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Problems of Prioritization National Security interest of Energy import-dependent States (Case studies: Georgia and Lithuania)

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ABSTRACT

This paper focuses on studying the prioritization process of national interests of energy import-dependent states. In particular, considering the energy strategy formation processes of Georgia and Lithuania, it explores the interrelation among the objectives of supply security and national security challenges. The reason behind the choice of the given countries was that energy security policies of both countries were formed based on identical characteristics after the collapse of the Soviet Union. Analysis of the mentioned cases offers a good opportunity to explain how foreign policy threats affect national energy security decisions. The study also examines the major factors affecting prioritization of national security interests, providing a possibility to answer the main research question of the paper - what prompts states to pursue less rational policies in terms of energy security, justified by maintaining state sovereignty? Using the securitization concept, the paper also explains what leads to taking steps aimed at solving national security challenges, which may, in turn, lead to the emergence of new types of security challenges. Analysis of the mentioned cases offers a good opportunity to explain how foreign policy threats affect national energy security decisions, whether such threats cause new energy challenges to be subject to political interests and whether it is appropriate for states to pursue such energy policy with the motive of maintaining state sovereignty. The paper indicates that energy policies purely formed based on political interests may not face the main energy security challenges of the country.

Keywords: *National threats, Securitization, Energy security, Georgia, Lithuania, Energy import-dependence*

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აბსტრაქტი

მოცემული ნაშრომი ეხება ენერგო-იმპორტ დამოკიდებული ქვეყნების ეროვნული ინტერესების პრიორიტეტიზაციის პროცესის კვლევას. კერძოდ, ლიეტუვისა და საქართველოს ენერგეტიკული სტრატეგიების ფორმირების პროცესებზე დაყრდნობით, იკვლევს იმ ურთიერთკავშირს რომელიც ყალიბდება მოცემული ქვეყნების მიწოდების უსაფრთხოების უზრუნველყოფის ამოცანებსა და ეროვნული უსაფრთხოების გამოწვევებს შორის. მოცემული ქვეყნების შერჩევა განაპირობა იმ ფაქტმა, რომ ორივე ქვეყნის ენერგეტიკული უსაფრთხოების პოლიტიკის ფორმირება საბჭოთა კავშირის დაშლისა და სუვერენიტეტის მოპოვების შემდგომ, იდენტური მახასიათებლებით ხდება. მოცემული შემთხვევების კვლევის მეშვეობით შესაძლებელი ხდება იმის გაანალიზება, თუ რა გავლენას ახდენენ საგარეო პოლიტიკური საფრთხეები ქვეყნის ენერგეტიკული უსაფრთხოების გადაწყვეტილების მიღების პროცესზე. კვლევაში ასევე განხილულია ის ძირითადი ფაქტორები, რომლებიც გავლენას ახდენენ ეროვნული უსაფრთხოების ინტერესების პრიორიტეტიზაციაზე, რაც საშუალებას იძლევა პასუხი გაეცეს ნაშრომის მთავარ საკვლევ კითხვას თუ რა განაპირობებს სახელმწიფოს ქცევას ეროვნული იდენტურობის შენარჩუნების გამართლებით, გაატაროს ენერგეტიკული უსაფრთხოების კუთხით ნაკლებად რაციონალური პოლიტიკა. სექურითიზაციის კონცეფციის გამოყენებით, ნაშრომში ასევე ახსნილია თუ რა განაპირობებს ეროვნული უსაფრთხოების გამოწვევების დაძლევის მიზნით ისეთი ნაბიჯების გადადგმას, რომლებმაც თავის მხრივ შესაძლოა წარმოშვან ახალი ტიპის უსაფრთხოების გამოწვევები. აღნიშნული შემთხვევების ანალიზი კარგი შესაძლებლობაა იმის ასახსნელად თუ როგორ მოქმედებენ საგარეო პოლიტიკური საფრთხეები ქვეყნის ენერგეტიკული უსაფრთხოების გადაწყვეტილებებზე, განაპირობებენ თუ არა მოცემული საფრთხეები ახალ ენერგეტიკულ გამოწვევებს და რამდენად გამართლებულია სახელმწიფოსათვის ამგვარი ენერგეტიკული პოლიტიკის წარმოება ქვეყნის სუვერენიტეტის შენარჩუნების მოტივით. ნაშრომში წარმოდგენილი კვლევის შედეგად დგინდება, რომ მხოლოდ პოლიტიკური ინტერესების გადმოსახედიდან ფორმირებული ენერგეტიკული პოლიტიკა შესაძლოა ვერ უზრუნველყოფდეს ქვეყნის ენერგეტიკული უსაფრთხოების გამოწვევების წარმატებით დაძლევას.

საკვანძო სიტყვები: *ეროვნული საფრთხეები, სექურითიზაცია, ენერგეტიკული უსაფრთხოება, საქართველო, ლიეტუვა, ენერგო-იმპორტ დამოკიდებულება*

Introduction

Ensuring secure existence in the international political system by maintaining statehood and national values is the top priority for each nation-state in the contemporary world. Energy security is one of the significant aspects in this direction. Being an important constituent part of our everyday lives, energy plays an important role in strengthening states' national security aspects. Economic development of the country and protection of its basic statehood values, necessary to maintain national identity, is impossible without ensuring energy security. Considering the growing energy demand and disproportionate distribution of energy resources around the world, transportation difficulties and unstable market conditions made energy relationships among consumer and producer states more complex. Frequent energy crises and cases of political manipulation through the energy instruments become an integral part of international political behaviour.

The mentioned factors led to the development of energy issues into the major component of national security and started to review energy security issues from a national perspective. Thus energy security has gone beyond sectoral limitations and it has become an important component of ensuring national interest and maintaining foreign policy agenda. Close link between energy security challenges and national interests brought states to such national security threats as unstable prices on energy resources, risks to supply security and monopolisation of energy markets. In particular, energy importer countries become subject to the mentioned risks. Consequently, energy importer countries started facing energy challenges in the context of national security in order to prevent the use of energy as apolitical levers from the supplying countries. This meant that so-called "securitization" of energy issues took place, meaning that a country may not have taken steps necessary for energy security in case if such steps posed a potential threat to state sovereignty.

As a result of the energy securitization, conditioned by national security goals, security challenges such as increased price on imported resources, diminished degree of state welfare, social-economic instability and import dependence, were perceived as less threat to the state, than potential political-military threats posed by import diversification activities. Consequently, this research aims to explore and answer ***the main question*** - why the import-dependent countries take less advantageous steps in the context of energy security justified by ensuring national security goals and whether such behaviour is justifiable from the perspectives of countries energy security interests. Considering and analysing conceptual linking of national and energy security aspects, ***the aim*** of the research presented in this paper is to identify what kind of inter-relationship exists between the formation of country-specific energy diversification policy and national security challenges, and how the decisions, driven by national security objectives, shape the main directions of the country's supply security strategy. Accordingly, ***the main goal*** of the research is to explain based on research findings, which factors influence the state's decisions to prioritize particular national security interests over the energy security challenges. This will help us understand which factors motivate the state to implement less rational energy security policy with the aim of maintaining national identity and how this motivation of states can be explained.

It should be emphasized that to strengthen empirical aspects of the given study, case studies of Georgia and Lithuania have been used in the paper. Being characterized by high import-dependence on Russia, both Lithuania and Georgia have often become in the past victims of political, military or economic pressure from Russia using energy levers. Difficult soviet past, constant presence of the military threat from Russia, possibility of ethnic conflicts and internal civil strife present the background of the energy independence formation processes of Lithuania and Georgia. On the one hand, historic energy import dependence on Russia and, on the other hand, geographical proximity with this country have made the mentioned processes even more complex. However, strong endeavours of the Georgia and Lithuania to establish their sovereign places in the international political arena, has led both countries to the formation of energy security strategy aimed at reducing future import dependence on Russia.

However, the actions of the mentioned countries, driven by national security interests, to prevent potential future military-political and economic pressure from Russia, led to formation of new energy security

challenges in the short term. Analysing the mentioned cases is a good possibility to explain how foreign political threats affect formation of energy security policy of the country and how political steps aimed at maintaining national identity impact formation of new supply security challenges. The following research sources, attributable to the empirical literature, have been used throughout the research: legislative acts, energy strategies, governmental decisions, national security concepts, regulatory decrees, statistical data from the official sources and relevant academic works on energy and national security issues.

Literature review indicated that energy security aspects have been widely covered in official state documents including national security concepts and strategies of both Lithuania and Georgia. Energy policy documents and strategic plans clearly state priority of energy security challenges for national security. However, analysing energy statistic data of the given countries also indicates that despite high priority of the issue, both countries still remain dependent on energy resources imported from Russia to some extent. Taking into account the mentioned fact, some researchers believe that in view of the potential military-political threat from Russia, existing energy dependence of Lithuania and Georgia on Russia should be reduced to minimum, based on the national interests of the mentioned countries (T. Gochitashvili, J. Hetland, M. Komakhia, T. Janeliunas, V. Pakalkaité). Others believe that to ensure security, it is necessary for a country to rationally use all available means at its disposal, whether strengthening transit functions or development of regional cooperation with all potential partners, for ensuring stable economic development (P. Roehrs, V. Papava, D. Chomakidze). At the same time, reviewing theoretical literature on security issues clearly indicated that securitization of energy issues significantly narrows a country's operational area in terms of development of foreign energy relations by setting new limits to threats, for maintaining and protecting national identity (D. Jakniūnaitė, T. Janeliūnas, O. Waever, B. Busan, G. Česnakas).

As for theoretical basis for this paper served framework of security studies, in particular was used the concept of "Securitization". The framework was developed by representatives of the Copenhagen School focused on studying security aspects (Barry Buzan, Ole Wæver, Jaap de Wilde). As part of the given theoretical framework, paper explains what leads to taking steps, aimed at tackling national security challenges, which may cause new types of security challenges and whether such behaviour is justifiable from the national security standpoint.

The first chapter of this study focuses on both general overview of the security concept and exploring interrelation between national and energy security components using the theoretical framework of the securitization concept. Chapters two and three deal with the analysis of Lithuanian and Georgian cases, overviewing the energy security formation processes within the mentioned countries and analysing prioritization process of political interests. The concluding part of the paper presents major findings of the study and summary analysis of the research question.

1. Conceptual analysis of the theoretical framework of security

This chapter presents general overview of the scientific foundation of the security concept. In addition, it analyses problems related to energy and national security conceptualization and reviews the existing interrelation between the main postulates of energy and national security concepts. It should be emphasized that exploring the mentioned conceptual framework of security is the basic instrument to further analyse the main research question, in particular what leads to state's decisions to prioritize particular national security interests over the energy security challenges. A notion of security is the major conceptual foundation in the field of international relations. However, self-defence, balance of power and security components were presented in the works of Thucydides, Machiavelli, Hobbs, Lock and others long before the discipline was developed. In terms of the discipline, discussion of security issues in the field of international relations first started in the context of the theory of realism, which focused on the anarchical nature of the international system, leading to existence of

states as the main actors in the state of constant war, where ensuring security is the primary objective for self-preservation (Viotti & Kauppi, 2012).

Later, in the context of neoclassical realism, the representatives of the new theoretical school of realism further developed security concept during the 20th century and presented a systematic approach, based on which, in the anarchical self-help system, the main task of states was ensuring self-security. In the state of anarchy, striving by the system elements – nation-states, for ensuring safe environment for existence led to the main dilemma, which implied reduced degree of security at the system level as a result of the behaviour of the states aimed at increasing security (Waltz, 1979). It should be emphasized that conceptual framework of both classical and neoclassical realism has changed significantly since the 1980's, when, in the work of the representatives of the Copenhagen School, security went beyond its classical military dimension and was analysed in accordance with various political, social or economic dimensions. Consequently, new formulation of security was developed, according to which in the international context "security is a possibility of a country and society to ensure their independence and maintain self-identification against changes caused by hostile forces" (Buzan, 1991, pp.18-19).

Development of security studies into a separate research field made it necessary to study security concept in various dimensions as well as at various levels (system, sub-system, union and sub-union). Thus, in accordance with the current theoretical framework of security a comprehensive and wider security concept was developed in the 21st century. Based on the concept, in line with the military aspect, other aspects affecting security policy formation are also discussed, in particular: internal political structure of a country, economic interrelations between countries, impact of a regional political context (Nye & Lynn-Jones, 1988). However, despite conceptual changes, security is still primarily linked to ensuring secure existence of states in the anarchical international system for the achievement of which states have to pay a certain price and sacrifice some aims and values (Williams, 2018). Therefore, modern security structure still remains focused on self-preservation of states, maintenance of sovereignty and protection of national values. This have created the need to study national security challenges and related aspects within the different prism of international politics.

Traditionally, national security implied maintenance of the state sovereignty, political institutions, cultural identity (Wolfers, 1952), but the globalization processes which started in the 20th century gave ecological, social and economic dimensions to the notion of security in addition to its military and political dimensions. Furthermore, economic, including energy threats were defined as the major challenge to the national security (Buzan, 1991). Energy crises set forth in the 20th and early in the 21st century further emphasized the significance of the energy component in ensuring national security. Consequently, definition of energy security were developed considering the views of the participating actors. One of the first scholars who tried to define energy security was Mason Willrich, who, in his 1976 work "International Energy Issues and Options" defined energy security as: „the assurance of sufficient energy supplies to permit the national economy to function in a politically acceptable manner" (Willrich, 1976). This was followed by multiple attempts by a number of authors in the 80's and 90's of the previous century to define energy security. As a result, the majority of scholars defined the given concept as the reduction of economic prosperity as a result of change of events (e.g. oil prices changed due to armed conflicts) (Barton, Redgwell, Rønne & Zillman, 2004).

At the beginning of the 21st century, frequent use of energy levers from energy suppliers towards importer countries for political purposes, further activated the attempts to develop a common energy security concept. Furthermore, global energy crises, growing demand on energy resources and unstable policy of the supplying countries strengthened aspects of supply security in the energy security concept. As a result, energy security was defined as ensuring provision of sufficient and continuous amount of energy resources required to satisfy main needs of a country (Kalicki & Goldwyn, 2013). In addition to security of supply, the given concept was also related to and associated with system resilience and its capacity to cope with energy crises and develop defence mechanisms (Yergin, 2011). Worth mentioning is the fact, that one of the most widely used and more or less agreed-upon notion of energy security was presented by the International Energy Agency, which defined energy security concept as "reliable supply of energy at a reasonable price" (IEA, 2019). However, in spite of the attempts

to develop a common energy security concept, currently, it is still defined in the context of the interests of particular States.

In this direction, representatives of the Copenhagen School presented concept of securitization to identify impact of various energy components on the degree of national security. According to the concept, the authors indicate that beyond the five major dimensions of security (military, economic, political, social and environmental), any component may be assigned a threat status, i.e. it may become "securitized" (Buzan, Weaver Ole & Wild, 1998). Authors state that for an issue to be perceived as a threat, physical presence of such a threat is not necessary. Rather, the existence of the issue and its perception as a threat is already enough for assigning "securitization" status to the issue. For this, the following three important components of securitization process should be present: it should present a significant threat, it should require emergency measures and it should justify violation of the established norms of political procedures (e.g.: increased conspiracy due to security objectives, violation of rights guaranteed by the constitution) (Buzan et al., 1998).

It should also be pointed out here that apart from the mentioned components, the representatives of the Copenhagen school also emphasized the scale of significance of the issue and whether the mentioned issue had a cascade effect on other component of security, because, according to the scholars, the significance of an issue can only be determined by evaluating the chain of events caused by the mentioned threat in relation to other components of security (Buzan et al., 1998). Consequently, "securitization" of energy security-related issues is possible when actions of another state are perceived as a threat. Furthermore, existence of such an energy threat should clearly threaten maintenance of national identity and it should not only be related to the fear of reducing a country's prosperity. In this term, for "securitization" of energy the following factors should also be present (Janeliūnas & Tumkevic, 2013): 1. Energy security issue should be included in national security strategies. 2. Urgency and importance of timely removal of threats should be determined. 3. Sources of energy threats should be identified. As a result, existence of the mentioned components clearly leads to "securitization" of the energy sector leading in its part to the decisions to be made in terms of energy security. The mentioned statement is particularly important for the study, because it will reveal the interrelation between the actions performed for ensuring energy security of a country and processes of its political self-preservation.

Consequently, these aspects of the energy security concept will be applied in two case studies provided in the following chapter of this article. In particular, by exploring what kind of energy security challenges are faced by Lithuania and Georgia, will be identified interconnection between energy security challenges and national interest formation processes. This will help to evaluate how national interest prioritization processes are affected by challenges caused by energy security components.

2. Case study one: Energy security strategy formation and national interest prioritization process in Georgia

Interconnection between national interests and energy security analysed in the previous chapter of this paper has clearly indicated the important role energy challenges play in stable and secure development of a country. Consequently, Georgia case study provided in this chapter will take place within the mentioned conceptual framework. In particular, based on the overview of the major security policy aspects of the country, the analysis of the components affecting state interest prioritization process will be provided.

It should be mentioned here that, the major objective of the energy security strategy of Georgia is to satisfy the country's general energy needs with its own resources. This will allow the country to be less dependent on supply security-related risks and thus protect its economy from the influence of the outside energy or political factors. However, despite the fact, that from energy resources, the country is particularly rich in hydropower, in view of the low development of these resources, Georgia has to import additional energy from its neighbouring countries. Based on 2020 data, Georgia is using only 22% of its hydropower potential (Ministry of Economy and

Sustainable Development of Georgia, 2019). As a result, despite the fact that, in accordance with 2020 data, the share of hydro resources in the internal power generation equalled approximately 73%, the share of power generated from the imported natural gas still dominates in the final use (Georgia Electricity Market Operator (ESCO), 2020). It should also be emphasized that seasonal character of hydro resources leads to instability of the system in its part and brings to the agenda the need to use basic energy resources such as gas coal or oil. Due to the absence of own basic resources, it becomes necessary to import them (Gochitashvili, 2020). Worth mentioning is the fact that main consumer products of the country are natural gas and oil products and hydropower resources only come next.

Furthermore, according to "Energy Balance of Georgia, 2020" published by the National Statistics Office of Georgia, which is the most recent publication with regard to the aggregated energy balance and provides 2019 data, approximately 90% of the energy needs of the country was covered from imported energy resources (a similar figure of 2018 was 88%). Natural gas (approximately 55%) and oil products (approximately 35%) present the largest share of the imports, while the remaining share is divided between coal and electricity (National Statistics Office of Georgia (GeoStat), 2020). It should be mentioned that out of the major imported products, oil import sources are more diversified than natural gas. Five major and 15 small scale companies carry out oil imports in Georgia (International Energy Agency (IEA), 2020. In addition, Georgian oil product supply market is fully liberalised and does not create trade barriers to market participants, preventing the attempts to monopolize the Georgian market. Therefore, the country faces less risks related to oil supply security (IEA, 2020).

Yet, the situation is entirely different in the natural gas sector. In 2020, 99.8% (2.57 billion m^3) of the natural gas needs of Georgia was covered from imported natural gas, with the remaining 0.2% (8 million m^3) covered by the local resources which are produced in insignificant amounts in Georgia In 2020, the natural gas supply in Georgia was carried out from the following sources: from Shah-Deniz gas field (Azerbaijan) operated by international consortium (1,15 billion m^3), by the Azerbaijan state energy company SOCAR (1,18 billion m^3), from Russia through „the North-South Caucasus Main Gas Pipeline" (NSGP) (204 million m^3) In total, 92.8% of the imports come from Azerbaijan and 7% from Russia (Georgian National Energy and Water Supply Regulatory Commission (GNERC), 2021). Electricity import is also worth mentioning. It should be emphasized that 3,7% share of the imported electricity in the entire import basket is approximately 3% of the country's total consumption in accordance with the 2020 data (ESCO, 2020). Despite low percentage of the imported electricity, this amount is critical for the country in winter, when generation from the local hydropower resources reduces significantly and the demand increases. In 2020, the electricity generated and supplied by the HPPs equalled 470.522 mln. KWh, which was 45.6% of the total electricity generation (Thermal power plants and wind farm) - 1 030.889 mln. kWh, while it only covered 37.8% of the total need of the country for energy resources. This means that the remaining share was fully covered by the imported energy resources. As for the imported sources, worth mentioning is that in 2020, the country imported electricity (in total 1610.1 mln. kWh) from the following countries: Russia (570.6 mln. kWh - 35% of the total imports), Azerbaijan (726.3 mln. kWh - 45.4% of the total imports) and Turkey (313.1 mln. kWh - 19.4% of the total imports). In 2020 no imported volumes came from Armenia (Energy Balance of Georgia, 2020, ESCO 2020). Despite the fact that in 2020, Georgia exported electricity as well (in Armenia, Turkey and Azerbaijan) (153.8 mln. kWh), the trade shows a clear negative balance (-1,456.3 mln. kWh) (ESCO, 2020). However, it should also be mentioned here that similar to oil product imports, electricity import sources are also diversified, thus less subject to supply security challenges.

To sum up, high volumes of imported resources, provide the basis to identify Georgia's gas import-dependence as the main challenge in the context of energy security. Meanwhile, monopolized market of the natural gas and supply security-related risks create additional threats. The situation becomes more challenging due to the fact that, in spite of a number of steps taken by the state to diminish import-dependence (construction of new HPPs, exploring local renewable energy resources, rehabilitation of energy infrastructure for the purpose of integration with the energy systems of the neighbouring countries - the implementation of which is related to the long-term period), currently the low indicator of the use of local energy resources, low reliability of the

energy infrastructure and lack of critical reserves of oil and natural gas are still present. In the situation of increasing consuming trend in the country, the mentioned challenges make questionable the possibility of reducing import-dependence of Georgia within the next 5 years.

However, while speaking of the major challenge of the import-dependence on Azerbaijan, it should also be mentioned that existing strategic partnership between Georgia and Azerbaijan significantly reduces supply risks. Georgia, as a stable transit country, plays a significant role in transportation of the natural resources of Azerbaijan towards the European region while Azerbaijan is the most important country in terms of stable energy supply to Georgia. However, despite strategic partnership between the two countries, supply security risks still remain related to natural disasters, technical malfunctions, cyber-attacks, sabotages and military operations in the region. As a result, Georgia may be left without natural gas for a certain period of time, leading to both economic crisis and social and political tensions. This poses significant challenges to Georgia in terms of ensuring natural gas supply security and provides a basis to identify high import dependence on a single supplier as a major energy security challenge of the country. Consequently, in a situation of high import-dependence, in accordance with the National Threat Assessment Document of Georgia 2010 – 2013, the Law of Georgia on Energy and Water Supply approved by the Parliament of Georgia in 2019, "Social-Economic Development Strategy - Georgia 2020", electricity and natural Gas sector action plans and strategies, the most optimal way to avoid supply security risks is diversification of natural gas import sources, routes and suppliers. However, considering the limited energy infrastructure within the region, diversification of the natural gas imports is only technically possible from Russia. However, a number of energy sabotages[2] implemented by Russia in relation to Georgia in recent years, simulated energy crises and attempts at seizing the strategic infrastructure, clearly demonstrated the threats that may arise in the event of deepening energy relations with this country. The mentioned risks are even more strengthened by the fact, that Russia has occupied almost 20% of Georgia's territories and particularly tense political relations that have formed since the war of August, 2008.

Therefore, despite the fact that in the event Georgia maintains import dependence on a single supplier it will be subject to threats of energy crisis, possible economic collapse and potential social-political instability, permanent military-political aggression from Russia forces Georgia to reject the possible ways of diversification. Thus, the challenge of dependence on imports has been considered less of a threat for the country than likely military and political challenges as a result of possible energy diversification. However, understanding the existing cooperation risks with Russia, does not mean that high import-dependence on a single supplier – Azerbaijan, are out of the country's energy security agenda. In this situation, existed energy threats forced Georgia to carry out securitization of energy issues via legitimization. Energy security issues have been included in the National Threat Assessment Document of Georgia 2010 – 2013, in the Law of Georgia on Energy and Water Supply, approved in 2019 by the Parliament of Georgia, "Social-Economic Development Strategy Georgia 2020", electricity and natural Gas sector action plans and strategies.

From the perspective of the "securitization" concept, the study indicates that this happened due to the fact that Georgia considered Russia as an enemy. Considering it as a source of threat was due to historical memory and the existing tense political situation, which, based on the research by Robert Jervis and Stephen Walt, increases perception of insecurity and facilitates reduction of the national security (Walt, 1987; Jervis, 2017). In addition, perception of the mentioned intentions as threats are facilitated by the factors such as geographical proximity, overall strength of the country (military, economic, political), aggressive intentions of the state and possibilities for attacks (Walt, 1987). If the above-mentioned is applied to the case of Georgia, i.e. Russia's strength in line with its aggressive actions and intentions, reflected in economic, including energy pressure in addition to the military occupation, this may lead to the perception of any degree of energy cooperation with Russia as a source of threat by Georgia. This, in its turn, affects the decisions made in the context of energy security of the country and

[2] In winter 2006, when Russia was the only option for supplying natural gas to Georgia, Russian intelligence services organized sabotage on the natural gas pipeline leading to a severe energy crisis for Georgia. This fact made Georgia reject Russian natural gas and switch to Azerbaijan, as the only supplier of natural gas.

subjects them to the intention to protect its national values. To strengthen the findings of the mentioned study, the next chapter will focus on the case study of another country – Lithuania. Using the example of its energy security strategy formation, one more case of political interest prioritization will be reviewed.

3. Case study two: Impact of national security challenges on the formation of Lithuanian energy security strategy

This chapter presents energy security policy analysis of Lithuania in the context of the major challenges affecting national security objectives formation of this country. Worth mentioning is that from the post-Soviet countries characterized by high import-dependence on Russia, apart from Georgia, only Lithuania managed to reduce dependence on Russian energy resources to the extent possible, whereas during the early years following the collapse of the Soviet Union, Lithuania was characterized by much higher dependence on Russian imports, compared to Estonia and Latvia. Furthermore, similar to Georgia, Lithuania has become a victim of energy and political threats from Russia many times in recent decades. In parallel, frequent military expansions carried out by Russia in relation to Lithuania, occupation of its territories and political blackmailing during previous centuries developed Russia as the main source of threat for Lithuania (Weyers, 2013).

It should be mentioned that during the Soviet period, the energy system of Lithuania, similar to other Soviet republics, was managed from Russia and, at the same time, it depended on Russian imports by 98% (World Bank, 1994). The post-Soviet period economic crisis significantly hampered the import of the energy resources from Russia and Lithuania faced serious energy crisis starting from the 1990s (Vilemas, 2010). The mentioned import-dependence on Russia lasted for another decade. During this period, Lithuania became several times a victim of a number of energy manipulations from Russia. Its aspiration towards Euro integration, its wish to pursue an independent energy policy and the steps taken towards reduction of Russian influence in the country were the factors leading to Russia's punitive measures towards Lithuania. The mentioned measures included setting higher prices on imported resources compared to other users as well as unplanned interruptions of supply and attempts at seizing the energy system of Lithuania (Puheloinen, 1999). In this direction, worth mentioning is the long-term oil crisis in 2006, when Lithuania refused to hand over the oil refinery under the ownership of a Russian company several times and handed it over to a Polish company. Meanwhile, with almost 100% dependence on Russia as on a single supplier, the gas supply disruptions and price-manipulation served as additional punishing methods form Russian side (Grigas, 2012).

As a result, energy security challenges become most important issue of national security and energy-securitization process went into operation. For ensuring energy security, the need for energy diversification was considered to be the major postulate of both economic and national security of Lithuania and the mentioned energy issues were legitimised vie reflecting them in the legislative acts and national security concepts of Lithuania (Šatūnienė, 2004). In particular, „Law on the Basics of National Security" adopted by the Republic of Lithuania in 1996 clearly indicates that the main principle of the national security policy is ensuring alternative sources of supplying energy resources for the purpose of gaining independence from monopolistic suppliers, to prevent manipulation with the energy levers from such suppliers (Republic of Lithuania „Law on The Basics of National Security", 1996). Furthermore, Lithuania developed the first energy security strategy in the early years after gaining independence, in particular in 1993. Based on the strategy, ensuring security of supply was identified as the main challenge, while ensuring reduction of energy dependence on Russia was directly identified as the way to respond to the challenge (Republic of Lithuania, National Energy Strategy, 1993). Later, in the energy strategy document developed in 2002, 90% import-dependence on a supplier was once again identified as the main energy threat (Republic of Lithuania, National Energy Strategy, 2002).

Acts and strategies developed at the legislative level were soon followed by practical steps taken by the country to ensure security of supply. Joining the European Union (EU) by Lithuania in 2004 allowed the country to improve energy security degree through the implementation of various energy projects, providing the

possibility for the country to minimize existed dependence on Russia. By cooperating with the EU, critical energy security tasks were identified, which implied gradual integration of the Baltic States named as "the energy island" into the energy system of the EU. Promoting use of the local energy resources and implementing energy efficient measures, together with energy market liberalization actions, Lithuania significantly improved energy security environment of the country (Vilemas, 2010). As a result of this action and with strong institutional and financial support from the EU, by 2009, Lithuania managed to achieve significant energy independence from Russia (Janeliunas, 2020). In particular, Lithuania's dependence on energy supply reduced from 98% in the early years of gaining independence, to 50% by 2009 (before stopping the nuclear station) (Statista Research Department, 2019).

However, soon after the implementation by Lithuania one of the precondition of gaining the EU membership – shutting down of the Ignalina Nuclear Power Plant, turned Lithuania again into a vulnerable country towards Russian energy pressure mechanisms. Making this decision was quite difficult for the government of Lithuania during that period because, on the one hand, freedom from Russian military and political influence by implementation of the western political course in the long term was at stake. On the other hand, it was giving up energy security and increasing dependence on the imported energy resources from Russia in the short term, which was considered to be a very serious threat for Lithuania due to the aggressive energy actions from Russia (Česnakas, 2010). The first negative effect brought by closure of the nuclear power plant on December 31, 2009 was much higher energy dependence on Russia. In particular, reduced energy dependence on the Russian imports by 2009 to approximately 50%, increased up to 80% by 2010, because the share of the generation from Ignalina Nuclear Power Plant was distributed to natural gas thermal power plants, leading to higher demand on the natural gas (Weyers, 2013)[3].

Besides the increased prices, implementation of the mentioned Nord Stream project significantly affected Lithuania's supply security because it gave Russia an opportunity to supply Kaliningrad district from the Nord Stream pipeline section bypassing Lithuania. This left Lithuania without its transit functions and the lever ensuring guaranteed receipt of the natural gas from Russia. On the other hand, reduction of Russia's dependence on Lithuania as the energy transit country, allowed the latter to make more use of Lithuania's energy dependence to promote own political interests in the Baltic region (Larsson, 2007).

The increased dependence on imports due to the higher demand made Lithuania sensitive to the changes in political prices on the natural gas by Russia, as the sole importer. However, pursuing aggressive energy policy by Russia, on the other hand, accelerated seeking new diversification routes by Lithuania.

In this respect, the most important step forward was completion of the liquefied natural gas terminal construction near Lithuania's seaside town Klaipėda at the Baltic Sea port. Klaipėda liquefied natural gas terminal provided an opportunity for Lithuania to initially import additional 2 billion m^3 and later 4 billion m^3 of natural gas from various sources during the entire year, which was enough to meet the needs of not only Lithuania, but 75% of the needs of Latvia and Estonia as well (Wood, 2016). During the same period, Lithuania took another extremely important step in terms of gaining energy independence. In particular, with the support of the EU, Lithuania carried out complete modification of its electricity system. All three Baltic states: Lithuania, Estonia and Latvia were known as the "Energy Island" states, because they were isolated from the unified European Energy System and were connected with each other via the so-called BRELL electrical grid constructed during the Soviet Union, connecting the electricity systems of Belarus, Russia, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania and still being under control of Russia (Purvins et al., 2016)Therefore, in view of the increased dependence on imports due to closure of the Ignalina Nuclear Power Plant, diversification of the entire electricity sector came to the top of the agenda (Wood, 2016). For this purpose, late in 2009, Baltic Energy Market Interconnection Plan – BEMIP was prepared. As part of the plan a number of priority projects were identified, aimed at connecting Lithuania to the unified European Energy System (Švedas, 2017). This allowed the country to purchase electricity at a lower price from the

[3] Before 2013, Lithuania paid relatively higher price for Russian natural gas not only compared with other Baltic states but compared with the EU member states as well (between 460 and 490 USD for 100 m^3 gas, while the weighted average purchasing price for the EU for Russian natural gas ranged between 370-380 USD for 100m^3) (Umbach, 2015).

EU Members and at the same time reduce dependence on Russia-controlled BRELL electrical system (Janeliunas, 2020).

However worth mentioning is that despite successful energy diversification policy, Lithuania still faces a number of energy security challenges, in particular low share of renewables in final consumption, lack of reserve capacities, instability of the energy system, long-term process of de-harmonization from the Soviet-time electricity system and harmonization with the European Energy System and so on (National Energy Regulatory Council, 2020). In spite of the existing energy challenges, deepening any type of energy relations with Russia is considered to be damaging for ensuring the country's national security, thus the energy policy of the country is pursued considering the tendency to reduce the existing energy dependence on Russia to the possible extent.

Summarising the empirical research outcomes of the case of Lithuania indicates that, similar to Georgia, the State energy decisions were mostly driven by the existing energy and political threats from Russia. As a result, searching for the ways to respond to the energy challenges clearly depend on national threat assessment process in case of Lithuania too. For example, if, in case of Georgia, considering the mentioned threats, the country still remains dependent on a single supplier and does not carry out energy diversification, thus clearly opposing the principles of energy security, in case of Lithuania, considering the potential threat from Russia, Lithuania was forced to reject importing cheap energy resources from Russia and Belarus[4], significantly limiting its possibilities for energy diversification. At the same time, it increased the price of energy resources and limited the country's energy transit potential, in its part having negative impact on the economic sector and affecting a number of sectors within the wider social dimension. On the other hand, however, in exchange for the challenges arising in terms of energy security, Lithuania significantly reduced the possibility of Russia to use energy levers as political instruments against Lithuania, thus defending country's national interests.

Conclusions

Analysis of the energy security challenges of Georgia and Lithuania presented in this paper clearly indicate that the mentioned cases do not fall within the classical model of energy security concept. The reason is that in developing a strategy to respond to energy security challenges, they are not only guided by energy security principles, but rather, prioritize political challenges with the aim to maintain national sovereignty and political independence. The purpose of such behaviour is similar in the cases of both Georgia and Lithuania. The threat of using energy cooperation by Russia as an instrument of political pressure and increased possibilities of potential military-political aggression from Russia's side, forced Georgia and Lithuania to securitise their energy strategies. Therefore, neutralization of political threats caused by energy dependence on Russia, become the main postulate of ensuring national security for Lithuania and Georgia. As a result, perception of energy challenges as threats and securitization of the sector led to the fact that in the process of responding to energy security challenges, these countries are guided by political agenda. Therefore, in case of both countries, deepening energy relations with Russia to any extent as a means of energy diversification is considered to be a source of political threats. A feature of foreign political behaviour of the Russian Federation, that undermines the use of any means of pressure (including energy levers) in order to increase political influence, further substantiates appropriateness of the decisions made by Lithuania and Georgia.

Furthermore, analysing the results through security concept and theoretical prism of securitization presented in the paper, it is clearly indicated that in the cases of both Lithuania and Georgia there are economic, political and military threats coming from another state threatening the countries' national identity. This led to "securitization" of the issues related to energy security and the fear caused by reduced welfare of the country,

[4] For security reasons, Lithuania decided not to purchase the newly opened Astravets Nuclear Power Plant in Belarus as a protest, because, despite the opposition from Lithuania, Belarus constructed the NPP in approximately 48 kilometres from Vilnius (LRT Media, 2020).

made energy subject to political interests. Presence of the source of threat in the event of both Lithuania and Georgia led to reflecting the energy security issues in the national security strategies and action plans, assigning threat statuses to energy security challenges, prioritizing them in the lists of national threats and their identification as urgent response objectives.

To sum up the above-mentioned, the paper concludes that energy cooperation with a country considered to be as a source of threats apparently leads to "securitization" of the energy sector, affecting in its part the decisions to be made in the context of energy security, thus narrowing and limiting the operational area in which political decisions are made. This is because the supreme objective of a state is self-preservation in the international anarchical system and to achieve the mentioned objective states often have to pay a certain price by scarifying some other aims and values. This was clearly demonstrated in the actions of both countries when both Georgia and Lithuania rejected deepening energy relations with Russia because of their national interests. Theoretical explanation of the mentioned approach provides the basis for the following assumption: in spite of the fact that energy diversification is an integral part of national interests, in case its realization is associated with foreign threats and it is perceived as a source of threats for a country's sovereignty, energy security objectives and interests may be sacrificed to ensure the foremost national interest – self-preservation of a country.

Considering on the above-mentioned, based on the theoretical prism of security, the research finds that the main factors caused by threat perception mechanisms, such as "securitization", "political legitimization", "formation of interests" and "formation of identity" significantly determine and play decisive part in formation and development of the conceptual platform of energy security. Therefore, formation of energy security issues and decisions of a country are the result of the above-mentioned mechanisms and are formed under the influence of the stated factors.

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