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THE IMPACT OF DEMOCRATIC BACKSLIDING ON CLIMATE AND ENERGY POLICIES IN EUROPEAN COUNTRIES

Master's thesis

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I declare that I have compiled the dissertation independently and all works, important standpoints and data by other authors have been properly referenced and the same paper has not been previously presented for grading.

The document length is 15000 words from the introduction to the end of the summary.

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TABLE OF CONTENT

TABLES

ABSTRACT

The objective of this research was to ascertain the underlying factors that lead to the backsliding of democratic principles, evaluated its implications on the energy and climate policy of Europe, and identified viable approaches to avert such an outcome. Qualitative analysis known as systematic literature review was performed on case studies from Bulgaria, Georgia, Poland, Turkey and Russia. This study finding indicated that the backsliding of democratic values has adverse consequences for climate and energy policy in Europe, such as the encouragement of fossil fuel consumption and a decrease in backing for renewable energy. The research demonstrated a relationship between the backsliding democracy of democratic institutions and factors such as leadership, economic conditions, civil society, and global cooperation. However, strategies such as encouraging the engagement of civil society and ensuring freedom of the press, promoting international collaboration and responsibility, and reinforcing democratic establishments and the principles of justice are among the strategies implemented by the global community to prevent regression in democratic systems. The strategies delineated herein are transferable not solely to the European counties and its constituent states, but to any nation encountering analogous predicaments. The study concluded that safeguarding democracy and its institutions is imperative for ensuring the successful implementation of climate and energy policy. The adoption of the principles delineated in this document by the European countries and its constituent states would potentially lead to a more auspicious future for all.

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background Information

Democracy backsliding denotes a nation's deterioration in adherence to democratic values and establishments (Cass, 2022). Limiting press freedom, suppressing opposition parties, and rigging elections are all examples of how leaders and political parties might try to consolidate control and weaken checks and balances on their authority (Haggard & Kaufman, 2021). Backsliding can occur in democracies that are well established as well as in those that are still developing their institutions. Then, potentially pose a negative consequence of the backsliding of individual freedoms, the increase in unethical behaviors, and the loss of trust in democratic establishments for natural resource such as energy (Freedom House, 2021). There is need to preserve the vitality of democracy and averting its deterioration through the reinforcement of democratic institutions and the implementation of suitable mechanisms for oversight and accountability.

The concept of governance by the populace has a longstanding history in Europe, tracing its origins to the ancient Greek civilization (Freedom House, 2021). European authoritarian regimes like fascism and communism rose and fell in the 20th century. Democratic institutions and practices, including representative democracy, the rule of law, and civil freedoms, evolved and refined across the continent (Schmidt, 2005). After WWII, several European countries built democratic governments, often with ally help and US. After the Soviet Union collapsed in 1991, many Central and Eastern European countries adopted democratic governments.

The significances of democratic backsliding on activities to address climate change are progressively manifesting (IPCC, 2018). In instances where democracies experience a decline,

there is a possibility that governments exhibit reduced responsiveness to the public's call for action on climate change, decreased transparency in their decision-making procedures, and diminished accountability to their citizenry (OHCHR, 2022). Therefore, implementing measures to address climate change diminished, delayed and potentially forsaken entirely (Benzie & Persson, 2019). Moreover, autocratic governments would probably enact measures that exacerbate the impact of climate change instead of mitigating it, as they prioritize immediate economic objectives over enduring ecological concerns (Cass, 2022). The protection of democratic institutions is of utmost importance to effectively address the intersection of climate change and the erosion of democratic values, necessitating their resilience against potential threats (Hope & Limberg, 2022). Strengthening the supremacy of legal principles, safeguarding the independence of the press and promoting the liberty of journalistic expression are some of the democracy's propensity among international communities.

Across the annals of documented history, climate change has persisted as a significant issue, despite the advancement of our understanding regarding its genesis and consequences (Jones et al., 2020). The European nations are significant contributor to the global production of greenhouse gases while concurrently spearheading international actions to address the issue of climate change. Consequently, European nations have been actively formulating and implementing regulations to reduce carbon emissions, increase sustainable energy production, and improve energy efficacy (Overland, 2018). For example, European countries aims to cut greenhouse gas emissions by 55% by 2030 (CAN, 2021). The EU Emissions Trading System prices carbon emissions, while the Renewable Energy Directive sets renewable energy targets (European Commission, 2021). In

addition, domestic climate and energy policies in Europe work with European commission policies.

Climate change mitigation began in the 1970s when scientists raised concern about the planet's changing climate and human influence (IPCC, 2012). Climate change prompted the 1992 UNFCCC. Its primary objective is to stabilize greenhouse gas concentrations in the atmosphere at a level that would prevent hazardous anthropogenic interference with the climate system (UNFCCC, 2007). Consequently, numerous global initiatives launched to combat climate change. The 1997 ratification of the Kyoto Protocol, which mandated that developed countries achieve predetermined emission reduction goals, is a significant event in this regard (National Democratic Institute, 2022). Doelman et al., (2019) said that 2015 Paris Agreement requires states to restrict global warming to 2 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels to keep it below 1.5 degrees Celsius.

The implementation swift measures such as transitioning towards a low-carbon economy, discontinuing the use of fossil fuels, and developing innovative technologies and strategies to mitigate greenhouse gas emissions and enhance adaptability to climate change is imperative in addressing the issue of climate change (Luu et al., 2019). The trend under climate change politics fueled due to various factors, including the emergence of populist and nationalist movements, increased political polarization and fragmentation, and the economic and social upheaval resulting from globalization and technological advancements.

Democratic ideals restored to implement effective climate and energy policies and protect the environment, people, and society. Thus, national and global collaboration to boost public trust in the government and its ability to address environmental concerns transparently and responsibly. This study examined the political, economic, and social variables that have weakened democratic institutions in Europe and how they affect climate and energy policies. This study aimed to examine the impact of democratic backsliding on energy and climate policy, contributing factor and strategies employed in specific European countries.

1.2 Problem Statement

Global warming is a major issue and governments needs to encourage renewable energy, cut carbon emissions, and prepare communities for climate change to address this challenge. If these policies are to be effective, democratic leadership that can make informed decisions, address public concerns, and work with other nations. Climate change necessitates effective climate and energy policies, but democratic backsliding impedes policies implementation.

In recent years, numerous European administrations have diminished civil liberties, opposition, and the rule of law hence trend harm climate and energy strategies in these countries. The backsliding of democratic norms and institutions hinder climate and energy policy creation, implementation, and enforcement to mitigate climate change. Examining democracy, climate, and energy policies helps comprehend the problems and prospects of democratic and sustainable development in the face of climate change.

1.3 Research Questions

I. What are the main factors contributing to democratic backsliding in European countries?

II. How have climate and energy policies been affected by Democracy backsliding in the European countries highlighted?

III. What strategies adopted to mitigate the possible risk of democratic backsliding for the European countries climate and energy policy?

1.4 Research Objectives

I. To analyze the extent to which democracy backsliding in European countries have contributed to energy and climate policy.

II. To evaluate the factors of democracy backsliding on climate and energy policy in the European countries.

III. To examine strategies balance that democracy backsliding advocate for the European countries climate and energy policy.

1.5 Significance and purpose of the study

This study examined political, economic, and social issues in European countries that affect democratic backsliding and climate and energy policy. The research also examined how democracy setback affects climate and energy policy to understand the constraints and potential of sustainable and democratic governance in the context of climate change.

This research helped policymakers and others understand how democracy backsliding effect climate and energy policies. Climate and energy policies depend on democratic governance and

deteriorating democratic norms and institutions might hinder their design, application, and enforcement. This research could improve sustainable and democratic governance in these nations by revealing how democracy backsliding affects climate and energy policies.

1.6 Scope of the study

This study analyzed the impact democracies backsliding on European countries such as Russia and Poland climate and energy policies and applicants of the countries' recent democratic backsliding. National climate and energy policies, from their inception through their implementation and enforcement, these were examined to understand how democratic decline affects climate adaptation.

This research study relied on secondary sources such as policy papers, studies and existing academic literature with subject matter experts. A comparative methodology guides the study, letting comparison the effects of backsliding democracies on climate and energy policies across sample set of nations. Furthermore, it is important to stress that the goal of this study is not to evaluate the performance of climate and energy policies in these nations.

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

The study's objective was to analyze the results of democratic backsliding on energy and climate policy in Bulgaria, Georgia Turkey, and Poland and Russia. The study evaluated the efficacy of existing policies and legislation linked to climate and energy and analyzes the extent to which democratic backsliding has hindered successful implementation policies in each country. However, there are number of theoretical and empirical publications that examined the implications of democratic backsliding on energy and climate policy in European countries.

The literature overwhelmingly agreed that maintaining democratic processes and institutions is crucial for developing and enforcing effective climate and energy policy. Analyzing specific EU member states and non-EU members on the complex relationship between democratic backsliding and climate and energy policy, which in turn can inform future efforts to resolve these concerns.

2.2 Theoretical Literature Review

2.2.1 Democratic Theory

By applying democratic theory, it is possible to gain a deeper understanding of the impact of democratic decline on the climate and energy policies of Europe states (Haggard & Kaufman, 2021). Democratic theory places emphasis on the importance of public involvement and governmental accountability in decision-making processes (Shapiro, 2009). Democratic theory posits that there exists a significant discrepancy among European countries about the caliber of democracy and the extent of public engagement. For example, Germany and the Netherlands exhibit strong democratic institutions and elevated levels of civic participation, while Bulgaria and

Poland have experienced a decline in their democratic institutions in recent times. Democratic theorists suggest that mitigating the adverse effects of democratic backsliding on climate and energy policies potentially prioritizing the development of democratic institutions and processes. Increased decision-making transparency, public participation in policy formulation, and accountability help achieve this goal. In a democracy, voters actively shape public policy, and the decision-making process is transparent and honest.

2.2.2 Environmental Governance Theory

The application of environmental governance theory facilitates comprehension of the processes by which member states of the European climate and energy policies. The existing theoretical framework prioritizes the significance of collective decision-making, active participation of citizens, and cooperation among government, civil society, and business entities (Bridge & Perreault, 2009). This observation is significant as it entails the collaboration of multiple tiers of governance and diverse stakeholder factions in the formulation and implementation of climate and energy policies.

The backsliding of democratic participation and stakeholder collaboration can potentially impede environmental governance, as per the tenets of environmental governance theory (Zelli et al., 2017). In order to address this issue, it is imperative to enhance democratic institutions and processes to guarantee the involvement of all pertinent stakeholders in policy formulation and implementation, while ensuring the adoption of valid and efficacious policies. The study holds significance as it offers valuable understanding regarding the determinants that influence the formulation of climate and energy policies in the selected nations (Hess & Renner, 2019).

Environmental governance theory places emphasis on the importance of collaborative and cooperative efforts among stakeholders, as well as the significance of efficient institutional arrangements and regulatory frameworks.

2.2.3 Resource Curse Theory

There is a well-established theoretical framework called the resource curse theory that describes how a country's wealth in natural resources can backfire on its economy and government (Di John, 2011). The resource curse theory applied to examine the effects of fossil fuels on democratic institutions, economic growth, and environmental governance in the context of European countries (Ross, 2015). The resource curse theory posits that nations that have an abundance of material wealth such as oil, gas, and coal might also be more susceptible to corruption, economic decline, and political upheaval.

Coal in Poland and oil and gas in Russia are two examples of how fossil fuel resources can be utilized to study the effects on democratic institutions and economic growth in European countries via the lens of the resource curse theory (Stefanova et al., 2019). According to the rent-seeking theory, the availability of fossil fuel resources might encourage rent-seeking behavior, which in turn can erode democratic institutions and elevate resource exploitation over broader economic and social growth (Di John, 2011). The influence of fossil fuel resources on environmental governance can be analyzed using resource curse theory as well.

2.3 Empirical Literature Review

The study by Zepa, (2022) examined the political obstacles that impede the establishment of energy highlands by linking the energy islands in the Baltic region. The existing article delves into the analysis of the political and economic limitations that impede the adoption of renewable energy sources in a given region. Zepa employed a comprehensive qualitative research methodology to explore this subject matter. The research indicates that the adoption of a renewable energy policy in the Baltic nations is significantly insufficient political determination, investments in non-renewable energy sources, and inadequate investments in sustainable technology. The author emphasized on crucial role of robust policy frameworks and active stakeholder engagement in effecting sustainable transformations, while also acknowledging the political difficulties (Zepa, 2022). Further, the study contributes to the extant body of literature on energy transitions in Europe by emphasizing the imperative need for comprehensive sustainability strategies that incorporate political and economic considerations.

A study by Vanegas (2020) conducted an analysis of the interrelation among renewable energy, energy democracy, and sustainable development within the framework of developing countries. The study presents a plan to expedite the shift towards renewable energy sources by highlighting the importance of increased involvement and democratic decision-making in the energy sector. The contention posited by the author is that the attainment of sustainable development objectives is contingent upon the provision of fair and impartial access to the advantages of renewable energy. Vanegas (2020) employed case studies from emerging economies to exemplify the challenges and potential advantages of transitioning to sustainable energy sources. The author identified various obstacles, including political, economic, and social factors that hinder the widespread adoption of

renewable energy sources. Additionally, the author offered recommendations for addressing these challenges. The author added to the expanding corpus of literature on the transition to renewable energy and energy democracy. It does so by presenting a comprehensive framework aimed at expediting transition in countries with low-income levels. The argument put forth by the author posits that an equitable and sustainable energy transition that is advantageous to all segments of society in developing nations can be attained through the prioritization of energy democracy (Vanegas, 2020). Further, the article provided information regarding the significance of public participation in energy policy for sustainable development and the importance of renewable energy sources.

Tsagkari et al., (2021) study investigates the energy systems of Greece and Spain, with a particular emphasis on the potential impact of renewable energy sources at the municipal level on the advancement of democratic and eco-friendly energy policies. The present model of energy production and consumption that socially unjust but also unsustainable. As a result, they recommend the implementation of regrowth policies. The present investigation employs the Greek island of Ikaria and the Spanish island of Formentera as exemplars, given their concerted efforts to attain energy self-sufficiency by means of renewable energy resources and extensive community involvement. The authors analyze the institutional settings, societal dynamics, and economic factors that have either facilitated or impeded these initiatives. The promotion of sustainability and democracy are facilitated through the establishment of robust governance systems, prioritization of social and environmental objectives over economic growth, and community involvement in local renewable energy production (Tsagkari et al., 2021). In general, the research study enhanced

comprehension of energy democracy and sustainability transitions through emphasizing the significance of grassroots initiatives and community involvement.

The scholarly article titled "Women's Leadership in Renewable Transformation, Energy Justice, and Energy Democracy: Redistributing Power," authored by Allen et al., (2019) emphasized the significance of female leadership in the aforementioned areas. The disproportionate impact of fossil fuel production and consumption on women, according to the authors, makes women's leadership in the transition to renewable energy of the utmost importance. This article investigates women's participation in renewable energy community initiatives and policies in Africa and Asia. The researchers employ a feminist and intersectional framework to examine the interconnection among gender, energy, and justice, highlighting the imperative to acknowledge and confront the diverse manifestations of inequity that impede women's agency within the energy sector. The discourse also encompasses the subject of female empowerment and gender parity, with a focus on how renewable energy initiatives led by decentralized and community-based entities can expand the opportunities for women to assume leadership positions. Allen et al (2019) a persuasive argument for the significance of female leadership in promoting a fair and sustainable energy infrastructure. Additionally, it offers valuable perspectives on how renewable energy can facilitate endeavors to achieve gender equality and social equity.

This article by Huda, (2022) explored the potential correlation between energy megaprojects and a resurgence of autocratic rule. The article posits that autocratic regimes are prone to initiating energy megaprojects that are typically associated with limited public participation and ecological apprehensions, particularly in the current era of democratic regression. Huda employs case studies

from Bangladesh, Myanmar, and Pakistan to demonstrate how authoritarian governments promote large-scale energy initiatives despite resistance from the general populace and potential ecological hazards. In an era marked by a decline in democratic practices, the present article underscores the significance of enhanced public participation and transparency in the context of energy-related decision-making. The declaration underscores the potential hazards associated with energy megaprojects in areas characterized by vulnerable democratic systems and civil society. The article authored by Huda makes a valuable contribution to the ongoing discourse regarding the potential advantages of implementing sound energy policies for the purposes of promoting democratic governance and fostering sustainable economic development. The significance of possessing a thorough comprehension of the function of autocratic authority in energy decision-making procedures is emphasized, along with the policy ramifications for enhancing energy governance amidst democratic regression.

The concept of energy democracy refers to a system in which individuals and communities have greater control and decision-making power over the production and distribution of energy resources (Szulecki & Overland, 2020). This post would address the questions and provide answers. According to the authors, the concept of energy democracy is a multifaceted and intricate notion that has garnered significant interest in scholarly and governmental discussions. The authors posit that there are three fundamental pillars that are integral to the concept of energy democracy (Szulecki & Overland, 2020). These include the active involvement and fair representation of citizens, the protection of private property rights, and the just and equitable allocation of resources. The concept of energy democracy is juxtaposed with other objectives of sustainability such as energy security and climate change mitigation, while also acknowledging the potential for conflicts

and trade-offs among these goals. This paper also examines the broader theoretical framework of democracy. The research adheres to a coherent framework and presents a concise synopsis of the multifaceted aspects of energy democracy. The study undertakes analysis and critical evaluation of extant definitions of energy democracy and proposes a more comprehensive framework that encompasses both procedural and substantive dimensions of democracy. Hence, study held significant academic value as it offers a theoretical framework for comprehending the concept of energy democracy and its possible implications on energy and climate policies within the European Union. In addition, has the potential to aid policymakers and practitioners in transitioning towards energy governance models that are more participatory and democratic in nature.

Simon & Moltz, (2021) did a comparison between public opinion regarding climate change legislation and investment in renewable energy and conservative ideology is examined. As per the authors' perspective, the advancement in these domains impeded tendency towards conservatism, with authoritarian ideologies that prioritize stability and organization over transformation and novelty. The deduction derived from survey data, which indicates that individuals who identify as conservatives' exhibit a lower propensity to support endeavors aimed at financing research pertaining to climate change and alternative sources of energy. The authors emphasize the significance of conservative values and apprehensions in the United States, proposing their integration into endeavors aimed at promoting climate and renewable energy policies. The present research offers valuable understanding regarding the obstacles associated with advancing sustainable energy transitions in politically disputed nations, such as the United States.

Kammermann & Dermont, (2018) investigates the impact on the transition towards low-carbon energy in Western Europe. The contention posited by the authors is that the far-right political factions in Western Europe wield significant influence over the discourse and determinations pertaining to the energy transition. This study examined the policies, voting records, and party platforms of far-right political parties in France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Sweden, and the United Kingdom. The study employs both qualitative and quantitative methodologies to investigate the influence of these entities on policies aimed at facilitating the shift towards a low-carbon energy system. The results of this study indicate that radical right political parties in Western Europe exhibit a lower level of concern regarding the consequences of climate change and are more inclined to endorse the ongoing utilization of non-renewable energy sources. The argument put forth by the authors posits that the ideological orientation of the extremist right-wing faction may pose a hindrance to the adoption of sustainable, low-emission energy alternatives across Western European nations. The present thesis underscores the necessity for further investigation into the interrelations among populism, climate policies, and the transition to low-carbon energy resources. In general, the outcomes of our research add to the current discourse on the function of political parties in the process of energy transition across Western European nations.

2.4 Research Literature Gaps

Table 1. The research gaps identified from the existing literature

Article	**Description of the article**	**Research Gap**
Zepa (2021)	Examines political barriers to sustainability transitions in the Baltic region	Does not specifically focus on the impact of democratic backsliding on energy and climate policies

Cantarero (2021)	Explores a roadmap for accelerating the energy transition in developing countries with a focus on renewable energy, energy democracy, and sustainable development	Does not specifically address the impact of democratic backsliding on energy and climate policies in EU members
Tsagkari et al. (2020)	Investigates the potential for renewable energy production and self-sufficiency	Does not specifically address the impact of democratic backsliding on energy and climate policies in EU members
Allen et al. (2021)	Explores the role of women's leadership in promoting energy justice, democracy, and renewable transformation	Does not specifically address the impact of democratic backsliding on energy and climate policies in EU members
Huda (2021)	Examines the impact of democratic backsliding on energy megaprojects	Focuses specifically on energy megaprojects and does not address the wider impact of democratic backsliding on energy and climate policies
Szulecki & Overland (2019)	Provides a conceptual review of energy democracy as a process, outcome, and goal	Does not specifically address the impact of democratic backsliding on energy and climate policies in EU members
Simon & Moltz (2019)	Examines the influence of authoritarian values and political parties on alternative energy funding public opinion in the United States	Does not focus specifically on the impact of democratic backsliding on energy and climate policies in EU members
Kammermann & Dermont, (2018)	Investigates the impact of radical-right political parties on low-carbon energy transitions in Western Europe	Explores the impact of radical-right political parties but does not address the broader impact of democratic backsliding on energy and climate policies in EU members

Source: Jekaterina Djomina

The table 1 provides an overview of the existing scholarship on the relationship between democratic backsliding and climate and energy policy in the European Union and proposes

avenues for further investigation. However, there is a noticeable dearth of studies investigating the impact of democratic regression in EU member states on energy and climate policy. Despite addressing topics such as sustainability transitions, renewable energy generation, and energy democracy, the papers fail to address the ramifications of faltering democratic institutions and procedures on energy and climate policy within the European Union.

The studies provide valuable insights; conducting comprehensive international comparisons would result in significantly more universally applicable knowledge. Studies encompass all EU states and non-EU states, potentially leading to ambiguous findings, as opposed to concentrating on individual countries. Further investigation is necessary to consider the diverse political, economic, and social conditions across various nations. Thirdly, in the realm of democratic decline, scholarly investigations have predominantly centered on the impact of political elites and establishments on climate and energy policies, with scant attention paid to the contribution of civil society.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

Systematic literature and document review employs techniques for data collection, analysis, and integration. This study examined the effects of democratic decline on climate and energy policies in the cited nations. The study investigated how the decline of democratic ideals has hindered the energy and environment policies of these nations.

Analyzing the Climate Doctrine and National Action Plan for Renewable Energy Development, the study evaluated Russia's climate and energy policy. The investigation also examined political variables, such as government-controlled energy enterprises and the influence of the fossil fuel sector on policy formulation, to determine how they influences Russia's capacity to develop and implement effective climate and energy policies. The study examined Turkey's compliance with the National Renewable Energy Action Plan. The study examined how democratic backsliding affected the country's controversial withdrawal programs from the Paris Agreement.

The mitigation measures, National Energy, and Climate Plan of Poland were evaluated. The study investigated the effects of democratic regression on coal reduction and alternative energy measures. The study investigated the effects of democratic regression on energy and climate policies in Bulgaria, Georgia, Turkey, Poland, and Russia. The purpose of the study was to identify obstacles to policy implementation in these nations in order to assist climate action and energy transition advocates.

3.2 Search strategy and Screening

This study examined how democratic backsliding affected energy and climate policies in Bulgaria, Georgia, Russia, Turkey, and Poland. This goal was achieved by reviewing relevant literature. The researcher searched Google Scholar, Web of Science, Scopus, and JSTOR for relevant scholarly articles using keywords like "democratic backsliding," "climate policy," "energy policy," and country names.

Upon applying relevancy and other filters, the search yielded a total of 501 articles and documents. This study examined the potential impact of democratic backsliding on climate and energy policy in five selected nations (Tawfik et al., 2019). The analysis was based on a review of English-language articles and papers published between 2010 and 2023. Articles excluded from consideration were those that were not originally published in English, focused on topics beyond the geographical scope of the European states, or were published prior to 2010. However, policy document had timeframe because the documents have been long prepared and changed over time since inception of climate change issues.

There 30 publications and papers were subjected to a comprehensive analysis after an initial assessment, including the National Renewable Energy Action Plan, the National Energy Efficiency Action Plan, and the National Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan. This study employed a systematic document analysis technique to identify prevalent themes and emerging patterns in the field of inquiry.

The search methodology and screening protocol were developed to ensure a comprehensive and meticulous process for identifying and assessing pertinent literature pertaining to the impact of democratic decline on climate and energy policy in the designated countries. The research employed various databases and inclusion or exclusion criteria to mitigate selection bias and guarantee a comprehensive range of literature was examined.

Table 2. Description of policy documents analyzed

Country	**Policy Name**	**Year Passed**	**Brief Description**
Bulgaria	National Climate Change Adaptation Strategy	2012	Outlines Bulgaria's strategy for adapting to climate change, with a focus on vulnerable sectors such as agriculture and forestry.
Bulgaria	National Renewable Energy Action Plan	2010	Aims to increase the share of renewable energy in Bulgaria's energy mix, with a target of 16% by 2020.
Bulgaria	EU Emissions Trading System	2005	Part of the EU's effort to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, the ETS sets a cap on emissions for participating companies and allows for trading of emissions allowances.
Georgia	National Energy and Climate Plan	2019	Outlines Georgia's goals and targets for reducing greenhouse gas emissions and increasing renewable energy generation.
Russia	Climate Doctrine	2009	Outlines Russia's approach to climate change and the country's commitment to reducing greenhouse gas emissions.
Russia	National Action Plan for the Development of Renewable Energy	2013	Aims to increase the share of renewable energy in Russia's energy mix, with a target of 2.5% by 2020.
Turkey	National Renewable Energy Action Plan	2016	Aims to increase the share of renewable energy in Turkey's energy mix, with a target of 30% by 2023.
Turkey	Energy Efficiency Law	2007	Establishes energy efficiency standards for buildings and appliances and sets targets for energy efficiency improvements.
Poland	Energy Policy of Poland until 2040	2018	Outlines Poland's goals and targets for energy and climate policy, with a focus on reducing

			dependence on coal and increasing the share of renewable energy.
Poland	Carbon Emissions trading systems	2005	Provide strategies to reduce climate change through carbon trading.
Poland	National Climate Policy Framework until 2030	2019	Outlines Poland's goals and targets for reducing greenhouse gas emissions and adapting to climate change.

Source: Jekaterina Djomina

3.3 Data analysis and synthesis

This study employed a qualitative methodology to interpret numerical data from the existing literature. This evaluation based on the national climate and energy policies of the five countries. Through the utilization of a content analysis methodology, the most prominent themes and patterns pertaining to climate and energy policies were extracted, alongside a scrutiny of the influence of democratic backsliding on their formulation and execution. A scale comprising of three levels was developed in the study to indicate the position of each country with respect to its climate and energy policy. The tiers were categorized into “High”, “Middle”, and “Low” levels. The final grade of each country was influenced by factors such as renewable energy, energy efficiency, and national readiness for climate change. Subsequently, a policy implementation score was computed by assessing the extent to which each of these factors had been put into effect.

A thematic analysis technique was employed to synthesize the data by identifying and studying the overarching themes and patterns across all five countries. This research study employed a comparative methodology to examine the effects of democratic decline on climate and energy policy across all five countries and to derive inferences regarding their commonalities and

distinctions. The effectiveness of national policies and laws was assessed, and impediments to their execution were identified.

The researcher conducted coding and analysis procedures to ensure the accuracy of the results. In order to enhance the reliability, accuracy and consistency of data coding and analysis, the researchers conducted regular reviews of their work. The research employed a meticulous and transparent methodology to ensure the precision and validity of its results. The data obtained from multiple sources underwent coding procedures that involved techniques such as triangulation of findings and verification of inter-coder reliability. This study meticulously monitored and rectified analysis biases, including selection bias and confirmation bias.

This study analysis of the primary themes and patterns observed across five countries. The data utilized in this analysis includes narrative, existing tables, and charts extracted from the reviewed literature (Linares-Espinós et al., 2018). The study examined the effects of democratic backsliding on the implementation of climate and energy policies in five nations.

An analysis was conducted on the effects of democratic backsliding on policies related to energy and the environment. This study's findings have contributed to a better understanding of the relationship between the deterioration of democratic values and the formulation of climate and energy policies in European countries (Belotto, 2018). The purpose of this study was to expand comprehension of the effects of democratic deterioration on climate and energy policies within the European countries. The study examined the impact of democratic backsliding on climate and energy policies, as well as the potential problems to their implementation, across five countries

with varying degrees of democratic backsliding. Moreover, the recommendation was made to conduct further research that delves into comprehensive case studies and explores potential tactics for transcending obstacles to effective policy implementation within the framework of democratic backsliding.

RESULTS AND FINDINGS

4.1 Implications of Democracy Backsliding on climate and energy policies in Europe

4.1.1 Introduction to Democracy Backsliding implications

The backsliding of democratic governance in specific European countries has caused concerns about the possibility. The loss has significant implications that includes local energy and environmental regulations. The focus of this research is to analyze how democratic backsliding has affected the energy and climate policies European nations. According to existing literature, it is widely agreed that effective implementation of climate and energy policies requires democratic governance as a prerequisite. According to Guelzo, (2018), the backsliding of democratic processes presented a difficulty in creating and implementing policies. Russia is a significant producer of fossil fuels, which sets it apart from other countries. According to the resource curse theory, countries that have ample natural resources may have less motivation to prioritize renewable energy and climate policies.

4.1.2 Extent of democracy backsliding on European countries climate and energy policies

The assessed effectiveness of the National Climate Change Adaptation Strategy in Bulgaria and the European Emissions Trading System. According to the research, there is a correlation between the observed democratic backsliding in Bulgaria and the inefficacy of their climate and energy policies. The implications of the study's findings hold great significance for energy and climate policies in Europe. The results underscore the significance of democratic leadership in achieving efficient energy and climate policies as shown in Table 3. The decline of democratic norms may impede the pace of efficacious energy policy implementation and hinder the public's ability to participate in the policymaking process. The results emphasize the importance of regional

collaboration in the formulation and implementation of effective climate and energy measures. A reasonable characteristic of this association involves the exchange of knowledge and assets to advance the progression of sustainable energy and the mitigation of carbon footprint. The table elucidates the obstacles that these nations encounter in implementing efficacious climate and energy policies amidst democratic regression. The existing actions indicated that additional financial resources, heightened political determination, and reinforced democratic structures are imperative to address the issue of global warming.

Table 3. General results for levels of climate and energy implementation per countries

Country	**Policies and strategy from case studies**	**Level of Implementation**
Bulgaria	National Climate Change Adaptation Strategy, National Renewable Energy Action Plan, EU Emissions Trading System	Medium
Georgia	National Energy and Climate Plan	Low
Russia	Climate Doctrine, National Action Plan for the Development of Renewable Energy	Low
Turkey	National Renewable Energy Action Plan	High
Poland	National Energy and Climate Plan, Polish Energy Policy until 2040	Medium

Source: Jekaterina Djomina

Table 2 compares the degree of democracy backsliding in five European countries - Bulgaria, Georgia, Poland, Turkey, and Russia - with their effectiveness in implementing policies related to climate change and the use of fossil fuels. The identification of three levels of implementation, namely high, medium, and low, to the effectiveness of current policies in achieving climate and energy targets.

These study findings showed that Bulgaria's climate and energy policies to have a medium level of effectiveness. The nation has implemented measures and tactics that align with the Paris Agreement and the European Union's climate objectives, including the National Climate Change Adaptation Strategy and the National Renewable Energy Action Plan. Bulgaria's delayed adoption of the EU Emissions Trading System had a noticeable effect on carbon prices, which decreased as a result. However, the impact on the mitigation of greenhouse gas emissions was negligible. Bulgaria has extensively adopted the EU Emissions Trading System and the National Climate Change Adaptation Strategy. The measures mentioned indicate that the country is committed to addressing climate change through legal structures and government supervision. The current climate and energy policies have not been effectively implemented, specifically in regard to increasing the use of renewable energy sources. Consequently, it is imperative for Bulgaria to enhance its implementation strategies and establish conducive circumstances to facilitate the proliferation of renewable energy sources. Bulgaria's National Renewable Energy Action Plan implementation is currently at the halfway point. Further efforts are required to ensure that the government achieves its sustainable energy goals. It is imperative for the nation to implement regulatory measures that facilitate the advancement of alternative energy sources.

According to the study, the climate and energy policies of Georgia have been deemed ineffective, resulting in a low rating. Insufficient institutional capacity and constrained resources in the country have hindered the implementation of laws such as the National Energy and Climate Plan. The curtailment of democracy in Georgia has constrained the government's capacity to undertake affirmative measures. The study examined the efficacy of Georgia's implementation of the National Energy and Climate Plan. The research suggests that there is a negative impact on a

country's ability to implement climate and energy policies when democratic values are in decline. The National Energy and Climate Plan and the use of hydropower as an energy source have received considerable praise. The diagram depicts renewable energy sources at the highest point, with energy efficiency measures located at the lowest point.

According to the study, the implementation level of Poland's climate and energy policy is currently classified as medium. The transition from coal to renewable energy sources has been a gradual process for the government. Experts have criticized the government's decision to repeal policies like the Wind Energy Investment Act, citing potential negative impacts on the progress of sustainable energy. The study analyzed the effectiveness of Poland's National Action Plan for Energy and Climate in meeting its goals through policy measures. In addition, these findings of the study indicated that the phenomenon of democratic drift has hindered Poland's ability to establish and implement a robust energy and climate policy. The user's text highlights the National Renewable Energy Action Plan's recommendation and the increasing use of renewable sources in the country's energy mix. The user's statement ranks the National Energy Efficiency Action Plan and the inability to achieve national renewable energy objectives in the lower tier, while climate policy and energy efficiency initiatives are placed in the middle. The need to address the challenges posed by climate change demands enhancements in multiple domains, as indicated by the varying levels of adoption.

According to the study, the evaluation of Russia's climate and energy policies revealed a low level of performance. The lack of political will and institutional capability has impeded the successful implementation of policies such as the Climate Doctrine and the National Action Plan for the

Development of Renewable Energy in the country. The utilization of fossil fuels such as oil and gas by the United States has been subject to scrutiny. The impact of Russia's democratic backsliding on the country's climate doctrine and national action plan for renewable energy has been noted as a potential obstacle. The National Action Plan for the Development of Renewable Energy and the increasing proportion of renewable energy in the energy mix are recognized as praiseworthy components. The Climate Doctrine occupies a central position; however, there exists a deficiency in the execution of climate and energy policies, particularly concerning energy efficiency.

According to this study analysis, Turkey is implementing its climate and energy policies at a high pace. Turkey has made significant progress in the development of renewable energy sources, including wind and solar electricity. This progress is reflected in initiatives such as the National Renewable Energy Action Plan. The nation has faced censure for its extensive reliance on coal and its gradual transition towards sustainable energy alternatives. The effectiveness of Turkey's National Climate Change Strategy and National Renewable Energy Action Plan were analyzed in this study. The findings revealed that the country's democratic regression has hindered the success of these initiatives. The user's statement highlights the National Renewable Energy Action Plan's recommendation and the increasing use of renewable sources in the country's energy portfolio. The researcher ranks the National Energy Efficiency Action Plan and the inability to achieve national renewable energy objectives in the lower, two tiers, while climate policy and energy efficiency initiatives are placed in the high tier.

Table 4. Different categories of policies implementation within EU countries

Country	**High implementation**	**Medium implementation**	**Low implementation**
Bulgaria	EU Emissions Trading System (ETS), adoption of National Climate Change Adaptation Strategy	National Renewable Energy Action Plan	Implementation of climate and energy policies, especially in the area of renewable energy
Georgia	National Energy and Climate Plan, progress in hydropower energy sector	Implementation of renewable energy technologies	Energy efficiency measures and progress in reducing greenhouse gas emissions
Russia	National Action Plan for the Development of Renewable Energy, increasing share of renewable energy in the energy mix	Climate Doctrine	Implementation of climate and energy policies, especially in the area of energy efficiency
Turkey	National Renewable Energy Action Plan, increased share of renewable energy in the energy mix	Climate policies and energy efficiency measures	National Energy Efficiency Action Plan, failure to meet national renewable energy targets
Poland	National Renewable Energy Action Plan, increased share of renewable energy in the energy mix	Climate policies and energy efficiency measures	National Energy Efficiency Action Plan, failure to meet national renewable energy targets

Source: Jekaterina Djomina

The Table 4 presented above highlights the levels of policy implementation categorized as high, medium, and low for each country included in the study. Empirical evidence suggests that policy implementation has been adversely impacted in all regions because of democratic erosion. The development and implementation of effective climate and energy policy are hindered by weak institutional arrangements, limited stakeholder participation, and insufficient capacity building

initiatives. In order to attain their climate and energy objectives and make a positive impact towards the worldwide endeavors to alleviate climate change, these nations must confront the aforementioned obstacles.

4.2 Determinants of democratic Backsliding and climate and energy policies in Europe

The implementation of climate and energy policies in certain European countries analyzed, revealing a range of supporters of democratic backsliding on climate change. Political leadership influences the achievement of climate and energy objectives. The presence of robust democratic institutions and effective leadership are key factors that positively influence the successful implementation of policies. The implementation of climate and energy policies influenced by various economic factors, such as the level of economic growth and the availability of financial resources. The implementation of programs in countries with limited resources or economic constraints may pose greater challenges. The level of comprehension and backing from the public could influence the success of the government's climate and energy policy. According to Snyderid et al., (2020), countries with weak civil societies or low climate and energy literacy have a lower political will to implement policy. The implementation of policies facilitated through global cooperation and the sharing of information. The establishment of strong global connections and cooperation among nations is crucial in facilitating the successful implementation of their respective agendas. Europe's diminishing commitment to democratic climate and energy policies has numerous causes. A nation's climate and energy strategy influenced by various factors such as political leadership, economic conditions, public opinion, civil society, and global collaboration.

According to the study, Bulgaria's limited adoption of renewable energy and inadequate implementation of climate and energy policies attributed to a lack of government interest. In recent years, political leaders have disregarded climate change. According to Grigorescu et al., (2021), Bulgaria made the decision to withdraw from a convention aimed at reducing violence against women. The correlation between the government's disregard for human rights and their apparent reluctance to tackle global concerns such as climate change implies a deficiency in political determination.

Economic issues also impact Bulgaria's energy and environmental policies. Renewable energy adoption has been hampered by the country's reliance on coal and lignite. The economic advantages of the coal industry have created challenges in promoting a transition towards renewable energy sources. In 2019, Bulgaria announced intentions to extend the lifespan of three coal-fired power stations. The proposed action is facing opposition from civil society and environmentalists. Bulgarian individuals and NGOs have not participated enough in climate and energy policy implementation. According to Nchofoung et al., (2023), the impact of environmental NGOs on policymaking is limited, and their calls to action are often disregarded by the political elite. People's indifference to energy and climate change reflects their values.

International cooperation has played a significant role in advancing Bulgaria's climate and energy goals. Despite being a European country, the nation has faced challenges in meeting the renewable energy standards set by the EU. Due to democratic collapse and rising nationalism, EU climate and energy policy harmonization is more difficult. Bulgaria's climate change efforts are hampered by poor international cooperation. Discussing multinational partnership. The impact of EU

membership on Bulgaria's climate and energy policy is demonstrated through the implementation of the National Climate Change Adaptation Strategy and the EU Emissions Trading System. The country has been criticized for missing EU climate and energy targets. Bulgaria's government has been slow to support international agreements aimed at addressing climate change, such as the Paris Agreement. This is a common trend among many governments around the world.

According to the study, Georgia's climate policy implementation is inadequate to National Energy and Climate Plan and the hydroelectric energy sector improvements. The government places a high priority on the development of hydropower due to the availability of ample water resources. Georgia is expected to achieve a 12% renewable energy target by 2019 through the implementation of new hydropower plants and upgrades. According to Szulecki & Overland, (2020) report, Georgia has set targets to achieve 20% renewable energy by 2025 and 30% by 2030 as part of its energy transition strategy. Georgia employs solar and wind power to a limited extent.

The study found that there is a correlation between Russia's political leadership and its climate and energy policies. The slow progress of federal climate and energy policies attributed to a lack of political determination to address the issue of climate change. In 2019, Russia became a signatory of the Paris Agreement. However, its goals for reducing carbon emissions are not considered sufficient. The government has been accused of hindering grassroots global warming measures by environmental organizations. The progress of climate and energy legislation in Russia has been impeded by economic factors. According to Hess and Renner (2019), the country's dependence on non-renewable energy sources for economic growth has impeded the widespread adoption of sustainable energy. The integration of renewable energy sources in Russia has shown signs of

progress. The motivation behind these efforts seems to be primarily focused on economic objectives such as increasing energy exports, rather than a sincere dedication to addressing climate change.

The findings of this study suggest that limitations imposed on civil society in Russia have had a negative impact on individuals and groups advocating for environmental and energy-related causes. Due of their international breadth, the government has labeled several environmental NGOs "foreign agents" and increased its surveillance. The obstruction of progressive energy and climate policy advocacy by certain factors is detrimental to the advancement of civil society. According to Hess & Renner, (2019), Russia's energy and environment policy has been influenced by international partnerships. The country has been involved in international discussions on climate change, however, it has consistently taken a stance against more stringent targets and measures. Russia's use of its oil and gas exports to influence global climate policy discussions hinders climate change mitigation efforts.

The statement suggests that the National Renewable Energy Action Plan of Turkey is indicative of the country's dedication to renewable energy. This proposal requires 30% renewable energy by 2023. The occurrence mentioned here has resulted in the development of sustainable energy projects such as wind and solar power plants, which have proven to be successful. Economic problems, such as the high prices of renewable energy projects, and political leadership issues, such as a lack of political resolve and contradictory policies, prevented the government from fulfilling its national renewable energy targets.

There has been an increase in civil society's comprehension and promotion of climate change in Turkey. Recently, civil society and media have been accused of government oppression. Despite its climate and energy collaborations with international organizations, Turkey has struggled to maintain its relationships with the UN and EU. Turkey's climate and energy initiatives could face obstacles due to economic factors. The inclusion of this particular element is crucial in the process of developing financial and ecological initiatives.

The data analysis indicates that the implementation of the National Renewable Energy Action Plan had a positive impact on Poland's renewable energy mix. The implementation of the National Energy Efficiency Action Plan and renewable energy goals has posed significant challenges. The current situation attributed to the government's prioritization of the coal industry, which is considered crucial to the country's economy, as well as the opposition of the coal lobby towards legislation promoting renewable energy. The promotion of climate legislation has been effectively achieved by civil society through assertive advocacy.

The acceptance of renewable energy programs has been hindered by economic factors, specifically the low cost and low energy efficiency investment associated with renewable energy. The relationship between the economy and climate and energy policy is significant. The cost competitiveness of wind and solar energy systems has increased in comparison to fossil fuels. Renewable energy use has been observed to increase in certain nations. Fossil fuel-dependent countries may exhibit reluctance in transitioning to low-carbon economies due to the possible short-term consequences. The successful implementation of climate and energy policy by a nation

is influenced by various factors such as financial resources, technical advancements, energy reserves, and global trade agreements and economic sanctions.

Europe's financial and logistical support has facilitated international collaboration for Poland's renewable energy initiatives. European energy and climate policy is significantly impacted by international politics and the global economy. European countries are working towards a unified energy policy that incorporates the use of renewable energy sources. The energy policy has set out specific goals to enhance energy efficiency, decrease the amount of greenhouse gas emissions, and establish a unified energy market. According to Yudha & Tjahjono, (2019) the Paris Agreement has set a goal of restricting the increase in global temperature to no more than 1.5 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels. The Paris Agreement requires nations to provide "nationally determined contributions" (NDCs) that outline their goals and strategies for reducing greenhouse gas emissions in order to fulfill their obligations under the agreement. The provision of financial and technological assistance is crucial in facilitating the transition of emerging nations towards low-carbon economies.

4.3 Strategies for Democratic Backsliding in Europe

4.3.1 Introduction

In order to address the potential consequences of a democratic regression on climate and energy policies within the European countries. The effective execution of climate and energy policy is contingent upon the presence of fundamental EU governance frameworks, including but not limited to democratic principles and the rule of law. Facilitating the augmentation of administrative capabilities of member states, scrutinizing the condition of democracy and the legal system, and

executing policies of the European Union are all constituent elements of this endeavor. An efficacious approach involves expanding the involvement of individuals in the process of making decisions. The fundamental components of this aim encompass the accessibility of data and the potential for engagement in the development of regulations. In order to guarantee that policy decisions are grounded in empirical evidence and considerate of the concerns of diverse stakeholders, this methodology additionally entails promoting the utilization of impact evaluations and consultations with stakeholders.

Diversifying energy supplies can enhance energy security by decreasing reliance on any particular country. This entails endeavors to promote the expansion of sustainable energy resources while concurrently reducing dependence on non-renewable energy sources. The European Union aims to promote the implementation of climate and energy policies through active collaboration with international counterparts in addressing analogous issues. The European Union's approach to promoting the adoption of climate and energy policies by its member states culminates in the provision of financial incentives. This compilation presents a catalog of renewable energy initiatives, alongside corresponding measures for adaptation and mitigation.

4.3.2 Application of strategies by case study nations

The study reveals that civil society organizations have placed considerable emphasis on monitoring and reporting corruption and conflicts of interest in Bulgaria's energy industry. The European Commission has taken action against Bulgaria for breaching EU regulations. The Commission has raised concerns about issues such as air quality, waste management, and environmental protection (Nkiaka & Lovett, 2019). Subsequently, the Bulgarian government's

administration of the nation's energy and environmental policies has increased analysis. The European Commission has initiated infringement procedures against Bulgaria for non-compliance with the Energy Efficiency Directive (EED) and the Renewable Energy Directive (RED), as part of its endeavors to strengthen the rule of law and democratic institutions throughout the European Union (Ćetković & Hagemann, 2020). The statement highlights the importance of maintaining legal order and serves as a reminder to the Bulgarian administration to comply with the regulations set forth by the European Union. The implementation of a fresh legal structure for renewable energy in Bulgaria attribute to the endeavors of the Bulgarian Photovoltaic Association and other non-governmental organizations.

Georgia in achieving its energy and climate goals through the formulation of the National Energy and Climate Plan. The European Union has provided technical guidance and extended its support to initiatives focused on increasing the use of renewable energy sources and improving energy efficiency. The European Neighborhood Instrument implemented by the European Union has had a positive impact on the development of democratic institutions and the rule of law in Georgia. The European Union has made a commitment to provide financial resources to support the objectives related to Energy and Climate Policy within the framework of the Association Agreement with Georgia. The implementation of the mentioned policies in Georgia could result in financial benefits for the country, as it is a member of the Energy Community of the European Union. The membership offers a structured legal system to facilitate the merging of energy markets and encourage the implementation of sustainable energy policies throughout Southeast Europe.

The study concluded that external pressure had a significant impact on the analysis of a policy promoting renewable energy sources in Russia. The energy industry in Russia has been significantly affected by the economic sanctions imposed by the European Union. As a result, Russia has increased its investment in sustainable energy and raised the percentage of renewable sources in its overall energy mix. The EU has been exerting pressure on Russia to enhance its human rights record and maintain democratic principles. The statement pertains to Russia's attempts to improve the implementation of the rule of law and democratic institutions. Russian economy is being significantly affected by the economic sanctions imposed by the European Union, which is a consequence of Russia's actions in Ukraine. Efforts are made to increase cooperation between the European Union and Russia on energy and climate issues, despite the current political tensions between the two entities. The European Union and Russia to address pollution and promote sustainable development in the Baltic Sea region created the Northern Dimension Environmental Partnership.

Both financial and technical assistance has backed Turkey’s National Renewable Energy Action Plan. The European Union has implemented a mechanism to oversee Turkey's advancements in renewable energy and energy efficiency. Improving the effectiveness and efficiency of political systems and legal frameworks. The European Union has made a request for Turkey to comply with the principles of the rule of law and enhance its human rights performance. The suspension of membership negotiations with Turkey is due to concerns about the country's performance in the areas of democracy and human rights. Turkey's decision to implement a renewable energy strategy appears to have been driven by economic incentives, which may have been influenced by its

membership in the Energy Community of the European Union. Financial support from European countries has been directed towards renewable energy initiatives in Turkey.

This study found that Poland has developed a National Energy Efficiency Action Plan aimed at enhancing the country's energy efficiency, which is a response to the persistent advocacy efforts of civil society organizations for more rigorous climate and energy regulations. The European Union has provided technical assistance and support towards the expansion of renewable energy usage and enhancement of energy efficiency. Poland has exhibited opposition towards several climate and energy measures implemented by the European Union, including the 2050 climate neutrality objective (Fraune & Knodt, 2018). Additionally, Poland has received criticism for its persistent dependence on coal. The European Union has taken measures to reinforce the rule of law and democratic institutions by commencing procedures against Poland. This course of action could potentially lead to the revocation of Poland's voting privileges in the European Council. The circumstance has resulted in increased scrutiny of the actions of the Polish government to maintain democratic principles and the supremacy of legal regulations (Ćetković & Hagemann, 2020). The presence of a robust civil society in Poland has led to the emergence of various organizations that actively advocate for policies that promote the use of renewable energy sources and energy-efficient practices. The Institute for Renewable Energy effectively advocated for the implementation of a new legislation in Poland that incentivize the utilization of sustainable energy sources.

The case studies highlight the measures that countries have taken to reduce the risk of a democratic backslide in climate and energy policy. These measures include strengthening civil society,

promoting renewable energy sources, enhancing energy efficiency, and intensifying international collaboration and pressure. The European Union has put in place various policies with the objective of averting any possible decline in democracy concerning energy and climate policy. The integration of legal governance principles into energy and environmental regulations is considered an effective approach. The EU has introduced a new system with the objective of protecting the rule of law among its member nations. A framework that conducts regular assessments of democracy, judicial independence, and media freedom. One potential strategy is to encourage cooperation and active participation between the various nations, non-profit organizations, and businesses involved (Singh & Singh, 2019). The European countries established various platforms for dialogue and cooperation, including the European Climate Pact and Clean Energy for EU. The effective implementation of climate and energy policy is facilitated by the collaboration of stakeholders through different channels, including information sharing and identification of areas that need improvement.

European countries have increased their focus on climate and energy initiatives within their member states, with a specific focus on Central and Eastern Europe. This is aimed at promoting the transition towards low-carbon economies. The European Union created the Just Transition Fund to offer support to regions and communities that have been negatively impacted by the transition away from fossil fuels. The European Union has expressed support for increased international engagement to tackle climate change and promote the uptake of sustainable energy options. The European Union's involvement in global climate negotiations has been notable, particularly in its support of the Paris Agreement (Fu et al., 2021). The European Union has augmented its collaboration with other prominent economies, such as China and the United States,

in order to bolster worldwide efforts aimed at addressing climate change. The aforementioned protective measures are interdependent and reinforce each other, and they may be implemented either at the level of European Union institutions or at the level of individual member states (Polman & Slangen, 2008). The European Union and its member states can facilitate a fair and prosperous shift towards a sustainable energy future by endorsing democratic values, promoting sustainable economic expansion, encouraging civil society participation, and fostering international collaboration.

Table 5. Strategic effort and implications of climate and energy policies

Factors of Democratic Backsliding	**Counteracting Strategies**	**Implication on Climate and Energy Policies**
Political Leadership	Promote and uphold democratic values and principles, strengthen the rule of law and independent institutions, increase transparency and accountability	Increase transparency and public participation in climate and energy decision-making, support the development of renewable energy sources and energy efficiency measures to reduce dependence on fossil fuels and external energy sources
Economic Factors	Foster sustainable economic growth and reduce inequalities, promote social cohesion and inclusivity	Support investment in renewable energy sources, incentivize energy efficiency measures, promote the circular economy and sustainable consumption and production patterns
Civil Society	Promote and protect civil society space, ensure freedom of expression and media freedom, support and empower civil society organizations	Increase public awareness and education on climate change and sustainable energy, engage civil society organizations and stakeholders in climate and energy decision-making, promote citizen participation and access to justice in environmental matters

International Cooperation	Strengthen multilateralism and international cooperation, support global climate action and the implementation of the Paris Agreement, uphold human rights and democratic values	Collaborate with international partners to address global climate challenges, support international climate finance and technology transfer to developing countries, promote the role of the EU as a global leader in climate action and energy transition

Source: Jekaterina Djomina

DISCUSSION

5.1 Extent of democracy backsliding on European climate and energy policies

The research findings suggest that there is a possibility of democratic backsliding in the climate and energy policies of the European countries and the evidenced by the experiences of Bulgaria, Georgia, Poland, Russia, and Turkey. The effectiveness of the measures implemented by the European Union and its member states in reducing this risk. The research highlights the significance of various factors such as political leadership, economic conditions, civil society, and global cooperation in preventing the decline of democratic systems.

The findings are consistent with previous studies that have suggested the potential for a decrease in democratic values in countries belonging to the European countries (Żuk & Szulecki, 2020). The Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice, and Home Affairs of the European Parliament raised apprehension in 2018 regarding the potential unforeseen impacts on climate and energy policy due to the authoritarian surge in certain member states of the European Union. In 2020, the European Environmental Bureau published a secondary study indicating that the EU is not in compliance with climate and energy-related regulations established in certain EU member states. There is an increasing apprehension that the decline of democratic values in certain member states of the European Union may have adverse effects on the climate and energy policies of the EU. Several studies have identified efforts to impede the autonomy of the judiciary, restrict media liberties, and constrain civil society engagement as signs of democratic regression in nations such as Poland and Hungary. The aforementioned actions have been associated with a deficiency in political determination to tackle climate change and a predilection for fossil fuel corporations. These factors

have the potential to impede the European Union's advancement in fulfilling its climate and energy obligations.

Although there have been challenges, many countries have made significant progress in adopting policies related to climate and energy. Sweden and Denmark are leading the way in the use of renewable energy compared to other European countries. The proposition suggests that the effectiveness of EU climate and energy policy is impacted by factors that go beyond the political situation of each member state. The text identifies three key factors that have a significant impact on a particular issue. These factors are public awareness, economic incentives, and technological advancements. The success of the EU's climate and energy policy ultimately depends on the member states' capacity to tackle democratic decline and implement measures that promote democratic institutions and civic participation. According to their research, the concentration of authority under President Erdogan's leadership has led to a decrease in the strictness of environmental policies. The study conducted by Kovács et al., (2022) investigated the function of civil society and multi-level governance in advancing climate action within the European countries. The aim was to counteract the impact of anti-environmental interests and encourage a more inclusive and democratic approach to decision-making.

This research highlights the significance of maintaining constant vigilance and responding appropriately to avert a potential backsliding in the democratic nature of climate and energy policies in the European Union. The study presented strategies that exhibit the potential to effectively advocating for governmental guidance and engaging with the public sector. While there may be some discrepancies in the precise outcomes and deductions of diverse investigations

regarding the matter, a general agreement exists that the backsliding of democracy presents a substantial threat to the efficacy of European Union's climate and energy policies (Buck et al., 2020). Consequently, it is imperative to adopt preventive measures to protect democratic institutions and procedures from these predicaments.

5.2 Determinants of democratic Backsliding and climate and energy policies

The democratic backsliding observed in climate and energy policies qualified to the European Union. Common factors that contribute to ineffective political leadership, public apathy, and external economic pressures. During the Trump administration, the United States has withdrawn from the Paris Agreement and significantly reduced its environmental and energy initiatives (Sangomla, 2020). The shift in environmental concern recognized, in part, to the administration's emphasis on economic growth and backing of the fossil fuel sector. Likewise, the Brazilian government has faced criticism for its prioritization of economic growth over environmental regulations, resulting in heightened deforestation and greenhouse gas emissions. However, there exist nations beyond the European Union that exhibit genuine prowess in their approach towards climate and energy policies. The government of Costa Rica has made substantial investments in renewable energy and reforestation in order to attain carbon neutrality by 2050. The Norwegian government has instituted a carbon tax and allocated resources towards bolstering the nation's infrastructure in order to facilitate the expansion of electric vehicles (Zapletalová & Komínková, 2020). These nations have demonstrated their political leadership prowess and dedication to sustainable development by making significant progress in their climate and energy policies.

The democratic regression observed in the European Union concerning climate and energy policy attributed to various factors, including political leadership, economic considerations, civil society, and international cooperation. Consistent findings have been obtained through further research on the correlation between democracy and climate policy. According to Żuk & Szulecki, (2020) research, there exists a correlation between authoritarian regimes and inferior environmental protection measures, whereas democratic systems are associated with superior environmental outcomes. Erspamer et al., (2022) discovered comparable results, indicating that nations with thriving civil societies and environmental movements are inclined towards enacting more progressive environmental and legislation. Hickel & Kallis, (2019) posit that the prioritization of short-term economic objectives over long-term environmental considerations by governments may result in a potential detriment to environmental policy.

The distinct contextual and adversarial circumstances encountered by various nations, the determinants that give rise to the regression of democratic principles in the domains of climate and energy policies. The effective management of these variables via sound policies and competent leadership is imperative in guaranteeing that the pressing issues of climate change are addressed with the necessary speed and efficacy (Swatuk et al., 2020). The implementation of climate and energy policies may face hindrances from economic factors and political leadership. Conversely, democratic institutions, civil society, and international cooperation are deemed crucial in promoting effective policies. However, there exists some disparity among studies regarding the significance of these factors.

5.3 Strategies for Democratic Backsliding in Europe

Several nations globally encounter comparable apprehensions to those of the European countries, such as the regression of democratic values and challenges in implementing climate and energy strategies. The etiology and methods of addressing the aforementioned issues may differ across nations (Fleming et al., 2015). Certain countries may possess superior capabilities in preventing democratic regression compared to others, owing to factors such as a stronger civil society or a more autonomous judiciary. Nations with a higher degree of economic dependence on the fossil fuel sector may encounter greater difficulties in transitioning towards sustainable energy alternatives.

Europe has been experiencing concerns about democratic backsliding. The ongoing opposition from specific governmental entities and industrial sectors in European nations impedes the implementation of climate and energy policies. The European countries have taken action to address the challenges by implementing measures such as responding to the Paris Agreement and enacting legislation to promote the spread of sustainable energy sources. In comparison to Europe, other nations have made significant advancements in areas such as democratic governance, environmental regulations, and energy policies. For example, Costa Rica has demonstrated significant progress in the realm of sustainable energy, as over 98% of the nation's electricity is derived from renewable sources. Additionally, the country has a rich history of civic engagement in governance (Batel & Devine-Wright, 2018). Uruguay has made considerable progress in transitioning towards renewable energy sources, and its democratic institutions are widely acknowledged strong and stable.

This study sheds light on several approaches that employed to forestall democratic regression. The aforementioned factors encompass enhancing political leadership, advancing economic stability and prosperity, fostering increased involvement from civil society, and reinforcing global collaboration. The strategies are commonly observed in other research studies pertaining to the regression of democracy in Europe (Roberts et al., 2018). As an example, a study that was commissioned by the European Parliament recommended enhancing political leadership and democratic institutions as a means of averting additional instances of democratic breakdown within the European Union. The significance of the European Union in advancing democratic values and principles was emphasized, along with the importance of civil society engagement. The significance of economic factors in averting democratic deterioration was underscored in a subsequent study conducted by ECFR (European Council of Foreign Relations). The research posited that the presence of economic expansion and stability might serve as a deterrent to the emergence of populist and authoritarian factions, which are frequently associated with the decline of democratic principles. The challenges of promoting climate and energy policy and preventing democratic backsliding are intricate and require nuanced solutions that may differ across various locations and regions. The implementation of universal ideals such as investment in renewable energy infrastructure and technology, along with the promotion of openness, accountability, and civil society participation, considered as potential measures.

Szulecki et al., (2023) conducted a study on democratic backsliding in Central and Eastern European nations, revealing that the successful execution of climate and energy policies impeded by the deterioration of democratic institutions and the rule of law, as well as the amplification of populist discourse. The contention put forth by the authors is that the sole means of surmounting

these hindrances is to bestow upon civil society organizations the power to hold governments accountable. Kester & Sovacool, (2017) discovered analogous results in their examination of the relationship between energy transitions and democratic regression in Southeast Asia. The importance of political leadership and international cooperation in mitigating the risk of democratic regression was emphasized. According to the authors, prioritizing measures to strengthen democratic institutions, increase transparency and accountability, and foster international cooperation is crucial for policymakers who aim to facilitate energy transitions.

A study by Mohr & Smits, (2022) that agreed with findings in this study was conducted to investigates the role of civil society in Germany's energy transition. The study emphasizes the significance of civil society actors in advancing democratic participation, social equity, and environmental sustainability within the energy industry. The proposition put forth by the authors suggests that the involvement of civil society organizations in policymaking facilitated by means of their inclusion in policy discussions, as initiated by governments.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 Conclusion

6.1.1 Implications of Democracy Backsliding on climate and energy policies in Europe

To summarize, the regression of democracy has significant implications for energy and climate policies within the European region. The potential consequences of democratic erosion includes a decrease in political motivation to tackle climate change, a relaxation of environmental regulations, and a decline in public participation in decision-making processes. The potential consequences of these repercussions may have significant and widespread implications for both the planet and its inhabitants in the times to come. Empirical evidence from case studies has shown that democracies in decline exhibit a decreased level of prioritization towards environmental and energy policy. The subversion of the Paris Agreement and the energy objectives of the European Union entails additional adverse consequences for both the environment and human well-being.

In response to these findings, it may be necessary for the European Union to consider taking measures to prevent the erosion of democratic principles within its constituent nations. One potential approach is to implement more stringent conditional measures for financial transactions and impose stricter sanctions for non-compliance with the climate and energy policies. It is recommended that the European countries prioritize the expansion of civil society and media freedoms within its member states in order to promote greater public participation in environmental decision-making and to ensure accountability of political leadership. The outcomes of Europe's democratic regression in the realm of energy and climate policy underscore the imperative of persistent endeavors to safeguard democracy and the environment.

6.1.2 Determinants of democratic Backsliding and climate and energy policies

The presented study aims to clarify the underlying mechanisms that contribute to the democratic regression observed in Europe's climate and energy policies. The research results emphasize the significance of political leadership, economic circumstances, civil society, and global collaboration in the effective or ineffective establishment of democratic climate and energy policies. The efficacy of political leadership in advancing or impeding advancements in climate and energy policy is pivotal to their realization. The implementation of climate and energy policies affects macroeconomic factors, including but not limited to recessions and energy dependence. The involvement of civil society in overseeing policy implementation and ensuring government accountability is of utmost importance. Ultimately, fostering collaboration between nations and adhering to international climate protocols may incentivize and mandate governments to uphold democratic principles in the implementation of energy and climate strategies.

This study's results validate those of prior research that have examined the fundamental causes of democratic regression in various policy domains. Scholars have identified multiple factors that contribute to the decline of democracy. The economy, public opinion, diplomatic efforts, and political leadership are all influential factors. This study focuses on the factors that contribute to the decline of democracy in the realm of climate and energy policy in Europe. The research aims to add to the existing body of knowledge on this topic. The study's results underscore the necessity of robust political guidance, economic factors, civic engagement, and global collaboration in order to promote effective climate and energy policies. The text underscores the importance of giving priority to democratic principles and the rule of law during the execution of said projects.

6.1.3 Strategies for Democratic Backsliding in Europe

In summary, the study has identified several approaches to forestall a regression in democratic principles within Europe's climate and energy policies. The aforementioned tactics encompass endeavors aimed at safeguarding the neutrality of the judiciary, reinforcing the societal sector, augmenting the liberty of the press, enhancing transparency and responsibility, and solidifying global cooperation.

The strategies are not inherently exclusive of one another, but rather have the potential to complement and strengthen each other. The presence of an autonomous and unrestricted press can aid in ensuring governmental responsibility and promoting openness, while a robust civic community can exert influence on policymakers to prioritize matters related to climate and energy. Through international collaboration, nations can collectively address common challenges that affect them.

The results of this study align with prior research on the decline of democracy and strategies for averting it. The escalation of worldwide hazards, such as climate change, necessitates heightened focus and initiative from policymakers and civil society constituents to preserve democratic principles and values.

6.2 Recommendations

A. Preserving democratic institutions is a crucial measure in preventing democratic regression. Hence, it is incumbent upon us to foster an unbiased judiciary, an independent media, and a safe atmosphere for the civic community. This measure is likely to enhance the likelihood of

holding government officials accountable for their actions and upholding democratic principles and values.

B. The promotion of collaborative efforts among nations. Due to the worldwide scope of the issue, collaborative efforts among nations are required to identify viable resolutions to address climate change. The achievement of this objective necessitates international and regional collaboration. In order to expedite progress towards climate objectives and guarantee their achievement, the European Union must sustain its collaborative relationships with other nations.

C. The attainment of effective climate and energy policy is contingent upon an informed and engaged populace. Thus, it is imperative to promote civic engagement in policy discussions and enhance societal consciousness regarding climate change. The aforementioned objective attained through the facilitation of public education campaigns, citizen consultations, and other modes of public involvement.

D. The shift towards a low-carbon economy necessitates significant investment in renewable energy and energy efficiency, thereby warranting encouragement. It is recommended that the European Union persists in its investment towards the research and enhancement of aforementioned technologies. Additionally, the European Union provides support to underdeveloped nations in obtaining the requisite materials and knowledge to implement these technologies.

E. The implementation of policy safeguards that prohibit political interference in climate and energy regulation is imperative to forestall the reversal of democratic gains. The implementation of protective measures necessitates the inclusion of mechanisms that ensure

transparency and responsibility, alongside firmly established principles that govern the process of policy formulation.

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