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AGNĖ TAMULEVIČIŪTĖ

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**2014 – 2021 ENERGY SECURITY TRANSITION IN UKRAINE:  
THE CASE OF GAS TRANSIT SECTOR**

*MASTER'S THESIS*

Tutor: Prof. Dr. Tomas Janeliūnas

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**MASTER'S THESIS FLYLEAF**

**Conclusions of the tutor of the Master's thesis (concerning the public defence):**

.....  
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.....  
(name, surname)

.....  
(signature)

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## BIBLIOGRAPHICAL ENTRY

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**Key words:** securitization, Ukraine, gas transit security, gas price, diversification, Russia, gas supplies, dependence, weaponization, transit routes.

**Summary:** This Master's thesis analyses Ukraine's gas transit securitization process and its dynamics in political communication to the public. The link between the 2014 war and Ukraine's ambition to reduce its dependence on Russian gas supplies created a dilemma as Ukraine sought to maintain gas transit from Russia to the EU. To explain the reasons for securitizing gas transit, the securitization and energy security theories have been combined and formed an interpretive framework. This approach detailed an analysis of the speech acts made by Ukraine's government officials and Naftogaz representatives. The research covers the 2014 – 2021 period of the gas transit securitization process, and the two hypotheses have been risen to access the dynamics of securitizing actors' rhetorics convincing the audience. The results of the in-depth political debate provide an understanding of how the Ukrainian audience was persuaded of the need to reduce gas imports from Russia on the one hand but maintain gas transit on the other.

## LIST OF FIGURES AND TABLES

<b>LIST OF FIGURES</b>		
<b>No.</b>	<b>Title of the Table</b>	<b>Page</b>
1	Energy security	20
2	Energy security chain	23
<b>LIST OF TABLES</b>		
1	Stages of energy discourse securitization	27
2	Gas transit sector security discourse indicators	29
3	Results of the gas transit securitization	51

## Table of Contents

INTRODUCTION.....	7
1. LITERATURE REVIEW.....	12
1. 1. Ukraine as a gas transit country and the role of Russian gas.....	12
1. 2. 2014-2021 Ukraine's gas sector security changes.....	14
2. THE CONCEPT OF ENERGY SECURITY.....	17
2. 1. Definition and scope of energy security.....	18
2. 2. Security of gas transit.....	22
2. 3. Weaponizing the gas sector.....	24
2. 4. Securitization of energy.....	25
3. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK.....	27
4. GAS SECURITY DISCOURSE IN UKRAINE.....	30
4. 1. The impact of 2014 Ukraine's gas-fuelled crisis.....	30
4. 2. Choosing the EU instead of Russia.....	34
4. 3. Russian gas transit route diversification: Nord Stream 2.....	37
4. 4. Between dependence and independence.....	41
4. 4. 1. To transit or not to transit?.....	44
4. 4. 2. Moving towards independence 2020-2021.....	48
CONCLUSIONS.....	53
BIBLIOGRAPHY .....	56
SUMMARY.....	66
SANTRAUKA.....	68

## INTRODUCTION

Ukraine has a century-long history of gas production. Having inherited infrastructure from the Soviet era in the early 1990s, Ukraine has a major profitable route for exporting Russian gas to the European market. Many EU countries receive Russian natural gas partly or exclusively through Ukraine. Gas transit volumes through the territory of Ukraine in 2017 reached the highest level in the last 6 years and amounted to 93.5 bcm of natural gas<sup>1</sup>. In the post-Soviet period, Ukraine's Naftogaz became an undisputed transit monopolist actor and an importer of natural gas. It was established in 1998 through the merger of several state-owned gas and oil companies and is historically the largest gas-producing company subordinated to the Government of Ukraine<sup>2</sup>. However, for over a decade, Russia's state-controlled Gazprom has been supplying gas at low subsidized prices below the market price, while Ukraine's export prices have been rising rapidly<sup>3</sup>. With the Ukrainian gas transmission system (further – GTS) being highly dependent on Russian gas supplies in the region, the result was even less maneuverability in decision-making for the Ukrainian leadership. Thus, Russia's energy policy has remained predominant and influenced countries' foreign policy. However, despite Ukraine benefiting from years of significant discounts in its domestic market, after the 2014 war, Ukraine's goal was to reduce gas dependency on supply from Russia<sup>4</sup>. The relationship between reducing dependence on Russian gas supplies and the crisis showed an interesting link, as Ukraine avoided reducing its dependence on transit as such. And in 2019, Naftogaz extended its transit contract with Gazprom for another five years, with around \$7 billion in gas transit fees by 2024<sup>5</sup>. In other words, the energy security of Ukraine was caught in a dilemma: how to minimize dependence on the Russian gas supply and at the same time maintain gas transit from Russia to the EU.

Ukraine's dependence on natural gas imports allowed Russia to arbitrarily set the price or demand for economic and political concessions<sup>6</sup>. Since most of the gas was imported from Russia, negotiations over the gas price and terms reflected the rising tension between the two countries,

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<sup>1</sup> Naftogaz Group, "Historical victory and the beginning of transformation: annual report 2017", Naftogaz Group, viewed on 2022 November 5<sup>th</sup>, <https://www.naftogaz.com/short/a5424ef7>.

<sup>2</sup> Margarita Balmaceda and Andrian Prokip, "The Development of Ukraine's Energy Sector" in "From "the Ukraine" to Ukraine: A Contemporary History, 1991-2021", by Mykhailo Minakov, Georgiy Kasianov, Matthew Rojansky (Stuttgart, ibidem-Verlag, 2021), 143.

<sup>3</sup> Paola Di Fraia, "The Ukrainian conflict and the long story of energy pipelines", Aspenia online, viewed on 2022 October 10<sup>th</sup>, <https://aspensiaonline.it/the-ukrainian-conflict-and-the-long-story-of-energy-pipelines/>.

<sup>4</sup> Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine, *Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine 2017 August 18 No. 605 p*, "Energy strategy of Ukraine for the period up to 2035 'security, energy efficiency, competitiveness'", Kyiv, 2017, <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/605-2017-%D1%80#Text> (viewed on 2022 November 5<sup>th</sup>).

<sup>5</sup> Naftogaz, "Naftogaz and the industry of Ukraine during the years of Independence in events and facts", Naftogaz, viewed on 2022 November 5<sup>th</sup>, <https://www.naftogaz.com/modern-ukraine-history>.

<sup>6</sup> Chi Kong Chyong, "The role of Russian gas in Ukraine", European Council on Foreign Relations (ECFR), viewed on 2022 October 10<sup>th</sup>, [https://ecfr.eu/article/commentary\\_the\\_role\\_of\\_russian\\_gas\\_in\\_ukraine248/](https://ecfr.eu/article/commentary_the_role_of_russian_gas_in_ukraine248/).

leading to high import prices and a series of gas crises<sup>7</sup>. Russia's energy policy towards Ukraine was negatively affected by Ukraine's government efforts to transform energy policy to a market-oriented approach influenced by the EU and to create new transit opportunities<sup>8</sup>. Moreover, Russia's pressure to control the gas sector and repeated "gas wars" revealed the core of the problems of corruption and energy market inefficiency. Ukraine's government interrelations and operation with well-connected oligarchs made it very hard to pursue a proactive energy policy since it was oriented to state capture by converting cheap gas into massive profits and supporting various economic groups and their gain<sup>9</sup>. Consequently, Ukraine's energy sector has been drained financially. Searching for new ways of supplying energy resources and attracting more investments into the gas sector became vitally important<sup>10</sup>.

A window of opportunity for change opened in 2014 when Ukraine's energy security was seriously challenged by prolonged gas price negotiations with Gazprom, a newly opposition-dominated parliament voting to remove President Viktor Yanukovich, military action in the eastern part of the country and Russia's occupation of Crimea. Following the significant escalation of gas disputes and Ukraine's continued efforts to cooperate with the EU, Russia's gas supplies to Ukraine were reduced to zero in 2016<sup>11</sup>. However, Russia sought to remain an important European gas supplier by starting to build 'Nord Stream 2' and 'TurkStream' transit routes. Soon after Russia launched the 'Nord Stream 2' project to bypass Ukraine's transit, Ukraine became concerned about ensuring its energy security, national sovereignty, and territorial integrity<sup>12</sup>. Dependence on Russia's energy supplies increased Ukraine's energy security vulnerability since gas dependence was capitalized on many times before to achieve Russia's political goals<sup>13</sup>. Moreover, the loss of transit status means that Ukraine will no longer be able to provide uninterrupted gas supplies to Europe and bargain on prices with Russia or even ensure the needed gas flows, which poses a direct challenge to its energy security. Therefore, the objective was both to maintain gas transit and reduce dependence on Russian

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<sup>7</sup> Simon Pirani, "Ukraine's energy policy and prospects for the gas sector", The Oxford Institute for energy studies, viewed on 2022 June 1<sup>st</sup>, <https://www.oxfordenergy.org/publications/ukraines-energy-policy-and-prospects-for-the-gas-sector/>.

<sup>8</sup> Eric Pardo Sauvageot, "Between Russia as producer and Ukraine as a transit country: EU dilemma of interdependence and energy security", *Energy Policy*, vol. 145 (2020): 5.

<sup>9</sup> Stefan Hedlund, "Ukraine remains firmly in its oligarchs' grip", GIS reports online, viewed on 2022 October 10<sup>th</sup>, <https://www.gisreportsonline.com/r/ukraine-naftogaz/>.

<sup>10</sup> Oksana Voytyuk, "The gas sector of Ukraine: past and future" *Wschodnioznawstwo*, vol. 14 (2020): 207-234.

<sup>11</sup> Simon Pirani, "The market takes shape: The Ukrainian gas sector to 2030", The Oxford Institute for energy studies, viewed on 2022 June 1<sup>st</sup>, <https://www.oxfordenergy.org/publications/the-market-takes-shape-the-ukrainian-gas-sector-to-2030/>.

<sup>12</sup> Adam N. Stulberg, "Natural gas and the Russia-Ukraine crisis: Strategic restraint and the emerging Europe-Eurasia gas network", *Energy Research & Social Science (ERSS)* vol. 24, (2017): 71-85.

<sup>13</sup> Szymon Kardaś, Tadeusz Iwański, "From vassalisation to emancipation. Ukrainian-Russian gas co-operation has been revised", OSW Centre for Eastern Studies, viewed on 2022 October 15<sup>th</sup>, <https://www.osw.waw.pl/en/publikacje/osw-commentary/2018-03-07/vassalisation-to-emancipation-ukrainian-russian-gas-co>.



gas. Thus, the Ukrainian government was not only concerned about Ukraine's gas transit issues but also had the opportunity to make fundamental changes to ensure its energy security.

The period from 2014 to 2021 opened not only a window for changes in Ukraine's gas sector but also distinguished two different presidents' cadencies in which Petro Poroshenko and later Volodymyr Zelenskyy could form those changes in energy security policy. Ukraine's gas sector issues have been formalized and become part of the national security agenda. In 2015 in the decree of the President of Ukraine on the *National Security Strategy of Ukraine*, Russia was presented as a threat to Ukraine's external and internal environment, including monopolization of energy resources and dependence on Russia's energy supply<sup>14</sup>. Additionally, in 2017 *Energy strategy of Ukraine for the period up to 2035* emphasizes an understanding of the country's need for secure, reliable, and independent gas supply and transit was detailed<sup>15</sup>. In other words, the securitization of the gas sector was already formalized, i.e., gas supply and transit issues labeled as 'threats' and included in the state's security agenda. The Strategy points to concerns about the uncertainty over Gazprom's readiness to sign a new transit contract while at the same time progressively implementing its projects to build alternative gas transmission routes to Europe to bypass Ukraine's transit<sup>16</sup>. Thus, despite the gas sector and transit issues being identified and the various urgent measures proposed to improve Ukraine's energy security, no visible reforms in the gas sector have taken place, and Ukraine has maintained gas transit concluding a new contract in 2019<sup>17</sup>. According to the securitization theory, securitizing actors seek to persuade an audience about the need to include an issue in the security agenda and take extraordinary measures. However, it is unclear how the Ukrainian government has tried to convince the audience of the importance of maintaining gas transit. Moreover, in 2021 Ukraine's government adopted *Energy Security Strategy for the period up to 2025*, emphasizing further gas transit issues and scenarios for changes in energy security<sup>18</sup>.

Therefore, this thesis focuses on Ukraine's gas transit in terms of energy security and geopolitical and economic relations with Russia. The study analyses the concept of energy security and how it constitutes with securitization theory. It also argues that energy transit is a unique and

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<sup>14</sup> National Security and Defence Council of Ukraine, *Decree of the President of Ukraine on the National Security Strategy of Ukraine 2015 May 6 No. 287/2015*, Kyiv, 2015, <https://www.president.gov.ua/documents/2872015-19070> (viewed on 2022 November 6th).

<sup>15</sup> Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine, *Energy Strategy of Ukraine for the period up to 2035 "Security, Energy Efficiency, Competitiveness" 2017 August 8 № 605-p*, Kyiv, 2017, <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/605-2017-%D1%80#Text> (viewed on 2022 November 6th).

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid*, 31.

<sup>17</sup> Atlantic Council, "Ukraine's historic gas sector reforms are under threat", Atlantic Council, viewed on 2022 November 6th, <https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/ukrainealert/ukraines-historic-gas-sector-reforms-are-under-threat/>.

<sup>18</sup> Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, On the approval of the Energy Security Strategy 2021 August 4th No. 907-p "Energy Security Strategy for the period up to 2025", Kyiv, 2021, <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/en/907-2021-%D1%80#Text>.

specific part of the energy supply and demand chain and requires broader attention and operationalization of transit security. As the importance of natural gas for the energy future of Ukraine rises, transit vulnerability to dependence on Russian gas and gas sector weaponization suggests interpreting gas as a tool to achieve foreign policy goals. The last section of the thesis applies the framework of energy security and securitization to analyze the reasons and the changes in Ukraine's gas sector presented by Ukraine's government which led to sustaining gas transit.

**The research problem of the thesis.** Ukraine's gas sector has been highly securitized and required serious reforms and transformation (i.e., extraordinary measures) to reduce dependence on the Russian gas supply while attempting to maintain its status as a gas transit country. However, from the perspective of securitization, the gas sector and transit issues and suggested emergency measures were more politicized than properly dealt with. As securitization theory suggests, a successful securitization process involves persuading the audience (society) that a certain issue must be included in the security agenda and should be solved by extraordinary measures. However, there is not yet clear how 'the gas transit' became a securitized issue in Ukraine, especially as it could be seen in contradiction with another direction of securitization – the issue of dependence on the Russian gas supply. The genuine reasons for Ukrainian politicians securitizing the gas transit and the public rhetoric's emphasis on "why" it must be securitized have been questioned and analyzed.

Therefore, **the main question** has been raised: How the securitization of the *gas transit* was persuaded to the audience in explaining the urgency to make it a security issue?

Two hypotheses have been raised:

**H1:** Ukraine's gas transit securitization was emphasized through the *need to ensure low and stable gas prices for consumers*.

**H2:** Ukraine's gas transit was securitized, emphasizing the need to reduce gas supply dependence on Gazprom by maintaining the ability to import gas from abroad.

**The object of the research is the** evolution of gas transit securitization process in 2014-2021.

**The thesis aims to** examine the gas transit securitization process and its dynamics in the political communication of Ukrainian officials to the public.

To answer the question, the following **tasks of this thesis** are set:

1. To review the academic literature and the main aspects revealing Ukraine's gas sector security issues and dependence on Russia's influence.
2. To present the main features of securitization and energy security theoretical approaches.
3. To analyze circumstances that increased awareness of Ukraine's gas transit and energy security issues.
4. To analyze 2014-2021 Ukraine's government officials' statements and strategical documents revealing reasons and discourse on the securitizing gas sector, especially the gas transit issue.

The concept of securitization is based on political speeches, statements, and discourses. For this purpose, most of the analysis will be based on the speech acts performed by securitizing actors. Among them are government officials, politicians, and representatives of a gas Naftogaz. In order to examine the dynamic of reasons behind maintaining gas transit, it is necessary to analyze the detailed information on transit securitization and pay attention to the interests of both sides. The speeches will be collected from the official *Government portal* as well a large part of the analysis will be based on collected data from popular domestic news agencies *Ekonomicheskaya Pravda*, *Ukrainskaya Pravda*, and *Kyiv Post*. Moreover, official Ukraine government documents such as the *2017 Energy strategy of Ukraine for the period up to 2035* and the *Energy Security Strategy for the period up to 2025* will be used to illustrate gas and transit issues as an integral part of the speech act context. The opinion of Naftogaz reflected in *annual reports* will be considered to draw a comprehensive background of motives to securitize gas transit. To differentiate the rhetoric of transit securitization from the general rhetoric on energy and gas, the following keywords will be used: *gas security, diversification, gas price, transit routes*.

## 1. LITERATURE REVIEW

The following section presents the academic literature that introduces the historical development of Ukraine's gas industry and the gradually growing Russia's influence in the gas sector causing Ukraine's dependence and further disputes with Russia – focusing on existing academic research on energy security and Ukraine's gas sector securitization, discussing the academic niche to be filled by this thesis aiming to contribute to academic debate.

### 1. 1. Ukraine as a gas transit country and the role of Russian gas

The first gas resources in Ukraine were discovered accidentally while drilling salt shafts in 1912. However, the discovered gas resources were small and had no industrial significance<sup>19</sup>. Gas production began before Ukraine was incorporated into the Soviet Union in 1922<sup>20</sup>. The first natural gas field near Dashava was founded in 1921, the pipeline was built to connect the towns of Stryj and Drohobych and later the city of Lviv. In 1924 development of the gas sector in the region, currently known as Western Ukraine, was slowed down due to a lack of industries that could use natural gas. Moreover, Ukraine's gas industry development was stopped because of the economic crisis that lasted from 1929 until 1933. After joining the western territories of the USSR in 1939, the gas industry of the Carpathian region was nationalized<sup>21</sup>. Following the binding agreement made in Yalta in 1945 by Churchill, Roosevelt, and Stalin when Dashava gas fields became a part of the USSR and were recognized as the first international gas link in Eastern Europe<sup>22</sup>. Until 1960, the Dashava pipeline was connected to Kyiv, Moscow, Minsk, Vilnius, and Riga. After ten years, in 1970 gas export route was opened to Western Europe by developing an effective gas transition pipeline system, '*Bratstvo*' (transl. *Brotherhood*) and the '*Soyuz*' (transl. *Union*)<sup>23</sup>. These routes ensured successful gas production and an increase in exports until the collapse of the Soviet Union.

In 1991, a decrease in gas production was directly connected to the worsened bilateral relationship between Ukraine and Russia since Russia has been the largest trading partner and energy importer. The spectrum of specific political, economic, and social changes marked a new period for the gas industry transformation and modernization. According to Morena Skalamera, USSR

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<sup>19</sup> Oksana Voytyuk, *The gas sector of Ukraine*, 215.

<sup>20</sup> V. Fedyshyn et al. (Ed.), "Atlas of Oil and Gas Fields of Ukraine" *Ukrainian Oil and Gas Academy* vol. 5, (1998): 710.

<sup>21</sup> Voytyuk, *The gas sector of Ukraine*, 208.

<sup>22</sup> Slawomir Lotysz, "The Dashava gas pipeline: the first Eastern European link", *Inventing Europe*, viewed on 2022 January 8<sup>th</sup>, <http://www.inventingeurope.eu/story/the-dashava-gas-pipeline-the-first-eastern-european-link>.

<sup>23</sup> Gas Transmission System Operator of Ukraine, "History of LLC Gas TSO of Ukraine", Gas Transmission System Operator of Ukraine, viewed on 2022 January 8<sup>th</sup>, <https://tsoua.com/en/about-us/history/>.

disintegration fractured a largely unified gas transmission system built irrespective of regional borders. Even though pipeline planners knew of possible long-term political risks, internal borders were not factors to be considered in the planning process<sup>24</sup>. Simon Pirani, in his research, adds that when Ukraine became independent and started to establish a new nation-state, it went through an economic slump, mainly aggravated by dependence on Russian imports of energy, specifically gas. In Soviet times, cheap Russian gas had been used to subsidize industry and to provide heat and fuel to the population in Ukraine<sup>25</sup>. Consequently, Russia has been in a highly unfavourable situation since thousands of kilometres of pipelines stayed in Ukraine and were a handful to other independent states. According to D.G. Victor, Amy Jaffe, and M.H. Hayes, Russia's energy strategy was aimed at taking ownership of gas transit infrastructure and restoring its influence by deepening its dependence on Russia's gas supplies<sup>26</sup>. Oles M. Smolansky argues that these periodic changes in the energy sector had to be addressed at the highest level by Ukrainian and Russian leaders, and the agreements had to be based on a balance of economic interest<sup>27</sup>. Russia and Ukraine considered geopolitical and economic changes significant, and it was the only starting point for disputes over 'realistic' gas prices and the tariffs for the transit of Russian gas through Ukraine's territory.

In 1998, Gazprom and Naftogaz tried to resolve issues by establishing a link between gas prices and transit tariffs, making a contract under which Gazprom would pay for the transit of gas volumes. The deal ended unsuccessfully by cutting gas to Ukraine. Accordingly, Yusin Lee analyzed a causal mechanism between Russia's and Ukraine's interdependence and the gas conflicts<sup>28</sup>. The primary aim was to explain the 2009 gas conflict, which differed from other Ukraine and Russia disputes<sup>29</sup>. The prolonged negotiations over gas debts, gas prices, transit tariffs, and Ukraine's gas pipeline system has put both states into a grey zone. Russia demanded to receive every penny of debt, raise prices, lower transit fees, and acquire control over the Ukrainian pipeline system. In contrast, Ukraine was focused on delaying the payments of its debts, decreasing the rise of prices, and keeping its pipeline system<sup>30</sup>. Margarita Balmaceda has focused on the post-Soviet countries' dependence on Russia's gas and proved energy's crucial role in defining relations between Russian oligarchs and the

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<sup>24</sup> Morena Skalamera, "The Ukraine Crisis: The Neglected Gas Factor" *Foreign Policy Research Institute*, (2015): 398-410.

<sup>25</sup> Simon Pirani, "Ukraine's gas sector" *Oxford Institute for Energy Studies* No. 286084, (2007): 6-18.

<sup>26</sup> D.G. Victor, Amy Jaffe and M.H. Hayes, *Natural Gas and Geopolitics: From 1970 to 2040* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 156.

<sup>27</sup> Oles M. Smolansky, "Ukraine's Quest for Independence: The Fuel Factor" *Europe-Asia Studies* vol. 47, No. 1 (1995): 67-90.

<sup>28</sup> Yusin Lee, "Interdependence, issue importance, and the 2009 Russia-Ukraine gas conflict" *Energy policy* vol. 102, (2017): 199-209.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid*, 199.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid*, 205.

state<sup>31</sup>. Moreover, it was noted that Russia sought to weaken Ukraine's transit reputation by presenting it as an unreliable transit partner and accusing Ukraine of stealing Gazprom gas, which was intended for export<sup>32</sup>. Ukraine's addiction to cheap gas made it particularly vulnerable to changes in Russian energy supplies.

According to Simon Pirani, Ukraine's politicians feared a gas price increase because it would create discontent among the population, which expected continued low heating costs and which would likely blow the political leadership<sup>33</sup>. Understanding gas price regulation was deeply rooted in the mechanism of post-Soviet Ukraine's elites' dependence on corruption income generated by the gas sector. Systematic corruption has been the leading cause and symptom of political weaknesses in Ukraine<sup>34</sup>. Until Viktor Yanukovich's downfall, gas prices were dominated by these so-called oligarchs who were staunch allies with those in power, getting special privileges at the cost of the Ukrainian economy<sup>35</sup>. In addition, Russia used gas-based schemes to corrupt the Ukrainian elite and to prolong its kleptocratic governance<sup>36</sup>. According to Randall E. Newnham, a pivotal moment was when Prime Minister Yulia Tymoshenko signed an extremely unfavourable gas contract with Russia in 2009<sup>37</sup>. Kremlin undermined the Ukrainian economy by raising Russian gas prices to a level that became one of the highest paid by Gazprom's foreign clients. Though this decision harmed Ukraine's economy, politicians remained to show extreme sensitivity to gas prices<sup>38</sup>. Instead of improving political standards towards price regulation in the gas sector, Ukraine gradually aggravated its dependence on Russia.

## 1. 2. 2014-2021 Ukraine's gas sector security changes

The second part of the academic literature focuses on Ukraine's growing dependence on Russian gas and its impact on the gas sector's security perception. Specifically, regarding the Ukraine and Russia gas dialogue, J. Stern emphasized common interests and linkages and pointed to spill over

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<sup>31</sup> Margarita Balmaceda, "Background to the Russia-Ukrainian Gas Crisis: Clarifying Central Issues and Concepts" Russian analytical digest vol. 53, (2009): 9-11.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>33</sup> Simon Pirani, "How post-Soviet transition and economic crises shaped the Russo-Ukrainian "gas wars"" (Presentation in conference Governing Energy in Europe and Russia, University of Warwick, 2010 September 3<sup>rd</sup>).

<sup>34</sup> Fabian Teichmann, Marie-Christin Falker, Bruno S. Sergi, "Extractive industries, corruption, and potential solutions. The case of Ukraine" *Resources Policy* vol. 69, (2020): 2-3.

<sup>35</sup> Shane Suksangium, Igor Herbey, "Energy Corruption in Ukraine: Causes and Cures", Euromaidan Press, viewed on 2022 November 13<sup>th</sup>, <https://euromaidanpress.com/2015/08/28/energy-corruption-in-ukraine-causes-and-cures/>.

<sup>36</sup> Wojciech Konończuk, "Why Ukraine has to reform its gas sector", Energy Post, viewed on 2022 November 13<sup>th</sup>, <https://energypost.eu/ukraine-reform-gas-sector/>.

<sup>37</sup> Randall E. Newnham, "Pipeline politics: Russian energy sanctions and the 2010 Ukrainian elections" *Journal of Eurasian Studies* vol. 4, (2013):115-122.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 119.

factors beyond the gas dialogue. Noting that outgoing disputes and income corruption obtained from the gas sector were a precondition for a complex change in Ukraine's gas sector security policy<sup>39</sup>. Up until 2014, Ukraine covered its natural gas shortage by importing gas from Russia almost at a constant price.

Still, circumstances have changed drastically after the annexation of Crimea, following the event of the Euromaidan Revolution and prolonged military conflict in Donetsk and Luhansk. 2014 was vital for the rising concerns in Ukraine's national and energy sector security. Accordingly, Ukraine had to strengthen its focus on sovereignty and independence since Russia was expanding its influence in the gas sector and raising its bargaining power in the international arena<sup>40</sup>. Ukraine's peculiar role as a transit vector for Russian gas to Europe became an impetus to search for new ways of supplying energy resources and developing gas systems and potential. Many scholars have stressed that after Russia halted its gas supply in 2015, Ukraine could import gas from European countries and seek energy independence mainly through accessing Slovakia's "Eurestream" pipeline via reversed flows<sup>41</sup>. Following changes in Ukraine's gas sector and energy policy, Dmytro Naumenko analyzed Russia's response and strategic decision to diminish its gas transit through Ukrainian pipelines and to add new gas transit capacities to the European countries<sup>42</sup>. F. R. Aune, Rolf Golombek's main implication is that Russia was not only seeking to strengthen Ukraine's dependence on gas transition but had a common interest with the EU to further integration into European gas markets<sup>43</sup>. However, the general perception of Russia as a secure supplier changed after the Russian aggression. Security concerns started to play the main role in Ukraine's energy and national policy, and that caused gas sector securitization.

As energy security becomes a key topic of policy debates, many authors analyzed energy sector security, focusing on Russian gas dependency using securitization as a concept for analysis. Kacper Szulecki aimed to understand governments' exceptional securitizing moves in the energy sector and audience acceptance of certain moves or measures<sup>44</sup>. Securitization of the energy sector

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<sup>39</sup> Jonathan Stern, "The New Security Environment for European Gas: Worsening Geopolitics and Increasing Global Competition for LNG" (Working Paper, Oxford, 2006), 4.

<sup>40</sup> Oleksandr Sukhodolia, "The Energy Dimension of War. An Overview of the Ukrainian Events in 2014–2016" *Energy Security* vol.11, (2017): 25–34.

<sup>41</sup> Kateryna Yakovenko, Matúš Mišík, "Cooperation and Security: Examining the Political Discourse on Natural Gas Transit in Ukraine and Slovakia", *Energies* vol. 13, No. 22, (2020):1-14.

<sup>42</sup> Dmytro Naumenko, "Russian gas transit through Ukraine after Nord stream 2: scenario analysis" (Study, Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung, Ukrainian Centre for European Policy, 2018), 5.

<sup>43</sup> Finn Roar Aune, Rolf Golombek, Arild Moe, Knut Einar RosendahlVand Hilde Hallre le Tissier, "The future of Russian gas exports" *Economics of Energy & Environmental Policy* Vol. 6, No. 2, (2017): 111-136.

<sup>44</sup> Kacper Szulecki, "Securitization and state encroachment on the energy sector: Politics of exception in Poland's energy governance" *Energy Policy* Vol. 136, (2020): 1-10.

appears when core state powers are challenged from below – civil society and market actors – and from above – supranational institutions<sup>45</sup>. Aleh Cherp and Jessica Jewell have defined energy security by the ‘four As’ concept and conceptualized energy security as an important policy problem with different meanings in different situations for different people<sup>46</sup>. Moreover, Benjamin K. Sovacool has provided a broader definition of energy security, identifying various components to conceptualize its dimensions<sup>47</sup>. The main implication suggests that energy security is policy-oriented and strategically significant to civilizational consequences.

Governments and political elites can raise various discussions around energy security topics and have a tool to manipulate public opinion by addressing one security issue over another. Yet more political elites can adjust to the energy security issues risen below and suggest various measures to satisfy the public interest. Tomas Janeliūnas and Angnija Tumkevič have provided a comparative analysis of the energy sector's securitization by analyzing a country's actual energy situation and the result of the securitization process<sup>48</sup>. Recent research has suggested that Ukraine securitizes its energy dependence on Russia in a pretty intense form but takes no reasonable steps to solve those problems. Furthermore, some Russian and Ukrainian actors want to maintain the *status quo* between the states. In addition, the study has provided the assumption that Ukraine considers securitization only as a political trend or proclamation, without any rational usage in practical measures dealing with security issues<sup>49</sup>. Emphasizing Ukraine's energy security, there were also relevant changes in the political arena. Following the 2014 Euromaidan revolution Petro Poroshenko gained most of the support and won the presidential elections. After being elected, Petro Poroshenko supported the discourse of a constant Russian threat and encountered interest in strengthening the energy sector and national defence capabilities<sup>50</sup>. When Volodymyr Zelenskyy replaced Petro Poroshenko in the president's office, he focused further on countering Russian aggression, emphasizing integration into NATO as a security guarantee<sup>51</sup>. Yet also highlights the importance of an independent and efficient energy and gas sector, suggesting an improvement in Ukraine's gas transit potential<sup>52</sup>.

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<sup>45</sup> Kacper Szulecki, *Securitization and state encroachment*, 2.

<sup>46</sup> Aleh Cherp, Jessica Jewell, “The concept of energy security: Beyond the four As”, *Energy Policy*, Vol. 75, (2014), 415-421.

<sup>47</sup> Benjamin K. Sovacool, *Evaluating the Energy Security Impacts of Energy Policies*, (The Routledge Handbook of Energy Security Routledge, 2010), 74-75.

<sup>48</sup> Tomas Janeliūnas, Angnija Tumkevič, “Securitization of the energy sectors in Estonia, Lithuania, Poland and Ukraine: motives and extraordinary measures” *Lithuanian Foreign Policy Review* vol. 30, (2013): 65-90.

<sup>49</sup> Janeliūnas, Tumkevič, *Securitization of the energy*, 87-88.

<sup>50</sup> National Security and Defence Council of Ukraine, *Decree of the President of Ukraine on the National Security Strategy of Ukraine 2015 May 6 No. 287/2015*.

<sup>51</sup> National Security and Defence Council of Ukraine, *Decision of President of Ukraine on the National Security Strategy of Ukraine 2020 September 14 No. 392/2020*, Kyiv, 2020, <https://www.president.gov.ua/documents/3922020-35037> (viewed on 2022 November 6th).

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*



As Ukraine has demonstrated a solid pro-Western position and the need for further integration into the West and NATO, recent studies focus on analyzing Russia's response to the changes and using the energy sector as a weapon to achieve personal goals. According to Rem Korteweg, energy weaponization is a tool by which one party seeks to modify the behavior of another derived from energy<sup>53</sup>. Many scholars have analyzed the political acceptability of 'Nord Stream 2', emphasizing potential risks for Ukraine and possible gains for Russia<sup>54</sup>. Transit route diversification would decrease Ukraine's gas transit revenue and role in the EU's gas supply. Yet would raise Russia's bargaining power in EU and Eastern Europe nations. This would increase geopolitical and economic influence and maintain a more profound dependence on Russia's gas supplies<sup>55</sup>. Russia's actions towards Ukraine evidently can be explained through using the gas sector as a weapon since Russia has attempted to consolidate state resources and control transit routes by implementing threats, price hikes, and disruptions within an energy system to further political objectives<sup>56</sup>. However, Ukraine remained interested in Russian gas despite Russia's aggressive energy policy and mentioned a clash over gas issues.

Considering the literature discussed, previous studies mainly addressed the link between energy security in Ukraine and problematic relations with Russia. Disputes involving major gas producers have extended, caused a deeper crisis in Ukraine, and are characterized by high dependence on imported gas. Underlining further discussions on energy security changes for Ukraine and the EU. Even though the importance of Ukraine's gas transit to the EU was highlighted and the securitization of the gas sector was justified, the Ukrainian perspective of persuading the need for gas transit securitization was limited.

## **2. THE CONCEPT OF ENERGY SECURITY**

This section of the thesis explains the complexity of defining energy security, constituting the framework of the concept of energy security together with the securitization theory. After the concept of energy security is explained, further energy components will be detailed to elaborate on Ukraine's gas sector and transit security peculiarities.

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<sup>53</sup> Rem Korteweg, "Energy as a tool of foreign policy of authoritarian states, in particular Russia" (Study, European Parliament, 2018), 4.

<sup>54</sup> P. Eser, N. Chokani, R. Abhari, "Impact of Nord Stream 2 and LNG on gas trade and security of supply in the European gas network of 2030" *Applied Energy* vol. 238, (2019): 816-830.

<sup>55</sup> Balázs R. Sziklai, László Á. Kóczy, Dávid Csercsik, "The impact of Nord Stream 2 on the European gas market bargaining positions" *Energy Policy* vol. 144, (2020): 1-14.

<sup>56</sup> Karen Smith Stegen, "Deconstructing the 'energy weapon': Russia's threat to Europe as a case study" *Energy Policy* Vol. 39, (2011): 6505-6513.

## 2. 1. Definition and scope of energy security

Energy security is currently one of the major debated issues and a major objective of the energy policy of all countries. However, academic debate on describing energy security has been problematic and used in various contexts for different purposes, often having different meanings, making it harder to measure and balance against other policy objectives<sup>57</sup>. So, what is the exact definition of energy security? The understanding of energy itself dates to the Classical period of ancient Greece when Aristotle created the term *energeia*, which was identified with the movement. *Energeia* was explained through the motion, action, work, and change related to the object's function<sup>58</sup>. This explanation was used as a base for the current proposed energy definition. Since all energy forms are associated with motion, energy is defined as the capacity to do work and the ability to transform the system and produce change<sup>59</sup>. As energy is vital in modern life, it is often highlighted in financial protection matters. In consumer states, this is associated with patterns of external dependence upon energy imports and their impacts on domestic economic actors<sup>60</sup>. States owning energy resources strive to meet their needs from domestic resources and therefore avoid dependency on energy imports from international markets. Since many economies rely on energy production and economic interest in various energy sources, it implies that the policy is necessary to promote 'energy security. Thus, governments frequently refer to energy security as something that justifies their policies.

While energy security is not easy to define because it is a multifaceted concept, the International Energy Agency (IEA) has defined it as "the uninterrupted availability of energy sources at an affordable price"<sup>61</sup>. The definition contains two dimensions that must be kept separate and distinguished from each other. Uninterrupted availability refers to the dependence on energy source suppliers, causing countries' energy markets prone to imperfect competition<sup>62</sup>. If no energy sources are available, it becomes one of the most crucial challenges to energy security. The potential interruptions are viewed as a security threat and refer to active government intervention to prevent the issues. The second dimension is necessary for all modern economic systems since excessively high prices can fundamentally affect the choice of energy resources. Specifically, switching from a

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<sup>57</sup> Christian Winzer, "Conceptualizing Energy Security" *Energy Policy* vol. 46, (2012): 36-48.

<sup>58</sup> Vaclav Smil, *Energy* (London: One world Oxford, 2006), 1.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid*, 7-8.

<sup>60</sup> Bruce Russett, "Dimensions of resource dependence: some elements of rigor in concept and policy analysis" *International organization* Vol. 38, Issue 3, (1984): 481 – 499.

<sup>61</sup> International Energy Agency, "Energy security reliable, affordable access to all fuels and energy sources", International Energy Agency viewed on 2022 June 10<sup>th</sup>, <https://www.iea.org/topics/energy-security>.

<sup>62</sup> Eric Pardo Sauvageot, "Between Russia as producer and Ukraine as a transit country: EU dilemma of interdependence and energy security" *Energy Policy*, Vol. 145, (2020): 1-13.

more expensive and less polluting energy source to a cheaper and more pollution-causing. Moreover, high prices are viewed as a threat to security, primarily because every person should have access to energy sources and not be exposed to rising prices. Consequently, energy security is distinguished into short-term and long-term security. Short-term energy security is defined as the ability of the energy system to react promptly to sudden changes in the supply-demand balance<sup>63</sup>. Thus, short-term security is oriented to avoid shortfalls and interruptions of supplies to a user, which exceptional circumstances may cause<sup>64</sup>. At the same time, long-term security is focused on timely investments to supply energy in line with economic developments and environmental needs. Primarily oriented to sustain supply and demand. Accordingly, energy security can be defined as a reliable and uninterrupted supply of energy sufficient to meet the economy's needs simultaneously, coming at a reasonable price<sup>65</sup>.

The classic understanding of energy security as the 'stable supply for reasonable price' still needs re-examination. Therefore, for this purpose, A. Cherp and J. Jewell provide us with the four 'As' energy security concept in at least four dimensions addressing the importance of energy availability, accessibility, affordability, and acceptability<sup>66</sup>. The concept of the four 'As' can be interpreted in various ways based on the level and scale of interest, geographical location, and cultural context, which involves expectations regarding energy availability. However, the proposed definition of energy security emphasizes the low vulnerability of vital energy systems<sup>67</sup>. Accordingly, the definition suggests that energy security is both a goal and a flexible state, gravitating towards the lowest possible vulnerability. Directed to handle relevant security concerns and to increase energy security in the ways available. The energy situation and need for energy security vary in each country or even between one region and another within a country. In other words, where countries stand on energy security depends on where they sit<sup>68</sup>. The perception of the four 'As' contains two previously mentioned IEA energy security dimensions – availability and affordability. The other two dimensions – accessibility and acceptability were addressed later as modern and achievable global energy goals<sup>69</sup>. The accessibility dimension reflects the country's ability to adopt new technologies to access energy sources and network infrastructure and cope with geographical and geopolitical challenges. The acceptability dimension illustrates how an economy's production and utilization can be achieved

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<sup>63</sup> International Energy Agency, *Energy security reliable*.

<sup>64</sup> Christian Winzer, *Conceptualizing Energy Security*, 42.

<sup>65</sup> Jun Eunju et. al., "The analysis of security cost for different energy sources. *Applied Energy*" *Applied Energy* vol. 86, No. 10, (2009): 1894-1901.

<sup>66</sup> Cherp, Jewell, *The concept of energy security*, 416.

<sup>67</sup> Cherp, Jewell, *The concept of energy security*, 420.

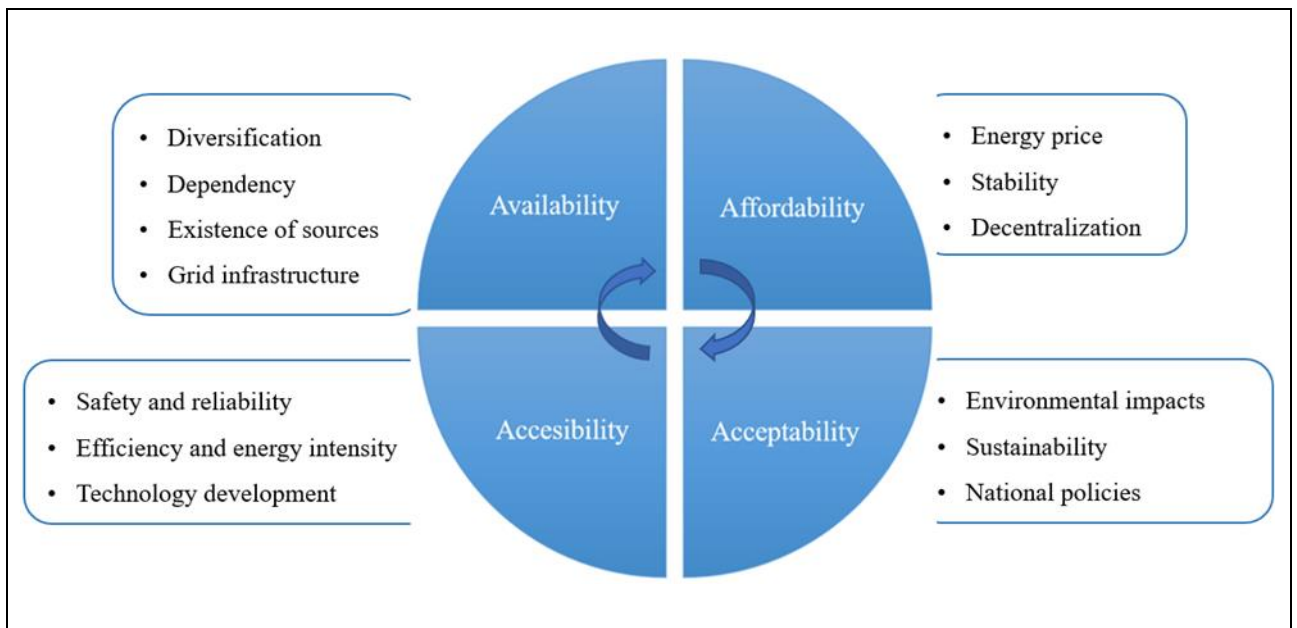
<sup>68</sup> Benjamin K. Sovacool, *Evaluating the Energy Security Impacts of Energy Policies*, (The Routledge Handbook of Energy Security Routledge, 2010), 45.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid*, 46.

concerning societal and ecological impacts with rising issues of environmental problems and suggests adopting eco-friendly solutions<sup>70</sup>. There are several ways in which the four ‘As’ can interact since various components depending on the object of analysis, particular context, and nature of the threat.

Benjamin K. Sovacool’s conceptualization of energy security has provided dimensions and components detailing national energy security policies and performance. The main five dimensions define energy security as available, affordable, accessible, environmentally benign, and proactively governed energy services to end-users<sup>71</sup>. Similar to an A. Cherp and J. Jewell discussed the central dimensions of the energy security concept, emphasizing social acceptability, human rights, and individual security<sup>72</sup>. Moreover, these five dimensions were separated into twenty components to characterize interactions among all parts. However, adapting the energy security definition complexity to the gas sector allows for synthesizing the provided components to accurately capture security issues and risks.

**Figure No. 1 Energy security**



Created by author, using Cherp and Jewell, “The concept of energy security: Beyond the four As” (2014), combined with Benjamin K. Sovacool, “Evaluating the Energy Security Impacts of Energy Policies” (2010).

Energy security in a developed country may not apply to a country that is only developing. Existing energy resources, economic development, government intervention, and geopolitical factors differ. It also depends on whether a country is importing, exporting, or a transit country. Energy-

<sup>70</sup> Bert Kruyt et. al., “Indicators for energy security” *Energy Policy* vol. 37, (2009): 2166–2181.

<sup>71</sup> Benjamin K. Sovacool, Ishani Mukherjee, “Conceptualizing and measuring energy security: A synthesized approach” *Energy* vol. 36, No. 8, (2011): 5343-5355.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid*, 5343.

importing countries traditionally were concerned about the energy security of supply. The components to ensure the security of supply include energy resources diversification, reducing dependence, sufficient energy grid, price stability, energy production decentralization closer to the site of energy consumption, and some extent, energy subsidies<sup>73</sup>. Energy security of supply has yet to be challenged as a concept since nearly all countries need it, regardless of whether they are energy producers or transit countries<sup>74</sup>. However, reflecting on the relationship between energy resources and the economy, consideration of the need to protect the environment has risen. The acceptability dimension in the energy security concept has many direct and indirect linkages to availability and affordability since energy resource diversification and supply disruptions across the country have a significant social and environmental impact. As dependence on energy grows, natural catastrophes and human-triggered disasters damaging the environment highlight global climate change issues, awareness to utilize energy resources in an environmentally friendly and other conflicting issues related to human development<sup>75</sup>. To tackle the abovementioned issues, governments' energy policies have been directed towards increasing energy efficiency and renewable energy capacity to reduce dependence on imported fossil fuels<sup>76</sup>. The acceptability dimension suggests that any solution to protect the natural environment requires rethinking how we use energy. While national energy agendas are still focused on supply security, the current importance of the environment is a crucial concern to policy in developed countries influencing decisions to search for new directions to sustain energy security.

However, the security of the domestic energy supply is increasingly an issue in many exporting countries. The need for demand security has been questioned since the oil price collapse in 1986. Energy exporting countries wondered how to ensure regular and stable energy flow to generate profit for new energy investments and economic development<sup>77</sup>. Among the energy export countries, Russia has raised the most concerns about gas demand insecurity and protecting Russia's interests from market regulation in importing and transit countries<sup>78</sup>. Moreover, supply and demand security has highlighted the accessibility dimension of energy security since importing and exporting countries are interested in profiting from safe and reliable energy services considering geographical and geopolitical challenges. As well as researching and developing new energy technologies to provide

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<sup>73</sup> Sovacool, Mukherjee, *Conceptualizing and measuring energy*, 5345.

<sup>74</sup> Energy Charter Secretariat, "International Energy Security: Common Concept for Energy Producing, Consuming and Transit Countries", Energy Charter Secretariat, viewed on 2022 June 10<sup>th</sup>, [https://www.energycharter.org/fileadmin/DocumentsMedia/Thematic/International\\_Energy\\_Security\\_2015\\_en.pdf](https://www.energycharter.org/fileadmin/DocumentsMedia/Thematic/International_Energy_Security_2015_en.pdf).

<sup>75</sup> Sovacool, *Evaluating the Energy Security*, 76-78.

<sup>76</sup> Sovacool, *Evaluating the Energy Security*, 79.

<sup>77</sup> United Nations ESCAP, "Energy Transit", United Nations ESCAP, viewed on 2022 December 3<sup>rd</sup>, <https://www.unescap.org/sites/default/files/Learning%20Material%20-%20EnergyTransit.pdf>.

<sup>78</sup> Energy Charter Secretariat, *International Energy Security*, 14-15.

efficient and intense energy flow<sup>79</sup>. From the perspective of the acceptability dimension, demand security also emphasizes that the development and use of renewable energy can help to diversify energy supply markets and to reduce local and global environmental impacts.

A comprehensive understanding of the energy security concept unites energy, economic growth, social acceptability, and political power within. It is a crucial concern to policymakers in both developed and developing countries. However, a variety of proposed definitions with similar dimensions and components is the main disadvantage of the concept of energy security. Since there is no universal way to achieve and measure energy security and performance to explain different consumers' and producers' behaviours and practices. Even though the energy security concept addresses various actors, priorities, threats, and concerns regarding the guarantee of supply and demand, it struggles to define and analyze transit security as a separate part of the energy system.

## 2. 2. Security of gas transit

The energy security concept has been mainly applied to the security of supply and demand and the growing interdependence of buyers and sellers, while another essential element of energy security refers to the security of transit<sup>80</sup>. In recent years transit security has become increasingly important as the movement of energy resources from a producing country to a consuming country via one or more borders has been challenged many times<sup>81</sup>. The physical distance between the centres of production and consumption of natural gas is one of the fundamental characteristics of contemporary global energy relations that necessitates transit<sup>82</sup>. However, the concept of energy security of transit is difficult to define since producers and consumers represent their interests and agenda.

Transit security is specific and usually is contributed to the diversification of either supply or demand chain. Yet the security of energy transit should be emphasized as the independent, separate chain part, following the complex interaction of transit countries with producers and its critical importance to consumer countries' energy security<sup>83</sup>. Thus, even though transit security is usually bound to the security of the supply chain, this is a unique part of the energy security concept which remain to be defined. The first definition describes transit security as the acceptable level of threat of

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<sup>79</sup> Sovacool, *Conceptualizing and measuring energy security*, 5345.

<sup>80</sup> United Nations ESCAP, *Energy Transit*, 8.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid*, 9.

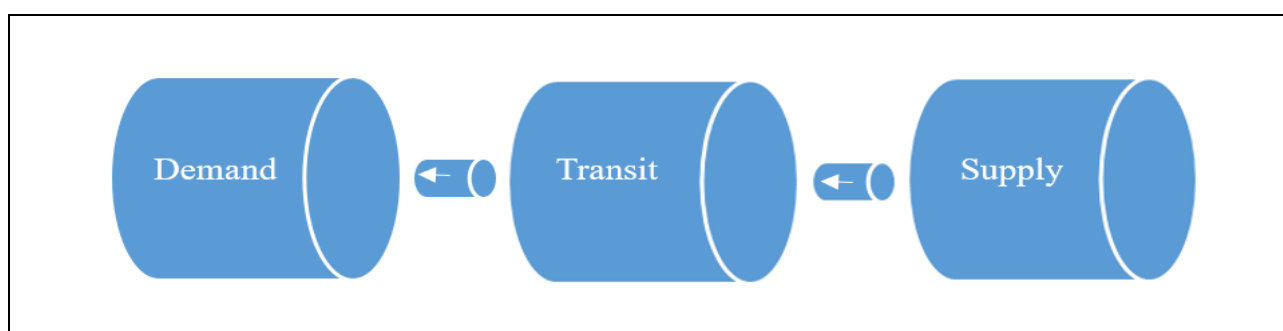
<sup>82</sup> Kerem Öge, "Understanding Pipeline Politics in Eurasia: Turkey's Transit Security in Natural Gas" *Geopolitics* vol. 26, No. 5, (2021): 1510-1532.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid*, 1513.

supply and price disruption arising from risks associated with the transit of gas supplies<sup>84</sup>. The second one particularly emphasizes transit security as a separate category in the energy security concept focusing on the gas sector. Defining transit security as the ability to maintain and increase the continuous flow of natural gas, which is not intended for domestic consumption, through the borders in exchange for some form of financial compensation<sup>85</sup>. Accordingly, the definition justifies that transit security is a unique part of the energy security concept, which addresses some specific energy-related aspects of the trade, including access to infrastructure and conditions of such access, transit tariffs, creation of new infrastructure, continuous energy flow and security of already established transit flows<sup>86</sup>. Thus, the transit security of gas is an essential component of the global energy system as it has a crucial role in sustaining the energy demand worldwide. As it aims to diversify the gas supply between energy-rich and energy-poor countries.

Gas transit security incorporates both domestic and international economic interests, as well as the geopolitical situation. Accordingly, transit security involves risks that are primarily political in nature. Even though it cannot be rejected that supply disruption may arise due to technical reasons, it is more common that commercial disputes, bargaining over prices, and political and regulatory intervention will be the main cause. Despite the transit countries can search for alternative suppliers, transit security is prone to risks caused by domestic monopolies in the gas sector as it may encourage corruption of political elites to accept unfavourable transit contracts to gain their benefits<sup>87</sup>. Moreover, regardless of domestic and international interest in profiting, exporting countries have the leverage to manipulate the price or even to weaponize energy resources.

**Figure No. 2 Energy security chain**



Created by author.

<sup>84</sup> Katja Yafimava, *The transit dimension of EU energy security: Russian gas transit across Ukraine, Belarus, and Moldova*, (Oxford: OUP, 2011), 17.

<sup>85</sup> Öge, *Understanding Pipeline Politics*, 1517.

<sup>86</sup> United Nations ESCAP, *Energy Transit*, 16.

<sup>87</sup> Fatri Morina, "The importance of transit countries in ensuring Eu energy security: the case of Ukraine", *International Journal of Academic Research and Reflection*, Vol. 3, No. 4, (2015):72-75.

Accordingly, transit gas disruption affects both consumers and suppliers, national and international energy security. Since geopolitical context and political conflicts can directly influence a country's transit security, it suggests to refer and conceptualizing it as a unique part of the energy security system.

### 2. 3. Weaponizing the gas sector

The political importance of gas is strongly derived from the economic and geopolitical dependence of importing countries and exporting countries on revenues. When an energy supplier monopolizes a market, gas resources can be both an object of foreign policy and a tool for achieving specific fixed objectives<sup>88</sup>. In the international system exporting countries has political leverage to force neighbouring countries to behave in a certain way and influence individual actors or to punish them if they do not behave accordingly. However, each case is individual and requires analysis of specific foreign and national security policy strategies, speeches, and actions of governmental officials.

The weaponization of the gas sector can be defined more broadly through foreign policies dictated by economic and geopolitical motives since gas can be an instrument of power in the form of political pressure to specific means. The political leverage of a gas exporting country can be used by manipulating the pricing of energy supplies, controlling energy assets, such as pipelines and gas operators, cutting or disrupting gas supplies, agreeing on restrictive supply contracts, and developing alternative supply routes to divert gas flows<sup>89</sup>. These main elements defining weaponization can vary depending on political objectives. Also, weaponization terms applied to the gas sector include state control over transit routes, increasing the possibility to transform and shape regional and global energy security systems<sup>90</sup>. However, as the primary goal of using gas as a weapon is to modify the behaviour of another, the accomplishments of weaponization processes will depend on its success or failure to achieve the intended behavioural change<sup>91</sup>. In particular transit, states are expected to behave as a client of a supplier in case they are willing to receive any gas at discounted prices. Otherwise, they can assume that exporting countries will apply various measures to affect the transit country's behaviour. Yet, hypothetically, transit countries also have the opportunity to use gas as a weapon. The major transiting country can pressure the supplier by not allowing transit. However, this option is less likely to be used as transit countries are often dependent on transit revenues, and it

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<sup>88</sup> Korteweg, *Energy as a tool*, 4.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>90</sup> Stegen, *Deconstructing the 'energy weapon'*, 6506.

<sup>91</sup> Korteweg, *Energy as a tool*, 5.



would not only affect its economic situation but also change its transit status to that of an unreliable partner.

The weaponization of energy resources is closely bound to the intensity of securitization, as it can affect the consumers, their values, and objectives and form national security priorities to respond to the threat<sup>92</sup>. Moreover, weaponization is an act that allows energy suppliers to apply energy as a tool against others and achieve subsequent results.

#### 2. 4. Securitization of energy

The association of the concepts ‘energy’ and ‘security’ has become more frequent after the Russia-Ukraine gas disputes. Energy security is no longer merely a question of protecting and accessing existing energy resources. It became a matter of politics. Since Russia strives to increase its energy security and, at the same time, reduce the energy security of others. Growing dependence on Russia’s gas supplies is a main pre-condition of gas sector securitization. It is also increasingly important for Ukraine to retain and secure its gas transit to contribute greatly to their economies<sup>93</sup>. Therefore, energy has started to be understood as an existential threat to the actors’ survival in terms of their economic needs. As a result, actors have securitized energy issues towards promoting their foreign policy interests.

The Copenhagen School describes securitization as the process through which a security issue as a problem has presented an object to be determined, requiring emergency measures and justifying actions outside the normal bounds of political procedure<sup>94</sup>. Securitization of a particular issue influences a country’s functioning and decision-making during a crisis. Securitizing actors usually do not talk about security issues when the *status quo* is stable. By saying ‘security’, political actors perform a securitizing move that requires an existential threat, a referent object that is threatened and, as a result, is placed on the political agenda after the intention to violate it<sup>95</sup>. Accordingly, in securitization theory, security is conceptualized as a speech act. To put it in another way, a securitizing move is a discourse that presents some issue as an existential threat to a given reference object. If we assume that energy is an essential dimension for the survival of the states and has an

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<sup>92</sup> Stegen, *Deconstructing the ‘energy weapon’*, 6510.

<sup>93</sup> Lee, *Interdependence, issue importance*, 200

<sup>94</sup> Barry Buzan, Ole Wæver, Jaap de Wilde, *Security – A New Framework for Analysis*, (London: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1998), 23-24.

<sup>95</sup> Kacper Szulecki, “When energy becomes security: Copenhagen School meets energy studies” (Draft, University of Oslo, 2016), 4.

influence on global politics and economy, then people and their intersubjective priorities add significance to the concept of energy security and make it dynamic. To support this argument, A. Cherp and J. Jewell noted that vital energy systems and their vulnerabilities are objective phenomena and political constructs defined and prioritized by various social actors<sup>96</sup>. Thus, it also suggests that different ideas about energy security can be evaluated and viewed from the scope of securitization theory.

A speech act accompanied by exceptional security grammar to form a discourse on security issues is usually carried out by state officials who can frame energy in different ways and shape the direction of geopolitics. Yet, securitizing actors can also be non-governmental organizations, media, and various individuals with social capital and an interest in convincing the audience<sup>97</sup>. Accepting this discourse by the audience and approving special measures are considered successful securitization, while not accepting the discourse can be considered only a securitizing move<sup>98</sup>. Thus, not only do different audiences play different roles, but they also have different kinds of relationships with securitizing actors. Usually, attempts at securitization are institutionalized with particular political systems, even if one of the possible outcomes of securitization is that relations between securitizing actors and the audience could change<sup>99</sup>. It is difficult to convince the audience that an issue is an existential security threat to a referent object that must be protected since the audience also does not stay fixed.

The relevance of combining securitization with the energy security concept lies in the ability to answer energy security questions regarding what is to be secured, from what threats, and how security should be achieved<sup>100</sup>. Moreover, the absence of energy resources caused many energy issues, including concerns about energy dependence, security of transit, increasing energy prices, high energy demand among consumer countries, and using energy as a political tool to achieve certain goals. This indicates that energy security went from non-politicized subjects into the field of politicization and became the subject of public debate, policy, and decision-making. Moreover, it was noted that energy security could function as a point of reference in non-politicized and political debates without gaining the special status of security issues<sup>101</sup>. Energy security can also be an element of national security but does not always have to be. On the one hand, energy issues can be widely

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<sup>96</sup> Cherp, Jewell, *The concept of energy security*, 419.

<sup>97</sup> Matt McDonald, "Securitization and the construction of security", *European Journal of International Relations*, vol. 14, (2008), 563-587.

<sup>98</sup> Buzan, Wæver, Wilde, *Security – A New Framework*, 25-26.

<sup>99</sup> Szulecki, *Securitization and state encroachment*, 3.

<sup>100</sup> Cherp, Jewell, *The concept of energy security*, 417-419.

<sup>101</sup> Szulecki, *Securitization and state encroachment*, 6.

escalated, and this does not imply the securitization of the issue, but on the other hand, intense politicization of the energy security issues can lead to the emergence of securitization energy threats<sup>102</sup>.

Consequently, this study has already argued that energy security is a flexible concept. It is the aspirational state of most countries worldwide to reduce threats to the energy sector to ensure energy security. Whether energy security is accepted as an issue depends on the power of the actors and their interests to convince the audience. Further analysis will focus on Ukraine’s gas sector securitization and securitizing actors and government officials’ speeches to carry out securitized gas sector issues for the audience.

**Table 1 Stages of energy discourse securitization**

Further Depoliticization ←	Depoliticization ←	Desecuritization ←
Energy as non-issue	Energy as a political issue (low security)	Energy as a security issue (high security)
→ Politicization	→ Securitization	→ Further Securitization

Created by author<sup>103</sup>.

### 3. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The central theoretical concept that forms the basic interpretive framework for the energy security relations between Russia and Ukraine is securitization. An important aspect that can facilitate securitization in some contexts is the broader national security and energy security discourses. The energy security discourse, which intensifies especially in times of a threat to the gas transit through Ukraine, focuses particularly on media and government officials’ political and security implications on Ukraine’s gas dependence on Russia<sup>104</sup>. Asking, ‘how has gas transit become a security issue in Ukraine?’ and ‘how did the political elite convince the audience of the need to secure gas transit?’.

Analyzing political discourse related to energy security and interactions between Russia and Ukraine helps identify the presence of securitization. It also focuses on basic principles of the actors thinking and political reality interpretation and its institutional relations with other actors<sup>105</sup>. To be

<sup>102</sup> Szulecki, *When energy becomes security*, 15.

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid*, 16.

<sup>104</sup> Yakovenko, Mišík, *Cooperation and Security*, 8.

<sup>105</sup> Lukáš Tichý, “EU political discourse on the energy security relations with Russia”, *European Political Science* vol. 19, (2020): 603–621.

more accurate, discourse analysis is a qualitative analytical method, generally understood as debate or public speaking, the expression of one's opinion. It examines the meanings of language use and communication and the contexts and processes generated by these meanings and practices. Discourse analysis can show how language and communication influence social action and policies by legitimizing or marginalizing specific policy initiatives<sup>106</sup>. Moreover, discourse allows for uncovering the internal inconsistency of meaning surrounding and conditioning an individual speech act<sup>107</sup>. The theoretical model of securitization and discourse analysis is often used to analyze threats, their emergence, and change. From a constructivist perspective, discourse analysis seeks to explore the relationship between discourse and social reality - the interplay between the complex social structures in which discourse is embedded. Thus, political discourses not only construct problems, objects and subjects, but at the same time, formulate policies to solve problems<sup>108</sup>.

Securitization of the energy sector is relatively private and technocratic compared to other sectors, which means that the authority to 'speak security' is principally restricted to government elites and market participants<sup>109</sup>. Thus, to answer a research question, this thesis focuses on political rhetoric aimed at speaking about Ukraine's gas sector and transit security. According to the notion that Ukraine's gas transit was highly securitized, further, hypothesize that economic and geopolitical threats and foreign policy justifications should play an important role and trace the reasons behind securitizing moves to convince the audience. However, the energy security concept is fluid and provides us with more dimensions and components which can be analyzed to add important arguments to securitize Ukraine's gas transit if necessary. Considering the historical and complex changes in Ukraine's gas sector, this analysis will be framed using several discursive indicators that can identify securitization. The analysis will focus on language indicating the urgency of the response<sup>110</sup>. As occurs, threats can rise immediately reaction to protect the gas sector. Moreover, the discourse will target references to energy supply dependence and gas transit security, possible interruptions such as weaponizing the gas sector, diversification, and cooperation with other countries<sup>111</sup>. Securitization is also present when actors associate energy policy issues with national security. Foreign policy statements usually imply that a threat to energy security is a threat to national security<sup>112</sup>.

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<sup>106</sup> Alan Bryman, *Social research methods 4<sup>th</sup> edition* (Oxford University Press, 2012), 528-529.

<sup>107</sup> *Ibid*, 531.

<sup>108</sup> Thierry Balzacq, *Securitization Theory: how security problems emerge and dissolve*, (London: Routledge, 2011), 39.

<sup>109</sup> Tichý, *EU political discourse*,

<sup>110</sup> Bryman, *Social research methods*, 530.

<sup>111</sup> Korteweg, *Energy as a tool*, 25.

<sup>112</sup> Szulecki, *Securitization and state encroachment*, 7.

**Table 2 Gas transit sector security discourse indicators**

Russia – Ukraine relations and gas sector discourse	Theoretical concepts	Keywords and terms
Security	Securitization, energy security	Gas security Diversification
Speech	Language indicating the urgency of response References to energy supply dependence and gas transit security, weaponization Associating energy security with national security	Gas price Transit routes, grid infrastructure Environmental impacts
Extraordinary measures	Governing gas exports or transit considered mandatory for national security State intervention in the gas sector	

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Table 2 shows the main theoretical concepts and components identifying gas transit sector security discourse. It also provides a speech frame and the main keywords and terms associated with the gas sector. A connection between energy policy and national security.

The selected time frame of the discourse covers the period from 2014 until 2021. A large part of the discourse analysis will consist of political speeches and statements that shape security narratives and allow us to observe processes, challenges, and evolutions in the Ukrainian gas sector. Firstly, the study will focus on speech acts performed by securitizing actors. Among them are government officials, politicians, and representatives of a gas Naftogaz. Secondly, official documents of the Ukraine government will be analyzed to illustrate gas and transit issues as an integral part of the speech act context. The analytic data selection will be based on framed keywords and terms related to the gas transit. In order to analyze the dynamics of the reasons for maintaining gas transit, it is necessary to detail information on transit security and address both parties' interests.

A large part of the data will be collected from the official *Government portal*, and the analysis will also be based on data collected by the country's popular news agencies *Ekonomicheskaya Pravda*, *Ukrainskaya Pravda*, and *Kyiv Post*. Official Ukraine government documents, such as the *2017 Energy strategy of Ukraine for the period up to 2035* and the *Energy Security Strategy for the period up to 2025*, will be used to illustrate gas and transit issues as an integral part of the speech act context. The opinion of Naftogaz reflected in *annual reports* will be considered to draw a comprehensive background of motives to securitize gas transit.

## 4. GAS SECURITY DISCOURSE IN UKRAINE

In this part of the Master's thesis, Ukraine's gas security relations with the Russian Federation will be examined through political discourse. The 2014 crisis in Ukraine has led to a broader shift in energy policy, with the adoption of a discourse that emphasizes the urgent need to address threats to Ukraine's gas sector security. Repeated gas interruptions, used as a political and security weapon by Russia, have encouraged the Ukrainian government to reduce its dependence on Russian gas while remaining dependent on gas transit. Therefore, the study focuses on the political discourse to convince the audience of the necessity of sustaining gas transit. Answering the main thesis question: how was the need for gas transit securitization persuaded in public communication to Ukrainian society?

### 4. 1. The impact of 2014 Ukraine's gas-fuelled crisis

Until 2014, Ukrainian society did not perceive the Russian Federation as a potential threat to Ukraine's sovereignty, territorial integrity, and energy policy. Although the gas dispute in 2009, when Russia completely cut off supplies, including transit volumes, had a significant impact on many EU countries and Ukraine<sup>113</sup>. On the one hand, it was an example of Ukraine's short-sighted political strategy. On the other hand, since 2010, the country has been ruled by a pro-Russian political regime led by President Viktor Yanukovich, with a government composed of highly corrupted people from his inner circle. Ukraine's oligarchs controlled more than a fifth of the gross national product, and the gas sector was a major source of corruption<sup>114</sup>. As a result, Ukraine already had close economic and political relations with Moscow and didn't consider its sovereignty in danger, nor did it consider its eastern neighbor as a threat. The situation changed dramatically when President Viktor Yanukovich rejected the EU-Ukraine Association Agreement, as the pro-Russian Yanukovich government came under intense pressure from Moscow to join the Eurasian Union as a full member in exchange for a substantial discount on Russian natural gas<sup>115</sup>. Therefore, gas has played a catalytic role, as it has been used as a tool of pressure by Putin to maintain control over Ukraine. The agreement's rejection mobilized many citizens in an anti-corruption protest against Yanukovich's decision on Kyiv's Maidan Square, widely known as "*Euromaidan*". This revolutionary movement demanded the

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<sup>113</sup> Lee, *Interdependence, issue importance*, 201.

<sup>114</sup> Thijs Van de Graaf, Jeff D. Colgan, "Russian gas games or well-oiled conflict? Energy security and the 2014 Ukraine crisis" *Energy Research & Social Science*, vol. 24, (2017): 59-64.

<sup>115</sup> Tony van der Togt, Francesco Saverio Montesano, Iaroslav Kozak, "From Competition to Compatibility Striking a Eurasian balance in EU-Russia relations" (Clingendael Report, Netherlands Institute of International Relations Clingendael, 2015), 47.

resignation of President Viktor Yanukovich, which effectively ended with Yanukovich's opposition to the government, his ouster, and the formation of a new pro-Western government<sup>116</sup>.

As a result, Russian military forces crossed the Ukrainian state border and began a civil war in Donbas, which followed Russia's annexation of Ukraine's Crimea region and Gazprom's nationalization of the Crimean gas companies Chernomorneftegaz and Feodosiya Enterprise<sup>117</sup>. The economic recovery was short-lived, with Ukraine falling back into recession and losing industrial capacity in the occupied territories. In addition, Russia has issued an ultimatum to Ukraine to accept upfront payments for gas supplies and significantly increased prices to 485.5\$/1000 m<sup>3</sup>. In contrast, a year ago, Ukraine managed to negotiate a price of 268,5\$/1000 m<sup>3</sup><sup>118</sup>. Russia's decision to occupy the Crimean territories and increase the price of gas was immediately criticized by Ukraine's Minister of Energy, Yuriy Prodan raising energy security concerns: *"A significant negative factor, which affects the energy security of Ukraine, is a capture by the aggressor of Chornomornaftogaz company"* <...> *"this is a serious loss to our energy security the Ukrainian economy should not pay such a gas price. It is a political price"*<sup>119</sup>. These statements are quite telling as they underline that in 2014, Ukraine witnessed a series of important events that fundamentally changed the security situation in the country. Events relating to the occupation of Crimea and the hijacking of Chornomornaftogaz, a company with proven reserves of 100bcm of natural gas, were powerful enough to securitize the gas sector automatically. Moreover, Russia's actions have increased energy security concerns in Europe and undermined its customers' confidence, as gas transit could be disrupted. Since gas supply disruption was used as a political weapon in Russia's relations with its neighbors, the gas pricing policy was another instrument in the game of *'divide et impera'*.

The EU's fears were realized after President Vladimir Putin sent an open letter to European countries on 2014 April 10<sup>th</sup>, informing them of a possible interruption of gas transit. Russia has put additional pressure on Ukraine, raising questions about Ukraine's huge debt and asking the EU to agree on joint negotiations on Ukraine's economic future<sup>120</sup>. These extreme measures have been followed by resilience building, and Ukraine has sought to counteract the impact of Russia's pricing policy by reverse flow trading and buying gas at the western border of Ukraine at European market

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<sup>116</sup> Simon Pirani, *Ukraine's energy policy*, 4.

<sup>117</sup> Экономическая правда, "Крымские "власти" забрали "Черноморнефтегаз" и Феодосийскую нефтебазу", Epravda, viewed on 2022 December 16<sup>th</sup>, <https://www.epravda.com.ua/rus/news/2014/03/17/428385/>.

<sup>118</sup> Reuters, "Russia raises gas prices for Ukraine by 80 percent", Reuters: integrated oil & gas, viewed on 2022 December 16<sup>th</sup>, <https://www.reuters.com/article/ukraine-crisis-gas-idUSL5N0MV2WL20140403>.

<sup>119</sup> Cabinet of Ministers, "Yuriy Prodan: Ukraine's energy security is among Government's priorities", Government portal, viewed on 2022 December 16<sup>th</sup>, <https://www.kmu.gov.ua/en/news/247176270>.

<sup>120</sup> Reuters, "Putin's letter to European leaders on Ukraine's gas debt", Reuters: commodities, viewed on 2022 December 16<sup>th</sup>, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-ukraine-crisis-russia-gas-letter-idUSBREA391DB20140410>.

prices. Minister of Energy Yuriy Prodan has outlined the prospects for cooperation with the EU at a briefing at the Ukrainian Cabinet of Ministers: “<...> *Ukraine will increase energy security <...> we can get up to 20 billion cubic meters of gas by using a reverse mode from the territory of Slovakia. This is a significant value for Ukraine in view of the decisions taken today in Russia on increasing gas prices*”<sup>121</sup>. Naftogaz has agreed that there is a high probability that gas supplies to the EU will be interrupted, emphasizing only two ways to avoid stopping supplies of Russian gas: “<...> *politics takes the upper hand over economics in the gas sphere, <...> either we agree with Gazprom to keep the price, or we agree with European companies, which will buy gas from Gazprom and then sell it to us, and will start paying directly for our services for the transit of gas through our territory*”<sup>122</sup>. At the moment, securitization of transit was favoured for various reasons. Ukraine had a large and constantly growing debt but also needed to import around 27 – 30bcm of gas to cover its needs and ensure transit in 2014<sup>123</sup>. In parallel, on the one hand, higher gas prices could force citizens and local authorities to reduce consumption, while on the other hand, the EU's dependence on Russian gas has made the dispute even more acute, as Ukraine had to meet its transit obligations for Russian gas supplies to EU countries.

At the same time, gas supplies to Ukraine continued as Russia stressed that supplies could not be interrupted immediately, and Gazprom was instructed first to consider obtaining an advance transfer from Naftogaz. The Russian monopoly had such an option because Naftogaz had not paid on time, and its total debt had risen to \$2.2 billion<sup>124</sup>. In response, Prime Minister of Ukraine Arseniy Yatsenyuk stated that: “*Russia has failed to capture Ukraine through military aggression, and the plan of pressure and capture of Ukraine over gas and economic aggression is being implemented*” <...> “*if the Russian company Gazprom gives an affirmative response to maintaining the price that has been set from the beginning of this year, and signs a respective agreement, then Ukraine will immediately repay \$2.2 billion in debt, which the previous government formed*”<sup>125</sup>. Moreover, the EU has confirmed its interest in helping Ukraine create a secure environment for its gas supply through further diversification, including rapid capacity building for reverse, enhanced energy efficiency, and

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<sup>121</sup> Cabinet of Ministers, “Yuriy Prodan outlined prospects for cooperation with countries of European Community”, Government portal, viewed on 2022 December 16<sup>th</sup>, <https://www.kmu.gov.ua/en/news/247176737>.

<sup>122</sup> Экономическая правда, “Украина может прекратить поставки газа в ЕС – Коболев”, Epravda, viewed on 2022 December 17<sup>th</sup>, <https://www.epravda.com.ua/rus/news/2014/04/12/439743/>.

<sup>123</sup> Naftogaz, “Використання природного газу”, Naftogaz, viewed on 2022 December 17<sup>th</sup>, <https://www.naftogaz.com/information/vykorystannya-pryrodnogo-gazu>.

<sup>124</sup> Экономическая правда, “Путин посоветуется, перекрывать ли Украине газ”, Epravda, viewed on 2022 December 17<sup>th</sup>, <https://www.epravda.com.ua/rus/news/2014/04/14/436974/>.

<sup>125</sup> Cabinet of Ministers, “Arseniy Yatsenyuk: Ukrainian government brings a lawsuit against Gazprom”, Government portal, viewed on 2022 December 17<sup>th</sup>, <https://www.kmu.gov.ua/en/news/247253414>.



to oppose Russian interests by calling for further integration with the EU<sup>126</sup>. However, it was also in the EU's interest that Ukraine should finally pay for its gas. As a result, trilateral talks on gas prices between the EU, Russia, and Ukraine took place in Berlin on 16<sup>th</sup> June 2014. After failing to reach an agreement, Gazprom and Naftogaz filed claims with the Stockholm Court of Arbitration over the supply and transit contracts<sup>127</sup>. Gazprom has asked to switch to pre-paid gas supplies. However, Naftogaz's disagreement with the price and increased political tensions eventually led to the cut-off of the gas supplies to Ukraine due to an unpaid debt of \$4.5 billion.

Moreover, on June 17<sup>th</sup>, a gas pipeline in Poltava carrying Russian gas to the rest of Europe exploded. Several versions of what happened were considered. One version is based on a technical pipeline oversight and a change in the gas pressure coming from Russia, making the accident. However, another version was more accusatory. Interior Minister Arsen Avakov has stated that the incident was “<...> *an act of terrorism, seeking to discredit Ukraine as a reliable supplier*”<sup>128</sup>. The evidence of gas supply disruption related to Russia's motivation to use the ‘gas weapon’ to put pressure on Ukraine and protect Gazprom's interests. Considering gas price hikes, supply cuts, and disruption, Ukraine's gas security was highly violated and worsened relations between the EU and Russia. Moscow constantly threatened to block the reverse flow and stop gas transit through Ukraine altogether<sup>129</sup>. In autumn, Gazprom started to reduce its gas supply to EU countries, forcing Poland and Hungary to stop reverse gas transit to Ukraine<sup>130</sup>. The motive for Russia was to reach the gas deal and debt repayment in the upcoming trilateral negotiation. However, all participants in this triangle depend on each other, so mutual interests should be considered. On 30<sup>th</sup> October, an agreement was reached whereby Ukraine agreed to pay in advance \$378/1000 m<sup>3</sup> until the end of 2014 and \$365 in the first quarter of 2015<sup>131</sup>. Moreover, Ukraine agreed to pay \$1.45 billion of its debts immediately and \$1.65 billion by the end of 2014. It was agreed that the EU would act as a guarantor for Ukraine's gas purchases from Russia and help cover its debts. According to EU officials, the agreement ensured that natural gas supplies to other European countries would not be disrupted<sup>132</sup>.

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<sup>126</sup> Экономическая правда, “ЕС обеспокоен повышением Россией цены на газ для Украины”, Epravda, viewed on 2022 December 17<sup>th</sup>, <https://www.epravda.com.ua/rus/news/2014/04/15/440578/>.

<sup>127</sup> Экономическая правда, “Кобелев ожидает слушаний в Стокгольмском суде уже в “ближайшие недели””, Epravda, viewed on 2022 December 22<sup>nd</sup>, <https://www.epravda.com.ua/rus/news/2014/07/23/477673/>.

<sup>128</sup> Экономическая правда, “Аваков: Ключевая версия взрыва на газопроводе – теракт”, Epravda, viewed on 2022 December 22<sup>nd</sup>, <https://www.epravda.com.ua/rus/news/2014/06/17/467039/>.

<sup>129</sup> Yakovenko, Mišik, 5-6.

<sup>130</sup> Экономическая правда, “‘Газпром’ начал сокращать транзит через Словакию”, Epravda, viewed on 2022 December 22<sup>nd</sup>, <https://www.epravda.com.ua/rus/news/2014/09/15/491042/>.

<sup>131</sup> Directorate-General for External Policies, “The Russian-Ukrainian gas deal: Taking the bite out of winter?” (Briefing, European Parliament, 2014), 5.

<sup>132</sup> *Ibid.*

The 2014 Ukrainian gas crisis highlighted Russia's role as the aggressor state occupying Ukrainian territory. The weaponization of gas supplies has revealed divergent approaches to resolving gas transit security issues, which has led to strained energy relations between Ukraine and Russia. Although the main issue was negotiating the gas price and Ukraine's debt, it became clear that the countries have different views on gas transit security. Russia has sought to remain an important gas supplier to Europe at all costs by weaponizing gas supplies to Ukraine and transit to Europe. While Ukraine was interested in maintaining its status as a gas transit country, this was an important part of Ukraine's energy policy since losing transit status would be a major challenge to ensure low and stable prices for consumers. Also, if physical gas supplies were disrupted, the EU would not necessarily be able to meet Ukraine's gas demand and transfer the necessary gas volumes, as access to gas reverse flow from the EU was problematic. Thus, since Russia threatened to cut off all gas supplies to Ukraine, Russian gas imports have become a major security problem. This was evident as Ukraine took extraordinary measures to reduce its dependence on Russian gas supplies. However, an immediate cessation of Russian gas imports to Ukraine and gas transit was impossible as it would have caused even greater issues for Ukraine's gas energy security. Ukraine would either be left without gas or have to buy gas at unaffordable prices. Therefore, to resolve this issue, Ukraine has sought to reduce its dependence on Russian gas while ensuring the transit of Russian gas.

#### **4. 2. Choosing the EU instead of Russia**

The EU side underlined Ukraine's important role in ensuring Europe's energy security and expressed its readiness to continue to assist in addressing issues related to the reverse flow of natural gas to Ukraine from the territory of the member states<sup>133</sup>. Under the EU – Ukraine Association, both parties committed to promoting gradual energy security, facilitating the development of appropriate infrastructure, and increasing market integration and regulatory approximation towards key elements of the EU *acquis*, promoting energy efficiency and renewable energy sources<sup>134</sup>. Stable prices and reliable gas transit have been a key focus for Ukraine as it seeks to secure a strategic energy partnership with producing countries. Therefore, it is also important for EU countries, especially those transporting gas further into the EU.

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<sup>133</sup> Cabinet of Ministers, “Ukraine and EU discuss further steps towards energy cooperation in Brussels”, Government portal, viewed on 2022 December 22<sup>nd</sup>, <https://www.kmu.gov.ua/en/news/247914523>.

<sup>134</sup> European Council, 2014 May 29<sup>th</sup> L 161/3 “Association Agreement between the European Union and its Member States, of the one part, and Ukraine, of the other part”, Brussels, EUR-lex, [https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/ALL/?uri=CELEX:22014A0529\(01\)](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/ALL/?uri=CELEX:22014A0529(01)) (viewed on 2022 December 23<sup>rd</sup>).

After relations with the Russian Federation worsened, Ukraine has actively sought to reduce its dependence on gas imports and diversify its sources and routes of supply. The government has taken extreme measures to reduce gas demand, increase domestic gas production and expand the reverse flow with Hungary, Poland, and especially Slovakia since it is the main transit point for Russian gas exports to Europe, transiting gas to the West and reverse flows to Ukraine<sup>135</sup>. Thus, these three countries had to ensure higher reverse flows to reduce Gazprom's dominant position in Ukraine and allow natural gas to be purchased in competitive European markets. By comparison, in previous years, for domestic consumption, Ukraine imported 5 percent of its gas from the EU and 95 percent from Russia, while in 2015, it imported 67 percent from the EU and only 33 percent from Russia<sup>136</sup>. Though Ukraine remained the main transit route for Russian gas to the EU, Arseniy Yatsenyuk demanded a further reduction of the share of Russian gas in Ukraine's energy balance by pumping as much gas as possible from the EU to Ukraine's underground storage at the lowest possible price, stressing that: “<...> let them leave their discounts in Russia <...> at the market price we primarily buy from our European partners, <...> this is cheaper and more efficient, <...> we need to reach the real price of natural gas”<sup>137</sup>. Ukraine still needed cheap gas, and improving energy efficiency was a challenge as Ukraine had to attract foreign companies to liberalize the domestic market and investments to modernize transmission, reduce gas consumption, and meet the needs of consumers by offsetting the gas price.

On 2015 April 9<sup>th</sup>, liberalization of the domestic market accelerated when Ukraine's Parliament adopted the long-awaited *Law of Ukraine on the Natural Gas Market*. The law ensured further regulation and integration of Ukraine's energy market into the EU and the abolition of the vertically integrated gas market structure<sup>138</sup>. This de-monopolization aimed to increase market transparency and non-discriminatory access so that the oligarchs in the energy sector would become entities that would operate under the law like other market players. As well as allow equal access for customers to choose and change their gas suppliers. In the past, Naftogaz imported almost all of its gas from the EU and sold it to domestic consumers, but since the liberalization of the market, European companies have been selling their gas directly to Ukrainian consumers. According to Naftogaz: “now European companies export half of the gas, and Ukrainian private companies import

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<sup>135</sup> International Energy Agency, “Ukraine energy profile: energy security”, IEA, viewed on 2022 December 23<sup>rd</sup>, <https://www.iea.org/reports/ukraine-energy-profile/energy-security>.

<sup>136</sup> Cabinet of Ministers, “Following the results of monitoring security of natural gas supplies” (Report, Cabinet of Ministers, Kyiv, 2015), 12.

<sup>137</sup> Cabinet of Ministers, “Arseniy Yatsenyuk instructs to maximize volumes of reverse gas”, Government portal, viewed on 2022 December 23<sup>rd</sup>, <https://www.kmu.gov.ua/en/news/247927130>.

<sup>138</sup> Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, *Law of Ukraine 2015 April 9<sup>th</sup> No. 27 Article 234 “On the Natural Gas Market”*, Kyiv, 2015, <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/329-19?lang=en#Text> (viewed on 2022 December 23<sup>rd</sup>).

*some volumes*”<sup>139</sup>. But what kind of gas does Ukraine then buy in Europe? Where does it come from? It is so-called Russian gas, which Gazprom supplies to Europe primarily through Ukrainian territory. Once this gas crosses the Ukrainian – Slovak border, it becomes the property of European traders, who sell it to Ukraine, from where it eventually comes back. The obvious question is whether this is legal. Gazprom would argue that European counterparties have no resale rights<sup>140</sup>. Though, such operations are not prohibited by EU law or by European companies' contracts with Gazprom<sup>141</sup>. However, due to such successful cooperation, Russia has attempted to block the reverse flow of gas from Slovakia to Ukraine. The last time such measures were taken was in 2015 when Gazprom reduced the volume of gas to Europe at a gas station in Slovakia, where so-called Russian gas has become legally “European” and flows to Ukraine<sup>142</sup>.

However, despite deepening its cooperation with the EU, Ukraine still had many concerns and problems to solve. Ukraine needed to accumulate more resources to make it easier to endure the coming autumn-winter period and ensure gas transit to the EU. One of the concerns was the weak EU stance since it suggested buying Russian gas<sup>143</sup>. The EU considered that the only mechanism that can guarantee gas transit to the EU and the stability of gas supplies to Ukraine is a trilateral agreement similar to the one signed between the EU, Ukraine, and Russia in 2014. As a result, Gazprom offered direct imports at a few dollars below reverse flow prices, but Ukraine agreed to pay only for a small amount of direct Russian imports<sup>144</sup>. As Ukraine’s Prime Minister pointed out: “*Russia blackmail us <...> we aren’t going to subsidize Russian Gazprom, as well as prevent Russian Gazprom from using its monopoly position*”<sup>145</sup>. In response, Gazprom held that refusal to buy Russian gas poses a serious risk to the reliable gas transit to Europe via Ukraine and the supply of gas to Ukrainian consumers in the coming winter. To support the argument for Ukraine’s gas transit reliability, Naftogaz stated that: “*over the past year and a half, we have shown that we can provide uninterrupted transit of Russian gas regardless of whether it is supplied to Ukraine or not, both in the summer and in the winter*”

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<sup>139</sup> Kyiv Post, “European companies export half of EU gas to Ukraine after market liberalization”, Kyiv Post, viewed on 2022 December 23<sup>rd</sup>, <https://www.kyivpost.com/article/content/ukraine-politics/european-companies-export-half-of-eu-gas-to-ukraine-after-market-liberalization-400658.html>.

<sup>140</sup> Simon Pirani, Katja Yafimava, “Russian Gas Transit Across Ukraine Post-2019: pipeline scenarios, gas flow consequences, and regulatory constraints” (Paper, University of Oxford, Oxford Institute for Energy Studies, 2016), 52.

<sup>141</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>142</sup> Экономическая правда, “Газпром утверждает, что зимой не снижал поставки в ЕС”, Epravda, viewed on 2022 December 23<sup>rd</sup>, <https://www.epravda.com.ua/rus/news/2015/05/14/542521/>.

<sup>143</sup> Экономическая правда, “Еврокомиссия хочет видеть "газовый план" Украины”, Epravda, viewed on 2022 December 23<sup>rd</sup>, <https://www.epravda.com.ua/rus/news/2015/07/1/548842/>.

<sup>144</sup> Simon Pirani, Katja Yafimava, 16.

<sup>145</sup> Cabinet of Ministers, “Arseniy Yatseniuk on a new gas contract: We are not going to subsidize Russian Gazprom”, Government portal, viewed on 2022 December 24<sup>th</sup>, <https://www.kmu.gov.ua/en/news/248306397>.

season” <...> customers are satisfied with the quality and reliability of our transit services”<sup>146</sup>. Another important argument for reducing Russian gas dependence was cost-effectiveness, according to Arseniy Yatsenyuk: “people began to economize” <...> “we also have advantages in price and benefits that we are not fully dependent on the Russian gas monopolist”<sup>147</sup>. But “not fully dependent” means several things, Ukraine gradually reduced its direct gas imports from Russia, while Russian gas continues to transit through Ukrainian territory, and the rest of the reverse flow’s imports are covered by transit fees. Significant transit revenues allow for a reduction in the overall cost of gas imports. Consequently, domestic consumers can make savings. Without alternative supplies from Europe, Ukraine will have to buy gas from Russia at non-market prices. With the monopoly on Russian gas supplies removed, Ukraine could strive to be the main and independent transit country. Thus, Ukraine’s gas transit securitization has been directly affected by Russia’s unfair pricing of gas imports and Ukraine’s underpayment for the transit of natural gas through Ukrainian territory. If Ukraine raises the issue of improving transit fees, Russia threatens to cut off supplies.

As an outcome of 2015 disagreements, Gazprom halted Russian natural gas exports to Ukraine on the 25th of November, arguing that Ukraine had not paid them for the next delivery. Yet Ukraine’s government had a different perspective and argued that they stopped buying from Gazprom because it could buy natural gas cheaper from other suppliers and meet its gas supply needs from European Union countries<sup>148</sup>. The state’s decision to achieve partial diversification through the EU reverse flow by refusing direct imports of Russian gas was a necessary message for the audience to understand the reality of the threat. Thus, Ukraine’s gas transit securitization was intensified through the need to ensure the uninterrupted availability of gas at affordable prices and adapt the infrastructure network to access gas sources from Europe. In parallel, Russia has been proposing additional pipeline projects and capacities to eliminate transit via Ukraine completely.

#### **4. 3. Russian gas transit route diversification: Nord Stream 2**

In 2015 Gazprom and Germany gas largest energy companies announced a controversial agreement on further construction of the ‘Nord Stream 2’ gas pipeline, an additional route for transporting Russian gas to Europe. However, from the outset, the ‘Nord Stream 2’ project has been

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<sup>146</sup> Экономическая правда, “‘Нафтогаз’ не будет принимать российский газ только для транзита в Европу”, Epravda, viewed on 2022 December 24<sup>th</sup>, <https://www.epravda.com.ua/rus/news/2015/11/25/569083/>.

<sup>147</sup> Cabinet of Ministers, “Arseniy Yatsenyuk: Within a decade we will be able to abandon the purchase of Russian natural gas”, Government portal, viewed on 2022 December 24<sup>th</sup>, <https://www.kmu.gov.ua/en/news/248645918>.

<sup>148</sup> Экономическая правда, “‘Газпром’ прекращает поставки газа в Украину”, Epravda, viewed on 2022 December 24<sup>th</sup>, <https://www.epravda.com.ua/rus/news/2015/11/25/568961/>.

met with strong opposition and numerous attempts to delay or halt construction. Gazprom argued that the new pipeline would meet the EU's growing demand for gas imports, while Ukraine argued that Russia is building 'Nord Stream 2' to diversify its natural gas supply routes to Europe and bypass Ukraine as a transit country<sup>149</sup>. Ukraine considers that the 'Nord Stream 2' operation puts the Ukrainian economy at risk, as it will potentially lose the relevant revenue from the transit route between Russia and the EU. In addition, the loss of transit status would lead to a loss of gas diversification for the EU and Ukraine and force the government to negotiate directly with Russia on gas issues<sup>150</sup>.

In January 2016, Ukraine's government announced that: *"Ukraine does not buy gas from Russia because it buys it in the European Union at a price less than offered by the Russian Federation"*<sup>151</sup>. In addition, Ukraine's President Petro Poroshenko has stressed: *"Ukraine has enough gas capacities and could do without Russian gas imports this year, pumping in gas from the EU only"*<sup>152</sup>. As a result, Ukraine's direct gas imports from Russia have been cut to zero. This was the first time in history that Ukraine survived the winter without Russian gas. Thus, Ukraine has gained more confidence to lobby against 'Nord Stream 2' and reassure the EU that Ukraine remains a reliable transit country supporting energy independence. To strengthen the narrative against 'Nord Stream 2' Arseniy Yatsenyuk has stressed: *"this is a threat to national and energy security of Ukraine and a number of Member States of the European Union" <...> the Russian target is as follows: to sell for scrap the Ukrainian gas transport system, to bypass Ukraine, to deprive Ukraine, Slovakia and Poland of billions of dollars of income from gas transit and actually create another monopoly in the energy market of the European Union"*<sup>153</sup>. This statement assesses the geopolitical and economic aspects of Ukraine's and the EU's national interests. Russia's desire to increase its influence in the energy sector is seen as yet another attempt to extend Russian aggression on the international stage and dominate the EU gas sector without Ukraine's transit.

The emergence of 'Nord Stream 2' on the EU energy market is fundamentally changing the balance of power in the region. Considering the geopolitical aspect of 'Nord Stream 2', two main

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<sup>149</sup> European Parliament, "The Nord Stream 2 pipeline: Economic, environmental and geopolitical issues" (Briefing, European Parliament, 2021), 8.

<sup>150</sup> Cabinet of Ministers, "Arseniy Yatsenyuk: "Nord stream-2" is a political project. We ask the European Commission to support the EU and Ukraine in making the gas sector of Europe more durable and less dependent on the Russian Federation", Government portal, viewed on 2022 December 24<sup>th</sup>, <https://www.kmu.gov.ua/en/news/248867717>.

<sup>151</sup> Українська правда, "Яценюк рассказал, почему Украина больше не покупает газ в РФ", Українська правда, viewed on 2022 December 24<sup>th</sup>, <https://www.pravda.com.ua/rus/news/2016/01/10/7094943/>.

<sup>152</sup> Українська правда, "Порошенко: Украина может обойтись без российского газа", Українська правда, viewed on 2022 December 24<sup>th</sup>, <https://www.pravda.com.ua/rus/news/2016/01/11/7095039/>.

<sup>153</sup> Cabinet of Ministers, "Nord Stream-2 should be blocked. Ukraine has always been and still remains a reliable transit country" Government portal, viewed on 2022 December 24<sup>th</sup>, <https://www.kmu.gov.ua/en/news/248836983>.



aspects affecting the geopolitical role of Ukraine can be divided: gas transit competition with Russia and the promotion of the energy interests of European Member States. Maintaining the transportation route through Ukraine would strengthen the energy security perspective of the Eastern European region<sup>154</sup>. In addition, '*Nord Stream 2*' represents a serious challenge to Ukraine's status as a major transit country, as Ukraine would lose its ability to supply Russian gas via the shortest route to the EU. Moreover, the new pipeline will not lead to EU energy independence, as the gas supplier remains the same, and the pipeline can be a channel for gas and Russia's political influence<sup>155</sup>. Russia's ability to supply gas to Western Europe bypassing Ukraine and other Central and Eastern European countries means that the Kremlin will be prepared to use gas even more as a tool of political pressure and may even resume its aggression on the Ukrainian front<sup>156</sup>. Despite existing pipelines already having sufficient capacity to export Russian gas, Gazprom's determination to build the pipeline demonstrates that this project is driven primarily by Moscow's geopolitical agenda. Additional problems have been caused by the Kremlin's '*TurkStream*' project, which provides an alternative route for Russian gas supplies to the southern part of the EU. Thus, Russia has created legal conditions for redirecting large gas volumes to other transit routes. In addition, Ukraine was concerned that in the confrontation between Washington and Moscow, US interests in '*Nord Stream 2*' do not always coincide with those of the European Union and had created additional tensions and increased Ukraine's transit security concerns<sup>157</sup>. Moscow uses the political fragmentation of the EU to challenge Ukraine's national interests in terms of aiming for energy independence and being part of the EU and NATO. However, Ukraine is keen to promote support and solidarity in the gas sector for EU countries since the construction of '*Nord Stream 2*' could also be detrimental to the EU strategy of diversifying energy sources<sup>158</sup>. Ukraine has pledged not to return to Russian natural gas supplies, relying instead on imports from Europe and possibly increasing its production.

The economic aspect of the '*Nord Stream 2*' project remains extremely important. To understand the economic impact of the Russian energy project, it is necessary to highlight the changes that have been achieved in the short term as a result of the diversification of Ukraine's gas supply. Despite ongoing disputes, Ukraine has managed to transit gas to the EU, although volumes fell to

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<sup>154</sup> Экономическая правда, "Десять стран ЕС выступили против газопровода 'Северный поток-2'", Epravda, viewed on 2022 December 25<sup>th</sup>, <https://www.epravda.com.ua/rus/news/2015/11/27/569637/>.

<sup>155</sup> European Parliament, *The Nord Stream 2 pipeline*, 9.

<sup>156</sup> Экономическая правда, "Евродепутат: "Северный поток-2" должен стать главной темой саммита НАТО", viewed on 2022 December 25<sup>th</sup>, <https://www.epravda.com.ua/rus/news/2016/05/4/591608/>.

<sup>157</sup> *Ibid*, 11.

<sup>158</sup> Экономическая правда, "Европарламент призвал отказаться от 'Северного потока-2'", Epravda, viewed on 2022 December 25<sup>th</sup>, <https://www.epravda.com.ua/rus/news/2016/01/21/577661/>.

62.2 bcm and 67.1 bcm in 2014 – 2015<sup>159</sup>. Since 2016, Ukraine has reduced its direct imports of Russian gas and successfully reduced the price of natural gas from the EU, leading to an increase in volumes to 82.2 bcm in 2016. In particular, the volume of gas transiting through Ukraine in 2017 reached its highest level in the last six years, reaching 93.5 bcm of natural gas<sup>160</sup>. The main reason for the increased transit volumes lies in the growth of demand for natural gas in Europe. Overall, Russia's Gazprom exported 192.2 bcm of gas to Europe in 2017<sup>161</sup>. Thus, Ukraine transited almost half of Russia's gas exports to the EU through its gas transmission system. In 2017, revenues from gas transit through Ukraine amounted to around \$3 billion<sup>162</sup>. While in 2016, Ukraine paid \$1.5 billion to Russia for direct gas imports before halting it<sup>163</sup>. As a result, Naftogaz made a profit of more than \$1 billion for the first time<sup>164</sup>. This proves that, from an economic point of view, Ukraine has retained the most significant transit route for Russian gas to Europe (and was profitable). However, launching 'Nord Stream 2' with a capacity of 55 bcm will increase the total capacity of the 'Nord Stream' project to 110 bcm<sup>165</sup>. This will allow Gazprom to export gas significantly via the northern route, thus depriving Ukraine of significant gas volumes in transit. According to the head of Naftogaz: "due to the pipeline 'Nord Stream 2', the Ukrainian economy will suffer losses of 3 billion dollars a year <...> if 'Nord Stream 2' is completed, there will be no transit through Ukraine"<sup>166</sup>. In addition, the Ministry of Finance of Ukraine has announced that the country could lose between 2.5 and 3 percent of its GDP due to 'Nord Stream 2' becoming operational<sup>167</sup>. Therefore, even a partial loss of the volume of gas transported in the Ukrainian gas transit system could significantly decrease Naftogaz's financial situation and provoke the state monopoly to increase natural gas prices to Ukrainian consumers. Moreover, Russia cannot economically allow Ukraine to have a big competitive advantage on the gas price, and by building 'Nord Stream 2', Russia aims to force Ukraine to buy gas and pay for its transport.

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<sup>159</sup> Naftogaz Group, "Historical victory and the beginning of transformation: annual report 2017", Naftogaz Group, viewed on 2022 December 25<sup>th</sup>, <https://www.naftogaz.com/short/a5424ef7>.

<sup>160</sup> Naftogaz Group, *Historical victory and the beginning*, 27.

<sup>161</sup> Gazprom Export, "Gas supplies to Europe", Gazprom Export, viewed on 2022 December 25<sup>th</sup>, <http://www.gazpromexport.ru/en/statistics/>.

<sup>162</sup> Українська правда, "Транзит російського газу дає Україні до 3 мільярдів доларів в рік", Українська правда, viewed on 2022 December 25<sup>th</sup>, <https://www.epravda.com.ua/rus/news/2018/03/2/634640/>.

<sup>163</sup> Слово і Діло, "Імпорт газу: скільки голубого палива Україна закупила з 1991 року", Слово і Діло, viewed on 2022 December 25<sup>th</sup>, <https://ru.slovoidilo.ua/2018/03/09/infografika/jekonomika/import-gaza-skolko-golubogo-topliva-ukraina-zakupila-1991-goda>.

<sup>164</sup> OSW Centre for Eastern Studies, "Ukraine: a record year for Naftogaz", OSW, viewed on 2022 December 25<sup>th</sup>, <https://www.osw.waw.pl/en/publikacje/analyses/2017-02-08/ukraine-a-record-year-naftogaz>.

<sup>165</sup> Nord Stream, "Nord Stream's Twin Pipelines: Part of the Long-Term Solution for Europe's Energy Security" (General background paper, Nord Stream, 2016), 1.

<sup>166</sup> Deutsche Welle, "Глава "Нафтогаза" рассказал о будущем транзита газа", DW экономика и бизнес, viewed on 2022 December 26<sup>th</sup>, <https://p.dw.com/p/3UIVz>.

<sup>167</sup> Kyiv Post, "Finance Ministry: Ukraine to lose 2.5-3 percent of GDP over Nord Stream 2", Kyiv Post: Ukraine's Energy Challenge, viewed on 2022 December 26<sup>th</sup>, [https://www.kyivpost.com/ukraine-politics/finance-ministry-ukraine-to-lose-2-5-3-percent-of-gdp-over-nord-stream-2.html#pll\\_switcher](https://www.kyivpost.com/ukraine-politics/finance-ministry-ukraine-to-lose-2-5-3-percent-of-gdp-over-nord-stream-2.html#pll_switcher).



The geopolitical and economic impact of 'Nord Stream 2' on Ukraine's national and energy security interests is significant. The Russian pipeline project intensifies the securitization of Ukraine's gas transit. The loss of most, if not all, transit between Russia and the EU could call into question the future of Ukraine's gas infrastructure as a whole and Ukraine's status as a major transit country. Without the revenue from transit fees for Russian gas flowing through Ukraine to the EU may no longer be economically efficient. If Ukraine's GTS ceased to operate, this would have far-reaching consequences for EU energy supplies, Ukraine's relations with Russia, and wider energy security issues. In addition, the geopolitical and economic risks could fragment EU unity and aggravate Russian aggression on Ukrainian territory.

#### 4. 4. Between dependence and independence

Despite the difficulties caused by Russia's geopolitical agenda to bypass Ukraine's gas transit, it has taken a principled stance of independence from Russia's gas imports and has sought to strengthen its status as a reliable partner of the European Union in the gas transit sector. The Ukrainian government considered energy independence, as part of Ukraine's national interests, could be achieved only if the country integrated into the European energy market<sup>168</sup>. Successful cooperation with the EU, prolonged gas disputes, and Russia's aggression in Ukraine's territory were the impulses for Ukraine's government to adopt the *Energy Strategy of Ukraine until 2035*.

Addressing Russia's aggression, the strategy emphasizes new challenges and opportunities for Ukraine. The challenge for Ukraine is the risk of losing its gas transit status. Ukraine aims to remain a reliable transit partner for the EU, ensuring a secure and reliable supply of gas resources to domestic consumers and neighboring markets<sup>169</sup>. Opportunities include taking advantage of the favorable geographical location to integrate into the European energy market, become independent from gas imports, and reduce dependence on gas transit from Russia<sup>170</sup>. One of the strategy's main objectives is to diversify gas sources further and address energy security issues, considering that the gas sector is one of the economic guarantees of national sovereignty and an urgent issue<sup>171</sup>. Even though Ukraine's government has been emphasizing the need for cheap gas and independence from Russian gas in previous years, in 2017, it strengthened its narrative with greater public involvement.

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<sup>168</sup> Экономическая правда, "'Нафтогаз' не справится с проблемами ГТС без Европы – Коболев", Epravda, viewed on 2022 December 27<sup>th</sup>, <https://www.epravda.com.ua/rus/news/2016/09/19/606046/>.

<sup>169</sup> Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine, *Energy strategy of Ukraine*, 8.

<sup>170</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>171</sup> *Ibid*, 9.

The issue of increasing domestic gas production to meet demand and the availability of transit gas resources had been stressed by Prime Minister of Ukraine Volodymyr Groysman: *“Ukraine should be a transit country. And we will not just be a transit country – we will increase our gas production <...> I want Ukraine to become the state that satisfies its demand <...> Ukraine will be energy independent, and citizens will have access to cheap gas. This can be done fundamentally in 2020”*<sup>172</sup>. This demonstrates that Ukraine’s government has continued to escalate that energy independence will not only allow the elimination of Russian gas imports, which have been used as a tool to put pressure on Ukraine but will also reduce gas prices in the country. Thus, increasing the state’s gas production and diversifying its supply is an extraordinary measure the government aimed to achieve in a certain period. Since developing the gas sector and assuring transit security would boost economic growth, budget revenues, and the quality of life of its citizens. Therefore, once the audience accepts the threat, it is difficult to challenge its image. This is a phase where securitizing actors do not dispute the perceptions of threats with the audience. Security actors and the audience are united in their understanding of the situation and do not want to change the established image of the threat.

However, some more uncertainties had to be addressed. Ukraine was awaiting the final Stockholm arbitration on all transit disputes related to Gazprom, scheduled to take place in February 2018, and was still determining the court’s decision. In parallel, the Ukrainian government has assumed that the continued application of EU market principles is a key element of the EU – Ukraine gas supply concept and gas transit security assurance after 2019, when the existing contract for the transit and supply of Russian gas through Ukraine will be terminated<sup>173</sup>. Addressing the issues, Petro Poroshenko emphasized: *“we are waiting for a decision by the Stockholm arbitration court <...> the contract is expiring in 2019, our task is to achieve the revolutionary change in the organization of transit with the help of the European Union <...> Europeans should buy Russian gas on the eastern, rather than on the western border of Ukraine. And Ukraine should provide high-quality transit services to the European Union rather than to Russia”*<sup>174</sup>. While the persistently low and unstable transit pressure on gas supplies from Russia via Ukraine to the EU is not a new phenomenon, with Gazprom likely to terminate the contract in 2019, it becomes particularly problematic for Ukraine. If Russia terminates the contract, Ukraine may lose its status as a reliable transit country which would

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<sup>172</sup> Cabinet of Ministers, “Prime Minister assures Ukraine will boost domestic gas production by 20 bcm/year till 2020”, Government portal, viewed on 2022 December 27th, <https://www.kmu.gov.ua/en/news/250447379>.

<sup>173</sup> Cabinet of Ministers, “Prime Minister: Integration into the energy market of the EU, joint management of the GTS and preservation of gas transit through Ukraine are among key challenges in the cooperation with the EU in the energy sector”, Government portal, viewed on 2022 December 27th, <https://www.kmu.gov.ua/en/news/premyer-ministr-integraciya-do-energorinku-yes-spilne-upravlinnya-gts-ta-zberezhennya-gazovogo-tranzitu-cherez-ukrayinu-klyuchovi-zavdannya-spivpraci-z-yes-v-energetici>.

<sup>174</sup> Ukrinform, “Poroshenko wants changes in Russian gas transit to Europe”, Ukrinform, viewed on 2022 December 27th, <https://www.ukrinform.net/rubric-economy/2300749-poroshenko-wants-changes-in-russian-gas-transit-to-europe.html>.

increasingly affect Ukraine's energy security. For this reason, Ukraine wanted to prove its reliability by ensuring uninterrupted gas transit, even if the terms of transit of Russian natural gas to Europe were to change.

On 28 February, Naftogaz won a historic dispute with Gazprom. In particular, in the transit dispute, Naftogaz demanded compensation for under-delivery and underpayment for transit services from 2009 – 2016. Stockholm Court of Arbitration has awarded Ukraine \$4.6 billion, though \$2 billion has to be transferred as repayment of gas debt to Gazprom for Russian gas consumed in 2014, and \$2.56 billion had to be transferred to the budget of the Ukrainian state-owned company Naftogaz<sup>175</sup>. In addition, Naftogaz demanded that the transit contract and tariffs comply with European law. Since the signing of the agreement, the so-called Third Energy Package has been adopted, and the conditions for forming transit tariffs in Europe have changed significantly<sup>176</sup>. However, the most impactful decision of the Stockholm Court of Arbitration was lifting the ban on the re-export of Russian gas<sup>177</sup>. Thus, Naftogaz could integrate into the European gas market and develop trade operations through re-export. Ukraine's president has greeted such a court decision and emphasized that: *“once again, this victory is not only in money, this victory has a geostrategic significance. It's like visa-free travel – final goodbye to a gas line or a gas loop. And the result is just as brilliant”*<sup>178</sup>. Although Ukraine was satisfied with the outcome, Gazprom disagreed with the arbitration award and announced the termination of its gas supply and transit contracts with Naftogaz<sup>179</sup>.

As a result, the decision has again exposed Ukraine's security gaps in gas transit and supply, as Gazprom continued to breach the gas pressure stipulated in the transit contract at the entrance to Ukraine's gas transmission system. According to Naftogaz, under the contract with Gazprom, it should receive natural gas at \$238.55/1000m<sup>3</sup>, while prices in Europe ranged from \$250-300 to \$500<sup>180</sup>. In response to Gazprom's blackmail, the Ukrainian government acknowledged that this was causing technical difficulties and a gas supply deficit that needed to be solved, stressing the urgent

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<sup>175</sup> Экономическая правда, “Порошенко с Коболев рассказали, что означает решение Стокгольмского суда”, Epravda, viewed on 2022 December 30<sup>th</sup>, <https://www.epravda.com.ua/rus/news/2018/02/28/634559/>.

<sup>176</sup> Simon Pirani, “After the Gazprom-Naftogaz arbitration: commerce still entangled in politics”, (Paper, University of Oxford, Oxford Institute for Energy Studies, 2018), 5.

<sup>177</sup> *Ibid*, 6.

<sup>178</sup> Экономическая правда, “Транзит газа через Украину - это не благотворительность Газпрома, а решение суда – Порошенко”, Epravda, viewed on 2022 December 31<sup>st</sup>, <https://www.epravda.com.ua/rus/news/2018/03/8/634818/>.

<sup>179</sup> Экономическая правда, “В "Газпроме" отреагировали на решение Стокгольмского суда”, Epravda, viewed on 2022 December 31<sup>st</sup>, <https://www.epravda.com.ua/rus/news/2018/03/1/634564/>.

<sup>180</sup> Экономическая правда, “ Президент рассказал, по каким ценам Украина покупает европейский газ”, Epravda, viewed on 2022 December 31<sup>st</sup>, <https://www.epravda.com.ua/rus/news/2018/03/3/634664/>.

need to reduce gas consumption and buy gas from Europe<sup>181</sup>. Thus, even though the Stockholm arbitration award obliged Gazprom to transit gas through Ukraine until the end of the contract in 2019, Russia once again demonstrated its willingness to use gas as a political weapon to provoke the EU's doubts about Ukraine's ability to meet demand and to provide quality transit services rising further security concerns.

#### 4. 4. 1. To transit or not to transit?

As Ukraine moved towards independence from Russian gas, Russia continued to implement the 'Nord Stream 2' transit bypass project, and the 2019 gas transit contract was about to be terminated, the question remained relevant: *to transit or not to transit?* To address this dilemma, the EU has reaffirmed that Ukraine is a strategic gas transit country that could ensure affordable, secure, and reliable gas supplies to the EU in the future amid concerns about gas transportation from Russia after 2019. However, as a strategic partner of Ukraine, the European Commission opposed the 'Nord Stream 2' project outlining negative consequences for the EU energy security and non-compliance with European legislation. The pipeline has been considered a purely political rather than economic project for Europe which the Kremlin lobbied for<sup>182</sup>. However, the EU's primary interest was that Russia and Ukraine find a solution for stable cooperation in the gas sector, which the EU considers the most important. For this purpose, the EU has been the main initiator, inviting the parties to trilateral talks to negotiate the long-term transit of Russian gas through Ukraine to the EU<sup>183</sup>. Ukraine has been obliged to enter into tripartite talks with Russia. Otherwise, by losing control of the Naftogaz gas transmission system, Ukraine would not meet its gas transit obligations to European consumers<sup>184</sup>. But it has never been easy for Ukraine to negotiate with Russia because of its aggressive policies and the very different objectives of the two countries.

As a supplier country, Russia had leverage and a better negotiating position to achieve its objectives. It has negotiated whether to cut off transit through Ukraine or to maintain it if the special conditions offered were accepted. According to Gazprom, the preconditions for the extension of the current contract or the signing of a new contract were the waiver by both parties of all mutual claims

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<sup>181</sup> Cabinet of Ministers, "Nothing endangers gas supply to Ukraine, from tomorrow we will purchase gas from the European market", Government portal, viewed on 2022 December 31<sup>st</sup>, <https://www.kmu.gov.ua/en/news/250592516>.

<sup>182</sup> Экономическая правда, "В Еврокомиссии снова заявили, что "Северный поток-2" не нужен", Epravda, viewed on 2023 January 1<sup>st</sup>, <https://www.epravda.com.ua/rus/news/2018/04/18/636142/>.

<sup>183</sup> Европейская правда, "В ЕК торопят РФ и Украину с началом трехсторонних газовых переговоров", Eurointegration, viewed on 2023 January 1<sup>st</sup>, <https://www.eurointegration.com.ua/rus/news/2018/05/23/7082089/>.

<sup>184</sup> Naftogaz Group, *Historical victory and the beginning*, 49.

in the arbitration process and the termination of all legal proceedings<sup>185</sup>. However, Gazprom is a very unpredictable actor for whom political interests can take precedence over financial ones. For this reason, Ukraine had to carefully consider the scenarios for concluding a transit contract and the ways to ensure gas transit in the case of no contract. The main proposal by Naftogaz was to apply the same rules under which Gazprom works in Europe to the Russian gas transit through Ukraine's territory<sup>186</sup>. An important aspect of implementing EU market rules lies in transforming the gas transmission infrastructure into a flexible European system<sup>187</sup>. Thus, Ukraine had to unbundle its gas transmission system to make it independent from the natural gas production and supply activities of its parent company Naftogaz and any other subsidiary<sup>188</sup>. The effective separation was a key factor for the survival of the gas transit system in Ukraine and its competitiveness among European gas companies and secure supplies to Ukraine. Conversely, without the necessary capacity to handle the strain on Ukraine's GTS, which could result from a reduction in the transit of Russian gas, Ukraine could be exposed to technological problems, a deterioration in its energy capacity infrastructure, and a financial burden that will be unbearable for further trade with the EU. Thus, the unbundling of the Ukrainian GTS would be suitable for the transit of Russian gas to the EU, the reverse supply of gas from Europe to Ukraine, and the supply of gas from alternative locations<sup>189</sup>. Therefore, the attempt to propose to the EU to change the format of Russian gas imports by purchasing gas at the Ukrainian-Russian border is crucial for Ukraine's national and energy security. As the military confrontation continued, Ukraine's gas pipelines to Europe were a good argument for resolving the conflict rather than escalating it. However, to become part of the EU's internal gas market and further integration with a properly functioning gas trading platform, Ukraine had to receive political support from the EU level on the changing rules of the game of Russia's Gazprom.

Thus, on the one hand, Ukraine sought successful integration into the European market and transit under transparent and competitive conditions, ensuring even greater predictability and stability of gas supplies and reselling Russian gas to European buyers in the West<sup>190</sup>. On the other hand, Ukraine still had the strategic objective of guaranteed revenues from gas transit of Russian gas

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<sup>185</sup> Европейская правда, “Новый газовый контракт: почему Украина и Россия начинают переговоры в Берлине”, Eurointegration, viewed on 2023 January 1<sup>st</sup>, <https://www.eurointegration.com.ua/rus/articles/2018/07/16/7084469/>.

<sup>186</sup> Экономическая правда, “В ‘Нафтогазе’ рассказали, чего хотят от трехсторонних переговоров по транзиту”, Epravda, viewed on 2023 January 1<sup>st</sup>, <https://www.epravda.com.ua/rus/news/2018/07/15/638712/>.

<sup>187</sup> Экономическая правда, “Украина завершит создание нового Оператора ГТС до конца года — Коболев”, viewed on 2023 January 1<sup>st</sup>, <https://www.epravda.com.ua/rus/news/2019/11/22/654052/>.

<sup>188</sup> Naumenko, 15.

<sup>189</sup> Naftogaz group, “Ukraine’s GTS can compete with new pipelines if EU rules are applied fairly to Gazprom”, viewed on 2023 January 1<sup>st</sup>, <https://www.naftogaz.com/en/news/ukrainska-gts-zdatna-konkuruvaty-z-bud-yakymy-potokamy-pry-chesnomu-zastosuvanni-pravyl-es-do-gazpromu-yuriy-vitrenko>.

<sup>190</sup> Экономическая правда, “Украинские компании готовят тестовые поставки газа в Европу — СМИ”, viewed on 2023 January 1<sup>st</sup>, <https://www.epravda.com.ua/rus/news/2019/01/28/644722/>.

transported through its territory since this was needed to develop further and implement gas transit reforms. Before finalizing trilateral negotiations on gas transit, Minister of Energy and Environmental Protection of Ukraine Oleksiy Orzhel stressed: “<...> we will defend the interests of Ukrainians. <...> get a fair payment for gas transit and ensure energy security in the region. Every final consumer will benefit from this because the continuation of the contract for gas transit will contribute to stability in the market and, consequently, to a gas price decrease”<sup>191</sup>. Moreover, Naftogaz emphasized the long-term benefits for the Ukrainian people if the government succeeds to reach a trilateral agreement: “<...> we are saying that our strategy is affordable energy, the energy that Ukrainians can afford <...> this means we have to contribute to reducing the prices on the gas market <...> we need money for the Ukrainian budget so that the budget can increase civil servants' salaries, pensions and, in general, stimulate economic growth so that Ukrainians become wealthy <...> the market price will be lower and energy, especially gas, will be more accessible to them”<sup>192</sup>. These statements strongly support the first hypothesis underlining the benefits for consumers and the state, which can be expressed in financial terms to stimulate economic growth, budget revenues, and citizens' quality of life. Since Ukraine's government was convincing the audience that fair transit payment would decrease the gas price as was promised from the beginning of the disputes. And Naftogaz has further elaborated on the revenues from the transit and the affordable gas price for Ukrainians to increase the accessibility of gas. This is a sufficient basis to justify the first hypothesis.

As a result of the trilateral talks, Ukraine, Russia, and the European Union signed a new five-year contract on 2019 December 30<sup>th</sup>. The minimum guaranteed transit volume is 65 billion cubic meters of gas for 2020 and 40 billion cubic meters for the next four years until 2024. At the same time, the actual volumes may be higher. The agreement is signed on a “pump or pay” basis, which sets a minimum volume of gas to be paid for each year, regardless of the actual transit volume. Previously, the principle was “take or pay,” which indicates either taking the gas from the supplier or paying the supplier a fine. Moreover, gas will be transited under European rules, connecting the Ukrainian GTS, Gazprom, and cross-border points<sup>193</sup>. Yet, Ukraine has received \$ 2.9 billion from Gazprom under the decision of the Stockholm Arbitration. As a result, it has secured a fully operational Ukrainian gas transit infrastructure and an income of around \$2-3 billion annually for the

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<sup>191</sup> Cabinet of Ministers, “Trilateral gas transit talks will continue in Minsk”, Government portal, viewed on 2023 January 2<sup>nd</sup>, <https://www.kmu.gov.ua/en/news/tristoronni-peregovori-shchodo-transportuvannya-gazu-prodovzhatsya-sogodni-u-minsku>.

<sup>192</sup> NV Бизнес, “Генерал газового фронта. Юрий Витренко объясняет, почему газ — это политика”, NV Бизнес, viewed on 2023 January 7<sup>th</sup>, <https://biz.nv.ua/markets/general-gazovogo-fronta-yuriy-vitrenko-obyasnyayet-pochemu-gaz-eto-politika-i-uveryaet-cto-nikogda-ne-poydet-50057069.html>.

<sup>193</sup> Naftogaz group, “Naftogaz, GTSOU and Gazprom signed a set of agreements to ensure Russian gas transit over the next five years”, viewed on 2023 January 2<sup>nd</sup>, <https://www.naftogaz.com/en/news/naftogaz-gtsou-and-gazprom-signed-a-set-of-agreements-to-ensure-russian-gas-transit-over-the-next-five-years>.



next five years, with an option to extend the contract for another ten years on similar terms. The government has admitted that these are acceptable terms of the agreement based on the priorities of Ukraine's energy security and the welfare of the Ukrainian people. After concluding trilateral talks Minister Oleksiy Orzhel concluded: *“in signing this document, we were guided by the priorities of Ukraine's energy security and the well-being of our people <...> Ukraine will maintain stability in the domestic and European gas markets <...> this will be a significant factor towards reducing gas prices”*<sup>194</sup>. Ukraine has maintained stability in the domestic and European gas markets, positively impacting important factors contributing to lower gas prices. Certainty over future gas transit creates the necessary environment for the continuity of the domestic gas market, while wider energy reforms ensure future contracts with the Ukrainian industry to maintain the Ukrainian gas transmission system. Accordingly, transit through Ukraine will be continued as a certified independent operator would operate it. This demonstrates Ukraine's reliability as a transit partner for the EU.

Thus, the dynamics of the public debate to maintain transit derive from Ukraine's interest in reducing gas prices and making resources accessible and affordable for Ukrainians. It also underlines the need to diversify its gas resources to ensure stable transit and infrastructure and maintain its reputation as a reliable transit country. Emphasizing the signing agreement on gas transit and stabilization of the situation, Minister Oleksiy Orzhel stressed: *“it made it possible to reduce prices for our Ukrainian citizens <...> a record low gas price as we have managed to settle the situation on the gas market possible due to the signing of the agreement on gas transit”*<sup>195</sup>. Thus, the main narrative of ensuring low gas prices for consumers persuades the audience, since a strong causal link between the transit agreement and the resulting benefits for consumers supports the first hypothesis. However, government elites are interested in transit securitization maintenance and reinforcing the securitizing movement's dynamic by emphasizing the need to become independent from Russian gas<sup>196</sup>. The narrative elaborating on the second hypothesis will be further discussed in the following section since achieving independence remains relevant as Ukraine has not successfully implemented all its gas sector reforms as planned.

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<sup>194</sup> Cabinet of Ministers, “Ukraine has concluded a new contract on gas transit to Europe”, Government portal, viewed on 2023 January 2<sup>nd</sup>, <https://www.kmu.gov.ua/en/news/zag-ukrayina-uklala-novij-kontrakt-shchodo-tranzitu-gazu-do-yevropi>.

<sup>195</sup> Cabinet of Ministers, “Oleksiy Orzhel: Gas price in February will be reduced”, Government portal, viewed on 2023 January 2<sup>nd</sup>, <https://www.kmu.gov.ua/en/news/cina-na-gaz-u-lyutomu-bude-menshoyu-oleksij-orzhel>.

<sup>196</sup> Cabinet of Ministers, “Own gas production is a step towards Ukraine's energy independence”, Government portal, viewed on 2023 January 2<sup>nd</sup>, <https://www.kmu.gov.ua/en/news/premyer-ministr-vidobutok-vlasnogo-gazu-ce-krok-na-shlyahu-do-energetichnoyi-nezalezhnosti-ukrayini>.

#### 4. 4. 2. Moving towards independence 2020-2021

Ukraine and Russia may appear to have stabilized their gas relations until 2024, but many issues related to the transit of Ukrainian gas remain unresolved and still challenging the region's energy security. In addition, 2020 was a year of *force majeure* and unusual for many countries and energy industries. The backdrop of COVID-19 has led Ukraine to reduce production and rethink its economic situation and management of its key energy resources. This means that Ukraine, providing gas transit to Europe, had to consider new trends and adapt quickly. Underlining the success of cooperation with the EU, the Prime Minister of Ukraine, Denis Shmyhal, stressed: “<...> we have record-breaking volumes of gas <...> we have made a breakthrough step by setting market gas prices for the population <...> together we will continue to carry out the necessary work and strengthen the energy independence of Ukraine”<sup>197</sup>.

In 2020, Gazprom reduced transit through Ukraine by 38% to 55.8 bcm compared to 89.6 bcm in 2019<sup>198</sup>. This was the lowest in the last 30 years. Even in 2014, when Gazprom made every effort to reduce gas supplies to the EU to prevent the reverse gas flow from Europe to Ukraine, transit reached 62 bcm. However, the volume of gas transported from Europe to Ukraine raised to 15.9 bcm in 2020 compared to 14.2 bcm in 2019<sup>199</sup>. The main factors behind the decline in transit volumes to Europe have been the start-up of bypass pipelines in Southern Europe and the reduced demand for natural gas in the EU. Thus, despite US sanctions against ‘Nord Stream 2’, the pipeline launch was still very probable<sup>200</sup>. Therefore, even after starting its successful integration into the European energy market, Ukraine has had to re-address emerging threats and consider the issue of transit security to accelerate the further synchronization of Ukraine's energy system and markets with the EU. However, even though the government succeeded in securing an optimal price and transport infrastructure, the physical availability of natural gas supplies still needed to be ensured to maintain the security of Ukraine's gas transmission system. Prime Minister Denis Shmyhal has noted that: “Ukraine has a huge potential for increasing gas production and efficient use of infrastructure <...> creating sufficient demand for new gas production and exploration <...> it is a step towards achieving energy

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<sup>197</sup> Cabinet of Ministers, *Own gas production*.

<sup>198</sup> UA Transmission System Operator, “In 2020, the transit of gas to Europe by the Ukrainian GTS amounted to 55.8 billion cubic meters, and gas transportation from Europe to Ukraine amounted to 15.9 billion cubic meters”, Tsoua, viewed on 2023 January 2<sup>nd</sup>, <https://tsoua.com/en/news/in-2020-the-transit-of-gas-to-europe-by-the-ukrainian-gts-amounted-to-55-8-billion-cubic-meters-gas-transportation-from-europe-to-ukraine-amounted-to-15-9-billion-cubic-meters/>.

<sup>199</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>200</sup> Reuters, “U.S. imposes Nord Stream 2 sanctions; opponents say they won't halt project”, Reuters, viewed on 2023 January 3<sup>rd</sup>, <https://www.reuters.com/world/us-issues-nord-stream-2-related-sanctions-russians-blinken-2021-08-20/>.



*independence of the state*”<sup>201</sup>. Therefore, this statement supports the second hypothesis, which is the need to be independent of Russian gas and to find other options to meet the needs of domestic and foreign markets. If Ukraine fails to develop domestic production and meet its needs sufficiently, it is unlikely to be able to ensure gas sector competitiveness and independence. The uninterrupted supply of gas to Europe through Ukraine's gas transportation system is therefore linked to the national security interests of ensuring sustainable energy development and other national interests such as the sovereignty and independence of the state.

While one of the optimistic objectives was to increase domestic gas production successfully, Ukraine also considered alternative ways to use the GTS. In 2021 February 5<sup>th</sup>, the Ukrainian government announced that Ukraine had chosen the European Green Deal strategy and is ready for the challenges of a green transition and decarbonization of the economy<sup>202</sup>. As part of its decarbonization plan, the EU is actively developing carbon-neutral gas, and Ukraine could take place among Europe's suppliers of such resources<sup>203</sup>. At best, the growing demand for a range of low-carbon gases such as biogas, biomethane, and hydrogen could lead to increased EU – Ukraine energy cooperation. These types of gas can technically be supplied through existing pipelines without major modernization. Thus, Ukraine needs to define the market model for a decarbonized gas production cycle, including domestic production and transit and the technological features of exploiting new resources. Addressing the path to the EU and Green Deal initiative in Ukraine, Denis Shmyhal stated that: *“Ukraine is now at the crossroads between regulated and market energy sector <...> this applies to the gas market <...> this is the basis of Ukraine’s environmental policy <...> a crucial project and concern for the future of our country”*<sup>204</sup>. This justifies that Ukraine's independence efforts have further escalated its integration into Europe, with the consideration of the future transit of environment-friendly gas. However, the Ukrainian government is focused on protecting the interests of consumers by keeping gas prices low and ensuring physical supply, and demand for low-carbon gas in Ukraine is likely to be low due to the relatively high costs of producing such gas. Since Ukraine’s energy market is not so developed, the acceptability of environment-friendly gas still lacks

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<sup>201</sup> Cabinet of Ministers, “Denys Shmyhal: Increasing gas production and achieving energy independence is an important priority for the Government”, viewed on 2023 January 3<sup>rd</sup>, <https://www.kmu.gov.ua/en/news/denis-shmigal-naroshchennya-gazovidobutku-j-dosyagnennya-energetichnoyi-nezalezhnosti-vazhlivij-prioritet-dlya-uryadu>.

<sup>202</sup> Cabinet of Ministers, “Ukraine has chosen the European Green Deal strategy”, Government portal, viewed on 2023 January 3<sup>rd</sup>, <https://www.kmu.gov.ua/en/news/premyer-ministr-ukrayina-obrala-strategiyu-yevropejskogo-zelenogo-kursu>.

<sup>203</sup> UA Transmission System Operator, “To biomethane producers: particularities of connecting to GTS and GDS”, Tsoua, viewed on 2023 January 3<sup>rd</sup>, <https://tsoua.com/en/news/to-biomethane-producers-particularities-of-connecting-to-gts-and-gds/>.

<sup>204</sup> Cabinet of Ministers, “Denys Shmyhal: In 2023, Ukraine's energy system will be integrated with the European system”, Government portal, viewed on 2023 January 3<sup>rd</sup>, <https://www.kmu.gov.ua/en/news/denis-shmigal-u-2023-roci-energetichna-sistema-ukrayini-bude-integrovana-z-yevropejskoyu>.

support. But the prices for these energy sources may be more affordable in the EU, and the nature of low-carbon gas is more relevant for the EU than it is for Ukrainian consumers.

Thus, in every crisis and challenge, there is a prospect to prepare for different future scenarios and ensure Ukraine's energy security and the protection of national interests. For this reason, Ukraine's government has adopted the *Energy Security Strategy for the period up to 2025*, emphasizing threats and scenarios for changes in the energy sector<sup>205</sup>. Ukraine's gas transport system has proven its reliability of uninterrupted transit, and that is the only reliable route not controlled by Gazprom. Earlier gas supplies to Europe were interrupted because of a deliberate Russian decision to cut off supplies, not because of technical problems in the Ukrainian transmission system. The resilience of Ukraine's infrastructure is determined by the large number of redundant facilities that can easily move traffic from one route to another and maintain transit continuity. Moreover, in outlining the threats that 'Nord Stream 2' could pose to regional energy security, Ukraine's government affirmed: "*we hope to preserve Ukraine's status as a supplier and transit country of natural gas to the European Union and to confirm the use of the Ukrainian GTS with the necessary volumes <...> we will integrate Ukrainian energy system into the European energy system until 2023 <...> give Ukraine real energy independence and the opportunity to separate from the energy systems of Russia <...> we are interested in starting joint production and transit of hydrogen to Germany and Europe*"<sup>206</sup>. Ukraine has also sought long-term cooperation with NATO on energy security to protect its assets and resources further<sup>207</sup>. NATO and the EU were seen to build on the momentum of Ukraine's transit security by helping Ukraine to become energy independent and by contributing to the energy security of their member states.

Thus, securitizing actors continued convincing the audience that the threat was as ominous, but the government has proposed alternatives to prevent the potential threats. In 2021, government actors did not have to negotiate with audiences about the existence of transit security issues. This phase of Ukrainian society had already passed at the beginning of the 2014 war, and it was particularly intensified in 2016 with the Russian 'Nord Stream 2' project to bypass Ukrainian transit. The context of these utterances justifies the second hypothesis, as the weakness of Ukrainian GTS lies in the dependence on Russian gas, and the alternative is to integrate into the EU gas system, diversifying the gas or starting new production of environmental-friendly gas to maintain Ukraine's transit.

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<sup>205</sup> Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, *Energy Security Strategy for the period up to 2025*, 8.

<sup>206</sup> Cabinet of Ministers, "Synchronization with ENTSO-E will allow Ukraine to separate from the energy systems of Russia", Government portal, viewed on 2023 January 3<sup>rd</sup>, <https://www.kmu.gov.ua/en/news/sinhronizaciya-z-entso-e-dozvolit-ukrayini-vidokremitisya-vid-energosisistem-rf-ta-bilorusi-denis-shmigal-na-zustrichi-z-angeloyu-merkel>.

<sup>207</sup> Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, *Energy Security Strategy for the period up to 2025*, 10.

However, it was also believed that gas transit guarantees that Russia would not invade Ukraine. Naftogaz has stressed that it would be more difficult to start a war with the Russian gas passing through Ukraine because then gas supplies would be affected<sup>208</sup>. But with the outbreak of the war, it became clear that these expectations were unfounded.

**Table 3 Results of the gas transit securitization**

<b>Time</b>	<b>Securitization act (citation)</b>	<b>Securitizing actor</b>	<b>Supports H1 or H2</b>
2014	<i>&lt;...&gt; Ukrainian economy should not pay such a gas price. It is a political price.</i>	Minister of Energy Yuriy Prodan	H1
2014	<i>&lt;...&gt; either we agree with Gazprom to keep the price &lt;...&gt; or we agree with European companies paying directly for our services for the transit of gas.</i>	Naftogaz	H1
2015	<i>&lt;...&gt; at the market price we primarily buy from our European partners &lt;...&gt; this is cheaper and more efficient.</i>	Prime Minister Arseniy Yatsenyuk	H1
2015	<i>&lt;...&gt; we have shown that we can provide uninterrupted transit regardless of whether gas is supplied to Ukraine or not.</i>	Naftogaz	H2
2016	<i>&lt;...&gt; Ukraine does not buy gas from Russia because it buys it in the European Union at a less price &lt;...&gt;.</i>	Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine	H1
2016	<i>&lt;...&gt; due to the pipeline 'Nord Stream 2', the Ukrainian economy will suffer losses of 3 billion dollars a year &lt;...&gt; if 'Nord Stream 2' is completed, there will be no transit through Ukraine &lt;...&gt;.</i>	Naftogaz	H1
2017	<i>&lt;...&gt; Ukraine should be a transit country. And we will not just be a transit country – we will increase our gas production &lt;...&gt; Ukraine will be energy independent &lt;...&gt;.</i>	Prime Minister Volodymyr Groysman	H2
2018	<i>Europeans should buy Russian gas on the eastern, rather than on the western &lt;...&gt; and Ukraine should provide high-quality transit services to the European Union rather than to Russia.</i>	President of Ukraine Petro Poroshenko	H2
2019	<i>&lt;...&gt; we will defend the interests of Ukrainians, get a fair payment for gas transit and ensure energy security in the region.</i>	Minister of Energy Oleksiy Orzhel	H1
2019	<i>&lt;...&gt; we are saying that our strategy is affordable energy, the energy that Ukrainians can afford &lt;...&gt; gas, will be more accessible to them.</i>	Naftogaz	H1

<sup>208</sup> Sebastian Zimmermann, "What is Nord Stream 2 and how does it link to the Russia-Ukraine crisis?", Euronews: my Europe, viewed on 2023 January 4<sup>th</sup>, <https://www.euronews.com/my-europe/2022/01/24/what-is-nord-stream-2-and-how-does-it-link-to-the-russia-ukraine-crisis>.

2020	<i>&lt;...&gt; we will continue to carry out the necessary work and strengthen the energy independence of Ukraine.</i>	Prime Minister Denis Shmyhal	H2
2021	<i>We hope to preserve Ukraine's status as a supplier and transit country of natural gas &lt;...&gt; give Ukraine real energy independence and the opportunity to separate from the energy systems of Russia.</i>	Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine	H2

*Created by author.*

The underlying framework for gas transit security is the issue of energy security, on which securitizing actors conducted a speech. Table 3 provides summarized results of the gas transit securitization, which shows the dynamics of political discourse and the main arguments used to persuade the audience.

## CONCLUSIONS

By analyzing Ukraine's gas sector and events after 2014, this thesis affirms that Russian aggression has led to the securitization of the gas sector. The role and magnitude of the Russian threat to energy security, in particular to the security of the gas sector, has been highlighted in the political discourse and has influenced the political processes in the country. However, this study does not focus on the securitization of the entire energy or gas sector in Ukraine but on a specific part of the securitization process – the securitization of gas transit. This raises an interesting question of how 'the gas transit' became a securitized issue since maintaining gas transit may contradict another important securitization objective of reducing dependence on Gazprom.

For this purpose, securitization theory draws attention to the speech acts of securitizing actors who openly talk about security and perform so-called securitizing moves, and claim to use extraordinary measures to convince the audience of the existence of a threat to the referent object. Combined with energy security theory, this approach leads to a detailed analysis of the speech acts made by the securitizing actors – i.e., Ukrainian authorities and Naftogaz representatives. The analysis helps understand how the Ukrainian audience was persuaded of the need to reduce gas imports from Russia on the one hand but maintain gas transit on the other. Therefore, to accurately analyze the process and dynamics of gas transit securitization in the period 2014 – 2021, two hypotheses were raised:

H1: Ukraine's gas transit securitization was emphasized through the need to ensure low and stable gas prices for consumers.

H2: Ukraine's gas transit was securitized, emphasizing the need to reduce gas supply dependence on Gazprom by maintaining the ability to import gas from abroad.

The narratives of the analysis provided a basis for highlighting the logic of these hypotheses. Russia's invasion in 2014 triggered a gas crisis, as Russia not only annexed Crimea, but Gazprom also nationalized the gas company Chernomorneftegaz. This was the beginning of the securitization of the gas sector since Ukraine chose a pro-Western stance instead of major gas discounts from Russia. Therefore, Russia has continued to use gas supplies and transit as a weapon to put pressure on Ukraine and to achieve its political goals. As a result, Russia sought to remain an important gas supplier to Europe, while Ukraine has sought to maintain its status as a gas transit country but cut off gas supplies from Russia. Analyzing gas transit issues, the speech acts of securitizing actors revealed two main directions. State officials have stressed the need for "cheap gas" or a reduction in gas prices

to make gas affordable and stable for consumers, which could be achieved if Ukraine maintains transit revenues. In contrast, Naftogaz has been more concerned with securing gas supply and transit, by diversifying its gas supply through reverse flows from the EU. As an immediate cut-off from Russian gas flow to and via Ukraine could potentially create a supply shortage in the EU (especially, in states bordering Ukraine) and minimize the ability of Ukraine to get gas from the EU countries at affordable prices. While the focus in 2014 was more on price negotiations, it has become clear that Russia and Ukraine have completely different approaches to transit security.

The Ukraine government had focused on affordable prices and uninterrupted gas transit. To achieve these objectives, extreme measures had to be taken. In 2015 government accelerated further integration into the EU gas markets and liberalization of the domestic gas market. The dynamics of the narrative suggest that by diversifying gas from the EU, Ukraine has sought to demonstrate that it can reduce gas dependence on Russian gas but remain a reliable transit partner. However, as Russian gas continued to transit through Ukraine, reverse flows to the EU were covered by transit fees. Thus, significant revenues decreased the overall cost of gas imports. In this analysis phase, the securitizing actors convinced the audience to buy gas from the EU at market prices. Since this would allow gradual direct import reduction from Russia. As a result, Ukraine's choice between Russia and the EU has intensified transit securitization. The discourse analysis suggests that both hypotheses were valid in this phase. Ukraine needed to ensure available gas sources at affordable prices, and adapting infrastructure to the EU was taken as an extreme measure.

In parallel, Russia had started building the '*Nord Stream 2*' gas pipeline to bypass Ukraine's gas transit completely. Ukrainian government officials emphasized that '*Nord Stream 2*' causes a threat to the national and energy security of Ukraine and the member states of the EU. Securitization of gas transit was intensified as it was interpreted as another extension of Russian aggression to dominate the EU market without Ukraine's transit. At a geopolitical level, Ukraine aimed to remain a powerful energy player in the EU market, questioning the purposes of '*Nord Stream 2*' project'. On the economic side, Ukraine has stressed that it will lose significant revenues from transit fees, weakening its strategic energy position and calling into question the survival of Ukraine's entire gas transmission infrastructure. It would further increase Russia's role in the region and the EU's dependence on Russian gas. As a result, Ukraine would lose its gas transit security entirely. This part of the analysis has highlighted the main components of Ukraine's gas transit vulnerability and provided a solid basis for further discourse analysis.

The events during 2017 – 2019 clarified that securitizing actors recognized that independence could be achieved through integration into the European energy market. On the contrary, the Ukrainian government and Naftogaz were still focused on the strategic objective of securing transit revenues for Russian gas transported through its territory. Dynamics of discourse have revealed that the main argument used by Ukraine's government to securitize gas transit was the need to ensure affordable prices for Ukrainian consumers. In addition, Naftogaz's rhetoric has undergone an important shift, from reducing its dependence on Gazprom by diversifying its gas supplies through EU reverse flow to ensuring low gas prices and long-term benefits for the citizens of Ukraine. The rhetoric on affordable gas prices, or the need to reduce them, has been particularly strong in the run-up to the 2019 transit agreement. The interests of Ukrainians were given high consideration, noting that transit revenues will bring money into the budget, boosting economic growth and increasing wages for Ukrainians. Accordingly, there is a causal link between the main narrative and the transit agreement since the actors persuade the audience to decrease gas prices to provide personal benefits to customers. This narrative has validated the first hypothesis.

Independence from Russian gas has played a secondary role in the securitization process until 2019, as the need for affordable gas prices has been emphasized more often. But once an agreement has been reached, securitizing actors strongly focused on strengthening Ukraine's energy independence. Reinforcing the securitizing movement dynamic by emphasizing the need to become independent from Russian gas and accelerate integration into the EU market. From 2020 to 2021, the Ukrainian government has sought to increase domestic production or look for alternative environmentally-friendly gas ways to ensure transit security. The context of the government statements has emphasized the huge potential of Ukraine to reduce dependence on Russian gas while maintaining gas transit by further integration into the EU to strengthen Ukraine's and the EU's energy independence. It gave a strong basis to validate the second hypothesis.

The theory of securitization combined with energy security analysis allowed the efficient explanation of the gas transit security transformation that has taken place in Ukraine after Russian aggression since 2014. Political communication dynamics have drawn attention to transit security issues, which directly supports the claim that transit has become securitized. This study showed how securitizing actors convinced the audience that even though gas transit is a security issue, Ukraine needs to maintain a gas transit state and ensure affordable prices. Thus, answering the main question of the thesis, this study has shown that the two hypotheses have been confirmed.

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## SUMMARY

**The title of the Master's thesis** – 2014 – 2021 energy security transition in Ukraine: the case of gas transit sector. The link between the 2014 war and Ukraine's need to minimize dependence on the Russian gas supply caused a dilemma, as Ukraine sought to maintain gas transit from Russia to the EU. This Master's thesis analyses Ukraine's gas transit securitization process and its dynamics in political debate to the public accessing genuine reasons "why" gas transit must be securitized.

**The problem of the thesis.** Ukraine's gas sector has been highly securitized and required serious reforms, suggesting extraordinary measures to reduce dependence on the Russian gas supply while attempting to maintain its status as a gas transit country. From the perspective of securitization, the gas sector, and transit issues and suggested emergency measures were more politicized than properly dealt with. As securitization theory suggests, a successful securitization process involves persuading the audience (society) that a certain issue must be included in the security agenda and should be solved by extraordinary measures. However, there is not yet clear how 'the gas transit' became a securitized issue in Ukraine, especially as it could be seen in contradiction with another direction of securitization – the issue of dependence on the Russian gas supply.

**The problem of the research:** How the securitization of the gas transit was persuaded to the audience in explaining the urgency to make it a security issue?

To answer the research question to two hypotheses has been raised:

**H1:** Ukraine's gas transit securitization was emphasized through the *need to ensure low and stable gas prices for consumers*.

**H2:** Ukraine's gas transit was securitized emphasizing the need to reduce gas supply dependence on Gazprom by maintaining the ability to import gas from abroad.

To analyze the gas transit securitization process in 2014 – 2021 following tasks of the thesis were formulated:

1. To review the academic literature and the main aspects revealing Ukraine's gas sector security issues and dependence on Russia's influence.
2. To present the main features of securitization and energy security theoretical approaches.
3. To analyze circumstances that increased awareness of Ukraine's gas transit and energy security issues.
4. To analyze 2014-2021 Ukraine's government officials' statements and strategical documents revealing reasons and discourse on the securitizing gas sector, especially the gas transit issue.

In order to explain the reasons for securitizing gas transit, the securitization theory and energy security theory has been combined and formed an interpretive framework. The success of securitization depends on the securitizing actor's ability to convince the audience. For this reason, the analysis was based on speech acts performed by Ukraine's government authorities and representatives of a gas Naftogaz.

The political discourse has provided the basis for highlighting the logic of hypotheses. The securitization dynamics emphasized the gas sector relations between Russia and Ukraine. In the emergency of the gas crisis, Ukraine's government emphasized the need to ensure low and stable prices for the customers. At the same time, Naftogaz stressed the need to reduce the dependence on Russian gas. Extreme measures have been taken to achieve these objectives by cooperating with the EU to reduce dependence and gas prices. The discourse validating the first hypothesis was predominant till 2019. It also revealed a shift in Naftogaz rhetorics emphasizing the need ensure low gas prices and long-term benefits for the citizens of Ukraine. As Ukraine reached the transit agreement, the dynamics of the discourse validated the second hypothesis as securitizing actors focused on the huge potential of Ukraine to reduce dependence on Russian gas while maintaining gas transit by further integration into the EU.

The results of the in-depth political debate on the security of gas transit revealed how security actors convinced the audience to maintain gas transit, even though it was a significant security issue. Answering the main question of the thesis, this study has shown that the two hypotheses have been confirmed.

## SANTRAUKA

**Magistro darbo pavadinimas** – 2014 – 2021 energetinio saugumo transformacija Ukrainoje: dujų tranzito sektoriaus atvejis.

Po 2014 metų karo Ukrainoje išryškėjo poreikis mažinti priklausomybę nuo Rusijos dujų importo. Tai sukėlė dilemą Ukrainos dujų sektoriuje, kadangi Ukraina siekė išlaikyti dujų tranzitą iš Rusijos į Europos Sąjungos šalis. Šiame magistro darbe analizuojamas Ukrainos dujų tranzito saugumizavimo procesas ir jo dinamika politinėse diskusijose, siekiant suprasti tikrąsias priežastis kaip buvo siekiama įtikinti auditoriją dėl poreikio saugumizuoti dujų tranzitą.

Tyrimo problema. Ukrainos dujų sektorius buvo saugumizuotas ir dėl to reikėjo rimtų reformų, siūlant imtis nepaprastųjų priemonių, kad būtų sumažinta priklausomybė nuo Rusijos dujų importo, bet kartu bandant išlaikyti dujų tranzito šalies statusą. Remiantis saugumizacijos teorija dujų sektoriaus ir tranzito klausimas bei siūlomos nepaprastosios priemonės buvo labiau politizuojami, nei tinkamai sprendžiami. Saugumizacijos teorija teigia, kad sėkmingas saugumizavimo procesas apima auditorijos (visuomenės) įtikinimą, siekiant, kad tam tikras klausimas turi būti įtrauktas į saugumo darbotvarkę ir būtų sprendžiamas taikant nepaprastąsias priemones. Tačiau nėra aišku, kaip „dujų tranzitas“ buvo saugumizuotas, kadangi tranzito saugumizavimas prieštarauja kitai saugumizavimo kryptiai – priklausomybės nuo Rusijos dujų tiekimo.

**Tyrimo klausimas:** Kaip buvo bandoma įtikinti auditoriją, kad dujų tranzitas turi būti saugumizuotas?

Siekiant atsakyti į tyrimo klausimą, buvo iškeltos dvi hipotezės:

H1: Ukrainos dujų tranzitas buvo saugumizuotas akcentuojant poreikį užtikrinti žemas ir stabilias kainas vartotojams.

H2: Ukrainos dujų tranzitas buvo saugumizuotas akcentuojant poreikį sumažinti dujų tiekimo priklausomybę nuo "Gazprom", išlaikant galimybę importuoti dujas iš užsienio.

Siekiant išanalizuoti dujų tranzito saugumizavimo procesą ir raidą 2014-2021 metais, buvo suformuluoti šie darbo uždaviniai:

1. Apžvelgti mokslinę literatūrą ir pagrindinius aspektus, atskleidžiančius Ukrainos dujų sektoriaus saugumo problemas ir priklausomybę nuo Rusijos įtakos.
2. Pristatyti pagrindinius saugumizacijos ir energetinio saugumo teorinių požiūrių bruožus.
3. Išanalizuoti aplinkybes, padidinusias Ukrainos dujų tranzito ir energetinio saugumo problemų supratimą.
4. Išanalizuoti 2014-2021 metų Ukrainos valdžios pareigūnų pareiškimus ir strateginius dokumentus, atskleidžiančius dujų sektoriaus, ypač dujų tranzito klausimo, saugumizavimo priežastis ir diskursą.

Siekiant išanalizuoti dujų tranzito saugumizavimo priežastis buvo apjungtos saugumizavimo ir energetinio saugumo teorijos ir sudarytas tyrimo rėmas. Sėkmingas problemos saugumizavimas priklauso nuo saugumizuojančio veikėjo sugebėjimo įtikinti auditoriją. Dėl šios priežasties buvo analizuojami Ukrainos vyriausybės atstovų ir „Naftogaz“ dujų kompanijos atstovų saugumizuojantys kalbos aktai.

Dujų tranzito saugumizavimo diskursas suteikė pagrindą pabrėžti hipotezių logiką. Saugumizacijos dinamika atskleidė Rusijos ir Ukrainos santykių pokytį dėl dujų sektoriaus klausimų. Kilus dujų krizei, Ukrainos vyriausybė pabrėžė būtinybę užtikrinti žemas ir stabilias kainas vartotojams. O „Naftogaz“ pabrėžė būtinybę mažinti priklausomybę nuo Rusiškų dujų, bet išlaikyti galimybę importuoti dujas iš užsienio. Šiems tikslams pasiekti buvo imtasi nepaprastųjų priemonių – skatinti bendradarbiavimą su ES ir diversifikuoti dujas. Pirmąją hipotezę patvirtinantis diskursas vyravo iki 2019 metų. Jis taip pat atskleidė "Naftogaz" retorikos pokyčius, pabrėžiančius poreikį užtikrinti mažas dujų kainas ir ilgalaikę naudą Ukrainos piliečiams. 2019 metais, Ukrainai pasiekus tranzito susitarimą, pasikeitusi diskurso dinamika patvirtino antrąją hipotezę, kadangi saugumizuojantys aktoriai sutelkė dėmesį į didžiulį Ukrainos potencialą sumažinti priklausomybę nuo Rusijos dujų ir kartu išlaikyti dujų tranzitą toliau integruojantis į ES.

Išsami politinių debatų analizė siekiant saugumizuoti dujų tranzitą, atskleidė, kaip saugumo veikėjai įtikinėjo auditoriją išlaikyti dujų tranzitą, nors tai buvo svarbi saugumo problema. Atsakant į pagrindinį disertacijos klausimą, šis tyrimas parodė, kad abi hipotezės pasitvirtino.