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# The energy dimension of the EU Eastern Partnership initiative in restructuring Europe's security architecture

This article analyses the energy dimension of relationships which have been developed between the 'Eastern Partnership' (EaP) partner countries within the context of European security. The essence of the EaP and the main priorities of the initiative's energy platform will be determined. The peculiarities of their relations with the European Union and the Russian federation will be analysed. One discovery which has been made is the fact that the involvement of the addressee countries within the EaP grants them significant advantages in the implementation of the overall energy policy, and the EU is understood by them as being a guarantor of energy security. Emphasis is placed on the fact that Russia seeks to establish the fullest possible levels of control over energy supplies which are sent to Europe, and to the EU, and indeed even to reduce the dependence of the EaP partner countries on energy imports from Russia. Something which became obvious was the fact that while Georgia, Armenia, Moldova, and Ukraine were forming closer ties with the EU, Azerbaijan and Belarus on the contrary continued (and continue) to adhere to the authoritarian status quo. From this it can be concluded that the EaP partner countries face new challenges and threats, both in terms of domestic and foreign policy, which will determine the transformation of energy relations, in particular within the dimension of security.

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## Introduction

Within the context of global international cooperation, the development of multilateral directions when it comes to international cooperation, with these directions currently being pursued by the European Union (EU), serve to provide a special place for the union's energy policy. Its implementation is taking place through the EU's interaction with other international players. One of the practical manifestations of this international interaction is the provision of a solution for energy problems within one of the thematic platforms of the EU's Eastern Partnership (EaP) initiative. Such energy needs demonstrate the process of transformation in the EU's Eastern European policy towards the three Eastern European countries: Ukraine, Belarus, and Moldova, plus a number of other countries in the southern Caucasus region: Georgia, Armenia, and Azerbaijan, which since 2009 have been partner countries of the Eastern Partnership.

The involvement of six post-Soviet countries in terms of energy cooperation with the EU is something which is due to geopolitical changes in international relations. Energy relations are becoming politicised, and energy resources are being used as a tool for political manipulation. This inevitably leads to conflict rhetoric between nations, while also exacerbating political contradictions and threatening international or regional stability and security. Therefore the energy challenge is now highly relevant not only for national systems but also for the European security system as a whole.

It is important to note that current international trends have made significant adjustments to the EaP's agenda. Firstly, there was Russia's military aggression against Ukraine, and then also the Russian occupation of the autonomous republic of Crimea, which led to contradictions in the positions of EU member states due to their differing levels of energy dependence upon Russia. At the same time, Kiev's official efforts have intensified in terms of ensuring energy security and integration into the EU's energy union. Secondly, mass protests and demonstrations took place in Belarus following the successful and highly controversial re-election of the president of Belarus in 2020, an act which violated the peculiar hybrid form of integration for this country in terms of its relations with the EU and Russia. On the one hand, the EU supports the protest movement in Belarus, while on the other hand, Belarus' total energy dependence on Russia may provoke more aggressive actions by the latter. In addition, and in response to EU sanctions, Belarus has suspended its participation in the EaP and is launching a procedure to terminate the 'Readmission Agreement' with the EU. These facts especially emphasise the integration of the interests of the country's political regime

with the interests of the Russian federation, while also serving to increase the energy dependence of Belarus. Thirdly, Moldova's foreign policy has changed with the coming-to-power of Maya Sandu, who seeks to bring the country out of international isolation, strengthen relations with the EU, and reform the country in accordance with the 'Association Agreement', particularly in the energy sector. Fourthly, following the occupation of part of Georgia by the Russian federation in 2008, that aggressor country still remains an existential threat to this southern Caucasus state. Therefore, within the EaP, Georgia needs additional security guarantees from the EU in order to be able to achieve its energy goals. Fifthly, there has been a recent escalation of the military confrontation between Armenia and Azerbaijan over Nagorno-Karabakh. It is worth noting that important energy infrastructure is concentrated in the region, which leads to the strengthening of measures to protect it, primarily to ensure Europe's energy security. The European Union praised the signing of an agreement in Nagorno-Karabakh regarding the ending of the war between the leaders of Armenia and Azerbaijan, mediated by Russia, on 10 November 2020. In fact, Russia and Turkey have determined the course of the war in Nagorno-Karabakh, which means that the United States and the European Union are on the geopolitical periphery. Another dangerous issue is the introduction of Russian 'peacekeepers' into the conflict region in order to consolidate new borders, an act which will certainly increase the influence of the Russian federation on the southern Caucasus. The Armenian side believes that Azerbaijan's victory marked Europe's de facto agreement with military aggression as a way in which to resolve territorial disputes, while the situation in the southern Caucasus is a threat which goes far beyond the region, instead being one which challenges Europe's security architecture.

We see that Russia plays a special role in the issue of energy security in the EaP countries. Its impact on the energy sector of EaP countries is often decisive in their choice of foreign policy guidelines. The desire of the Russian federation to preserve the EaP countries within the sphere of its strategic (imperial) aspirations serves to modify European energy relations in general, making it necessary to reformat them in accordance with new threats and challenges. Under such conditions, the EU is assigned the role of energy security regulator in the EaP countries. On the one hand, the EU focuses on the integration processes of the Eastern Partnership members and the formation of an energy community which is guided by European energy policy implementation; on the other hand, the EU opposes an energy-powerful Russia which often acts against established rules of the game. Undoubtedly, the problem of harmonising energy relations between the EU and the Russian federation in connection with the EaP partner countries certainly does set a new trend in

terms of international development.

The aim of this article is to analyse the energy dimension of the foreign policy relations for EaP partner countries as an important component of the European security system. Achieving the goal has led to a solution for tasks which aim to clarify the essence of the EaP, along with clarifying the content and main priorities of its energy platform; it also makes it possible to analyse the peculiarities of the relations of EaP countries with the EU and the Russian federation, identify potential threats and ways in which such threats can be countered, and clarify the development of the energy sector in areas in which it affects European security.

## 1. The Theoretical and Methodological Fundamentals of Research

It can be seen that energy relations are being taken under consideration where they fall within the triangle between the European Union, Russia, and the Eastern Partnership countries. The aim of this article is to analyse the energy dimension of the foreign policy relations of EaP partner countries as an important component of the European security system. The article's main research question can be summarised as follows: how do the energy relations of the EaP partner countries with the European Union and Russia change the architecture of European security?

Before proceeding to the analysis of the theoretical basis, it is necessary to outline the article's structure. The article consists of theoretical, descriptive, and analytical sections. The theoretical section illustrates the theoretical and methodological basis of the study itself. A descriptive research method represents the evolution of the EaP's energy relations with the EU and Russia. Based on the analysis of the facts which have been presented in the descriptive section, the analytical section presents the main threats to the energy security of the EaP partner countries, and ways in which such threats can be prevented, as well as potential development trajectories which include energy relations and their impact on restructuring the European security architecture.

To be able to meet the stated goal, the solution requires tasks to be carried out such as uncovering the essence of the EaP, along with the content and main priorities of its energy platform; analysing the peculiarities of their relations with the EU and Russia; forming a table of the dynamics regarding Russian gas imports to the EaP countries; and identifying potential threats, ways in which they can be countered, and pinpointing restructuring factors

which are important in terms of European security architecture.

This section will present the relevant theoretical approaches which are used in the study, while also providing an analysis of its results and recommendations. It is worth noting that we handle any consideration here of energy policy in terms of geostrategy, meaning a policy which forms a means to achieve the geopolitical goals of the involved parties. This approach, in our opinion, falls most clearly in line with the purpose of our study and will allow us to trace the geopolitical motivations and relevant energy policies of the participants who are under consideration here.

Since the period in which the gas conflict erupted between Russia and Ukraine in 2006 and 2009, a huge tranche of literature which covers international relations has approached EU-Russia energy relations as a matter of geostrategy, 'great politics', and security. This approach has led to the tendency to connect energy policy with power-related motivations by the principle participant within the international arena. Such an approach to energy relations is presented in papers by several notable authors, including Keith Smith (2010), Christophe-Alexandre Paillard (2010), Zeyno Baran (2007), Mert Bilgin (2009), Frank Umbach (2010), and Michael Bradshaw (2009).

However, it should be noted that, in the available scientific literature where international relations are concerned, and in which energy relations are considered in terms of geostrategy, this approach is often criticised. For example, Irina Kustova notes that 'energy power' is equated only with the possession of resources (Kustova, 2015), and therefore needs a better analytical and methodological justification'. Edward Stoddard (2016), who researches EU commercial diplomacy in the field of energy, where this avenue of approach aims to provide international protection for the interests of companies which belong to member states. The scholar argues that such diplomacy is carried out in parallel with strategic economic diplomacy, and therefore it includes not only the important foreign policy interests at the state level, but also those of other factors which influence energy policy (Stoddard specifies the problem as one which involves the needs of companies in EU member states). Instead, Andrew Judge et al oppose the identification of energy relations between the EU and Russia with the policy of 'big powers' (Judge et al., 2016), as this approach ignores their economic complexity while also ignoring many other non-governmental stakeholders whose interests may differ from those of governments. Tom Casier expressed a similar view which stated that any consideration of energy relations between the EU and Russia which looks at it exclusively from the point of view of geopolitics is reductionist because reducing the two sides merely to issues which revolve around 'big politics' eliminates the very complex and overly-differentiated realities which are in-

volved in energy relations (Casier, 2016).

Without denying the complexity of the realities involved in energy relations and the multiplicity of factors which serve to influence them (such as the interests of producers, consumers, and governments, along with the added complications provided by pricing mechanisms, commercial competition, and so on), in this article we focus on national participants in international relations. After all, the sphere of energy relations largely exists due to the production and transportation of energy resources. The overall umbrella of energy policy is most often viewed through the prism of the participant's ownership or ability to control energy resources, and those ways in which such resources are transported. In the energy relations between Russia and the EU, with the involvement of the EaP countries, the latter are mainly important in terms of their being transit energy resources and, therefore, are of direct interest to the energy resources being provided by the 'big players'. In addition, the EU and Russia are defending their spheres of influence and geopolitical interests vis-à-vis the EaP partner countries.

In accordance with the purpose of the study, as well as the chosen approach, we understand energy policy as a means of realising geopolitical motives. This interpretation makes it possible to determine the role and place of the EaP countries in terms of energy relations between Russia and the EU, as the energy policy of these 'big players' serves as a means of geopolitical struggle for influence over these countries.

Russia and the EU use different energy policies in order to achieve their geopolitical goals. Marco Siddi interprets this as the use of different forms of force in connection with energy relations between Russia and the EU (Siddi, 2018). The former largely follows a geopolitical approach, while the EU to a great extent adheres to the practices of a liberal market and regulatory requirements. With Russia being categorised as a user of geopolitical power in terms of its energy policy, it needs to be confirmed that geopolitical power is defined here as the ability of a nation state to establish control over national energy resources and transportation infrastructure, and to use or adapt these areas in order to achieve its foreign policy goals. This will be confirmed in the descriptive section of the article, in such areas and one which covers Russia's policy in regards to the construction of Nord Stream-2, South Stream, and Turkish Stream, an export strategy which has been adapted by Russia to offset Ukraine's strategic importance as a transit corridor and, consequently, to reduce its influence and security, and to limit European integration potential.

In contrast to Russia's geopolitical approach to energy policy, the EU uses regulatory powers, an area which can be defined as the ability to formulate, control, and enforce a set of market rules. This approach is based on

the attractiveness of a large European market for energy exporters, as well as upon the development of legislative norms which have been designed to stimulate competition. In the descriptive section of this article, the main example of this area of approach is in the EU's relations with the EaP countries in the energy dimension. The EU's strategy in this region is to use its regulatory power to create attractive conditions for the integration of transit countries from Eastern Europe and the southern Caucasus into its energy space and, consequently, political space.

Since the EaP partner countries have in fact found themselves stuck between two influential international participants, they are forced to shape their energy policy as a result, taking into account the peculiarities of the energy policies both of Russia and of the EU. Therefore attention to the above differences in terms of the approaches being employed by the EU and Russia in terms of the implementation of their energy policies is important when it comes to being able to identify the main threats which are being posed to the energy security of the EaP partner countries, and ways in which such threats can be mitigated, which is a matter which will be presented in the analytical section of this article. Russia pursues an energy policy which is contrary to EU principles when it comes to the EaP partner countries. As a result, the latter face new challenges and threats which they must resist. This greatly contributes towards the necessary restructuring of Europe's security architecture.

Under the European security architecture, forms in which relationships can be built up between key participants is understandable, with those participants being the European Union, the Russian federation, and the EaP partner countries, based on existing regulations and under the influence of exogenous and endogenous participants which serve to influence the transformation of energy security in general. This is because each of these participants, in accordance with their geopolitical and/or geoeconomic interests and foreign policy priorities, provides 'the sphere of their privileged interests' with the help of 'hard power' or 'soft power'. It should be noted that the key role of the EU in terms of the European security architecture is to guarantee 'soft security' and a timely response to 'soft threats' to EU security (Вонсович, 2015).

Ensuring 'soft' EU security, firstly, requires the EU today to focus on 'soft threats' to its security, in the form of illegal migration, terrorism, organised transnational crime, epidemics, and so on. Secondly, the EU's 'soft power' manifests itself as a force in which the economic and humanitarian instruments which exist within the EU play a key role. Thirdly, the lack of 'hard power' - namely the tools and means to support had power, unlike the case for Nato - does not allow the EU to provide 'hard security'. The main role of the EU follows from its main role in terms of its 'soft' security: the fight

against 'soft threats' with the use of that very 'soft power' (Вонсович, 2015).

Entirely differently from this, the Russian federation acts from a position which employs 'hard power', a position which is guided by the foreign policy dictates which are required under Realpolitik. Russia has launched its geostrategic offensive in the direction of the EU. Russia's main driving force against the European Union has become its growing geopolitical ambitions and energy resources, and a demonstration of its military capability in 2008 during the brief war against Georgia and the occupation of part of its territory, as well as its intention to deploy missiles in the Kaliningrad region which will be targeted at European countries.

When focusing on the EaP partner countries, it should be noted that, within the context of the regional bipolar security system, they remain within a grey or 'buffer zone' which is characterised by internal and external instability, and an unfavourable and even dangerous foreign policy environment.

Moreover, many European leaders have spoken out about the legitimacy of Moscow's claims to a special interest area or even a geographical area which involves enhanced security in Europe, as well as the possibility of being able to conclude a comprehensive agreement with Russia which would guarantee long-term supplies of Russian energy resources to Europe in exchange for the recognition of Moscow's special interests in the 'post-Soviet' space, as well as closer cooperation in addressing pressing issues which involve international security matters.

Accordingly, the key international participants and EaP partner countries have also developed their own approaches when it comes to being able to understand energy security. Thanks to this, energy security for the EU refers to the availability of energy in the quantities and at the level of quality required under certain economic conditions (EU); for Russia, it is a condition of its protection of its own country, its citizens, its society, and the state which serves to protect their economies from threats which could come from unreliable fuel and energy supplies; for Belarus, it is the state of the fuel and energy complex which provides a sufficient and reliable energy supply to the country to allow its sustainable economic development under normal conditions, and to ensure a minimisation of damage in emergency situations; for Azerbaijan, it is meeting the country's energy needs, and in creating a reliable East-West energy corridor to supply energy to European markets; for Moldova, it is the creation of effective foreign policy conditions to ensure the production, consumption, and importation of energy resources; for Georgia, it is a stable and reliable supply of energy, and a diversification of supply routes, suppliers, and energy resources; for Ukraine, it is an integral component of the state's national security, which anticipates the achievement of the technically reli-

able, stable, economically efficient, and environmentally safe provision of energy resources with which to support and improve the country's economy and social sphere; for Armenia, it is the provision of an affordable, high-quality, and reliable energy supply for the country by participating in Russia's regional processes, without which the republic could not exist as a sovereign state. Therefore the meaning behind the concept of energy security depends upon the national interests of each state and the priorities being employed by each of the intergovernmental formations.

The issue of energy relations between the EU and Russia, as well as with the EaP partner countries, has traditionally been of great interest to researchers. Their work contributes towards the expansion of knowledge on this topic, along with the understanding of certain processes within the field of energy security. Therefore work by Andrew Judge et al. (2016), Marko Siddi (2019), Irina Kustova (2017), and also Tom Casier (2016), all aim to develop approaches which can be used in the study of energy relations between the EU and Russia, which itself will permit an accurate analysis to be carried out and an explanation to be formulated when it comes to the complex realities of energy relations. The proposed theoretical methods are aimed towards developing relevant recommendations for the comprehensive study of energy relations. In addition to the authors already mentioned in this article, it is worth noting work by Amelia Hadfield (2008), Marko Siddi (2017), Nikolay Kaveshnikov (2010), and others, all of whom pay consideration towards the development of an energy dialogue between the EU and Russia, while also studying the trajectory of their energy relations, and suggesting ways in which future research on this topic can best be carried out.

The peculiarities of the respective energy policies which are being used by the EU and Russia are also the subject of research by Andreas Goldthau and Nick Sitter (2015, 2014), namely in terms of the EU's employment of 'soft power' when it comes to the implementation of its energy policy, and also in terms of its role as a liberal participant in the international arena of energy relations. Instead, Marko Siddi (2019) emphasises the inherent peculiarities which are apparent in the application and effectiveness of the geopolitical approach of the EU's foreign energy policy towards the Caspian region. Work by Elena Kropatcheva (2011), Fillipos Proedrou (2017), and also Tatiana Romanova (2016), are devoted towards the study of the Russian energy policy. The central problem here is the geopolitical aspect of Russia's energy policy, in particular in terms of its relations with the EU.

The work which has been carried out by various scholars, such as Dorin Dusciac et al. (2016), Samuel James Lussac (2010), Adam Stulberg (2015), and Aliyar Azimov (2021), and also by Theodoros Tsakiris (2015), are all devoted

to a comprehensive analysis of the EaP energy dimension, as well as the energy relations being employed by specific EaP countries in cooperation with the EU and Russia. These researchers consider the implementation of EU association agreements with individual EaP countries and their impact on EU-Russia energy relations, while also assessing aspects of the development of the Eastern Partnership energy platform, while also comparing EU and Russian energy policies towards the southern Caucasus and Ukraine.

It should also be noted that Sabina Stimbovchi (2016), Georg Zachmann (2010), and Richard Giragosian (2010), and also Kseniia Pashaieva (2019), all focus on the energy potential of the EaP partner countries. On a different angle of approach, Kamila Proninska (2006), and also Oksana Dobrzhanska (2013), study the policy of conditions which are related to the European Union's approach to the energy dimension of its cooperation with EaP partner countries. Tanel Kerikmäe (2016), on the other hand, considers the specific nature of the EaP when taking into account the geopolitical challenges involved in EU integration. Within the context of relations between EaP partner countries and the EU, the scientific work by Licínia Simão (2017) is especially notable.

Research into the geopolitical aspects of energy security in Europe is also important. Among such research work can be included efforts by the Polish scholars Václav Bartuška, Petr Lang, and Andrej Nosko (2019), in whose work attention is focused upon the problem posed by Europe's energy dependence on Russia.

The author Zaur Shiriyev (2017) reveals various peculiarities in relations between Azerbaijan and Russia in his scientific papers, raising issues such as the balancing out of the Russian federation and the west, along with security and regional integration, the policy of 'soft power' in Azerbaijan, and so on. Another author, Laura Kirvelyte (2010), provides clarification in terms of Moldova's security strategy, along with coverage of the problem which is raised by its permanent neutrality in terms of relations between the Russian federation and the EU.

Mykhailo Honchar (2019), plus Ivan Klopov (2016), and also Mert Bilgin (2020), all pay attention to a study of the challenges and threats which are involved in the energy security of the EaP countries and the EU.

Ukrainian scholars highlight, with great interest, the conceptual foundations of the EaP as one of the areas of the 'European Neighbourhood Policy' (ENP). Considerable attention is paid towards the study of energy relations with the EaP countries. When it comes to this area of study and research it is necessary to single out work by authors such as Andriy Goltsov (2017), and also by Yuriy Mazurets (2016), while separate mention must be made of Andriy Hrubinko's (2015) study of the crisis in the European security system

under the existing conditions of the Russian-Ukrainian war in 2014.

A significant scientific contribution to the study of the EaP was made by Yaryna Turchyn (2019). Understanding the content of different approaches to the interpretation of energy security is important when it comes to being able to explore the research topic. In this aspect, any definitions of this concept should certainly be distinguished. For example, Elena Bykova defines energy security as a form of applying protection to the country (or a group of countries, or even a region) against the threat of energy shortages. On the other hand, Mykhailo Kovalko (2016) sees energy security as a component of economic security which requires the creation by state and non-state institutions of necessary and sufficient conditions which will serve to prevent a deficit in energy resources for consumers.

The main international legal instruments which govern EU energy policy are the 'Energy Charter' and the 'Energy Charter Treaty'. Important normative acts when it comes to understanding the urgency of the problem which is raised by energy security and the mechanisms which will ensure its provision are as follows: 1) the 'Energy Community Treaty'; 2) the 'Covenant of Mayors', which contributes towards energy saving at the local level; and 3) the INOGATE programme. The proposed study also used statistics from Gazprom, Naftogaz, and the International Energy Agency (IEA).

## 2. The EU's Policy of Assigning Conditions in the Energy Dimension of Cooperation with Eastern Partnership States

When paying any consideration to the different levels of energy potential when it comes to the EaP partner countries, it should be emphasised that the EU forms its energy relations with each country according to that country's energy status. It is worth noting that cooperation between the EU and Azerbaijan began in the early 1990s. In 2006, Azerbaijan and the EU signed a memorandum of understanding, on the basis of which state energy programmes were created (such as SAARES). Their goal is the efficient use of energy resources in order to secure the country's energy security. Besides this, since 2014 Azerbaijan has been a member of the 'International Renewable Energy Agency' (IRENA) (Audin, 2019).

Azerbaijan acted as an active participant in the construction of the 'Nabucco' gas pipeline which, for geopolitical reasons, could not be implemented. In 2012, the Azerbaijani government signed off on the TANAP pro-

ject, which is part of the 'Southern Gas Corridor' (SGC), in order to expand the reach of its gas supplies (Proninska, 2020). According to the 'Quarterly report on European gas markets' (published in 2020), Azerbaijan did not supply any gas to the EU. The SGC can provide only 10bcm annually from Azerbaijan, which is only about 3% of entire EU gas import market.

Azerbaijan can play a leading role in supplying gas resources to EU markets, something which is especially relevant in the context of Russia's aggression against Ukraine. After the illegal annexation of Crimea by Russia and its occupation of eastern Ukraine, geopolitical competition between the EU and the Russian federation has intensified. Consequently, the European Commission is giving more support to the SGC. The TANAP and TAP pipelines can eventually cover 20% of European gas needs.

For the EU, which receives more than half of its natural gas through imports from Russia, energy cooperation with Azerbaijan mainly helps to reduce this dependence to a certain degree. So Azerbaijan is considered to be the only state on the western side of the Caspian Sea which can safely supply gas to European markets through the SGC and thereby contribute to European energy security, making impossible the creation by Russia of geopolitical tensions. Participation in the EaP has provided a new dimension to EU-Azerbaijan relations. The main relations between them are aimed at deepening cooperation, creating a free trade zone, liberalising the visa regime, and strengthening energy security (Кирилко, 2017).

Since achieving independence, Armenia has also permanently been involved in various levels of European cooperation. Although members of Armenia's political elite periodically declare their commitment to the country's 'European path' of development, unlike Georgia the country has not had and does not have an official goal in terms of achieving EU membership. In 2009, Armenia became the addressee of the 'European Eastern Partnership' initiative. In November 2017, Armenia signed a 'Comprehensive and Enhanced Partnership Agreement' with the European Union within the framework of the Eastern Partnership summit.

Regarding EU-Armenia energy relations, it should be noted that these relations are based on a comprehensive and enhanced partnership. In particular, on 24 November 2017 under the EaP, an agreement (CEPA) was signed between the partners, which provides for closer cooperation in terms of strengthening democracy and human rights, creating opportunities for business, education, security, and so on. The EU finances the process of energy exchange due to Armenia's connection to the regional grid between Armenia and Georgia (An official website of the European Union, 2018).

According to the head of the 'Center for Regional Studies', Richard

Giragosian, following its Velvet Revolution, Armenia was given the chance to ease away from some of its energy ties with Russia, while strengthening them with Europe. In particular, Armenia can receive significant support in the energy sector within the EaP. At the same time, Giragosian (2010) points to the rather slow influence of the EU in terms of developing Armenia's energy potential. To be able to resolve this problem, he considers it appropriate to involve Armenia into the 'Eastern Partnership Plus' model in which Ukraine, Georgia, and Moldova are already involved, which provides for more significant investment into those countries which are following the European format of development.

Georgia's foreign policy strategy on energy focuses on working closely with the west to gain full membership both of the EU and Nato. It is worth noting that Georgia has one of the best indicators of energy development within the EaP. According to the 'International Energy Agency' (IEA), Georgia has made significant progress in ensuring energy security and the sustainability of its energy supply. The country concluded an association agreement with the EU in 2016, and became a contracting party to the 'Energy Community Treaty' in 2017. Accordingly, Georgia has implemented noteworthy institutional reforms, demonstrating the government's desire to bring its energy sector into line with EU norms, in particular regarding the electricity and gas market, the security of supply, renewable energy sources, energy efficiency, and son on. It should be mentioned that Georgia has quite a stable energy supply situation and well-formed energy relations with all of its neighbouring countries. Besides this it is also an exporter of electricity and Azerbaijani gas, and its role as a transit country will grow not only for the European energy market but outside of it too. Georgia supplies energy from three pipelines: two which connect with Azerbaijan and which include the Shah Deniz pipeline, and a third which travels from Russia to Armenia (Giragosian, 2010).

Despite the positive aspects of Georgia's energy infrastructure, it must be stressed that there are significant shortcomings in the country's gas sector. Evidence of this can be seen in the structure of its market, while its legal basis is largely contrary to the principles of EU energy legislation, and does not provide proper regulation in this area. This raises concerns about Georgia's energy security. Its energy requirements are based on non-transparent governmental agreements with two suppliers: Azerbaijan's 'SOCAR' and Russia's 'Gazprom Export'. There are no extant competition mechanisms between them, which makes the gas market somewhat segmented and monopolistic. Accordingly, these companies have a determining influence on the energy market.

Moldova has been a member of the Energy Community since 2010. The country also signed an association agreement with the European Union on

27 June 2014. By December 2017, Moldova had committed itself to adapting and/or harmonising its legislation to bring it into line with the requirements of basic EU energy legislation. The 'European Neighbourhood Policy' promotes bilateral cooperation between the European Union and Moldova in accordance with the 'Partnership and Cooperation Agreement', which includes energy cooperation within its purview. The main project which is related to Moldova's energy security is the 'Iasi-Ungeni-Chisinau' gas pipeline.

Within the EaP framework, Moldova's energy strategy until 2020 provided for the following measures: 1) the creation of an efficient, reliable, and competitive national energy sector; 2) increasing the security around the country's energy supply; 3) promoting energy and economic efficiency; 4) the liberalisation of the energy market and energy restructuring; and 5) increasing the role of Moldova as an important transit country for electricity and gas (IEEJ, 2011).

At the same time, of all the EaP countries Moldova's energy situation is the most difficult. This is due to the following influencing factors: 1) the country's unfavourable economic location and its lack of energy resources; 2) the importation of energy resources from Belarus, Romania, Russia, and Ukraine; 3) the location of the power plant in a separate region of Transnistria; and 4) the lack of investment into the energy sector due to the country's ongoing economic crisis.

It is worth emphasising the fact that Moldova's energy efficiency levels are extremely low. It can be calculated in approximate terms that the production of goods or services for a value of 1,000 euros in Moldova consumes three times more energy than it does in EU member states. In order to resolve this problem, the EU4Energy initiative was launched in 2016 within the EaP framework. The aim of the project is to improve energy security and connect together energy systems, as well as to promote energy efficiency and the use of renewable energy resources. Also, in December 2019, within the framework of EU4 Energy, Moldova and Ukraine signed a memorandum of understanding regarding mutual cooperation within the field of ensuring the security of gas supplies and in terms of strengthening energy security in the region as a whole.

As for Belarus, it should be noted that the EU supports infrastructure and energy projects which aim to deepen the interconnection between the Belarusian energy system and EU standards. Under the EaP, Belarus has improved its infrastructure in terms of the transportation of oil, petroleum products, and electricity, all of which aims to ensure the basic principles of state energy policy, namely: 1) that both energy security and energy efficiency are key to the economic development of Belarus; 2) ensuring the improvement of the fuel and

energy component, and the importance of promoting energy efficient and environmentally-friendly forms of technology in all sectors of the economy.

The main document of which relates to the Belarus energy policy is the 'Concept of energy security', which came into force on 1 January 2016. Its main strategic provisions involve the reduction of dependence upon imports, the development of the country's own energy resources, the diversification of import suppliers, ensuring an increase in energy transit, increasing the energy efficiency of energy production and distribution, and improving energy sector management, along with other areas (UNECE, 2018).

Nevertheless, attempts to diversify the energy market for Belarus are, de facto, unsuccessful. It is obvious that Belarus' energy dependence is turning it into a kind of Russian property. Belarus is the only EaP country which does not have a 'Partnership and Cooperation Agreement' (PCA) with the EU. In addition, and in response to EU sanctions, Belarus has suspended its participation in the EaP and is launching a procedure to terminate the 'Readmission Agreement' with the EU. In general, relations between Belarus and the EU within the framework of the Eastern Partnership are developing in a rather limited format.

Ukraine has been a member of the Energy Community since 2011. The country seeks to integrate its energy market into that of the EU market. Ukraine-EU energy relations are based on the 'Association Agreement' (2017). Further, in 2016, Ukraine and the EU signed a new memorandum of understanding regarding the 'Strategic Energy Partnership'. At the same time, Ukraine now faces a number of challenges which are serving to affect its energy relations. Among these, those factors which are worth noting include the following: 1) the need to implement EU legislation within the field of energy which, in previous years, lagged significantly behind in the gas and electricity sectors when compared to neighbouring countries; 2) the inconsistency of reforms within the European vector of development; 3) the ongoing conflict in eastern Ukraine; 4) economic weakness; and 5) corruption (Visegrad Insight, 2011).

As Wolfgang Bindzail rightly noted, the state of Ukraine's energy security has changed for the better, particularly within the context of transforming its energy dependence on the Russian federation, as the state has started to consume less gas and is carrying out reforms in accordance with the association agreement (Konrad Adenauer Stiftung, 2018).

Therefore Ukraine, as well as Georgia and Moldova, both of which have signed an association agreement with the EU, are seeking the prospect of EU membership with a view to deeper integration within the EU in the field of energy. In particular, at the meeting in 2019 the parties voiced a proposal to establish an additional cooperation format for associate partners within the

EaP. At the same time, the foreign ministers of Ukraine, Georgia, and Moldova submitted a joint statement with proposals for the further development of the EaP.

It should be borne in mind that an important participant in ensuring the EU's energy security is the need to form a single internal market for electricity and gas in EU member states, due to the low level of EU energy security and threats which could result in a violation of the EU's energy supply stability. With this in mind, the 'Strategy for the establishment of the EU energy union until 2030' was approved in 2015. This strategy is aimed at gradually reducing the level of EU energy dependence upon energy imports, thereby neutralising the impact on current EU energy policy by leading energy suppliers, primarily Russia. Measures to improve the EU's energy security which have been envisaged by the strategy are designed for the short-term perspective (until 2017), and for the medium-term (until 2020) (Ukrenergo, 2017). The EaP tasks, within this context, involve the integration of transit states from Eastern Europe and the southern Caucasus into the EU energy space, and the prevention of any reincarnation of monopoly-wielding Russian corporation suppliers in terms of the pipeline infrastructure in Ukraine, Belarus, and Moldova (Доброжанська, 2010).

## 3. The Factor of Russian Influence on Energy Cooperation within the Eastern Partnership

Today, Russia's foreign policy often uses the export potential of energy resources as one of the elements of a hydride war (hybresia). The country's aim is to restore its political and economic positions within the international system, although this aim significantly undermines the energy security both of the EU and the EaP partner countries. Russia also has a somewhat ambiguous view of EU energy projects where these provide for multilateral agreements between states in regard to the regulation of trade and the transit of energy, including agreements which have been approved by and with Eastern Partnership countries. Russia sees such initiatives as serving only to limit its influence and security. This leads on the one hand to the spread of European standards within the area of regulating energy policy being perceived in Russia as a political expansion while, on the other hand, it also results in repeated problems with Russian oil and gas supplies where these have created within the EU an image of Russia as a partner which is inclined to take European consumers 'hostage' in connection with Russian-Belarusian or Russian-Ukrainian gas disputes (Доброжанська, 2010). Important in this respect is the

fact that, since March 2014, due to its foreign policy and especially concerning Ukraine and Georgia, Russia has come to be seen by many EU countries not as a partner but as a threat to their security and territorial integrity (Kerikmäe, 2016).

It is worth noting that, since the beginning of 2018, 'Gazprom' has been seeking to implement two alternative projects for the transportation of natural gas, with both projects bypassing Ukraine. This is all about the 'Nord Stream-2' project and the 'Turkish Stream' pipeline, the implementation of which threatens not only the national security of individual countries, including Ukraine, but also calls into question the existence of the EU as an influential participant in the system of international relations. First of all, these projects contain a military component and, therefore, are part of the multifrontal, multidimensional hybrid form of aggression which Russia is carrying out against Ukraine and the west using, among other things, non-military tools. The peculiarity of 'Nord Stream 2' is that Germany will be the major gas hub in Europe, receiving 22% of gas consumption and 30% of EU gas imports (EULOGOS, 2020). Among EU member states, 'Nord Stream 2' is also supported by Austria and the Netherlands. However, a group which is led by Poland and the Baltic states is seeking to cancel the project. The United States also opposes 'Nord Stream 2'.

Both projects clearly demonstrate the actual merging of Russia's foreign energy policy with commercial goals. After all, their implementation firstly guarantees financial income from gas sales, despite the conflict in Ukraine. Secondly, it levels downwards the strategic importance of Ukraine as a transit corridor. Thirdly, it allows Russia to avoid having to pay transit fees to Kiev (which amounts to about $3 billion annually). Fourthly, it allows Russia to supply gas to Belarus, Germany, Poland, Hungary, Romania, Bulgaria, and Greece in order to weaken their energy security.

In turn, the negative significance of 'Nord Stream 2' is that the project is being referred to as Russia's energy weapon, the security consequences of which are, de-facto, commensurate with Russia's imperial ambitions. Besides this, the project has a clearly-expressed military component. According to Sandra Udkirk, US Assistant Secretary of State for Energy Diplomacy, the 'Nord Stream-2' gas pipeline from Russia to Germany is of concern to US intelligence and the military, as it would allow Russia to deploy new listening and monitoring equipment in the Baltic Sea, turning the pipeline into a Russian intelligence asset (Wavell Room, 2019).

EaP partner countries for the most part understand the negative security trends which are being generated through energy projects which have been initiated by the Russian federation. Among such negative security trends

are these: 1) serving to increase the EU's political dependence upon Russian energy resources, and increasing strategic blackmail being levelled by Russia; 2) the fact that 'Nord Stream 2' will bypass the EU's Eastern European partners and weaken the alliance; 3) the EU will partially finance the Russian 'military machine' through the development of the pipeline; 4) increasing corruption in Europe; 5) the pipeline is a contradiction of the principles which form the basis of the EU's energy union; and 6) it would be a source of environmental damage, along with other considerations (European Values Center for Security Policy, 2020).

Despite international energy contradictions, it is impossible to establish the rules of the game in terms of international energy relations without recognising Russia as being an energy-powerful state. Besides this, energy cooperation between Russia and the EU is mutually conditioned. After all, for Russia the European market is the main consumer of its exported energy resources. Therefore EaP partner countries have in fact found themselves stuck between two influential international participants, and are now shaping their energy policy depending upon the relationship they have with each of this two giants.

Azerbaijan is a strategically important partner of Russia, a country which has its interests in the Caspian region and which has formed special energy relations with Turkey (via the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan and Baku-Erzurum gas pipelines). When it comes specifically to Azerbaijan's energy relations with the Russian federation, it should be noted that Russia is still developing partnership relations with Azerbaijan and is interested in strengthening its influence on the country. Both countries have a common approach to the status of the Caspian Sea and the delimitation of its shelf. At the same time, as a result of Azerbaijan's close energy cooperation with the EU as well as with Turkey, Iran, and the United States, the Kremlin is trying to maintain its position in this country by pursuing a 'soft power' form of geopolitics, using the influential Azerbaijani diaspora in Russia (Гольцов, 2017).

A significant increase in diplomatic activity between them could especially be observed at the end of 2019. On the part of the Russian federation, such tendencies are obvious: 1) the involvement of Azerbaijan into its multilateral initiatives will aid it in weakening it's the country's geopolitical role as far as the EU and China go (it is a member of the SGC); 2) Russia requires its assistance in resolving the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict because it is important for Russia not to lose its influence both inside Azerbaijan and Armenia. Therefore the most appropriate course of action for Russia is the 'freezing' of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. It should be noted that any continuation of hostilities in Nagorno-Karabakh could significantly change the energy relations both of Azerbaijan and Armenia as EaP members. After all, the 'Baku-

Tbilisi-Ceyhan' oil pipeline and the 'Southern Caucasus' pipeline gas pipeline both pass through Azerbaijan, with some sections of it being perilously close to the recently-resumed hostilities. The likelihood of the pipeline being shelled posed several serious risks to Europe's energy security policy. Besides this, the end of the war in Nagorno-Karabakh has created new challenges for Azerbaijan. Firstly, the tripartite agreement does not clearly define the status of Nagorno-Karabakh. Secondly, Azerbaijan's foreign policy relations under the new conditions envisage a strengthening of relations with Turkey and their weakening with the EU. Thirdly, Russia's role in helping to resolve the conflict comes down to a desire to provide its services as a 'peacemaker' and to 'preserve' the conflict.

In general, the orientation of Azerbaijan's energy relations towards the direction of Europe can serve to significantly undermine Russia's status as an energy superpower. In this aspect, it is worth agreeing with Vitaliy Kulyk (2020) who believes that, firstly, the introduction of the 'Trans Adriatic Pipeline' (TAP) and Azerbaijan's activity in this market will lead to a significant redistribution of energy power; secondly, the Russian federation will be forced to use foreign policy tools, along with those which involve economic and military mechanisms, to put pressure on markets and countries which oppose Russian domination; thirdly, in response to its displacement in the energy market, Russia will attempt to respond in a hybrid fashion which mixes military methods and an information 'war' with countries which are recipients of Russian energy resources. Nevertheless, the tendentiousness of Azerbaijan's energy policy boils down to the fact that, quite often, the pipelines which are introduced through the participation of Baku's officials have generally remained 'eternal' on paper alone.

The current energy relations between Russia and Armenia lead to the following key aspects: Armenia firstly is a member of the 'Eurasian Economic Union' (2015); secondly that it has no good neighbourly relations with wither Azerbaijan or Turkey, in particular in the energy sector; thirdly that it imports its fuel for thermal energy usage from Russia (covering 83% of its total requirements) and also from Iran (covering the remaining 17%); and fourthly that it has a vertically-integrated holding structure by the name of 'Gazprom Armenia', which forms the country's sole gas distribution system operator and supplier, and which is a de facto subsidiary of Russia's 'Gazprom'. Iranian gas supplies to Armenia are commercially organised in exchange for electricity exports from Armenia to Iran. However, the Armenian side of the cross-border connection with Iran also belongs to 'Gazprom Armenia' and therefore is controlled by the Russian federation. Such features in fact make it impossible to expect any liberalisation of the country's energy market. Ar-

menia's dependence upon fuel imports poses risks to its security of supply as well as creating accessibility problems for consumers. In 2015, the CJSC 'Electric Networks of Armenia' (ENA), which is entirely and fully owned by Russia's JSC 'Inter RAO', released a statement regarding raising electricity prices, and thereby sparked a wave of protests which were collected together under the banner 'Electric Maidan'. Today, dependence on natural gas for electricity generation is considered a systemic risk, something which requires levels of diversification in terms of primary energy resources and the formation of safe ways in which energy resources can be supplied. However, according to Vape Davtyan, a political scientist and energy security expert, Armenia, despite the crisis in some industries, has to this day achieved significant results in its efforts in diversification, mainly in terms of external supplies. The main risk for the country, in his opinion, is the surrender of its energy sovereignty in exchange for Russian investments (Yengibaryan, 2017).

As one can see, the gas sector in Armenia is completely monopolised (by the Russian federation). Under domestic law, the monopolist has the exclusive right to operate gas transportation and distribution systems, which rights also include their development. Armenia is not one of those countries which are of especial of interest to the EU when it comes to the field of energy security. Cooperation between the two sides is focused mainly on the adaptation of domestic energy legislation so that it meets EU standards in this area, along with issues which relate to electricity exports.

As a transit country for Caspian oil which is transported via the 'Baku-Ceyhan' pipeline, Georgia is per se a competitor against Russia. After all, the latter tried in every way to prevent the transportation of oil from the Caspian Sea from bypassing its territory. An illustrative example here is 5 August 2008, when a pipeline exploded along the Turkish section of the 'Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan' oil pipeline. At the time, many western mass media outlets claimed that the explosion near the Turkish city of Refahie was the result of a cyber-attack by Russian special services. Given this possibility, the lack of natural gas storage sites in Georgia is a major risk to the country's energy supply security. However, the supply of Azerbaijani gas from the 'Southern Caucasus Pipeline' still reduces Georgia's dependence on Russian gas.

It is also worth noting that Georgia is geographically related to the 'Shah Deniz' transit route. It purchases additional volumes of gas via that supply route. Experts assume that the combination of Shah Deniz and Russian gas will meet Georgia's gas needs and, in the long run, the country will be able to do without Russian gas. Nevertheless, Georgia has many supporters who wish to restore fully-fledged energy relations with the Russian federation. In this regard, the governments in Moscow and Tbilisi have been in constant

contact since 2019. In fact, experts in the Georgian energy sector have already emphasised their opinion that Russia's influence in the country is growing. In particular, in late December, the two countries reached a new agreement which allows the transit of Russian natural gas into Armenia via Georgia. According to independent expert Georgy Vashakmadze, this circumstance will allow Georgia to reserve its own hydropower resources for emergency situations (Zachmann, 2010).

Therefore it can be seen that Azerbaijan, Armenia, and Georgia all have different vectors when it comes to their energy relations. Involvement in the Eastern Partnership gives them a number of benefits, including energy security. On the other hand energy cooperation between the three countries and the EU differs in each of the countries. Azerbaijan is in no hurry to carry out EU market reforms in the energy sector. Armenia, which meets its energy needs thanks to Russia and relies entirely upon the latter to develop its energy infrastructure, also does not fully use European energy rules. Finally, Georgia, whose energy and infrastructure are separate from the Russian and European energy markets and are dependent upon a transit route between them, is seeking EU membership and is steadily reducing its energy dependence on Russia.

Regarding Moldova, it should be noted that despite cooperation with the EU within the framework of the Eastern Partnership, being able to limit the monopolisation of its energy market is by far a difficult prospect. In fact, since 1991, the goal behind Russia's policy towards Moldova has been: 1) to prevent its deviation from Russia's sphere of influence; 2) the desire to preserve the Russian military base in Tiraspol; and 3) to prevent Moldova from joining Nato. In addition, the Transnistrian government was Russia's trustee when it came to achieving its foreign policy goals. Instead, supporting the 'statehood' of Transnistria entailed significant financial cost. The energy sector played a key role in financing Russia's separatism in Moldova, as the Russian federation has repeatedly provoked a politically-motivated energy crises in Moldova (Free Russia Foundation, 2020).

'Moldova Gas' operates and partially owns pipelines in Moldova to the west of the River Dniester, and its subsidiaries operate more than 98% of the distribution network. Limited opportunities to diversify energy routes and supplies make the country dependent upon political stability in Romania and Ukraine. For example, in 2006 and 2009 gas disputes took place between Russia and Ukraine, which resulted in a lack of gas supplies for more than 50,000 Moldovans. When taking this into consideration, the Moldovan government found itself in dire need of being able to diversify its gas importation sources. It is expected that in 2020 it is the 'Iasi-Ungeni' intersectoral gas pipeline with

Romania which will best meet all of the country's gas demand requirements, and not just those of the Transnistrian region. Concurrently, gas imports from Russia will continue, but in smaller volumes.

Importantly, the supply of Russian gas both to Moldova and the self-proclaimed Transnistria is carried out under contracts which were signed by 'Gazprom' with legal entities which were registered in Moldova and were officially recognised bodies (under the name 'Moldova Gas'). Under such a contractual scheme, the Moldovan side of the question accumulates the gas debt for the separatist region. In this way, Transnistria's gas infrastructure is included in the capital of the Moldovan gas supplier, under the pretext of paying off its gas debt. Therefore 'Gazprom' supplies gas to 'Moldova Gas', while the latter supplies gas to Moldovan consumers and to 'Tiraspol-Transgaz' from Transnistria. De jure, 'Tiraspol-Transgaz' is a subsidiary of 'Moldova Gas', but de facto its assets have been nationalised by the separatist authorities. At the end of 2019, the debt to Russia amounted to 7,860.6 million US dollars (Free Russia Foundation, 2020). In contrast, the total 'Gazprom' debt which is held by 'Moldova Gas' is much higher. However, the cost of natural gas which is supplied by 'Gazprom' to the Transnistrian region through 'Moldova Gas' has been at a much lower price than the one the Moldovan government should have paid. According to a report by Maplecroft, a global risk and strategic consulting firm, back in 2011, Moldova was recognised as the ninth most-at-risk country in the world in terms of its short-term energy security. Therefore it can be seen that Moldova's energy security depends upon Russian gas and electricity which is supplied from Transnistria.

However, with the coming to power of Maia Sandu in Moldova, experts expect positive changes to strengthen the European partnership. Her victory in the elections is also an important moment for Ukraine. There, Igor Dodon openly supported the annexation of Crimea by Russia, while dialogue between Ukraine and Moldova was suspended, which negatively affected cooperation between the countries within the framework of the Eastern Partnership.

The development of cooperation between Belarus and Russia in the gas sector takes place within the framework of their political and economic integration, namely in terms of the following: 1) Belarus is a member of the 'Eurasian Economic Union' (EAEU), which also provides for a common energy policy; 2) Belarus participates in the implementation of international energy projects, in particular within the framework of the 'Commonwealth of Independent States' agreement (CIS); 3) the country is part of a confederate union with the Russian federation under the banner of the 'Union State of Russia and Belarus'. It should be emphasised here that it is the transit agreements and the cost of energy for Belarus that are identified with ensuring

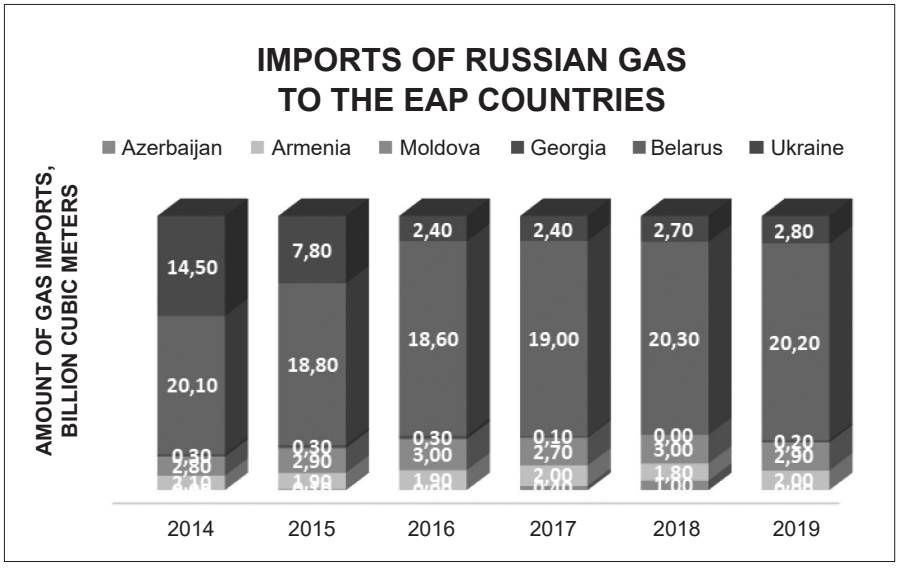
national sovereignty, as Russia identifies energy issues with geopolitical ones. It is important that the energy dependence upon Russia by Belarus imposes significant restrictions on its participation in the EaP, as the Russian federation sees closer cooperation between Belarus and the European Union as an act which would serve to undermine its own agreements. However, despite close cooperation, Belarusian-Russian energy relations have been characterised by a good many contradictions since the 1990s. It should also be borne in mind that Russia seeks to create a confederation which meets the Kremlin's priorities, as it is well aware of the important geopolitical location of Belarus, especially in terms of its borders along the right flank of the 'North Atlantic Treaty Organisation' (Nato) in Eastern Europe. Hostility between Russia and the west is prompting Russia to look for new ways in which it can reinforce this strategic direction (Mammadov, 2020). Besides this, Russia has also shown that it does not mind cutting off or even blocking altogether oil and gas supplies to Belarus which, in this respect, is a manifestation of energy dominance when it comes to any negotiations.

A stumbling block between Russia and Belarus within the energy sector has been Russia's desire to build new pipelines in the Baltic Sea and Black Sea (the latter via Turkey) to deliver gas to Europe, simultaneously excluding transit through Belarus and Ukraine. The president of Belarus, Alexander Lukashenko, has spoken out against Russia's first Trans-Baltic pipeline, Nord Stream, which was constructed in 2007 and which supplies gas directly to Germany, seeing it as a threat to the country's livelihood. Because of this, the construction of Nord Stream 2 is also unacceptable for Belarus. In this aspect, experts attribute the energy security of Belarus to US assistance, firstly because the United States will tighten sanctions against Russian individuals and companies which are involved in the building of the Nord Stream 2 gas pipeline (Sieradzki, 2020). With this in mind, Belarus is trying to diversify its economy, as well as to reduce its dependence upon the energy resources of its eastern neighbour.

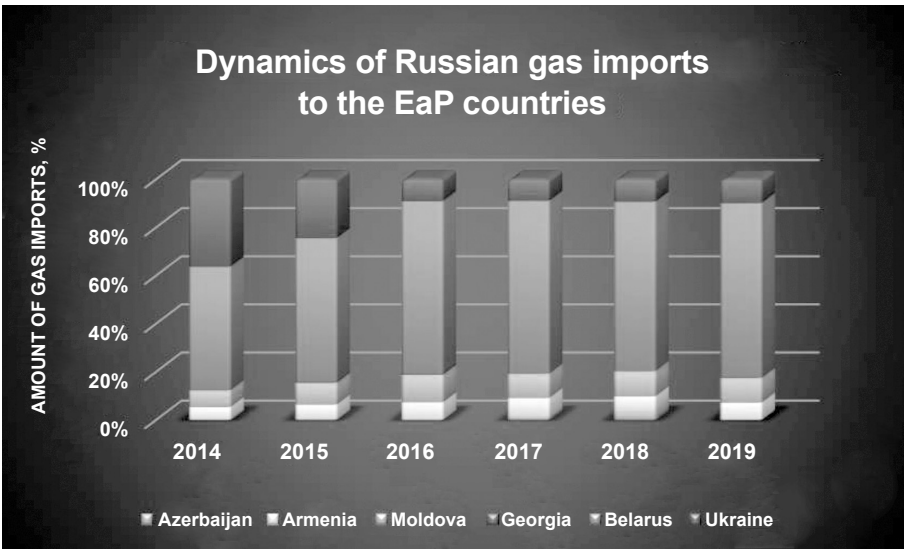
Unlike other EaP partner countries, Ukraine has achieved significant energy independence from Russia, primarily through the diversification of its gas supplies from EU countries, Poland in particular. This is due to the obvious and most relevant trends: the annexation of Crimea by the Russian federation and the ongoing conflict in eastern Ukraine. In addition to that, and due to the annexation of the peninsula, gas fields on the Black Sea shelf were lost, along with assets of DTEK 'Krymenergo' (which is 25%-owned by the state), and those of generating enterprises and the SE 'Feodosiya Petroleum Supply Company', and all projects in the field of hydrocarbon production were frozen. Military action which has been undertaken with the participation of the

Russian federation in the east of Ukraine has also led to the destruction of oil and gas infrastructure there (Razumkov Center, 2016).

Ukraine's energy component is actually linked to the transit of Russian gas. Although Ukraine no longer buys gas from Russia, it still depends upon 'Gazprom' transit requirements. After all, the main transport route for Russian gas into Europe passes through Ukrainian territory. Ukraine receives about three billion dollars a year from this traffic. This is equal to 2.5% of its GDP. Moreover, more than 64% of Ukrainian coal supplies and 55% of the enriched uranium it needs still comes from Russia. Ukraine also pays Russia for the disposal of its nuclear waste. At the same time, Ukraine may lose significant funds from gas transit fees if Russia succeeds in implementing the 'Nord Stream 2' project. According to experts, the supply of gas which will then bypass Ukraine may increase Russia's aggression against Ukraine, as there will be no economic reasons to refrain from such actions (Forbes, 2019). The Ukrainian authorities are of the opinion that any attempt to implement 'Nord Stream 2' could have unpredictable consequences for it, while also increasing threats to Europe's energy security. These concerns were articulated by Ukraine's 'Naftogaz' in an official complaint against the project which was submitted to the energy community on 21 December 2015, and also to the EU commission. Ukraine believes that the European commission should take into account all of the consequences of the Russian project and should then take the necessary precautionary measures (EULOGOS, 2020).




Graph 1. **Imports of Russian gas to EaP countries. DONE*****




Graph 2. **The dynamics of Russian gas imports to EaP countries.**

It should be emphasised that, within the framework of the EaP, the EU is perceived by its partner countries as being a certain guarantor of European energy security. Instead, the EU gets 40% of its natural gas via imports from Russia, according to the 2020 'Quarterly Report on European Gas Markets' (An official website of European Union, 2020). Within this context it is worth mentioning the potential possibility for a disruption of Russian gas supplies into the EU due to the domestic political situation in Ukraine in 2006 and 2009, which turned into gas confrontations. Taking this into consideration, the EU was forced to take urgent action to prevent the possibility of any disruption of energy supplies to the EU. At the same time, this has contributed towards a greater focus of EU energy policy on those countries which are most dependent upon gas supplies from the Russian federation.

To be able to prevent future disruption in the implementation of gas contracts, the EU has begun to pay special attention to various areas, including: 1) a strengthening of the levels of efficiency in terms of gas storage infrastructure (in particular by expanding gas storage capacity in Latvia to create a strategic reserve for the Baltic states); 2) developing within the EU a system of reverse flows (in the context of a memorandum of understanding between Slovakia and Ukraine); and 3) implementing regional plans for the organisation of energy supplies, along with other areas of attention.

In particular, since then the EU has significantly strengthened its response mechanisms to possible disruptions in gas supplies. Investments in

terms of improving the effectiveness of these mechanisms have become a legal obligation: starting in December 2014, EU countries are required to meet peak gas demand even if individual gas suppliers fail to meet their obligations. Reverse gas flows must be organised and should operate at all cross-border crossings between EU countries. European regulations define protected categories of consumers (especially those who use gas for heating their homes), which must be supplied with gas as a matter of priority. In addition, EU countries are required to develop plans of action in case there should be any gas supply disruptions in winter time, while they also need to create and maintain minimum stocks of crude oil and petroleum products to the extent necessary to meet domestic market demand for a total period of ninety days. Today, in the vast majority of EU countries, oil reserves have been increased to 120 days. Such actions will allow a balancing of market prices in case there is any temporary disruption of oil supplies into the EU. In general, the operational 'Gas Coordination Group' (which includes amongst its numbers EU regulators) has proven its effectiveness, mainly through the organisation of a pan-European platform for information exchange, the study of expert opinions, the development and implementation of effective measures to quickly respond to changes in the EU gas market, and to ensure the protection of the interests of all EU members.

## 4. Main Threats to the Energy Security of the EAP Partner Countries and Their Impact on the Restructuring of Europe's Security Architecture

Based on the aforementioned energy aspects when it comes to relations between the EaP partner countries, the matter of the restructuring of Europe's security architecture is, in our opinion, affected by several main threats which are listed below.

1) Energy dependence by the EaP partner countries upon the Russian federation and its energy pressure on individual countries, first of all in order to maintain a monopoly on energy resources and to be able to exert influence on the main transit routes.

2) Russia's desire to build up new export routes into Europe, in particular the 'Nord Stream 2' pipeline which, firstly, will increase Western Europe's energy dependence on Russia while, secondly, as a result of direct supplies of Russian gas being provided to Germany, the role of the EU's energy partners is levelling off and, thirdly, 'Gazprom' will become the de facto energy mar-

ket monopolist in Europe.

3) The EaP countries and their energy markets remain largely monopolistic in format, as it is state-owned companies which are responsible for each country's energy policy. Despite regular calls for privatisation, these countries are in no hurry to liberalise their strategic energy sector, which complicates the contribution of foreign investment and energy efficiency efforts.

4) Regional conflicts in the southern Caucasus are also a threat, as they serve to destabilise transit infrastructure. In our opinion, the main energy problem for this region is its underdeveloped regional international relations, which hinder the formation of mutually beneficial energy security strategies in the region.

For Ukraine, the greatest threats in the energy sector, which are hybrid in content, are the following: 1) the termination of Russia's gas supply in transit through Ukrainian territory; 2) the ability of the Russian federation to directly control its own supplies of petroleum products onto the Ukrainian market and to relatively easily influence supplies from Belarus; 3) the possibility of targeted actions being undertaken from within the Russian federation in order to destabilise the work of Ukraine's 'United Energy System'; 4) Russia's intensification of its efforts under the guise of Russian-German and Russian-Turkish business cooperation project in order to be able to implement its the 'Nord Stream 2' and 'Turkish Stream' projects.

It is important that the Russian-occupied territories of the Donbas region are not energy self-sufficient, even taking into account the coal surplus there. Russia has been predisposed to expand the occupied territories in order to ensure their greater energy stability, which concurrently would destabilise the operation of Ukraine's own energy systems. Ukraine's energy infrastructure is viewed by the Kremlin as one of the theatres of hostilities in which it must operate against Ukraine. The main attacks on the network and its key power-generation objectives are carried out through cyberspace in order to achieve the same effect as in the case of direct sabotage, this being the collapse of Ukraine's energy systems (Гончар, 2017).

The aforementioned main threats to the energy security of the EaP countries from the Russian federation make it necessary to counter those threats.

Among the most effective forms of counteraction, in our opinion, are methods which will help to prevent threats to the energy security of the EaP partner countries. Those which are included below should be identified and resolved.

1) The diplomatic unity of the position being held by EU member states when it comes to energy pressure being levied against them by the Russian

federation, along with the status of the Eastern Partnership partner countries. A resolution has already been adopted at the EU level which states that the EU is ready to protect EaP countries from Russia's pressure (Synerging Energies, 2018). However, within the EU's practical international policy there is often a lack of political will or mechanisms being put in place which will help to resolve problematic energy relations with Russia.

2) The transparency of energy trade and EU market rules, which are the most powerful tools which can be used when it comes to being able to counter the abuse of its power by the Russian federation in areas in which it holds a monopoly. The EaP partner countries must understand their vulnerability in terms of energy cooperation with Russia, while striving to avoid any undermining of European security, in particular by supporting pipelines which bypass Ukraine and Belarus.

3) Adopting the 'common sovereignty' model for the EaP partner countries and EU member states, something which is in essence an enhanced form of cooperation, and which includes direct supervision by the EU of the implementation of any reforms (such as, for example, the EU mission in Moldova, Ukraine, and Georgia). This will allow the EU to implement its strategic energy projects under the EaP and provide more funding, unlike Russia (Minzarari, 2020).

4) Ensuring the principles of market competition for energy companies in the European gas market, and thereby serving to weaken Gazprom's influence in this aspect.

In analysing energy security in Europe, the Polish researchers, Václav Bartuška, Piotr Lang, and Andrei Nosko, have focussed on the following areas: 1) strengthening Russia's role as a major supplier of energy resources, which can pose a risk to the cohesion of the EaP partner countries and their security; and 2) the domination of a low-carbon economy within the EU, which can have a destabilising effect on the Middle East (Bartuška, 2019). In their view, the role of Nato is important in strengthening the energy security both of the EU and the EaP partner countries. The alliance must use the energy trade market as a method by which it can stabilise energy transit countries and involve them in concluding cooperation agreements. Potential risks can be managed through the joint supervisory duties which are carried out by European countries which take responsibility for energy supplies.

According to researcher Mert Bilgin, depending upon the priorities and strategies of the various stakeholders (which include amongst their number the European Commission, EU members, suppliers, and transit countries), Europe's security restructuring may take the following directions: 1) 'Russia first', in which the European commission and EU members prioritise gas

from Russia; 2) 'Russia everywhere', in which Russia controls the natural gas market and offers supply routes to the Caspian, the Middle East, and Africa; 3) 'safety first', which follows from the concept of EU energy security and determines the EU's ability to benefit from the potential of natural gas; or 4) 'each country for itself', which involves the inability of the EU to achieve a common energy policy when EU members and EU partners pursue their own policies. Alternative European energy security policies can lead to different futures which are based on the relevant participants taking care of their own oil prices, ecological commitments, and strategic initiatives (Bilgin, 2020).

Based on the above threats and the dynamics which have been analysed in terms of the development of energy relations within the EaP as a whole, we can identify several trajectories in terms of restructuring Europe's security architecture, as listed below (Visegrad Insight, 2010).

1) 'Pragmatic integration between Eastern Europe and the EU'. This will lead to energy consolidation in the EaP countries, at least in the cases of Georgia, Ukraine, and Moldova, under their 'Association Agreements' (AAs) and 'Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreements' (DCFTAs). In the future, the EU also plans to expand its energy projects under the EaP. This vector of development is the most appropriate in terms of strengthening Europe's security architecture and is likely to involve other EaP partner countries.

2) 'A return of the hegemony of the Russian federation'. Some countries may lose confidence in pro-European leaders and instead accept dependence upon Russia. Due to the strengthening of energy dependence on Russia, both in terms of the EU and the EaP partner countries, the EU may lose its influence on the EaP partner country energy policies. Such a development vector could significantly shift Europe's security component and completely restructure it, mainly due to the 'energy noose' which is held by the Russian federation and the complete loss of EU influence.

3) 'Agreement between the EU and the Russian federation'. The improvement of energy relations between the EU and Russia is likely, due to the EU's desire to reduce energy tensions in the world and to create the grounds for a new form of European security architecture. While some EaP countries are trying to counter these trends, others agree on their energy status and are hesitant to implement European energy initiatives. This will contribute towards the EU losing its influence, and actually playing up to Russia.

4) 'Civil impulse'. This envisages a strengthening of further democratic development processes, thereby activating civil society or shifting from the 'bottom-up' and involving 'people's power' (such as, for example, protests in Belarus), which will radically change the course of integration for such countries and, accordingly, determine the course of their individual energy

policies. Given the experience which has been generated following many of the more recent national revolutions, we can say that it is with the help of 'civic impulse' by which the rules of the game of international politics can potentially be changed.

In general, the realism of a full or partial restructuring of Europe's security architecture, in our opinion, closely depends upon the EU's impact on the energy relations of the EaP partner countries. The latter have the opportunity to compensate for their geopolitical energy vulnerability only through further cooperation with the EU, which has significant potential to counter Russia. However, the EU is not fully using this opportunity in international practice. However, energy relations between partner countries are not always unanimous, often being accompanied by mutual accusations, and showing elements of a reluctance or failure to compromise. Instead, achieving the goals of the Eastern Partnership in terms of energy relations requires significant resources and the political will of all participants. Achieving a balance of interests both at the EU level and within the EaP will determine the strengthening and/or weakening of Russia's energy role in Europe.

## Conclusions

Based on this study we can state here that Europe's security architecture within the triangle of energy relations between Russia, the EU, and the EaP partner countries depends upon the interaction and coordination of interests at several levels, namely between the EU and the EaP partner countries; between the EaP partner countries themselves; between the EaP partner countries and Russia; and between the EU and Russia.

The restructuring of Europe's security architecture is a matter which has become necessary due to several influencing factors which include those catalogued below:

- The EaP partner countries are characterised by geopolitical fragmentation between the Russian federation and the EU. Russia seeks to control energy resources in terms of their supplies to Europe, while in contrast the EU seeks to reduce the dependence by partner countries on energy imports from Russia.

- In general, the EaP partner countries are characterised by significant differences when it comes to their involvement in the energy sector. There is a certain pattern to be discerned here: some EaP partner countries receive income from transit and energy resources, while others are crucially dependent upon energy imports. There are also problems evident in terms of energy sav-

ings and lack of investment within the EaP partner countries. Georgia, Moldova, Ukraine, and Belarus significantly stand out as strategically-important energy transit countries. Azerbaijan is a leading energy producer. Armenia has nuclear energy, which allows it to export electricity.

- The Eastern Partnership region is neither stable nor secure due to several recent or ongoing conflicts: Crimea and Donbas in Ukraine, Transnistria in Moldova, Abkhazia and South Ossetia in Georgia, and Nagorno-Karabakh in Azerbaijan. In the energy sector, the EaP countries are affected by the hybrid war, which involves the use of energy resources within the process of achieving the goals which have been set out by the aggressor.

- Russia and the EU, despite mutual declarations, have different views on energy relations. For Russia the priority is the geopolitical approach and the realisation of its long-held imperial ambitions, which involves the use of energy resources as a method of maintaining political influence over the EaP partner countries, while the EU's construction of energy relations is relevant to the principles of international law, the liberal market, and regulatory paradigms. In the practical energy policy of both participants, these differences are illustrated by the use of 'hard power' by Russia, and 'soft power' and 'soft security' by the EU.

- Russia is, de facto, a monopolist of the energy market. Transparency in terms of energy trade and EU market rules are important tools in terms of counteracting the monopoly of the energy market by the Russian federation. However, only Georgia, Armenia, Moldova, and Ukraine have formed close ties with the EU. Azerbaijan and Belarus on the other hand continue to adhere to the authoritarian status quo, which precludes full cooperation with the EU.

- Russia has its strategic interests in the EaP partner countries, pursuing a policy which is contrary to EU principles. In recent years Russia has increasingly stated its imperial ambitions in the Eastern Partnership region.

As a result, the various nations in the east face new challenges and threats, both domestic and foreign, which affect the transformation of their energy relations, in particular within the security dimension. All of these countries can help to restructure Europe's security architecture.

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