetric and 'outside' options are largely available.

More empirically, striking similarities exist between the EEC's 1973 oil crisis and the EU's recent gas crisis. In both cases, an external event, the weaponization of Arab oil and Russia's war against Ukraine with its implications for European energy, confronted member states with difficult choices. Developing a joint policy to address energy shortages and price hikes, which was difficult then, has turned out to be difficult today (Schramm, 2023). Differences in member states' (immediate) affectedness and dependence on Russian fossil fuels again created collective action problems, with national governments pursuing competitive bidding and negotiating bilateral energy contracts with third countries. Moreover, the 2022 gas crisis saw several instances of Franco-German clashes over the organization of the European energy market. Amongst other things, France, again, suggests a more 'sovereign' Europe and advocates for common fiscal measures to limit the costs of energy. It also seeks to promote domestic energy resources, including nuclear power. Germany, in contrast, is again more concerned about stable energy supply and mobilizes large fiscal resources for domestic stimulus packages, causing concerns amongst other member states about distortion of the single market. An effective European crisis response, however, so far has been lacking. Instead, the very limited use of mandatory energy-saving proposals and the European platform for the joint purchasing of gas is reminiscent of member states' co-operation problems in the 1973 oil crisis.

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