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Central Europe: The Arena of Energy Competition in the Political Thought of the Law and Justice Party

Introduction

Central Europe¹ became a focal point of international engagement for the Law and Justice party. This strategic approach was grounded in a recognition of the region's significance in Poland's foreign policy. Consequently, politicians from this political party prioritised bilateral and multilateral relations in the area and pragmatically assessed threats. A key aspect of their policy was the pursuit of energy security,² driven by the belief that political relations of sovereign states

¹ In the article, the term "Central Europe" denotes Poland, the Baltic States, the Visegrad Group, and Ukraine – essentially, Poland's neighbours. This classification stems from the direct energy interconnections and the accompanying infrastructure facilitating the transportation of energy resources.

² Energy security represents a pivotal category of research. Within the realm of international relations, the two prevailing research paradigms – realism and liberalism – conceive of this concept in differing ways. Law and Justice aligns more closely with the realist approach, which prioritizes the state as the central actor. Accordingly, the paramount concern is not merely the cost of energy imports but rather the state's capacity to ensure access to vital energy resources (a viewpoint distinct from that of the liberal paradigm). Consequently, for the Law and Justice Party, energy security entails "uninterrupted access to energy sources at all times, in various forms, and in quantities sufficient to sustain the effective functioning of the state", M. Paszkowski, *Specyfika badań politologicznych nad myślą polityczną w zakresie bezpieczeństwa energetycznego państwa*, „Humanities and Social Sciences”, 2015, vol. 2(22), pp. 101–102, <https://doi.org/10.7862/rz.2015.hss.22>.

could not be freely shaped if they remained reliant on supplies of energy resource. The Law and Justice party recognised the inherently conflicting nature of the international landscape, along with the evolving state relations. According to this party the foremost threat to political sovereignty of Central European countries was the imperialist foreign policy of the Russian Federation. The manifestation of this threat materialised in the full-scale invasion by the Russian Federation of Ukraine in 2022. Throughout the years, energy resources have remained the primary instrument employed by Russia in inter-state relations. From the perspective of the Law and Justice party, every effort to diminish reliance on Russian energy should have been undertaken, with a crucial aspect being the expansion of infrastructural connections among Central European countries.

The assessment of threats, directly linked to the imperialistic ambitions of the Russian Federation, underscored the imperative for an active policy across multiple fronts. Within this framework, efforts were directed towards countering Russia's agenda through various means. These included fostering closer political and economic ties within Central Europe, exemplified by initiatives such as the Three Seas Initiative. Additionally, political and financial tools within the European Union were leveraged, particularly in securing funds for the expansion of energy infrastructure. Furthermore, cultivating strong relations with key energy resource exporters was deemed essential. For the Law and Justice party, Central Europe's strategic dynamics should ideally involve a significant role for the United States of America (US), a pivotal global energy exporter.

The cognitive aim of the article was to scrutinise the political thought of the Law and Justice party³ concerning the role and significance of key international players – the Russian Federation and the United States of America – in safeguarding the energy security of Central European countries. Consequently, the aim was to explore the roles these two nations played in the energy competition within the region. The article's structure is problem-centric, with issues categorised into two chapters. Two key research questions were posed: 1) How did Law and Justice politicians evaluate the Russian Federation's role in the global arena and its position in Central Europe?; 2) How did Law and Justice perceive the United States of America's role in its endeavours to ensure the energy security of regional countries? The article employs an analysis of testimonies and traces of political thought, which were utilised in assessing the understanding of po-

³ Political thought should be understood as "any form of reflection on political reality, regardless of the degree of development, internal consistency and systematization, as well as theoreticalization and concretization", J. Jachymek, W. Paruch, *Wstęp*, [in:] *Więcej niż niepodległość: polska myśl polityczna 1918–1939*, red. J. Jachymek, W. Paruch, Wyd. UMCS, Lublin 2011, pp. 9–14.

litical realities – specifically, in delineating problems and diagnosing solutions to fortify the energy security of Central European countries. Considering the research area, the article is primarily based on secondary sources, which play a central role in studies on political thought. Therefore, the analysis mainly relies on public statements made by representatives of the Law and Justice party in the mass media. Additionally, a limited number of comprehensive studies and academic articles have also played a significant role. The article employs an analysis of testimonies and traces of political thought. The research process is based on secondary data analysis (desk research) and content analysis of source documentation. Two key premises underpin the discussion on the significance of Central Europe as an arena for energy competition. The first is the belief in the substantial impact of the energy dimension on the political debate in Poland regarding national security. The second is the limited level of recognition of Law and Justice's views on the interpretation of the role and significance of Russia and the United States in Europe in the context of energy policy. The analyses are premised on the concept that the Law and Justice party regarded the Central European region as a crucial domain of political engagement, with energy projects aimed at diminishing the Russian Federation's influence in this region and, through the policy of diversification of energy sources and supply routes, facilitating the importation of energy commodities from the US.⁴

The role of the Russian Federation in the region

For years, the Law and Justice party has held a critical view of the Russian Federation's foreign policy, particularly its utilisation of energy resources as a means to advance political objectives. Law and Justice politicians have consistently highlighted Russia's imperialistic aspirations. A pragmatic assessment of the global landscape led to advocate for proactive measures aimed at fostering a more diversified energy resource supply structure.⁵ This imperative extended beyond Poland to encompass other Central European countries. Consequently, there was an emphasis on the legitimacy of opposing projects that sought to bolster the Russian Federation's influence in Central Europe, especially when such endeavours lacked commercial viability. Simultaneously, there was an emphasis

⁴ The analysis of political projects to ensure the energy security of the country is an issue under study of the political thought of political parties. M. Paszkowski, *Specyfika...*, pp. 99–109.

⁵ See: M. Paszkowski, *The Issue of Poland's Dependence on Natural Gas Supplies from the Russian Federation in the Political Thought of Piotr Naimski: Selected Problems*, „Historia i Polityka”, 2022, vol. 42(49), pp. 117–129, <https://doi.org/10.12775/HiP.2022.034>.

on the legitimacy of promoting alternative investments that supported energy security of the region.

A cornerstone of Law and Justice's political thinking was the pursuit of energy security not only for Poland but also for Central European countries. Core element of this perspective was the recognition of Poland's significance within the region and the broader international arena. Law and Justice politicians firmly believed that "Poland's importance in the world is commensurate with its significance in the region".⁶ The unfavourable appraisal of the Russian Federation's actions in Central Europe stemmed from multiple factors, spanning political, energy, and infrastructural realms. Firstly, Russia's imperialistic policies manifested through military interventions, notably evidenced by its aggression in 2008 during the conflict with Georgia, the annexation of Crimea in 2014, and the subsequent invasion of Ukraine in 2022. Additionally, Russia's political-military engagements in diverse regions worldwide, such as Syria, Venezuela, and Libya, were perceived as efforts to bolster its global standing and engage in active rivalry with the United States of America. The confrontational nature of the international landscape and Russia's strategic manoeuvres prompted the Law and Justice party to advocate for proactive measures across various dimensions to counteract its influence.

Secondly, the proportion of energy resources from Russia in the region's energy balance was a significant concern for Law and Justice. The party contended that Russia's actions, along with those of Russian companies, were geared towards monopolising the energy market of Central European countries.⁷ Consequently, the prevalent dependency on Russian energy imports rendered these countries susceptible to external influence, constraining their ability to make autonomous political decisions. Natural gas pipelines originating from Russia epitomised this dependency. Poland opposed the development of transmission infrastructure that would increase Central Europe's dependence on natural gas supplies from the Russian Federation. At the same time, it emphasized the need to strengthen the region's resilience to the risk of using these supplies as a tool of political pressure.⁸ Mateusz Morawiecki, Prime Minister from 2017 to 2023, underscored this sentiment by stating that "for Russia, gas pipelines, much like the tanks barrels, are instruments of aggression, domination, and imperialism". He further likened Russian gas to a drug, suggesting that "a drug dealer also

⁶ Prawo i Sprawiedliwość, *Bezpieczna przyszłość Polaków*, [b.m.w.], 2023, p. 86.

⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 85.

⁸ Biuro Bezpieczeństwa Narodowego, *Strategia Bezpieczeństwa Narodowego Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej*, Warszawa 2020, p. 34.

dispenses his wares purportedly at low cost, or even for free, to ensnare future dependents. And this is precisely how Moscow operated in the preceding years.”⁹ Consequently, it was believed that Russia’s policies in the region were designed to diminish competitiveness and thereby undermine the feasibility of alternative energy projects.

Thirdly, the existing energy dependency, which had accumulated over the years, was facilitated by operational energy connections. These included both historical links, such as the Brotherhood and Friendship pipelines, and newer initiatives like Nord Stream 1 and Nord Stream 2 pipelines. A notable aspect of the Law and Justice party’s position regarding Russia’s involvement in the region was its critical stance towards energy projects lacking economic justification.¹⁰ According to Law and Justice, pipelines such as Nord Stream 1 and Nord Stream 2 were politicised and could yield numerous adverse consequences.¹¹ Therefore, its politicians underscored that such projects were unjustified due to several reasons: 1) diminishing the significance of certain transit countries, chiefly Ukraine; 2) impeding the implementation of competitive projects and thereby hindering the policy of diversifying energy supply sources and routes; 3) absence of a cohesive energy policy at the European Union level, including the assurance of energy solidarity; 4) enabling the potential for “blackmail” of Central European countries; 5) facilitating the monopolisation of the energy market of EU member states and curtailing competitiveness.¹²

According to the Law and Justice party, the imperative was to establish an energy system in Central Europe that remained impartial towards any particular countries. Consequently, it was highlighted as crucial to enact measures aimed at market liberalisation and ensuring equitable operating regulations for all stakeholders. European Union regulations played a significant role in this en-

⁹ [jp/PAP/IAR/kor], *Premier Morawiecki: szczyt w Pradze potwierdził, że Rosja jest w pełnej izolacji*, PolskieRadio24.pl, 6.10.2022, <https://polskieradio24.pl/arttykul/3049137,premier-morawiecki-szczyt-w-pradze-potwierdzi-ze-rosja-jest-w-pełnej-izolacji>, access 25 IV 2024.

¹⁰ M. Kozłowska, *Premier dla „DGP”: NordStream 2 nie ma charakteru biznesowego; jest bardzo niebezpieczny*, 29.01.2018, <https://www.pap.pl/aktualnosci/news%2C1265633%2Cpremier-dla-dgp-nord-stream-2-nie-ma-charakteru-biznesowego%3B-jest-bardzo-niebezpieczny.html>, access 23 IV 2024; Business Insider, *PiS chce wezwać Niemcy do wycofania poparcia dla NordStream 2*, 27.05.2021, <https://businessinsider.com.pl/wiadomosci/nord-stream-2-projekt-uchwaly-poslow-pis/d3715k4>, access 24 IV 2024.

¹¹ J. Kubera, *Polska „piastowska” vs. „jagiellońska”. Odmienność wizji relacji z Niemcami jako determinanta poglądów na polską politykę zagraniczną*, „Acta Politica Polonica” 2016, vol. 4(38), pp. 65–80.

¹² See: M. Paszkowski, *Stanowisko Prawa i Sprawiedliwości wobec wpływu gazociągów NordStream 1 oraz NordStream 2 na bezpieczeństwo energetyczne państw Europy Środkowej*, „Przegląd Zachodni”, 2023, nr 3, pp. 135–148, <https://doi.org/10.60972/PZ.2023.3.135>.

deavour. While the party generally exhibited a negative stance towards the EU's role in guaranteeing energy security, asserting that such matters were within the purview of nation-states,¹³ it nonetheless acknowledged the EU's role in creating regulations to curb energy market monopolisation and ensure energy solidarity. This stance was evident in its opposition to legislation favouring Gazprom's utilisation of the full capacity of the OPAL pipeline (which, together with the NEL pipeline, constituted the onshore segment of the Nord Stream 1 pipeline). The Law and Justice party contended that energy security was intrinsically linked to market equilibrium, thus stressing the EU's crucial role in this domain. Within this context, it emphasised that the principle of energy solidarity guaranteed "both energy security and equal developmental opportunities for all EU member states".¹⁴ Consequently, for the Law and Justice party, it was incumbent upon EU member states, working through the European Commission, to delineate the requisite conditions for establishing a regulatory framework conducive to energy market demonopolisation.

For the Law and Justice party, the negative assessment of the Russian Federation's position in Central Europe stemmed from its perceived efforts to undermine energy solidarity among the region's countries and, indeed, the European Union as a whole. This concern was intricately linked to Russia's foreign policy strategy, which prioritised cultivating bilateral relations and executing joint energy ventures solely with select countries. The Nord Stream 1 and Nord Stream 2 gas pipeline projects exemplify this approach, representing the established Russian-German infrastructure links.¹⁵ These projects aimed to further consolidate Russia's dominance in the European natural gas market, with Russian supplies covering 37% of demand in 2021.¹⁶ In the view of this political party, such projects served as evidence supporting the notion that energy security was determined by individual countries rather than the collective framework

¹³ P. Naimski, *Ministerstwo Energetyki*, [in:] *Racja Stanu – Janowi Olszewskiemu*, red. E. Urbanowicz, J. Urbanowicz, Zysk i S-ka, Poznań 2011, p. 208; Telewizja Republika, *P. Naimski – bezpieczeństwo i suwerenność energetyczna Polski i Europy – Dziennikarski Poker*, 5.04.2022, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tHo7dJSnGOM>, access 22 IV 2024.

¹⁴ Europejskie Centrum Projektów Pozarządowych, *Korzystny wyrok TSUE w sprawie gazociągu OPAL. „Komplikacje dla NordStream 2”*, 15.07.2021, <https://www.ecpp.org.pl/korzystny-wyrok-tsue-w-sprawie-gazociagu-opal-komplikacje-dla-nord-stream-2/>, access 22 IV 2024.

¹⁵ [WZI], *Naimski o NordStream 2: „Ma siac nieufność w strukturach Zachodu”*, 10.01.2022, <https://www.money.pl/gospodarka/naimski-o-nord-stream-2-ma-siac-nieufnosc-w-strukturach-zachodu-6724985895414752a.html>, access 21 IV 2024.

¹⁶ A. Hernandez, M. Rashad, P. Lombardi, N. Adomaitis, *New west-east route keeps Europe hooked on Russian gas*, 3.04.2024, Reuters, <https://www.reuters.com/business/energy/new-west-east-route-keeps-europe-hooked-russian-gas-2024-04-03/>, access 24 IV 2024.

of the Energy Union. Simultaneously, it was underscored that such projects, in this regard, sometimes engendered negative evaluations from segments of the international community and fostered unnecessary distinctions among individual countries. Therefore, according to the Law and Justice party, projects should have been prioritised that facilitated the augmentation of natural gas availability from diverse sources. Key tools in achieving this objective included the construction of regasification terminals in Poland (Świnoujście), Croatia (on the island of Krk), and Lithuania (Klaipėda).¹⁷

Law and Justice's assessment of the Russian Federation extended beyond its energy policies in Central Europe to encompass experiences on the domestic front. It was underscored that Russia was an inherently unpredictable trading partner, fraught with difficulties. Piotr Woźniak, Deputy Minister of Economy from 2005 to 2007 and CEO of PGNiG from 2016 to 2020, highlighted the recurrent disruptions in natural gas supplies from Russia. He emphasised the pervasive uncertainty surrounding deliveries, stating, "we were never certain of the day or the hour, throughout the duration of the contract [with Gazprom – M.P.], whether there would be a delivery or not because it really depended on the supplier's whim."¹⁸ These disruptions not only caused significant upheavals in the operation of the transmission system but also posed challenges to energy security. Despite formal agreements, Russia resorted to "energy blackmail", albeit on a smaller scale.¹⁹ Such incidents only reinforced the legitimacy of domestic energy projects and initiatives aimed at diversifying commodity supply sources away from Russia. Examples included the Baltic Pipe gas pipeline and the Poland-Slovakia and Poland-Lithuania interconnectors. In this context, there was a call for expanding infrastructure to ensure the availability of natural gas from alternative sources, including the United States.

An examination of testimonies and traces of political thought reveals that Law and Justice party envisaged three main courses of action to counter various activities by the Russian Federation in Central Europe's energy sphere. Firstly, there was a focus on bolstering import capacity through alternative natural gas channels. Secondly, efforts were directed towards thwarting any attempts to

¹⁷ [PAP/mt], *Duda: realizowane projekty gazowe zapewnią nam niezależność*, 28.09.2020, wGo-spodarce.pl, <https://wgospodarce.pl/informacje/85904-duda-realizowane-projekty-gazowe-zapewnia-nam-niezaleznosc>, access 20 IV 2024.

¹⁸ YouTube, *Piotr Woźniak – polski rynek gazu ziemnego – fortel czy paradygmat? (Klub Ronina)*, 7.03.2022, cz. 24:53-25:02, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LXO3o7L3kfw>, access 28 IV 2024.

¹⁹ P. Naimski, *List Piotra Naimskiego do uczestników II Polsko-Ukraińskiej Konferencji Gazowej*, 6.06.2017, <http://naimski.pl/list-piotra-naimskiego-do-uczestnikow-ii-polsko-ukrainskiej-konferencji-gazowej/>, access 30 IV 2024.

monopolise the market and diminish competitiveness. Thirdly, there was an emphasis on institutionalising regional cooperation, particularly through the implementation of collaborative energy projects. A significant component of such endeavours was the Three Seas Initiative, aimed at facilitating dialogue and executing specific initiatives to enhance operability and trade, including energy exchange, along the North-South axis.

In summary, Law and Justice's evaluation of the Russian Federation's energy policy spurred politicians to advocate for a reduced role for Russia on the energy landscape of Central European countries. The escalation to a full-scale war in Ukraine in 2022 served as a validation of Law and Justice's negative appraisal of Russia's regional foreign policy, prompting a reassessment of the stance towards the country. In this context, there was a call for and support towards complete de-Russification of energy policy, entailing the cessation of energy resource imports from the Russian Federation. This demand was driven by the imperative to demonstrate solidarity towards Ukraine, with a subsequent inclination towards collaboration with more reliable and predictable partners.

The US energy position in Central Europe

The perceived threat to sovereignty and security, stemming from the foreign policy of the Russian Federation, necessitated Poland to fortify and deepen collaborations with other key partners. According to the Law and Justice party, the security of Central European countries was intricately linked to cooperation with the USA, viewed as one of the fundamental pillars of Poland's security²⁰ and a guarantor of the region's autonomy.²¹ Consequently, the alliance between Poland and the US was accorded the highest strategic priority. It was deemed imperative that Russia's aggressive policies, including its imperial ambitions, mandated closer cooperation with the US across multiple dimensions, encompassing not only political and military realms but also energy. Mutual relations were bolstered, particularly in the wake of the conflict in Ukraine, with energy resources from that country assuming a significant role in the strategy to diversify energy sources and supply routes to the region.

²⁰ J. Sanecka-Tyczyńska, *Model bezpieczeństwa zewnętrznego państwa w myśli politycznej Prawa i Sprawiedliwości*, „Zeszyty Naukowe Wyższej Szkoły Oficerskiej Wojsk Lądowych”, 2011, vol. 161(3), pp. 218–224.

²¹ W. Paruch, *W obronie interesów narodowych i tożsamości politycznej Europy Środkowo-Wschodniej: Eurorealizm w myśli politycznej Prawa i Sprawiedliwości*, [in:] „Rodzinna Europa”. *Europejska myśl polityczno-prawna u progu XXI wieku*, red. P. Fiktus, H. Majewski, M. Marszał, Wyd. Uniwersytetu Wrocławskiego, Wrocław 2015, p. 419.

For Law and Justice, Polish-American cooperation held paramount importance in foreign policy, stemming from a pragmatic assessment of threats.²² It was believed that only collaboration with the US, alongside its military presence on the European continent, could ensure security. The Russian Federation's aggressive policies further reinforced the conviction of the imperative to fortify mutual relations.²³ According to the Law and Justice party, the alliance with the US extended beyond political and military dimensions. An essential aspect of this relationship was energy cooperation. Members of the party envisioned the US playing a significant role in Poland's energy policy in two key areas: diversifying energy sources and supply routes, primarily natural gas, and the construction of a nuclear power plant in Poland.

In the political thought of this party, a prevailing belief underscored that the security of the state hinged on its capacity to procure commodities from various sources and suppliers. A notable feature of this political ideology, as manifested in its evaluation of the international landscape, was the notion that Poland's sovereignty in international relations would be bolstered as it became increasingly independent in its energy supply. A similar perspective extended to Central European countries, with the conviction that Russia ought to be just one among several suppliers of commodities, rather than monopolising markets in EU countries. Concurrently, it was assessed that only an energy-independent state could autonomously shape political relations on the global stage. This assessment led to the conviction of the necessity to develop infrastructure to safeguard the security of Central European countries, given the significant threat posed by the absence of alternatives in the selection of commodity supply, particularly the lack of integration along the North-South axis.

For the Law and Justice party, a pivotal aspect of ensuring security entailed the pursuit of energy imports from diverse directions and a multitude of suppliers. The advent of the technological revolution, notably through hydraulic fracturing and horizontal drilling techniques, in the US post-2005, led to a significant surge in the country's production of crude oil and natural gas from unconventional ("shale") formations. Consequently, in 2015, the US government lifted the long-standing ban on crude oil exports,²⁴ dating back to 1975, and au-

²² Prawo i Sprawiedliwość, *Polski model państwa dobrobytu. Program Prawa i Sprawiedliwości* 2019, [b.m.w.], 2019, p. 178.

²³ T. Wicha, *Absens carens. Studium o polityce zagranicznej Polski w myśli politycznej Prawa i Sprawiedliwości (2001–2011)*, Wyd. UMCS, Lublin 2021, pp. 326–342.

²⁴ See: M. Paszkowski, *Import surowców i paliw z USA do Polski oraz państw bałtyckich*, „Komentarze IES”, 2024, nr 88(1113), 25.04.2024, <https://ies.lublin.pl/komentarze/kies-1113/>, access 29 IV 2024.

gmented natural gas exports, including in liquefied natural gas (LNG) form. In light of these altered international dynamics, it was envisaged that Poland and Central European countries could substantially mitigate their energy imports through supplies from the US. However, the situation concerning crude oil imports was intricate, with the volume of supplies influenced over the years by the distinct characteristics of US crude oil grades available on the international market, such as Eagle Ford or Bakken, among others. These grades, distinguished by lower sulfur content, facilitated the production of more gasoline rather than diesel. The physicochemical attributes of these grades posed a barrier to their importation by refineries in Central Europe. These facilities prioritised the import of commodities conducive to producing primarily diesel fuel, including Urals crude from the Russian Federation. Conversely, the scenario differed concerning natural gas imports, where the challenge in strengthening mutual trade relations stemmed from inadequate infrastructure. It was not until Poland erected a regasification terminal in Świnoujście that the groundwork for LNG supplies from the US was laid. Similarly, LNG terminals in Klaipėda (Lithuania), and on the island of Krk (Croatia), were envisaged to fulfil a comparable role. As highlighted by Andrzej Duda, President of Poland, “[w]e aim to establish a north-south corridor – a natural gas corridor between the natural gas terminal in Świnoujście and the prospective natural gas terminal on Krk Island in Croatia. However, our objective is to energetically safeguard the countries of our region through this system, to prevent any potential exploitation of natural gas as a tool of blackmail against our part of Europe”.²⁵

Central European-U.S. relations witnessed a bolstering in the wake of the full-scale attack by the Russian Federation on Ukraine in 2022.²⁶ Various actions were undertaken at both bilateral and multilateral levels during this period. On the bilateral front, there was a redirection of the US natural gas from the Asia-Pacific market to Europe, including Central European countries, facilitated by imports via LNG terminals in Poland, Lithuania, and Croatia. Specifically, concerning the supply of natural gas to the terminals in Świnoujście and Klaipėda, there was a notable uptick in imports from the US. Previously, Poland and the Baltic States had been partially dependent on natural gas supplied from the Russian Federation. However, in the new circumstances of 2022, there was

²⁵ [SzSz], Duda: *Chcemy stworzyć korytarz gazowy pomiędzy gazoportami Świnoujście i Krk*, 6.07.2017, wGospodarce.pl, <https://wgospodarce.pl/informacje/38274-duda-chcemy-stworzyc-korytarz-gazowy-pomiedzy-gazoportami-swinoujscie-i-krk>, access 28 IV 2024.

²⁶ J. Sanecka-Tyczyńska, *Filling the Gap: The Importance of US Energy Resources in the Central European Region*, [in:] *Central Europe Countries' Path to Energy Derussification: Opportunities and Challenges*, ed. M. Paszkowski, Institute of Central Europe, Lublin 2024, pp. 39–50.

a substantial increase in natural gas supplies from the US to Poland by approx. 120% compared to 2021, and to Lithuania by 130%. Notably, in May 2022, the first-ever deliveries of LNG from the US to Poland via the Klaipeda LNG terminal occurred, facilitated by imports via the GIPL pipeline connecting the two countries. The deepening cooperation between Poland, Central European countries, and the US was also evident in the domain of crude oil and diesel supplies.²⁷ On the multilateral front, there was a concerted effort to support the initiatives of the International Energy Agency (IEA) countries aimed at guaranteeing the availability of crude oil and petroleum products on the global market. Consequently, IEA member states, including those in the Central European region and the US, released accumulated stocks twice in 2022 to mitigate potential shortages following the imposition of sanctions on Russia in connection with the conflict in Ukraine.²⁸

Importing energy resources from the US constituted a significant aspect of cooperation, albeit not the sole one. For the Law and Justice party, paramount importance was placed on enhancing strategic bilateral relations through the establishment of nuclear power plants in Poland. It was believed that by advancing nuclear technology, the nation could secure a safe and dependable energy source while mitigating the potential for manipulation and interference by third-party countries in the energy sector. Fundamentally, the development of nuclear technology was perceived as a cornerstone of state energy sovereignty.²⁹ Hence, the overarching objective was to fortify energy security and establish facilities that would serve as tangible embodiments of mutual commercial ties. Simultaneously, the significance of the political alliance between the two nations was underscored in this regard.

Notably, in the perspective of the Law and Justice party, Polish-American relations took precedence over cooperation with other countries. Consequently, while plans were in place to construct a total of six reactors in Poland, government support was primarily directed towards the first two, for which a contract was signed with the US.³⁰ Conversely, while there was favor for the construction

²⁷ See: M. Paszkowski, *Import surowców i paliw z USA...*

²⁸ International Energy Agency, *IEA confirms member country contributions to second collective action to release oil stocks in response to Russia's invasion of Ukraine*, 7.04.2022, <https://www.iea.org/news/iea-confirms-member-country-contributions-to-second-collective-action-to-release-oil-stocks-in-response-to-russia-s-invasion-of-ukraine>, access 22 IV 2024.

²⁹ [MWL], *Minister Moskwa: suwerenność to też energetyka jądrowa*, 3.04.2023, <https://www.money.pl/gospodarka/minister-moskwa-suwerennosc-to-tez-energetyka-jadrowa-6883380591811520a.html>, access 28 IV 2024.

³⁰ B. Sawicki, *Rząd PiS wybrał Amerykanów. Jest projekt atomowej uchwały*, 2.11.2022, <https://energia.rp.pl/atom/art37341161-rzad-pis-wybral-amerykanow-jest-projekt-atomowej-uchwa>

of the remaining reactors, it was envisaged to pursue them on a commercial basis. In this context, potential collaboration with South Korea and France was considered. Consequently, the conclusion drawn was that while nuclear power plants could indeed enhance energy security, such endeavors would be primarily pursued in cooperation with the US.

For Law and Justice, bolstering political ties with the US and attracting investment to Central European countries emerged as a paramount concern. There was a prevailing belief among the party's members that only a substantial and tangible presence of American capital in the region could effectively align US interests with those of the Central European countries. Consequently, it was acknowledged that strategic projects would serve as crucial tools in deepening mutual relations, grounded in the conviction that the US would safeguard the interests of its enterprises. As a result, there were varying degrees of advocacy for the enhancement of cooperation. One such instrument was the Three Seas Initiative. It was recognized that this initiative held at least two pivotal roles in the context of relations with the US. Firstly, to fortify political ties with the US across all Central European countries. Secondly, to augment the presence of American capital on the continent. As emphasized by Krzysztof Szczerski, Head of the Cabinet of the President of the Republic of Poland, "[t]he Three Seas Initiative is intended to serve as a platform for America's economic resurgence in this part of Europe".³¹

To summarize, for the Law and Justice party, Central Europe represented a significant arena of intersecting political and economic interests. Within this party, there was a strong conviction that enhancing the energy security of the region necessitated diminishing the influence of the Russian Federation and its capacity to shape political dynamics. Consequently, the Law and Justice party advocated for filling the void left by Russian energy resources with supplies from the US. As such, the presence of US capital was encouraged, and various mechanisms were employed to achieve this goal. According to politicians of this party, key instruments for bolstering and deepening American presence in Central Europe included the import of LNG, the construction of a nuclear power plant in Poland, and the Three Seas Initiative. Of particular significance was the

ly, access 20 IV 2024.

³¹ A. Orzelska-Stączek, M. Czernicka, *Wywiad z Szefem Gabinetu Prezydenta RP, ministrem Krzysztofem Szczerskim przeprowadzony w Kancelarii Prezydenta RP w Warszawie 17 lipca 2019 roku przez prof. Agnieszkę Orzelską-Stączek i dr Marzenę Czernicką*, [in:] *Inicjatywa Trójmorza z perspektywy jej uczestników*, Wyd. Instytutu Studiów Politycznych Polskiej Akademii Nauk, Warszawa 2020, p. 148.

instrumentalization of cooperation, with the Three Seas Initiative envisioned as a pivotal platform for strengthening American business engagement in the region.

Conclusion

Law and Justice accorded utmost priority to energy issues, a stance prompted by shifts in international dynamics. There was a longstanding recognition that the monopolization of the energy market in Central European countries posed a grave threat to regional sovereignty. Consequently, the actions of the Russian Federation, aimed at bolstering its international standing through energy resources, were appraised with clarity. Within this context, it was deemed imperative that Russia's position in the region align with that of other countries. To this end, the Law and Justice party advocated for infrastructure development to facilitate the diversification of energy sources and supply routes. Additionally, it pushed for regulatory frameworks at the European Union level aimed at curbing Russia's imperial ambitions and exerting indirect influence on the formation of political relations. Central to Law and Justice's agenda was the preservation of sovereignty and energy solidarity among EU member states. Such objectives hinged on the ability to independently shape political and economic relations, while concurrently mitigating Russia's monopolistic influence in the region.

According to the Law and Justice party, the United States of America held a paramount role in the international arena, particularly in Central Europe. The party esteemed the US's influence on political and energy dynamics in the region, considering it indispensable for security. From Law and Justice's perspective, the US, as a member of the NATO, was envisioned as the guarantor of military security on the continent.³² Moreover, the party believed that energy resources from the US could diminish the monopolistic grip of the Russian Federation in Central Europe. Law and Justice advocated for active US involvement in shaping political relations and fostering business presence in the region. Consequently, the party viewed the Three Seas Initiative as a vehicle for enhancing US presence in Central Europe. This initiative stemmed from the imperative to fortify political and economic ties among countries in the region, including the development of North-South transportation networks for internal integration, and to catalyze US engagement with external partners. Importantly, the involvement of other major energy-exporting countries such as Saudi Arabia and Qatar was not solicited in the Three Seas Initiative.

³² Prawo i Sprawiedliwość, *Program Prawa i Sprawiedliwości 2014*, Warszawa 2014, p. 154.

In summary, for the Law and Justice party, the Central European region was a battleground for political and economic competition, with energy issues at the forefront. The party viewed the monopolization of energy markets by the Russian Federation as a critical threat to the independence and political sovereignty of Central European countries. Consequently, the Law and Justice party prioritized efforts to diversify energy sources by attracting other key producers and exporters of crude oil and natural gas, while also fostering cooperation among Central European countries. This entailed a focus on collaboration with the United States of America and leveraging initiatives like the Three Seas Initiative to unite Central European countries in addressing common challenges and shared threats.

The opinions expressed in the publication represent the views of the author only and cannot be equated with the standpoint(s) of the Institute of Central Europe.

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Abstract: Central Europe was a focal point of international engagements for Law and Justice party. A paramount facet of their strategic agenda entailed the pursuit of energy security, stemming from a pragmatic appraisal of the international environment. This political party identified the imperialistic foreign policy of the Russian Federation, leveraging energy sources to advance its objectives, as the preeminent menace to political sovereignty. The cognitive aim of the article was to examine the political thought of Law and Justice party towards the role and importance of key international actors (the Russian Federation and the United States of America) in ensuring the energy security of Central European countries. The starting point of the analysis was the thesis that Law and Justice party treated the Central European region as a key area of political activity, and the energy projects implemented were aimed at reducing the importance of the Russian Federation in the region. Concurrently, these initiatives aimed to ensure, within the

ambit of diversifying energy sources and routes, the importation of energy commodities supply from the US.

Keywords: energy security; Central Europe; Russian Federation; Law and Justice party; United States of America

Europa Środkowa: arena rywalizacji energetycznej w myśli politycznej Prawa i Sprawiedliwości

Streszczenie: Europa Środkowa stanowiła dla Prawa i Sprawiedliwości centralny punkt aktywności międzynarodowej. Niezwykle ważnym aspektem prowadzonej polityki była chęć zapewnienia bezpieczeństwa energetycznego, co wynikało z realistycznej oceny środowiska międzynarodowego. Dla tego ugrupowania największym zagrożeniem dla niezależności politycznej była imperialna polityka zagraniczna prowadzona przez Federację Rosyjską, która wykorzystywała surowce energetyczne do realizacji swoich celów w środowisku międzynarodowym. Celem poznawczym artykułu było przebadanie myśli politycznej Prawa i Sprawiedliwości wobec roli i znaczenia kluczowych aktorów międzynarodowych (Federacji Rosyjskiej oraz Stanów Zjednoczonych Ameryki) w zakresie zapewnienia bezpieczeństwa energetycznego państw Europy Środkowej. Punktem wyjścia analiz była teza, że Prawo i Sprawiedliwość traktowało region Europy Środkowej jako kluczowy obszar aktywności politycznej, a realizowane projekty energetyczne miały na celu ograniczyć znaczenie Federacji Rosyjskiej w regionie oraz zapewnić, w ramach realizacji polityki dywersyfikacji źródeł oraz kierunków dostaw surowców energetycznych, importu nośników energii z USA.

Słowa kluczowe: bezpieczeństwo energetyczne; Europa Środkowa; Federacja Rosyjska; Prawo i Sprawiedliwość; Stany Zjednoczone Ameryki

