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SECURITIZATION OF PIPELINE: THE UKRAINE CRISIS AND THE ROLE OF THE NORD STREAM IN THE POLITICAL AND SECURITY RELATIONS BETWEEN RUSSIA AND THE EU

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Abstract: Drawing on the theoretical framework of the Copenhagen School of Security Studies, the paper's aim focuses on the role of the Nord Stream pipeline in the Russia-EU political and security relations, considering its securitization following the Ukraine crisis and Russia's military intervention against this country. The paper, utilizing the comparative analysis method and securitization theory, argues that in the past, the Nord Stream pipeline significantly contributed to maintaining friendly relations between Russia and the EU, assisting the two parties in determining foreign policy positions and flexibility. However, following the Ukraine crisis and the subsequent development of mistrust and increased military threats, this pipeline has lost its position and stabilizing role, and it no longer fulfills its previous function of fostering relations between the EU and Russia. The paper concludes that after the Ukraine crisis, it became securitized, and rather than holding a constructive role, it has adopted a threatening role for the EU and its Western allies, especially the US.

Keywords: Nord Stream Project; Securitization; EU; Russia; Ukraine Crisis; Political-Security Relations

INTRODUCTION

Due to the increasing growth of population and industries, natural resources, especially energy, are very important for survival and economic development. Many countries worldwide, especially industrialized and advanced countries, have focused on how to supply natural resources, and to this end, they continuously establish policies and strategies. In other words, the industrialized and advanced countries, or the so-called developed countries, are under severe competition for easy access to natural resources, and one of their important priorities in their foreign policy includes how to provide energy. Among the various natural resources, energy (oil and gas) is undoubtedly more useful and important for survival and economic development. Hence, energy exporting and importing countries exploit energy export or import to the maximum extent to reach their economic and political goals. In other words, countries try to keep their political and security interests through energy trade. Therefore, at present, the issue of energy and its supply process, in addition to the economic dimension, has gained important political and security dimensions for exporting, transmitting, and importing countries. The process of exporting Russian gas to the European Union (EU), known as the Nord Stream project, is divided into two parts, Nord Stream 1 and Nord Stream 2.

The Nord Stream 1 pipeline, which started operation in 2011 with a capacity of 55 billion cubic meters per year (De Jong and Van de Graaf 2021), has always been one of the fundamental and challenging issues in the field of political economy and international relations, considering global competitions and the intertwining of politics and economy. As the biggest exporter and consumer of energy, Russia and the EU (Siddi 2022) have established close relations and economic interactions during the operation of the Nord Stream project, which suggests their interdependence. Thus, the Nord Stream project, which governs the largest energy economic relations, is very important. Nevertheless, despite its great importance, this project has faced many ups and downs due to political changes, especially the crisis in Ukraine. After a short time, this pipeline was securitized by the US and a few nations as security actors. Now, after Russia's military action against Ukraine, it has been securitized by all European countries, including Germany.

Considering the economic importance of the Nord Stream pipeline, it was assumed that political and security events could not harm this project, enabling improved peaceful political and security relations between Russia and the EU. However, Yanukovich's refusal to sign an EU association agreement resulted in the 2014 Ukraine crisis, raising doubts about the efficiency of the Nord Stream project under Western sanctions. Russia and some EU Member States, including Germany, attempted to improve the security of this project, so its Western allies continuously criticized Germany. The Russian military attack on Ukraine on 24 February 2022 caused part of this project (Nord Stream 2) to be suspended under the new Western sanctions imposed against Russia.

Contrary to expectations, Nord Stream not only failed to regulate and strengthen the peaceful and interactive relations between Russia and the EU based on the theory of interdependence but also, due to political changes, especially the Ukraine crisis and Russia's military attack on this country, it was seriously damaged. Following Russia's military action against Ukraine, the Nord Stream pipeline was completely securitized and was considered the main source of threats or aggressive behavior of Russia in Ukraine. At present, due to the efforts of the EU to find alternative ways to supply energy, this project encounters serious doubts. Some thinkers believe that under the sanctions of the US, if the EU could satisfy its energy needs via other ways, especially through renewable energy sources, it would reduce its economic relations with Russia to the lowest level and may no longer export gas via the Nord Stream pipes. Given the increasing political tensions between the West and Russia due to the war in Ukraine, Russia has reduced its gas supplies to Europe in several stages. It has cut it off through the Nord Stream 1 pipeline for some time. Accordingly, despite the huge investments and the expectations about the Nord Stream project, it is exposed to uncertainties and is considered a threat to European countries after securitization. Drawing on the theoretical framework of the Copenhagen School, this study emphasizes that the Nord Stream pipeline was affected by the Ukraine crisis and no longer contributes positively to Russia-Ukraine relations.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study focused on the securitization of the Nord Stream pipeline and its effect on the political and security relations between Russia and the EU. Thus, the theoretical framework of the Copenhagen School is used, which specifically addresses securitization and de-securitization, providing complete and necessary explanations for this issue. The Copenhagen School in security studies performs a scientific, dimensional, and extensive study of security, shifting away from its narrow military dimension. This school is built on the theorization of many thinkers in the field of international politics, including Barry Buzan and Ole Wæver, in collaboration with the Copenhagen Institute for Peace Studies (McSweeney 1996). It was founded at the end of the Cold War with the publication of the book "People, States, and Fear" in 1983.

Along with the publication of numerous works and theories of other thinkers, this school of thought was further developed and currently seems to be an unrivaled and comprehensive theory in the field of security issues. Bill McSweeney, one of the thinkers of this school, was the first to use the term "Copenhagen School" concerning the works and perspectives of Barry Buzan et al. (1998). This term is also associated with Copenhagen, where research on this school of thought is conducted (Buzan 2008, 10). The Copenhagen Peace Research Institute significantly contributed to the publication and evolution of this theory.

After the Cold War, the Copenhagen School theorists significantly attempted to develop a broader framework of security issues, deviating from the limited framework of the countries' military relations. They analyze security at various levels (national, regional, and global). Based on this theory, national security is related to the internal policies of countries; regional security analyzes the politics and function of regional powers; and global security mainly addresses the role of great powers in international relations. To examine security issues, this school mainly concentrates on regional security (Buzan and Hansen 2009, 10). While doing the security studies with the aim of analysis and development, this theory, while keeping the main and key elements of security (threat and survival), proposed other fundamental concepts under the term "securitization" and "de-securitization", which constitute the main themes in the Copenhagen School.

The Copenhagen School is grounded in multi-level and multi-dimensional views of social, political, and security phenomena. It does not focus too much on material elements, nor does it emphasize purely mental elements. Like the constructivist theory, this theory is formed in society and builds on inter-subjectivity. For Barry Buzan, the securitization of issues is not determined only by the securitizer but also relies on the audience of the speech act; hence, the phenomenon of security is neither based on the objectivity nor the mind but constitutes an inter-subjective issue (Buzan and Wæver 2009).

Following the Cold War and numerous changes in the international order in various fields, along with the emergence of new non-state actors and security phenomena, the traditional theories of security studies could no longer explain and analyze events. The emergence of terrorism, organized crime, social conflicts, cyber threats, migration, and environmental issues demanded the need for an alternative theory, yielding the emergence of the Copenhagen School as a novel approach that aims to explore and expand the security concept (Kاونert and Yakubove 2017, 31). While addressing different areas or security aspects,

the Copenhagen School mainly focuses on the process of securitization and de-securitization, which serves as key concepts of the Copenhagen security school in the analysis of security issues and the securitization of economic, social, and environmental issues. The main three faces of securitization are a political agency, audience, and context (Balzacq 2005). In general, securitization can be defined as a process in which the security actors introduce an issue into the security discourse through the language and expression of the issue. Based on the contextual factors and the facilitating conditions provided by the functional actors, mainly the media, this process is evolved and finally accepted as a threat by the audience. During this process, objectivity is not important, but rather the acceptance of the threat by the audience and the public mind is important. Securitization takes an objective or subjective issue out of normal politics and brings it into emergency politics (Balzacq et al. 2016; Roe 2008).

The securitization process, which enters into the security discourse by the security actors (governments, political groups, party leaders, and the media) and is accepted by the audience (the general public) as a threat under certain conditions, is not without concerns for Copenhagen theorists. The Copenhagen thinkers attach particular importance to filling the gaps in security studies and their management. They have always raised concerns about the securitization of the issues that weaken national, regional, and global security. It is worth noting that the securitization of issues not only targets the military aspect but drawing on the Copenhagen School, different closely-intertwined dimensions, including political, sociocultural, economic, military, and environmental factors, are involved.

Therefore, their broad and multi-dimensional meaning should be considered when discussing security and securitization. The Copenhagen School, as a successful school with a good acceptance of the culture and thought of international relations, utilizes securitization and de-securitization concepts to analyze and resolve new security issues and phenomena such as terrorism, transnational crimes, immigration, AIDS, etc. (McDonald 2008, 45). That is, securitization and de-securitization, which constitute the key concepts of the Copenhagen School, involve broad social, military, political, economic, and environmental dimensions and are used in dealing with various issues concerning security. As mentioned earlier, soon after its operation began, the Nord Stream pipeline was securitized by the US and EU Member States due to the Ukraine crisis, the annexation of Crimea, and especially the Russia-Ukraine war. Following the securitization of Nord Stream, rather than assisting in establishing friendly relations, it is considered a threat to European countries which could weaken political and security relations.

THE NORD STREAM PROJECT: ENERGY FOR THE SAKE OF GOOD

The Nord Stream pipeline was designed to transfer Russian natural gas to the EU through the Baltic Sea (Balaz et al. 2020). It is of great economic and commercial importance for Russia and the EU and consists of Nord Stream 1 and Nord Stream 2.

Nord Stream 1 was started in 2010 and completed in 2012. Due to the increasing demand of Germany and the EU for Russian gas, the Nord Stream 2 project was designed with a similar capacity to Nord Stream 1 in 2018 to increase gas transmission. Nevertheless, before its completion, it was suspended due to political conditions, especially the Ukraine crisis and

Russia's military action against this country. Following the escalation of the Ukraine crisis in 2014, the cooperation between Russia and the EU significantly weakened and shifted towards conflict and confrontation (Siddi 2020). Moscow's military intervention in Ukraine has reduced trade and economic relations between the European Union and Russia, especially in the energy security sector. However, the Nord Stream project became problematic in EU and Russia relations after the military intervention.

Nord Stream 1

The Nord Stream 1 pipeline is a project that transfers Russian natural gas with a capacity of 55 billion cubic meters of gas per year through the Baltic Sea to the EU (Balaz et al. 2020, 4). It is a Russian-German project that President Putin and the prime minister of Germany in 2005 jointly planned. The construction of the project's first line was scheduled in 2010 and commissioned in November 2011, but the project was completed in 2012. The Nord Stream 1 pipeline, with a capacity of 55 billion cubic meters per year, stretches 1,222 km from Vyborg in Russia through Baltik to Lubmin near Greifswald. The total investment in this project is about 7.4 billion Euros, the main shareholder of which is Gazprom company of Russia, holding 51 percent share, and the rest of its share belongs to other companies, including Wintershall (Wood and Henke 2021).

From 2011 to 2013, the project significantly increased energy exports from Russia to the EU. However, the full capacity of this project was hindered by a lack of consensus regarding how the third party would utilize the imported gas. In 2014, about 33.9 billion cubic meters of gas were transferred to Germany through Nord Stream 1 (Chikhladze 2022, 43), and this pipeline increased the transport of Russian gas from 27.5 billion cubic meters to 55 billion, yielding positive effects on the development of EU industries. Therefore, Nord Stream 1, which until then had not been securitized under the political conditions of Ukraine and US-Russia tensions, gained importance for both the EU and Russia. Considering that Nord Stream 1 provided advantages regarding the convenience of transferring Russian gas to the EU, the idea of designing the Nord Stream 2 project was formed.

Nord Stream 2

After the Ukraine crisis in 2014, the major argument between Russia and the EU was how to secure energy (Chikhladze 2022). Accordingly, given that the Nord Stream 1 project served as a successful project to strengthen the security of energy supply and increase commercial Russia-EU relations, especially with Germany, the Nord Stream 2 was designed and started operating in 2018. The Nord Stream 2, possessing two natural gas pipelines, runs through the Baltic Sea almost parallel to Nord Stream 1, from Ust-Luga, Russia, to Lubmin, Germany. This pipeline is 1,200 kilometers long and, similar to Nord Stream 1, has a capacity of 55 billion cubic meters of gas per year. In 2019, approximately 28% of the total Russian gas exports to Western and Central Europe were conducted through this pipeline (Sziklai, Kóczy, and Csercsik 2020). If this project had been completed as scheduled in 2020-2021, Germany would have received reduced gas from the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Ukraine, and Poland (Goldthau 2016). The primary

shareholder of this project is Gazprom, the Russian gas giant. At the same time, five other companies, including Germany's Wintershall, France's Energy, Austria's OMV, the Netherlands' Royal Dutch Shell, and the United Kingdom, collectively hold nearly 50 percent of its shares (Pifer 2021). Nord Stream 2 was launched when tensions between Russia and the US intensified due to Ukraine. This project would also ensure the energy security of the EU and completely bypass Ukraine, eliminating Russia's need and dependence on Ukraine for gas transmission. Therefore, the US and many other European countries, which did not need much Russian energy, were against the launch of this project. The opposition from the United States and certain European countries resulted in the securitization of Nord Stream 2, consequently impacting Nord Stream 1 as well. The completion of Nord Stream 2, originally slated for 2020, faced delays until 2021 due to American opposition (Jacobsen 2021). In 2021, the project did not commence operations for political reasons and was officially suspended following Russia's military attack on Ukraine.

RELATIONS BETWEEN RUSSIA AND THE EU: FROM ENERGIZATION TO POLITICIZATION

In the early 1990s, drastic political changes occurred in the region and worldwide, the most important of which was the fall of the Berlin Wall and the collapse of the Soviet Union, leading to the end of the Cold War. The collapse of the Soviet Union provided further opportunities for friendly relations between Russia and the EU. At the end of 1991, the dissolution of the Soviet Union led to the establishment of close ties between the Russian Federation, the EU, and the US (Kanet 2009).

The relations between Russia and the EU underwent fluctuations following the collapse of the Soviet Union. This period of change gave rise to new identities while simultaneously reducing previous conflicts between Russia and the EU. In the aftermath of the Soviet Union's collapse, the multifaceted Russia-EU relations encompassing politics, economics, security, science, and culture can be examined and understood through two lenses: conflict and interaction. Despite notable disagreements and competition, these relations were characterized by significant shared needs (Tocci 2020), necessitating extensive cooperation and interaction across various domains. Overall, the relations between Russia and the EU developed after the Cold War and the collapse of the Soviet Union, once they signed the "Partnership and Cooperation Agreement", which aims to develop political, economic, and cultural relations, as well as economic and commercial growth, enhance readiness to cope with threats and remove restrictions. Following this, in 1999, Russia's strategic partnership with Europe was approved, yielding strengthened relations. The main goals of this joint partnership were the EU's investment in Russia and the expansion of Western values in Russia. However, Russia aimed to enhance access to a common European economic space and markets (Cronberg 2003, 95-96). This led to the expansion of relations in various political, economic, and security dimensions, with the economic dimension being wider than other dimensions (Golunov 2013).

At the St. Petersburg summit in May 2003, Russia and the EU committed to further strengthening their cooperation in four areas: economic, political, and security, ensuring freedom and human rights, and scientific and research cooperation. In 2008, they designed a comprehensive framework reflecting their extensive cooperation and binding commitments in

various economic, political, security, commercial, and cultural fields. In 2010, the EU and Russia launched a partnership modernization partnership program, which reflected their extensive ties in various fields (House of Lords 2015).

After 2014, the internal conflicts in Ukraine harmed the relations between Russia and the EU. The tensions between Russia and the EU are not only related to this period. Earlier in 2004, challenges and opposition increased with the development of the EU and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the EU's support for the Orange revolutions in Ukraine and some other countries. However, during the Ukraine crisis, these tensions reached the maximum level. In 2014, due to the street protests in Kyiv Square, Yanukovich was swiftly ousted from office, leading to the installation of an interim government until a democratically elected government could be established (Lichtenstein et al. 2019). According to President Putin, these developments at that time were against the internal laws of Ukraine and showed direct interference from the West. The fall of the Ukrainian government under the leadership of Yanukovich happened just when he opposed the West, and the West, especially the EU, encouraged many Ukrainian political parties and extreme nationalists to demonstrate against the government. These demonstrations finally turned violent in February 2014. Subsequently, the Ukrainian parliament, influenced by pressure from the US, the EU, and the UK, an EU Member State at the time, dissolved the Ukrainian government and implemented an interim government until early elections could be conducted (Ramicone et al. 2014).

The fall of the Yanukovich pro-Russian government made Russia more sensitive to the West. The EU created the mentality that the West, supported by the US, attempts to expand its sphere of influence in the East and the buffer zones through NATO and the EU. It seeks to integrate Ukraine, which possesses an excellent geopolitical position, into NATO. This was considered a big threat to Russia's national security; therefore, President Putin tried to prohibit the integration of Ukraine into NATO and make integrating that country into the EU costly (Richter 2022; Tsygankov 2015). In order to maintain political, security, and economic relations and strengthen regional stability, Russia first asked the West for an assurance not to integrate Ukraine into NATO, but the West rejected Russia's request. Subsequently, in a preventive measure to prevent Ukraine from joining NATO and the EU, Russia annexed the Crimean Peninsula to its territory through a referendum on 16 March 2014 (Olech 2019).

Russia's annexation of the Crimean Peninsula, which holds significant geopolitical importance for Russia and the West, caught the Western countries off guard. This unexpected move intensified tensions between Russia and the West, marking an unprecedented escalation since the end of the Cold War. Russia's aggressive actions in Ukraine prompted swift condemnation from the Western nations, followed by extensive and stringent sanctions against Russia (Kuzio 2018). To isolate Russia socially, the West declined Russia's invitation to the first summit of the Group of Eight (G8), leading to the group's rebranding as the Group of Seven (G7). While weakening Russia's ties with the EU, these measures further fueled the country's expansionist and invasive tendencies, increasing its reliance on military options. Although after the Cold War, Russia-EU relations were strengthened and significantly developed until the late 1990s, due to political and security factors, these relations gradually faded and became strained and aggressive after the Ukraine crisis and the annexation of Crimea to Russia. The repercussions of these tensions were felt in the Nord Stream pipeline and energy exports,

leading to concerns about this project's dynamics and economic significance (Foxall 2019; Harris 2020). However, the securitization of the project and the Russian military attack on Ukraine on 24 February 2022 further exacerbated doubts surrounding its viability. Consequently, Russia-EU relations experienced a significant deterioration in political and security dimensions and economic aspects, marking the most strained period since the end of the Cold War.

SECURITIZATION OF THE NORD STREAM

According to the Copenhagen School, the process of securitization and de-securitization involves several dimensions in a strong and close relationship with each other and cannot act separately. In the context of economic securitization, the close and undeniable link between the economic and military dimensions becomes apparent. When an economic issue undermines military power, it can threaten the government's survival and the system's overall stability. Likewise, military and political issues can securitize the economic dimension, rendering it devoid of economic value and significance.

The securitization of Nord Streams 1 and 2 began in 2018 due to political tensions stemming from the Ukraine crisis. This project has evolved into a security concern, particularly under specific security-military conditions, due to its undeniable connection with broader security and military issues. In his analysis of security threats, Barry Buzan highlights the close relationship between economic and military security, emphasizing that military security relies heavily on economic security due to budgetary constraints. Buzan views economic security as a fundamental component of national security (Stone 2009, 5).

The Ukraine crisis subjected Nord Stream 1 and Nord Stream 2 projects to full securitization and a state of emergency under the political West-Russia conflicts. This led to a decrease in these projects' economic and peaceful effectiveness based on the theory of mutual interdependence. It seems that this problem cannot be solved through ordinary political resolutions and existing rules because these projects are securitized by some security actors, including the US, which controls a large part of the economic sector in Europe and many countries worldwide. Practically, this problem is a serious threat to the EU, especially Germany, until finding alternative solutions.

RUSSIA-EU RELATIONS BEFORE THE SECURITIZATION OF NORD STREAM

Economic projects usually play a positive and constructive role in countries' political and security relations. In many cases, while under political, security, or military tensions, countries have cut off their friendly relations, and economic programs have restored them. Regarding the Nord Stream, which formed a part of Russia's economic and political relations with the EU, there was an impression that this project would shape peaceful and constructive relations between Russia and the EU in the long term. Even some thinkers after the Ukraine crisis assumed that all Member States of the EU would not act jointly against Russia due to their economic dependencies. It was assumed that some countries, including Germany, with broad economic relations with Russia, would maintain these relations to keep mutual interests despite the pressures of the US. In other words, economic relations and the Nord Stream project were

expected to ensure both sides' development and economic growth. From this perspective, the Nord Stream pipeline, which has long been on the agenda of Russia and Germany, plays a key role in both countries' industrial and economic development (Laqueur 2018).

In addition to the support of countries such as Germany, France, Italy, the Netherlands, and Bulgaria, this project was officially approved by the European Commission, which determines the energy and economic policy of the EU (Moshenets 2021). Germany considered the Nord Stream crucial for establishing stable and long-term relations among the EU Member States. Thus, rather than accompanying the EU, it tried to mediate the opposition between the West and Russia during the subsequent tensions. For Germany, the Nord Stream pipeline, as an important aspect of bilateral cooperation between Russia and the EU, contributes to reducing tensions and strengthening political and security relations and should be kept away from political and security issues (Shagina and Westphal 2021). Following the Ukraine crisis and the annexation of Crimea, Russia, the third trading partner of the EU (Estrada and Koutronas 2022), lost its position in 2017. The following section discusses the role of the Nord Stream in the political and security relations between Russia and the EU after securitization.

RUSSIA-EU RELATIONS AFTER THE SECURITIZATION OF NORD STREAM

The Ukraine crisis caused tension and conflict between Russia and the West, especially the EU, and created the perception that if the big powers (West and Russia) do not reconsider their behavior, there could be increasing conflicts and military confrontation. However, some believed that the tensions would eventually diminish for several reasons. They argued that the deep-rooted relations between Russia and the EU, forged by geographical proximity, historical connections, and scientific and cultural cooperation that underscore their shared identity, were resilient enough to withstand the impact of the Ukraine crisis. Two significant options emerged as potential solutions: a political understanding founded on a reliable mechanism and the maintenance of economic relations facilitated by the Nord Stream pipeline. These approaches were instrumental in rebuilding relations and alleviating tensions between these countries (Perović and Shagina 2021). Before the Ukraine crisis, Russia and the EU had security relations, including cooperation with NATO and a common defense and security strategy. Russia, as a leading country in global terrorism, human and drug trafficking, and organized crime, had significant cooperation with the EU and even NATO. Russia started cooperating with the North Atlantic Council in 1991 and joined the NATO-Russia Partnership for Peace in 1994 (Forsberg and Herd 2015). It also signed the NATO-Russia cooperation document, which contains many commitments and agreements demonstrating Russia's close security relations with NATO and the EU. In 1999, the EU developed its common foreign policy strategies, leading to the approval of a security and defense strategic document between Russia and the EU (Busygina 2018). This document heavily emphasized value aspects, including human rights, the expansion of freedom, the consolidation of economic relations, and the fight against terrorism, organized crime, and drug trafficking.

After 2000, Russia took an aggressive and confrontational attitude toward the West. In 1999, the EU adopted an aggressive rather than a security approach after the Kosovo War. According to the new military strategy of the EU, each member state of the union had to

prepare 60,000 military forces, 200 aircraft, and 100 ships as rapid reaction forces. Later, the security strategy of the EU was renewed in 2003, which again adopted a security approach (Dembinska et al. 2020).

Over the years, Russia cut security cooperation with NATO (Frear et al. 2018). It sought to increase its military capabilities because the presence of America and NATO, which strived for world domination, was considered the biggest threat to its western and southwestern borders (Eastern Europe and the Black Sea area). Russia needed to reconstruct and strengthen its defense systems and modernize the army to neutralize the threat of America and NATO.

In such a tense security environment, the perception was that joint economic programs, including the Nord Stream, would effectively reduce strains. However, this pipeline became securitized amid political changes, particularly the political conflicts and the Ukraine crisis. Instead of fostering amicable relations, it further exacerbated the political and security dynamics or, at the very least, lost its constructive role. In 2015, they witnessed Russia's proposal for the Nord Stream 2 project, aiming to double the capacity of gas transmission, which ignited heated political debates (Moshenets 2021). In 2018, coinciding with the project's official launch, it reached the highest level of securitization. As discussed earlier, the United States, Poland, and the Baltic countries, as EU Member States, opposed Germany's energy policy and viewed Nord Stream as a significant threat to the EU's and its allies' national security (Siddi 2020). Rather than fostering the relations between Russia and the EU, the securitization of the Nord Stream first led to internal tensions in the EU. Then the change in Germany's approach towards Nord Stream under US pressure increased the tensions between Russia and the EU. Following the Russian military attack on Ukraine, this project encountered new challenges in 2022. Nord Stream 2 was suspended, and Russia reduced gas transfer from the Nord Stream pipeline, resulting in further tensions between Russia and the EU or the West. As a result, Nord Stream 1 and 2 lost their values and economic position, and rather than being a source of cooperation and convergence, they were considered a security threat by the US and some EU countries, including the European Commission (Bugayova and Kagan 2021).

The Nord Stream has not played a significant and outstanding role in improving political and security relations between Russia and Europe before and after securitization. Although this project helped strengthen the relations between Russia and the EU before the Ukraine crisis and the securitization of this project, it has become a tool to pressure the EU and Western countries after the Ukraine crisis. The EU quickly realized that rather than improving security, economic dependency can be a source of threat and insecurity. Therefore, it seems that the Nord Stream pipeline after securitization possesses a negative and conflict-inducing rather than a positive and constructive role.

CONCLUSION

From its inception, the Nord Stream project was perceived as an economic endeavor, but it also held political and security implications. The project's initiation coincided with escalating political tensions between Russia and Ukraine, leading Russia to raise the price of gas exports to Ukraine as a punitive measure. In response, Ukraine resorted to exerting pressure on the gas transit system, threatening the security of Russian gas transmission to Europe. At the same time

as the political conflicts in Ukraine increased, the hypothetical Nord Stream pipeline, which had been at the core of attention for years, was approved by the President of Russia and the Chancellor of Germany in 2005. Finally, the operational plan of this strategic and long-term project was started in 2010, operated in 2011, and completed in 2012. In the first stage, Russia seriously welcomed this project and many member countries of the EU, including the European Commission. At the time of this project's operation, the European Commission and Germany considered it important for regulating economic, political, and social relations between Russia and the EU. At first, Russia and many EU Member States, including the European Commission, enthusiastically supported this project. From 2010 to the end of 2013, Nord Stream was not securitized, and Russia and the EU considered it an important, extremely helpful, successful, and strategic economic project.

Since the Nord Stream was important and successful in planning and efficiency, the construction of the Nord Stream 2 project was on the agenda. This project was launched when the political tensions between Russia and the West rose due to the Ukraine crisis and the annexation of Crimea. When the Nord Stream 2 construction was initiated in 2018, the United States, the European Commission, and the Baltic States opposed the project. Despite Germany's resistance, these countries kept opposing and deemed Nord Stream a threat to the national security of Europe and NATO Member States. Due to the concern that Russia could exploit the EU's dependence on its energy resources for political ends and potentially act recklessly, the United States intensified its focus on securitizing the Nord Stream project. Consequently, numerous media outlets, intelligence agencies, and certain European countries began magnifying this project as a significant threat. Eventually, the EU began to view the project as a potential menace.

Following the securitization, Nord Stream shifted its economic position to a security position, failing to play a significant and positive role in improving political and security relations between Russia and the EU. After Russia's military attack on Ukraine on 24 February 2022, which coincides with the 2014 Ukraine crisis, Nord Stream 2, which was not yet operational, was suspended, and the flow of gas to Europe by Nord Stream 1, which was about 55 billion cubic meters, was reduced and almost stopped. Currently, the Nord Stream is in uncertain conditions. In light of the prevailing political tensions between Russia and the Western countries, it is plausible to anticipate a complete suspension of the Nord Stream pipeline if the EU manages to fulfill its energy requirements through renewable energy sources or alternative suppliers and if Russia discovers a new lucrative market for its gas exports. The continuation of the Nord Stream project hinges on reducing political tensions and de-securitizing Nord Stream following international rules and conventions.

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