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Global Refugee Studies

Master Thesis



The great policy paradox:
ambiguous changes in the Lithuanian refugee integration

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ABSTRACT

Last year, the so called refugee crisis challenged political agenda of the European Union. It was suggested that, refugee relocation across Member States could be an initial solution. This plan in Lithuania was received ambiguously. Refugee quota assigned to Lithuania was approved by the government; nevertheless, few months later the Lithuanian government has introduced amendments to the refugee integration policy. Major non-governmental organizations criticized changes made in the policy and stated them to be contra-productive for successful integration. This paradoxical situation inspired the formulation of the research question: *How should we understand recent changes made in the Lithuanian refugee integration policy?*

In the first two parts of the analysis, the research employs theory of *Conditionality* and applies *Security* concepts. The third part of the analysis partially utilizes the analytical tool called “*What’s the problem represented to be*” which is meant to critically interrogate the integration policy and its effects in reality.

In order to answer the research question and produce holistic picture of the problem, first of all, the research will provide the inquiry of the historical context regarding the asylum system establishment in Lithuania. Analysis of secondary literature reveals that foreign actors imposed certain conditions which stimulated Lithuania to ratify Refugee Convention as soon as few years after it regained its own independence from the Soviet Union.

In addition, to reveal the prevailed image of refugees and their relocation, I analyze political and societal discourses. The political discourse analysis was done by using articles collected in the media and social perception was revealed by inquiry of public surveys. This thesis demonstrates how security concerns are referred to refugees and thus frame them as a source of potential threat. Besides, political discourse analysis emphasizes that need of political solidarity within EU was a primary reason for Lithuania to accept the refugee quota.

Finally, the last part of the analysis particularly looks into refugee integration policy changes. This part is based on three sources of data: policy documents, interviews with employees of non-governmental organizations and official UNHCR commentaries on the policy amendments. This part outlines that, the primary aim of the integration policy changes was to reduce expenditures for refugee integration. In addition, practitioners identified that changed integration policy might lead refugees to hardship as it does not provide sufficient support.

Overall, this research shows that the government aimed to improve external relations, therefore, agreed to participate in refugee relocation. Yet significant reductions of financial integration support reveals that the system does not intend to actually effectively assist refugees; rather it just provides possibilities to exist.

Key words: Lithuania; refugee integration; integration policy; refugee relocation; European Union.

ABBREVIATIONS

Lithuania -The Republic of Lithuania

UNHCR - United Nations Higher Commissioner for Refugees

EU - European Union

Rukla RRC- Rukla Refugee Reception Center

Integration Support Order - Order of the Ministry of Social Security and Labor of the Republic of Lithuania on the Approval of The Description of the Procedure of Rendering Support of the Lithuanian State for Integration of Foreigners Granted Asylum in the Republic of Lithuania. (No A1-238)

Caritas -Caritas of Vilnius Archdiocese

Red Cross - Lithuanian Red Cross Society

TSS - Traditional Security Studies

NGOs - Non-Governmental Organizations

Member States - the Member States of the European Union

Refugee Convention - 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees

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INTRODUCTION

Last year, the so called refugee crisis was widely escalated in media, it was also one of the main challenges on the political agenda of the European Union. Since the refugee influx affected many countries, belonging to the EU, the issue quickly reached a phase where all member states were asked to cooperate by sharing the responsibility. Therefore, a plan was suggested: to relocate refugees from Italy and Greece across the EU other Member States. Consequently, Lithuania was also offered to take responsibility for 1105 people in need of international protection, which is a noticeable increase for this country as in previous years the average of applicants granted asylum was 130 per year (EMN 2015:1). However, Lithuanian government agreed to take in this number, notwithstanding the fact that this decision raised huge arguments and debates in the society. In addition, media interest regarding refugees doubled (Appendix no.1), it spread information and expressed that refugees will be entitled to a €600 monthly allowance, which is double the minimum wage in the country. Therefore, this message went viral and increased society's discontent that refugees will be provided with such exceptional treatment.

Problem formulation

Societal discontent regarding refugee relocation prompted a division of political discourse, various political parties expressed different opinions on how refugee influx to Europe should be handled. They took different stands on how Lithuania should react to forced migration processes and how it should respond to the offer of the EU Commission to accept a share of refugees. Even though the country officially agreed to participate in the relocation plan, few months after this agreement was approved, the Lithuanian government implemented ambiguous amendments to the refugee integration policy. The most important changes introduced in the policy were: reduction of individual financial support and new limitations of the integration period. Therefore, I am interested to analyze this paradox where on one hand Lithuania agrees to share the responsibility for refugees, yet on the other hand it changes the policy and reduces financial support for these refugees. The ambiguous actions of the government leads to the research question:

How should we understand recent changes made in the Lithuanian refugee integration policy?

In order to answer this question I will divide analysis into three parts, each of them answering separate analytical question:

1. *How did external relations of Lithuania influenced the emergence of an asylum system in the country?* The first part of the research will analyze the historical context, it will provide information regarding asylum system establishment in Lithuania, as well as introduce incentives set by foreign actors, that stimulated the government to ratify Refugee Convention.

2. *How did political debate in media and public perception influence refugees' image and how did it affect the integration policy changes?* Second part of the inquiry will analyze political discourse reflected in the media and societal perception revealed in public surveys. Findings in these areas will deepen understanding on how refugees were observed by ordinary citizens and political elites, shedding light on how it was reflected in the integration policy changes.

3. *What is meant to be achieved by the integration policy changes?* This part of the analysis will critically look into the changes introduced in refugee integration policy. The third part of the analysis will reveal what the effect was of the policy changes in practice and how it affected refugees' opportunities to integrate.

Application of the above mentioned analytical questions will lead to and support development of a holistic answer to the main research question.

METHODOLOGY

In this chapter the reader will be introduced to the applied research methods. As well I will present data sources and limitations that are meaningful for the analysis. Explaining methodological choices will clarify research design.

This work is based mainly on a qualitative research approach. As Ospina (2004) explains, qualitative approach allows one to investigate a view from the “inside”, meaning that researcher investigates historically phenomenal events or situations where particular and unique details have high importance (Ospina 2004:4). In opposition, quantitative research has a limited contact with investigated subjects, thus the analysis is less complex and provides an approach from the “outside”. As Patton (2001) described, qualitative research is *“the kind of research that produces findings arrived from real-world settings where the “phenomenon of interest unfold naturally”* (Patton 2001 in Golafshani 2003:600).

In terms of this thesis I also aim to provide this view from “inside”, because as a Lithuanian, I am able to collect culturally specific data in my native language. Moreover, in September of 2015, when the EU decided to relocate refugees across its member states, I was an intern at the UNHCR liaison office in Vilnius (Lithuania) and my major task was media monitoring, I had a great chance to observe political and societal tendencies. Opportunity to witness how refugee issues were reflected in the media and how it was relating to the development of refugee integration policy, encouraged me to analyze this phenomenon in my final thesis. I chose four methods that will be used in this research: secondary literature analysis, discourse analysis, public surveys’ analysis and semi-structured interviews. In the section below, the reader will be introduced to the data sources, that were analyzed using the methods listed above.

Presentation of data and its limitations

The first part of the analysis is based on secondary literature. Such authors as Elson (1997) and, Thompson (1998) are used to reveal geo-political, historical context in all three Baltic countries since these countries share some common qualities such as: newly restored

independence, geographical location, which determined the role as a transition region and a common wish to join EU. This section mostly contains information about all three Baltic countries since historical information particularly about Lithuania is limited. Byrne et.al. (2002) was used to unfold reasoning for asylum legislation emergence in Lithuania.

The second part of the analysis is based on data collected in the media, mainly articles that were collected in a time frame between September 1st and December 15th. Media monitoring was done by employing the “Meltwater News” program. This technical tool provided me with daily reports, which consisted of articles with one or more requested keywords, such as: refugee, asylum seeker, UNHCR, United Nations, asylum, Border Security service, migrant, Migration Department, integration etc. As was mentioned in the introduction, media interest in the refugee topic over this period of time doubled, compared to statistics before (Appendix No.1). Therefore, to be able to operate with this data, I decided to narrow my focus on articles which contained relevant messages expressed only by politicians, hence I was able to apply the discourse analysis method. Most of the collected articles were in Lithuanian, therefore, to be able to provide them for the reader, they were summarized and only the most relevant quotes were left and translated by myself. All media monitoring data was gathered and attached to Appendix No.2, in addition, highlighted names of paragraphs represent headlines of the articles.

Moreover, in order to explain societal discourse in the second part of this analysis chapter, I used data of public surveys. The Institute for Ethnic Studies of LSRC has initiated a public survey in order to uncover societal perception towards refugees and ethnic minorities in Lithuania. This survey included 1078 respondents and it can, therefore, be considered representative. Yet, it is worth mentioning that the survey was conducted not that long after attacks in Paris took place. Therefore, there is a certain limitation that affected the results of the survey. However, this data is still considered valid, as it reflects the societal perception prevalent at that time.

The third part of the analysis consists of three sources of information: refugee integration policy documents, UNHCR Comments on the policy and semi-structured interviews with practitioners who are supporting the integration.

In this chapter, I introduce the previously existed Integration Support Order and Amended Integration Support Order as inquiry of both these documents enables understanding what the change was and its development.

Moreover, due to the network that was developed over my internship time at UNHCR, I had a chance to kindly ask for UNHCR official commentaries on the policy amendments, which is a great source of information, since it provides expertise opinion supported by the knowledge of the national context as the organization has over the past many years developed a strong relation with the Lithuanian government.

Furthermore, I used semi-structured interviews. I had a chance to interview a representative of UNHCR liaison office in Lithuania and three employees of two major NGOs: Red Cross and Caritas, which are supporting refugee integration in Lithuania. All of these interviews were conducted through Skype and the interviewees' expertise on the work with refugees is based on 1,5 and 9 years of experience. Interviewees agreed that their interviews would be recorded, transcribed versions of this data is attached to Appendixes of this thesis. As NGO employees preferred to remain anonymous, I have provided each of them with fictive names and attached them to the Appendix numbers No.3-Rita, No.5-Eva, No.6-Lina. UNHCR representative Renata Kules mainly represented the official position of the organization, therefore, it was agreed to keep her identity known. I acknowledge that this amount of interviews does not attempt to be representative, yet I rely on the social constructivist approach, which accepts that all knowledge is socially constructed. As Johanson (1995) summarized it "*in research that probes for deeper understanding rather than examining surface features*" (Golafshani 2003:603), therefore, this method is useful to outline personal experiences of these practitioners.

In addition, there is a one more limitation common to the entire research. I use the term 'refugee', though Integration Support Order describes its persons of concern as: persons who were granted asylum in Lithuania, which includes 'refugees' and 'recipients of subsidiary protection'. In this paper I do not differentiate between these two groups as long as the integration policy foresees the same conditions for both of them. Yet it is worth mentioning that the broader, social security legislation takes the different status of these two groups in account, thus, provides them with different levels of social services.

THEORY

In this thesis I will invoke several theoretical approaches which will help the reader to look at the data through different lenses. All of them will be applied in different stages of the research and will help to build an answer to the research questions.

First of all, theory of *Conditionality* will be applied to analyze past relationships between Lithuania and its foreign connections, such as International organizations and regional neighboring countries. I argue that international pressure accelerated emergence and implementation of asylum legislation in Lithuania and application of *Conditionality* theory enables reader to realize why Lithuania accepted it in such early stage of its own independence. This theory reveals the measures thanks to which compliance with conditions was actually succeeded. However, by employing this theory, I am not trying to explain why international actors were interested to get Lithuania's compliance regarding asylum system, but rather I try to understand the underlying rationales of the Lithuanian government by analyzing why it seemed important at that time to include asylum matters into its political agenda.

The second theoretical lens will deal with the security concerns. I will introduce Traditional Security Studies' approach and Critical Security Studies' approach, namely perspective of Copenhagen School. In this thesis I attempt to demonstrate that refugees were perceived and portrayed as a threat to national security and Lithuanian society. Security theories will help to analyze political discourse and perceptions within the society regarding refugees. These two approaches are rather different, but I will introduce and invoke both of them in my analysis, as it provides a more comprehensive understanding of how processes of forced migration might be perceived as a threat, by the Lithuanian government or the society.

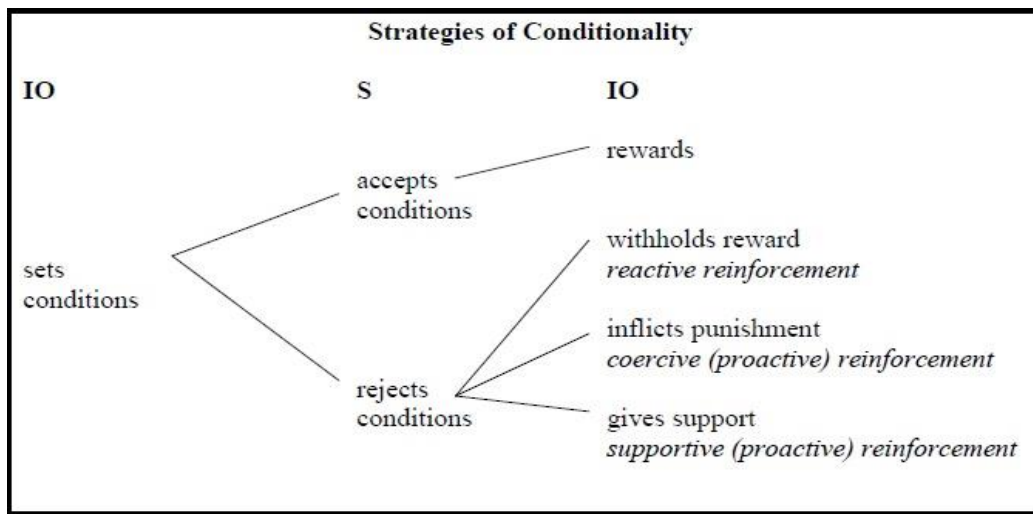
The third theoretical lens is meant to look into integration policy and its changes. In order to better understand integration policy changes and what they intend to represent I will utilize C. Bacchi's analytical tool, called "What's the problem represented to be?". I claim that changes in the integration policy are aiming to solve a specific problem(s), which is implicitly imparted in the new amendments. Thus, this analytical tool will enable me to identify what problems current policy changes suggest to solve and who would benefit from it.

Conditionality Theory

To begin with, *Conditionality*, which as P. Schmitter describes as “*use of fulfillment of stipulated political conditions as a pre-requisite for obtaining economic aid, debt relief, most-favored nation treatment, subsidized credit, or membership in coveted regional or global organizations*” (Petrovic 2007: 54). This theory describes international cooperation through a lens of social stimulation, which works in two ways: rewards or punishments. J. Petrovic referred to this strategy as use of ‘carrot’ and ‘stick’ incentives. As can be seen in a quote above there are many possible forms of rewards, most importantly it has to match needs of a country receiving conditions, and the costs of fulfilling them should be beneficial for the later one. (Petrovic 2007: 55). Similarly punishment, so called ‘stick’ can mean variety of different actions or means, ability to apply it reflects coerciveness of conditionality strategy (ibid.).

In a democratic setting conditionality strategy serves for international actors as a major mean to activate non-member states to comply with rules or requirements (Schimmelfennig et al. 2002:1). Democracy in conditionality strategy is reflected when the purpose of conditionality policy is used to improve degree of democratic values; also nature of conditionality itself leaves a choice for recipient, “(*...*) *beyond the two options typical of conditioning, namely acceptance or non-acceptance of a condition.*” (Petrovic 2007: 56).

International conditionality can be illustrated as a decision tree as in Picture nr.1 below, which was explained by Schimmelfennig, Engert and Knobel, it demonstrates possible strategies of conditionality.



Strategies of Conditionality (Picture nr. 1) (Schimmelfennig et al. 2002:3)

State's rejection of conditions might result in three ways: withhold of rewards, inflicted punishments, provided support. The first way - reactive reinforcement, it withholds rewards, but nothing more is done or suggested to stimulate State's interests to comply. Meanwhile, inflicting punishment includes not only withholding of rewards, but it seeks to impose additional costs to the state, because of its non-compliance. Finally, International Organization can choose third way and withhold rewards, but provide some support that the state would be capable to meet conditions in the near future, this can be done by reducing costs of compliance or it can enable the state to meet particular requirements (Schimmelfennig et al. 2002:3).

The above mentioned authors suggested distinguishing reactive reinforcement by two dichotomies. The first one distinguishes material bargaining and social influence as conditionality tools. Bargaining mechanism in return for targeted country's compliance suggests material, financial or any meaningful political rewards, such as market access, technical expertise etc. Then receiving target country should evaluate whether benefits of compliance are worth of adaptation costs, if so, it will comply. Meanwhile, social influence mechanisms rewards are intangible, such as: "(...) *international recognition and legitimacy, a high status, or a positive image*" (*Ibid.*). Non-compliance in this case might cause 'shame' and 'shun'. Moreover, in this case, international organization invokes the feeling of exclusion and embarrassment, this punishment aims to affect only community inside of target country. Thus, 'stick' is effective only if target country is genuinely interested and aspires the International Organization. Good example here is the EU, only those countries "*that regard the EU as their „aspiration group“ find it painful to be shamed and shunned as a result of conditionality*" (Schimmelfennig et al. 2002:6).

The second dichotomy identifies and distinguishes two channels through which conditionality strategy can be imposed, which are the intergovernmental and transnational channels. The first channel is direct, intergovernmental relation and is capable to affect government of the target country the most though its success is determined by government's commitment to the idea and its practical calculation on benefits of compliance exceeding costs. The second transnational channel works through societal actors of targeted country. If internal societal actors are sensible for possible reward, then it will be interested to influence government to comply with conditions. Nevertheless, societal actors' success to influence government, which is not willing to respond, is limited. "*Societal (material or social) responsiveness must be*

combined with societal strength (...) to force the government to comply with the rules, for instance (...) their ability to mobilize the electorate” (Schimmelfennig et al. 2002:7). Moreover, transnational channel might not be as effective in countries where society is weak and political parties are organized top-down. Such situation can be identified in post-Communist countries where even political parties fail to aggregate societal interests “(...) and an active civil society has failed to emerge despite promising beginnings in the revolutions of 1989.” (Ibid.).

Theories concerning security

In nowadays when people are approaching high international migration it is inevitable to avoid topic of security. Therefore, migration and its relation to the security nexus is important to mention in this thesis as well. Castles & Miller (2009) state that, migration and migrants can be perceived as threats in three contexts: cultural, socioeconomic and political. Reasons behind this perception vary: migrants are “*challenging the cultural status quo*”, “*religious identity and linguistic practices of migrants loom large in perceived threats*” or migrants are suspected to be “*potentially politically disloyal or subversive*” (Castles&Miller 2009:212).

To begin with, I would like to shortly introduce Traditional Security Studies’ perspective, which in some few aspects can explain how forced migration can be approached as a threat for national security. Its foundation is based on Realists’ approach, which perceives state as the only actor in International Relations, though, this is not applicable for modern world anymore, TSS still have somewhat a relevant point when it perceives forced migration through a lens of a national security (Betts 2009:62). This theory frames refugees as an “*independent variable in relation to sources of insecurity.*” Such authors as Stedman & Tanner (2003), Weiner (1995) and Loescher (1993), in their works, discussed that great powers are able to manipulate refugees as resources of war (Ibid.). They can be used for strategic goals as resource to support military bases, to be used by rebels as shield and they can be used as well as a threat, when they are invoked to catalyze conflict. Especially refugees are framed as a threat when this theory analyzes relation between forced migration and terrorism. “*Asylum channels have been identified as means through which terrorists might acquire access to the territory of intended target states.*” (Betts 2009:64). Thus, forced migration might challenge sovereign state and its ability to protect and sustain its cultural cohesiveness and national identity (Castles&Miller 2009:212).

Furthermore, I would like to employ Critical Security studies' approach, which is more concerned about economic, cultural and societal security rather than the military one. In addition, it focuses more on individual security matters rather than national state security. In this group of studies I particularly chose Copenhagen school, which delve into ideational level of security (Betts 2009:69). This approach was introduced by O. Waever, who came up with two major concepts: 'societal security' and 'securitization'. The first concept defines threat to cultural values such as language, religion or ethnicity, "*consequently many threats are constructed in relation to a social group, that defines itself as 'we', in opposition to 'others'*" (Betts 2009:71). The later concept 'securitization' describes how an issue becomes a concern of a security, usually it is a 'speech act' which is followed by practical political decision or change. "*The CS defines this social interaction as a rhetorical one: a discursive exchange between a securitizing actor and an audience in relation to an object, the referent, and that which threatens it.*" (Charrett 2009: 13). If an issue is considered to be security matter, then even hardly legitimate actions are possible, because security need is immediate and highly prioritized (Ibid.). Successful securitization consists of three moves: *existential threats, emergency action, and effects on interunit relations by breaking free of rules*" (Buzan et al., 1998:26 in Williams 2003:514).

As mentioned above, TSS approach alone is not capable to reflect contemporary situation of International relations, because in nowadays it is obvious that states are not the only international players and security of one state does not equal with individual's security. Nevertheless, this theoretical approach is able to portray how forced migration can threaten security of the national state, in my work, TSS represents existing concerns regarding links between terrorism and forced migration. Yet, to explain how it became a matter of security in Lithuania I will invoke Securitization theory. As O.Waever explained even traditional security issues, which are identified as classical military or power related matters can be analyzed through a lens of Securitization, as it can analyze "*...how different securitizing actors want to make different referent objects the center of attention, focus on different threats, different extraordinary measures. So the variation-- the struggle going on within something that is generally accepted as a security issue-- is still a powerful tool to understand.*" (O.Waever 2014). Therefore, even though terrorism is identified as a traditional security issue, it can be analyzed through a lens of Securitization. In case of Lithuania, I will analyze who is the securitizing object

and who is regarded as referent object, special attention will be paid to the reaction of ‘audience’, meaning Lithuanian society who is supposed to receive and react to securitized message

What’s the problem represented to be?

C. Bacchi introduced analytical tool which is meant critically examine public policies and was called ‘What’s the problem represented to be’ (from here on referred as WPR). She states that policy proposals are intended to identify what we think that needs to be changed, thus what we consider to be the ‘problem’ (Bacchi 2010:2). In such way policy implicitly represents what is considered to be problematized. *“The task in a ‘WPR’ analysis is to read policies with an eye to discerning how the ‘problem’ is represented within them and to subject this problem representation to critical scrutiny.”* (Bacchi 2012:23). According to Bacchi by creating particular concepts governments tend to create problems instead of just reacting to them. Moreover problematization of public conditions means *“...that we are governed through problematizations, rather than through policies”* (Bacchi 2010:4). However, Bacchi does not intent to claim that policies are deliberately misinterpreted, *“...though doubtless at times members of governments portray issues in particular ways for political gain.”* (Bacchi 2010:2). Therefore, Bacchi suggested to identify how those ‘problems’ are constructed by analyzing forms and manners they were spoken about and analyzing what ‘knowledge’ are assumed to support their construction (Ibid.). The author also emphasized that representation of the problem is highly important because it may have different effects, she distinguished three of them: *“discursive effects, (what is discussed and not discussed); subjectification effects (how people are taught about and how they think about themselves); and lived effects (the impact on life and death).”* (Bacchi 2010:4). To achieve qualitative interrogation of public policy one has to apply set of six questions (Bacchi 2010:7):

1. *What’s the problem represented to be in a specific policy or policy proposal?*

This question aims to identify implicit problem representation within specific policy (Bacchi 2012:22).

2. *What presuppositions or assumptions underpin this representation of the ‘problem’?* By answering this question one should layout assumptions that support representation of the problem (Ibid.).

3. *How has this representation of the 'problem' come about?* This is asked in order to understand how particular form of problematization emerged (Bacchi 2012:22).

4. *What is left unproblematic in this problem representation? Where are the silences? Can the 'problem' be thought about differently?* This part encourages looking for possible gaps and limitations in representation of the 'problem' (Ibid.).

5. *What effects are produced by this representation of the 'problem'?*

6. *How/where has this representation of the 'problem' been produced, disseminated and defended? How has it been (or could it be) questioned, disrupted and replaced?*(Bacchi 2010:7).

This set of questions is meant to analyze policy as well as its surroundings. However, I will limit application of this analytical tool to questions: 1, 2, 4 and 5, since these questions are concentrating on the policy itself. Thus, this analytical tool will be mainly used in third part of the analysis.

ANALYSIS

Asylum System establishment in Lithuania

This chapter will provide some historical background and information about the establishment of the Lithuanian asylum system. Better understanding of historical context will give in depth view about conditions and circumstances of asylum system emergence in the country, therefore, this part of the analysis will be based on secondary literature. I argue that Lithuania was persuaded to implement asylum system and this was done by external stakeholders, who invoked political *Conditionality Strategy*. This chapter will introduce three main groups of international actors, which stimulated the government to consider and implement asylum legislation. I consider important to reveal how asylum system came into being in the country, understanding of historical context will enable to obtain a more in-depth comprehension of the current challenges and conditions of Lithuanian refugee integration policy.

European Union

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, Baltic countries took specific position, though they were independent, each of them were too small to impose political will in a broader political arena, their independence was still very much connected to Russia, which could be described as unilateral independence. In order to change this situation each of the Baltic States decided to seek membership in EU (Elson 1997:325). This was important step for this region, since EU membership meant a chance for these countries to get political as well as economic support; it was also an opportunity to achieve pluralistic dependence, which would diminish role of Russia in their domestic and foreign politics. (Ibid.).

At that time this membership was not only opportunity, it also demanded commitment to develop domestic policies so that they could be in line with those of the EU. One such was immigration and asylum related policy, which was incorporated into one of the EU legally comprised pillars, called “Cooperation and home affairs”, nevertheless, at that moment it was not subordinate to the European Court, thus it did not have any jurisdiction over these matters. (Elson 1997:329). Instead, EU attempted to develop some kind of common requirements which would guarantee at least respect for human rights, nevertheless, there was a lack of

comprehensive policies about asylum and immigration. Thus, candidate countries had a challenge to develop sufficient policies compatible with the EU guidelines (Elson 1997:332). Main challenge for candidate countries in order to catch up with the EU tendencies was uncoordinated national policies, which tended to transfer problems from one country to another and created 'refugees orbit' with people moving back and forth applying for asylum (Elson 1997:337). In this way, if every country had different systems and experiences, candidate countries had even more confusion how to frame their national asylum systems.

In addition, at that time developments of immigration and asylum policies were influenced by perception of immigration as a possible threat to nation, its culture, language etc. Soviet occupation caused great immigration influx in Latvia and Estonia, therefore, nationals of these countries could feel as if they were becoming minorities (Elson 1997:333).

“These countries' experiences with immigration cannot simply be considered historic relics of an age now passed; they continue to affect the Baltic States and have undoubtedly played at least some role in the formation of current immigration and asylum policies.”(Ibid.).

Therefore, after the collapse of the Soviet Union these two countries created additional requirements to obtain citizenship, pre-1940 residents and their descendants were granted citizenship automatically, others were introduced to some restrictions. Citizenship was open to those who met certain criteria, such as: number of years residing in the country, competence in the national languages etc. (Thompson 1998:112). Meanwhile Lithuanian “(...) *Communist leaders skillfully prevented a large influx of Russian speakers (...)*”, it did not have that high immigration rates during occupation, thus after independence, citizenship was granted to almost everyone “(...) *without risking a loss of control over the nation's destiny*” (Thompson 1998:111). Therefore, citizenship policies were based on inclusion and intended to foster national self-determination feeling (Elson 1997:333). This step was an advantageous step made by the Lithuanian government, since minority rights was one of the political criteria required by the EU (Schimmelfennig et al. 2002:6), though looking from security perspective Soviet Union legacy yet has framed foreigners as a possible threat, which was better to avoid.

Nordic countries

Second incentive, which promoted asylum system emergence particularly in Lithuania, was initiated by Northern European countries. Though Lithuania became independent yet it had

weak border control with other former Soviet Union countries, therefore, it was in a position of a crossroad. The most difficult parts were East and South borders with Belarus and Poland in 1995 333,000 illegal migrants attempted to reach Western countries through Lithuania and Poland (Elson 1997:335). Lack of normative and legal regulations on the matter of irregular migration, affected detained migrants, who usually got stuck in a legal limbo and even genuine asylum seekers were marginalized, “*Claimants were not only treated as ordinary ‘illegals’, but they were even exposed to danger of **refoulment** since a refugee regime did not exist*” (Byrne et al. 2002: 228). Asylum seekers’ route through Baltic westwards concerned closest neighboring countries. Nordics in particular were targeted as destination states; it was a major problem for them, because it was not possible to send asylum seekers back, to these transit countries without violating international obligations by sending them back to countries, where system for refugee protection is inadequate (Byrne et al. 2002: 204). While seeing all the new countries struggling within area for asylum, Northern European countries decided to contribute and encourage Lithuania to be the first one to develop asylum system in the Baltics. Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden offered their expertise and support for Lithuanian authorities to create a proper refugee reception system. Financial contributions of these countries were approximately 2 million US Dollars; willingness to develop asylum system gave political benefits in international arena and EU in particular (Ibid.). Nevertheless, at that time this assistance of the Nordic countries also received some critique from opponents, who thought that altruistic wish of Nordics to help asylum seekers in Lithuania was not a genuine concern, but rather an attempt to create buffering zone, thus Nordics would fulfill their self-interests and instead of sharing burden they would actually shift it and keep irregular migrants in the Baltic area (Byrne et al. 2002: 229).

Several cases in the early 1990 demonstrated that refugee flows through Baltic countries might be continuous or even increasing. For example, only in 1994 February 52 Iraqis asylum seekers reached Gotland with Latvian lifeboats, then later the case of 15 asylum seekers smuggled in Stockholm was announced, they were hiding in a truck which came by ferry from Estonia, finally 36 Sri Lankan Tamils reached Copenhagen by lifeboats from an unidentified containership (Byrne et al. 2002: 210). These and many other cases demonstrated that Baltics cannot control their borders and thus raised dilemmas for their neighbors. Before and during their independence fight, Nordic countries supported Baltics, therefore, after they achieved it,

Nordics were willing to support and develop contacts with them, but this openness was limited by fear that these partners might add to the increase of asylum seekers in Northern States (Ibid.). Therefore, Nordic countries decided to suggest some privileges to Baltics in exchange to their cooperation on asylum and immigration issues. Visa-free travel agreement was introduced as one of the most practical privileges, which was highly appreciated by Baltic countries. This cooperation was almost openly conditioned, in 1996 during meeting of the Council of the Baltic Sea States, which invoked cooperation of EU Commission, prepared Action Program, which stated:

“The speedy, accurate and safe processing of travellers and goods at border crossings is essential for business and tourism... Abuse, including illegal migration from third countries and the illegal trafficking of migrants, must, however, be prevented.” (UNHCR Information Notes No.20 in Byrne et al. 2002: 212).

This quote emphasizes attractive benefits for Baltics and implies that they also should take care of their external borders in order to prevent transit migration. Furthermore, in this Action program was emphasized, that interested countries should access Refugee Convention and conclude readmission agreements. Therefore, all three Baltic countries started actions in order to prevent migration flows from their Eastern neighbors, they started improvements at border control, they initiated border demarcation negotiations and readmission agreements with Russia, Belarus and Ukraine, all these efforts were made because those countries wanted to get closer in touch with the Western world, but they had to avoid a risk of becoming a ‘closed-sack’ of irregular migrants (Byrne et al. 2002: 213). Though there were no formal requirements for visa-free agreement, yet in 1997 Swedish Foreign Minister openly expressed that Baltic countries *“(…) must, inter alia, accept ‘the concept of first country of asylum’, thus having to readmit asylum seekers who arrive in Sweden through their territories” (Ibid.)*. Denmark had different conditions than ratification of Refugee Convention, it concluded bilateral visa-free agreements with Lithuania and Estonia years earlier than those two acceded to the Convention. Denmark managed to include clear readmission provisions into visa-free agreement, which covered citizens, permanent residents and citizens of any third country, who have entered illegally (Byrne et al. 2002: 215). Conditionality strategy is well revealed in this place, though EU was not setting conditions itself but *“(…) EU leaves it to the external states to create the political conditions*

under which they will be materially and institutionally rewarded” (Schimmelfennig et al. 2002:5).

Other International Organizations

In addition to Northern European countries helping Lithuania to develop asylum system, there was international organizations’ input as well. Early in the 90’, UNHCR has expressed its concern regarding lack of normative system for refugee protection in Lithuania. It has initiated first inter-governmental meeting already in 1992 and in 1993 has agreed on creation of an international work group, which was supposed to assist with preparation process of concerning legislation (Byrne et al. 2002: 230). UNHCR has closely cooperated with EU institutions on asylum related matters, thus when candidate countries had to meet EU asylum criteria, UNHCR had constantly provided legal expertise and shared its experience. *“The aim, at all times, is to ensure that EU assistance gives precedence to the development of functioning asylum systems which meet the highest possible standards.”* (UNHCR. Tool Box1 2003: 149). Already in 1994 considerable progress was achieved during asylum legislation drafting process in Lithuania and yet further process of implementing legislation stuck in a debate amongst members of the Government’s cabinet, because this question was not considered to be a priority of national politics. (Byrne et al. 2002: 230). Nevertheless, UNHCR continued to cooperate with EU institutions and because of this, it was able to implement a project within ten candidate countries, which aimed to *“identify and address the needs and priorities of each applicant country for setting up fair and efficient asylum systems in line with EU standards”* (UNHCR. Tool Box1 2003: 145). Each country had to indicate and explain how it would improve lacking parts of their asylum system and how external partners could measure their progress in this area (Ibid.).

Another international key player regarding migration and asylum is International Organization of Migration, which was also included in a multilateral program between Nordic and Baltic States. Their common program supposed to improve capacities and competences of immigration authorities and strengthen border control in Baltics and Belarus, the program also aimed to form a common regional approach regarding migration matters (Byrne et al. 2002: 2019).

These International Organizations were able to cooperate with the EU, the most aspiring group Lithuania wanted to belong to, thus their influence was higher than could be expected if they would have worked only by themselves. Rejection to participate in their projects would inflict social punishment on the government not only by these two organizations, but also by EU institutions and its Member States.

In 1997 Lithuania finally ratified 1951 Geneva Convention and took a commitment to grant asylum for foreigners who fled their country of origin because of war, well-founded fear of persecution or serious human rights violations (Raudeliunaitė&Bartkeviciene 2012: 106). This step though was not a national priority, but was taken as a compliance with the conditions of the EU, since “*Commission confirmed, that, “negotiating [...] new types of agreements has to be subject to political conditions (respect of human rights and democratic freedoms, guarantees for minorities, etc.)”*” (Schimmelfennig et al. 2002:5). All foreign factors worked as a ‘carrot and the stick’, all three incentives catalyzed Lithuania to implement immigration and asylum legislation quicker. While in the Soviet Union the Baltic region was producing refugees itself, just few years after independence it started to adjust its policies and prepare to host those, who were in need of international protection. Lithuania became a pioneer in the region regarding asylum legislation; nevertheless, this process was initiated and promoted from outside, thus was approved by national elite, whereas, society was not concerned about it. Aspiration to join EU member club pushed legislators to consider asylum matters, consult and faster apply EU recommendations. However, not only EU conditionality on this question was forcing to comply. Regional cooperation with Nordic countries was very attractive, especially when it was possible to achieve tangible bargaining rewards such as financial support and expertise, visa-free agreements and technical equipment. In this case, interest of Nordics was obvious: create legal asylum system and readmission mechanism, in order to have a buffer zone and prevent asylum seekers’ further migration through Baltics. Nevertheless, Lithuanian government calculated the costs of compliance and evaluated that benefits are exceeding.

Political and societal discourse

This chapter will be divided into two parts: political discourse analysis and societal perception analysis. The first part will enable to identify the dominant political positions reflected in media and the second part will analyze public surveys, hence will allow to understand some of the prevailing perceptions that exist in the broader society. Assessing these two domains will enable to see how these perceptions affected and were reflected in new integration policy changes.

I argue that trending political and societal discourses framed refugees as source of potential threat to national state, its culture and identity, therefore analysis in this section will be done through a lens of security theories.

Political Discourse

Major political discussion in media regarding refugee influx to Europe, can be divided into several groups: politicians, who were in favor of EU solidarity solving migration challenges, those who were against refugee influx to Europe and their relocation to Lithuania and those, who were concerned about refugee integration in Lithuania.

In favor of EU refugee relocation plan

The first group consisted of the biggest parliamentary party Social Democrats and two major opposition parties: Liberal Union together with National Union and Christian Democratic Party of Lithuania (from here on referred as Conservative Party). Though these three parties are opposing to each other, their political rhetoric regarding refugee quota distribution sounded similar. Repeatedly this group used term of “solidarity”, which meant that obligation to other EU countries was the reason to participate in the refugee relocation agreement. G. Landsbergis, a leader of Conservative party said: *“I am for solidarity. We are members of EU, we want EU solidarity, when we talk about Russia, Ukraine, and therefore, we have to act in solidarity when we are solving refugee questions (...)”* (Appendix No.2: 1).

Prime minister and leader of Social democrats party expressed his position similarly: *“Fact of illegal migration we take very seriously, we understand the size of this problem, and therefore,*

we should keep acting in solidarity in order to solve this problem with other EU countries.” (Appendix No.2:1).

Even though they both talk about action of solidarity, this later quote uses a term of ‘illegal migration’ which frames refugees as people who do not really have a right to arrive and apply for asylum, which actually is one of universal human rights (UDHR Article 14). Moreover, the Prime Minister refers twice to this refugee plight as a ‘problem’ which strengthens negative implication, despite that, he as a leader of the Government maintains official line and takes up favored approach towards cooperation with other EU countries.

Leader of Liberal Union Party E. Masiulis also was mostly concerned about solidarity: *“Inevitably we have to act in solidarity with EU and the quota should be corresponding to economic potential of the host country and its possibilities to integrate those people. I understand that we have to demonstrate that solidarity. I think that Lithuania is capable to integrate this number (of people).”* (Appendix No.2 :1).

Once again, this quote expresses concerns about unity with EU, need for solidarity within this strongly aspired organization was named as primary reason explaining refugee relocation.

Minister of foreign affairs L.Linkevicius also mentioned that Lithuania has an obligation to participate solving crisis initiated by refugee influx: *“Duties and obligations are not exciting, but we need to remember that we are a part of EU, when we are in need we also expect actual support, rather than just compassion. (...)”*. Moreover, he stated that refugee influx might be consciously initiated by some great powers in order to destroy great achievements of European countries’ cooperation, such as Schengen zone (Appendix No.2:3). His opinion in this group is very important, as he is the one externally representing official position of Lithuania, as well as it is one of the main functions of the President of The Republic of Lithuania. The president D. Grybauskaitė also clearly stated that increased forced migration is a serious problem for entire EU.

“It means that all countries should act in solidarity with those countries which at the moment have highest influx of migrants, we should respond to Germany’s invitation to act constructively and solve this problem (...) We perfectly understand our own responsibility. We understand the importance of solidarity principle (...) We felt solidarity when we needed help to ensure our security, we felt financial solidarity when Lithuania was facing crisis” (Appendix No. 2:12).

In these quotes it can be clearly identified that this act of solidarity can be compared to what Conditionality theory states as compliance with conditions set by International Organization. However, act of solidarity is based on voluntary participation, but potential economic or social reward and punishment measures are still considered.

Also a member of EU Parliament A. Guoga noticed that participation in solving refugee crisis could be beneficial in international political arena “(...) *by fulfilling international obligations to accept war refugees we will get credits in other political areas which are sensitive and important to us (...)*” (Appendix No.2: 10). Thus, as Conditionality approach explains international recognition, status and positive image are valuable social rewards and can foster state’s compliance with conditions. Moreover, leader of the opposition A. Kubilius connects solidarity and security and concludes that decision to withdraw from cooperation on refugee relocation could negatively affect national security:

„Today the worst decision that Lithuania could do is (...) to announce that Lithuania is closing borders for solidarity to solve this Middle-East inspired crisis. If we shut down the European solidarity, neither we would become safer, nor would we help EU with finding correct solutions. As a member of EU we will not be able to avoid participation in solving this problem (...)” (Appendix No.2:11).

To sum up, this group of politicians is concerned about state’s official image within the European Union, in the aforementioned quotes it can be identified, that participation in refugee relocation is a chance to express solidarity and unity with other Member States. Therefore, accepting relocated refugees and integrating them in Lithuania is implied as a cost for integrity, which is highly appreciated, because according to quoted politicians, in the past EU integrity has proven to be beneficial for the country and is expected to be beneficial in the future, when Lithuania will be in need. Nevertheless, none of these politicians seem actually concerned about refugees as such, they feel obliged to accept relocation plan for political reasons, but it is possible to spot that there is a lack of commitment to humanitarian action and assistance. However, I argue that primary message was aiming to prove importance of compliance for general society. In addition, further in the analysis I will demonstrate, that solidarity concept was invoked as primary argument in order to reach consent of the majority of the society, which was disposed negatively regarding refugee acceptance. Position to accept refugees had to be justified in the eyes of negatively minded society, the above quoted politicians see long lasting political

benefits for Lithuania, if it takes place in refugee relocation agreement, though at the same time they “(...)are generally subject to the most powerful sanctioning mechanism of society --- electoral confirmation and defeat.”(Schimmelfennig et al. 2002:8). Electoral confirmation or defeat in this case was very relevant, since elections were only one year away. “(...) if elections are to serve as an instrument of conditionality, a majority of the electorate must either identify itself strongly enough with “Europe”, or be sufficiently concerned with the opportunity costs of non-compliance, to make a conscious choice for pro- European political parties.” (Ibid.). Therefore, though these politicians expressed mostly purely institutional approach, yet it cannot be directly linked to the lack of compassion towards refugees.

When talking about security issues this group does not portray refugees as threat, they do not securitize forced migration question, though between the lines they draw impression that there are other threats, such as Eastern neighbors or economic crisis, therefore, national and economic security are related to a membership of the European Union. In addition, there is a short reference to TSS approach when Minister of Foreign Affairs L. Linkevicius states, that refugee influx to Europe might be planned by some great powers in order to hinder EU unity, thus refugee in this case would get a position as *independent variable* challenging security of EU overall.

Against EU relocation plan and refugee arrival to Lithuania

The Second group in the collected data covers those politicians who were against EU relocating refugees to Lithuania. This group mainly consists of two parties of ruling coalition: Labor Party, and Order and Justice Party, though individual members of other parties also could be included.

To begin with, Labor Party’s position was most often presented by its leader and a member of European Parliament, V. Mazuronis. He openly expressed disagreement regarding refugee relocation plan stating:

„EU should stop ‘open door’ policy as soon as possible and return economic migrants to their countries of origin ASAP (...). Europe has to give clear signal that it will not accept everyone, who wants to come, and those who are genuine war refugees will be accepted just temporary (...) What happened in Paris will upheave a lot of processes and EU cannot ignore

the fact that migrants' flows are out of control, through them terrorists are also getting in." (Appendix No.2:7).

Moreover, he announced that Labor party knows how to solve the so-called refugee crisis: *"It is a must to separate economic migrants from those who are fleeing war (...) Status of a temporary protection could be an appropriate response to this crisis"*. In addition to that, V. Mazuronis stated that refugees should be accommodated in such refugee camps, which would fulfill their basic livelihood needs as food, shelter, education, though their mobility within EU or the country would not be permitted:

"First of all we cannot allow that because of security reasons: we hear every day about riot, burglary and other accidents, but the most important is threat of terrorism. ISIS clearly announced that they have infiltrated their fighters among refugees and they are going to Europe (...) Finally, nobody of third countries citizens are permitted to move freely in EU, they have to have ID documents, visas. So, why we should make exceptions for refugees?" (Appendix No2: 6).

Thus, Labor Party and its leader have openly expressed that refugees impose threat of terrorism, V. Mazuronis presents this in a sight of TSS, which depoliticizes threat and unfolds it as an objective concern, uniformly threatening the entire society (Betts 2009:65). However, in this context security concerns are broader than those related to terrorism. In fact, the quotes above imply that refugee arrival would hinder individual security by riots or burglary incidents. Referent object in this case is refugees, but not terrorists, thus suggested solution is isolation or limitation of refugee mobility. In such way, Securitization approach overtakes scene and explains how exceptional actions can be perceived as legitimate in sake of security. In this case, extreme suggestion is to contain people, who are fleeing war and persecution, in an isolation.

Moreover, a Deputy Chairman of the Parliament, who is also a member of Labor Party V. Gedvilas criticized other Parties' opinions openly saying that:

"They like to talk about solidarity, unity and similar things. They humbly listen and accept what is dropped from the top of EU (...) But public surveys clearly demonstrate: Lithuanians do not want refugees. And this time it is not about whether their reluctance is related to real or fiction fears. It is about that nation is expressing its will." (Appendix No.2: 7).

By this rhetoric, Labor Party decided to stand out and oppose prevailed political discourse that affirms International obligations and EU solidarity. This quote reflects an intention to draw a

critical electorate closer to itself, because Labor Party demonstrates solidarity with the nation, with the society which obviously feels insecure about arriving refugees. Therefore, Labor Party even suggested rejecting refugee quota entitled to Lithuania, because of reasons such as *“highly increased risk of terrorism and because of other obvious shortages of this plan”*. However, this suggestion was never taken, yet, ruling coalition agreed that 1105 relocated refugees is the maximum number and it should not increase (Appendix No.2:9).

Labor party was not the only one in ruling coalition which was against refugee relocation, leader of Order and Justice Party R. Paksas said that decision to distribute refugees among Member States equals to *“opening Pandora’s box”* (Appendix No.2:1). He argued that this relocation plan will send an encouraging message to other refugees increasing in this way entitled quotas even more. In order for this not to happen European institutions need to function differently, because, according to R. Paksas, EU so far is still not capable of reacting to nowadays threats and challenges and thus it sacrifices its identity and history (Ibid.). Here we can see how indirectly political rhetoric appeals to security by giving a notion of societal security being challenged by culture and identity threats.

Finally, it can be seen that this group of politicians perceives EU as an outside political power, which does not comprehend the size of the forced migration problem and thus does not consider correct solutions, which, according to these parties, would be such as: strengthening of external EU borders and isolation of refugees in closed camps. However, this time EU is not the main referent object; though it is criticized for taking equivocal decisions. This group targets refugee’ image itself and frames refugees’ influx as a source of terrorism and criminality.

Concerns regarding refugee integration

To begin with, as soon as discussions on whether Lithuania should agree with entitled refugee quota or not began, politicians started to debate about refugee integration. L. Grauziniene, chairwoman of the Parliament, stated that it is important to provide qualitative integration, because it might affect refugees’ loyalty for the country in the future (Appendix No:2: 8). A. Guoga, a Member of European Parliament, said that Lithuania should be interested in investing into refugees’ integration, because this way the country will get new loyal and motivated society members, who will also contribute for its economic growth in the future (Appendix No:2: 10).

The decision to accept the quota implied that the country would receive about 3-4 times more refugees than its average per year. Thus, debates how to achieve effective and successful refugee integration got more intense. Major idea how to improve refugee integration system was expressed by leader of Liberal Union Party E. Masiulis, who suggested to reduce refugee stay in Refugee Reception Center (from here on referred as RRC) to 3 months also offered that refugees should not be entitled to financial support once they are employed, he claimed that this would encourage faster integration.

“ (...) only clear incentives, rather than various social benefits will ensure successful integration. For example as it is now refugees are entitled to get benefits for 5 years – it is wrong way, it does not motivate refugees to take care of themselves. These conditions will create mentality of dependence. Otherwise, there should be valid principle of equality – one group of people cannot be entitled to exceptional conditions, it would not be fair in respect of citizens of Lithuania. Therefore, first of all we should establish such order and rules, which would promote people to work, study our language and live with dignity.”(Appendix No.2:10).

After a couple of months, these suggestions became a reality in the integration policy. Claims that refugees cannot be entitled to exceptional treatment were invoked to demonstratively assure societal security, meaning that citizens will not have to compete with refugees for common goods, but rather that will imply that everyone will be entitled to equal level of opportunities.

Moreover, the President D. Grybauskaite echoed that financial support for refugees should not exceed unemployment support for Lithuanian citizens:

“Benefits won't be higher than for Lithuanian citizens, on the contrary it might be a little less than for citizens. Because our purpose is not to keep refugees „on benefits“, not to create ghettos, which would prevent integration, but rather to provide such benefits, which immediately would push them to enter a work market, to try to find jobs and integrate in the Lithuania.” (Appendix N.2: 12).

Nevertheless, despite practical issues related to refugee integration the President D.Grybauskaite also expressed compassionate awareness: *“Lithuania understands very well those, who are forced to leave their country, their loved ones and home. We can help them to build a secure and free life here – which is what they need the most”*. She also acknowledged that Lithuania already had past experience in helping refugees (Appendix No.2:12). Thus,

besides being concerned about societal security, D. Grybauskaite also expressed understanding and support for refugees. There were some other politicians, such as V. Andriukaitis or J. Belskiene, who tried to emphasize humane obligation to help and assist people fleeing danger, persecution or war, though this was a voice of minority.

In conclusion, these statements intend to explain main principles on how refugee integration should be implemented. Most often refugees are seen as a challenge for general society given that their integration requires states' resources. Therefore, politicians started to think of means by which would be possible to fulfill integration conditions with minimum expenses and justify it in an objective way. Although some speeches reveal that refugees' backgrounds and circumstances are understood, yet concerns about the financial support implies that refugees are expected to be able to sustain themselves in the same way as citizens do.

Societal perception

The purpose of this chapter is to analyze public perception on refugees' matter reflected in public surveys held in Lithuania on November 2015, just before the integration policy changes have been legally approved. By analyzing public surveys I intend to reveal what was trending society perception regarding refugees. This will help to assess how public opinion framed refugee image and thus how this perception could influence changes in the integration policy.

To begin with, public surveys reflected rather negative perception towards refugees. According to the surveys' results, 50% of respondents stated that they would not like to live in the neighborhood with refugees, putting them on the 4th place of all groups, which were perceived as undesirable to live with, first three respectively were: Roma (gypsies), persons who returned from prisons and Muslims. Moreover, 31% of citizens answered that they would not like to work together with refugees; this indicates them as sixth undesired group in work environment. Also when interviewees were asked to whom they would **not** like to rent their property, refugees were identified as 5th undesirable group, because 52% would not like to have them as a potential tenants (LSRC 1:2-5). This variation among percentages identifies that refugees are less unwelcomed if they are met in broader societal context such as work place. In addition, results of the survey conclude that prevailed opinion among society members (74%) is

that a number of refugees is increasing every year, though statistics shows that over last 5 years numbers of persons who were granted asylum in Lithuania remains average and steady (LRSC 2:1). This argument shows that societal perception does not match with reality and thus is over protective towards refugee arrival to the country. The 70 % of respondents expressed that Lithuania has already enough of refugees and that it should not accept more (Ibid.).

Furthermore, 55 % of interviewed people claimed that Lithuania should reject participation in EU refugee relocation. Most of the respondents agreed that refugees might cause an increase of general criminalization, social unrests in Lithuania and that they are using the country as a transit zone (LRSC 2:3). These reasons indicate threatening image of refugees in the society.

“Citizens of Lithuania perceive their own society and country rather negatively. Absolute majority (80%) of the respondents believe that refugees, who arrived to Lithuania will face negative societal perception.” (LRSC 2:2). This finding of survey researchers implies that Lithuanians are aware that most of their own society members will raise an issue for newcomers. When interviewees were asked whether refugees should be granted same rights in medical care, only 42% agreed. Same question was asked regarding their rights in labor market and results showed that positive answers consisted only 35%, and when survey triggered social payment issue, only 31% agreed that refugees should be entitled to the same financial benefits as citizens (LRSC 2:6). Hence, we can see that society’s consent correlates with financial need for refugees, meaning, if refugees require investment, then societal consent decreases.

Finally, it can be seen that refugees were apprehended negatively by majority, though reasons are various, society identifies them as a threat for societal order and safety; also they picture them as a threatening competitors for state’s resources. Many respondents think that there are enough refugees in the country and more should not come, hence it can be pointed out that in this case refugees are identified as a social group called *‘others’* and opposed by societal group which might be referred as *‘we’* - Lithuanians.

Policy changes and effects

The goal of this chapter is to look into changes that were made in the refugee Integration Support Order. Identifying and analyzing those changes will enable the reader to understand more concealed intentions that prompted quick adjustments to the policy. This chapter will be

divided into three sections. The first two of them will present specific changes introduced in the policy and will reveal the outcomes in practice. Third section is meant to display overall, long-lasting practical refugee integration issues caused by the existing policy.

Financial support and termination of integration period

To begin with, major and most important change which was done in the refugee integration policy, was reduction of financial benefits. Financial support for a single person was cut half, thus, a single person currently is entitled to €204 per month, family of two people is entitled to €306 per month etc. (MSSL 2016). These amounts of monthly allowance are already reduced half, comparing to previously existing policy (A1- 238 2015: Article 51.2). However, this reduction of financial benefits was not the only one. Amended refugee integration policy states that after 6 months of refugee integration in municipalities their monthly benefits decrease again by half. Thus, from 7th month of integration in a municipality a single person is entitled only to €102 (MSSL 2016). This monthly allowance is meant to cover basic needs, such as housing, transportation, food etc. Thus, general financial cuts and especially the second reduction of the allowance, strongly concerned related stakeholders, which are involved in refugee integration and protection processes. For example UNHCR expressed concern that: *“the envisaged decrease of integration related support may lead to hardship and destitution of refugees (...) and significantly hinder their ability to integrate fully into all vital sub-sectors of the society”* (UNHCR Comments 2015). Representative of the Lithuanian Red Cross society (from here on referred as Red Cross), Rita also explained why the new integration policy changes worried her as an expert: *“(...) this program deeply concerns me because it is not corresponding with people’s possibilities and their actual needs, but it demands that after half a year in municipality people would be able to live on their own.”* (Appendix No.3: 2). These quotes clearly point that reduction of refugee monthly allowance sets a real barrier for them to integrate and even to survive in Lithuania. In big cities, such as capital Vilnius, where population is more multicultural, refugees usually have more employment opportunities. Nevertheless, as UNHCR representative Renata said, accommodation prices in Vilnius and Kaunas are rather high, thus currently existing amount of financial support is insufficient, and not able to provide even for set of basic refugees’ needs (Appendix No.4: 5).

Moreover, amendments to the refugee integration policy have limited the time of integration period. During the first stage of integration refugees are accommodated at the Rukla Refugee Reception Center (from here on referred as RRC), this institution starts their integration program, introduces them to language tuition, provides vocational guidance, as well as courses about Lithuanian culture and society (Rukla RRC 2016). In the previous edition of the policy, it was set that refugees should live from 8 to 12 months at RRC, while the current policy states that their primary integration in the center should last only 3 months, with possibility to extend for one month if needed (No A1-238 2016: Article 11). UNHCR positively welcomed news about this development:

“UNHCR considers that placing refugees and beneficiaries of subsidiary protection in local communities as soon as possible, is as a step towards implementing community based reception (...) while a prolonged stay in reception centers or other collective accommodation facilities inevitably leads to isolation of asylum seekers and refugees from the host society and limits their social interaction and integration, hence being counterproductive to the goals of the integration support programs.” (UNHCR Comments 2015).

Nevertheless, professionals supporting refugee integration had ambiguous opinion about this change, as they have to work with real cases, their perception includes practical concerns, which are skipped in the legislation.

“Red Cross has always been in favor that time in Rukla RRC would be shorter, that people would be able to live in municipalities earlier (...). However, if we talk about particularly vulnerable groups, for example about families with minor children, sick or handicapped people, then it is likely that even moving out of Rukla RRC is not physically possible, because of their condition and abilities. This period in especially complicated cases should be foreseen with exceptions in the policy.” (Appendix No.3:3).

Hence, even though this change in the policy is considered to foster integration, vulnerable groups are still not taken into account in this place.

In addition, for the time being refugee integration is limited to 12 months, this number is not new, but if we consider that after 6 months, their financial support decreases by half, then in only one year refugees are expected to be completely done with integration process. Furthermore, in a previously existing integration policy the refugees associated with vulnerable groups were able to extend their integration period up to 5 years with full financial support (No

A1-238 2015: Article 25). At the moment, this extension for vulnerable groups is available only up to 2 years and “(...) *during extension period they are entitled to the amount of second half-year support, which is per person €102*” (Appendix No.3: 2). This change makes it even more difficult for particularly vulnerable refugees, if one have disabilities or if it is a single parent with minor children, learning a language and finding a job is even harder. Therefore, after a half a year the one would face especially hard times, and legal system does not have more tools to offer that would be able to assist. Then the one has to rely on additional support provided by local NGOs. For example Red Cross besides implementation of the national integration program, also implements separate projects funded by EU, as well as collects private donations. Supplementary measures are invoked in order that the organization would have extra funds to help those refugees who turned out to be in critical situation. “*It depends on the situation and projects. We have possibility to compensate food items, we also hand out some food, we provide clothing charity, and sometimes it happens that donations are assigned directly in cash or goods, when people have a special need for it.*” (Appendix No.3:2).

Therefore, thanks to the NGOs implementing extra measures there still are some possibilities to meet the most basic livelihood needs of those refugees who are not capable to go along with official conditions and thus, are in critical situations.

To sum up, reduced period of integration implies that refugees should not take a long time to adapt, but look for opportunities to support themselves. Above mentioned quotes reveals that these changes are not considering actual capacities, opportunities and struggles of refugees and fails to notice special needs of vulnerable people.

Housing and language tuition

Furthermore, integration policy states, that refugees should find accommodation themselves, with some assistance of the organizations supporting their integration and this should be done in 15 days since they signed a contract with the organization (No A1-238 2016: Article 36). In the previous version of this policy notification regarding moving out from RRC was longer – 60 days, thus, organizations were able to prepare and search for accommodation without stress. As moving out term is shorter at the moment there is a strong need for cooperation and planning ahead, which according to Eva, is not always happening (Appendix No.5:3). Moreover, this policy regulation worries UNHCR, considering negative society's

perception accommodation search might be highly complicated for refugees. Therefore, UNHCR advised to change the wording in the policy that organizations supporting integration would be entitled to actively participate in search of accommodation options and that refugees as minimum would be assisted with finding affordable offers and signing of the lease contracts (UNHCR Comments 2015). The aforementioned assistance on affordable accommodation indicates another concern regarding prices, an issue which refers back to reduction of the financial support. As Eva from Caritas identified, often price is the major barrier: *“We looked for an apartment for them for two or three months, because of course price, because of the price we were looking this long”* (Appendix No.5:3). When she was asked what happens when they are not able to find any housing options in time, Eva explained it with an example of one family: even though the family was not recognized legally as a vulnerable group, they were allowed to extend their stay at RRC until a suitable housing option was found for them. *“Though rules state that it should be only three months, but they (people at the RRC center) are still humane and in situations like this people stay to live there, of course with warning that they should move as soon as it is possible”* (Appendix No.5:3). Hence, it can be identified that when people are stranded in legal limbo unconventional solutions might be applied by NGOs or even within state institutions such as RRC. In addition, lack of provisions for exceptional practical situations cause stress and puts pressure on the organizations and lower level bureaucrats that enforce the policy.

Moreover, refugee integration was affected in one more way, even though it is not specifically mentioned among policy changes: because of a shorter stay at the RRC, the initial stage of Lithuanian language tuition becomes shorter as well. When refugees were able to stay at RRC for 8 months, they were entitled to 190 hours of language tuition, now when this period is reduced there is room only for 96 hours (Appendix 3:3). This loss of hours appointed to learn Lithuanian language could be compensated by transferring this amount to the municipality level. Nevertheless, language tuition at municipalities remain same as it was before, which is 190 hours. Most of interviewed practitioners expressed that this amount is not sufficient, since Lithuanian language for foreigners is difficult, as they have not even heard it before, and sounds very alien regarding their native languages (Appendix No.6:3).

In addition, according to practitioners there are more issues related with language tuition, which are not considered and as Bacchi (2010) would identify are treated with silence in the policy. One such issue is lacking funding, which affects quality of this education. *“In*

municipalities there is a problem that funding was not changed about decade, funding assigned for one hour (of tuition) is €2.90 and they require that it would be a private lesson.” (Appendix No.3:3). According to Rita, this funding does not correspond with market prices. Thus, NGOs again has to search for unique methods to provide this service for such low price. Rita explained that the way their organization is still able to hire teachers is that they gather a group of refugees in one class, thus lessons are not private and leads to another problem:

“Tuition is not adjusted to those people (...) it is provided in groups, though people have different levels (...) their skills and knowledge are different. There are some who can learn in one week more than some are learning in two months. Then actual tuition is not corresponding with people’s capacities and needs.” (Ibid.).

Another problem in this highly important integration step of language tuition is that legislation does not provide clear regulation, which would ensure coherent system in between integration periods at the RRC, and at municipalities, *“(...) there is no transference. (...) a teacher meets with a person, identifies his level and then he is either included into existing group or he gets individual lessons to catch up with the group (...) It is not coherent and that is very sad.”* (Appendix No.5:4). UNHCR representative for Lithuania Renata expressed that language tuition has a vital importance for refugee possibilities to integrate into society, therefore, she also emphasized that it should be strengthened (Appendix No.4:4).

All these arguments require shedding more light on language tuition in the legal system. Organizations supporting integration are forced to search for additional measures that they would be able to provide this service within existing legal framework, which is lacking to spot problematic areas and does not meet practical concerns. This area of integration should not be treated with silence but should be a major tool providing refugees with ability to integrate faster in the country.

NGOs’ insights about existing legal refugee integration framework

First of all, as seen from the interview with Eva, the refugee integration system is incomplete, she states that policies and legal procedures are set, nevertheless, they are not working properly: *“(...) everything is done just on a surface level, even though it should be already a well working system, (...) that Integration Order and procedure and law exist 10 or 14*

years already, but actually this question became relevant only half a year ago, when they started to assign quotas.”(Appendix No.5:1).

One of the problems, as Eva identified later during the interview, is vocational trainings: refugees are interested to obtain new skills and competences, but unfortunately, their options are limited by their previous education. *“For example if you obtained higher education in your country of origin then you are not going to get any vocational training here”* (Appendix No.5:4). Thus, if refugees are not able to use their previous higher education and at the same time they are not allowed to obtain a new education which could be more relevant in the new country, this leads refugees to obscure situation. Moreover, another issue is related to qualification recognition. This procedure is not developed very well, because if a person does not have all necessary documents to prove it, then one will face a lot of problems (Appendix No.4:6). As one of the practitioners identified creating better possibilities to recognize their qualifications would be one of extra measures which could improve and foster refugee integration (Appendix No.3:1).

Overall, concerns regarding amended refugee Integration Support Order and its effectiveness were clearly revealed by Rita:

“I am worried about the fact that it does not match with real capacities of the people and does not create opportunities for people to integrate and to start an independent life in Lithuania. And the goal of the Integration Support Order should be to “set people on their feet”(…) At the moment, the way how it is being changed, it does not meet the real needs of people and only describes a temporary support, which becomes a waste of funding and energy (…) This program is more suitable (…) for work migrants, who would arrive to Lithuania as a particular work force (…) This does not correspond with need of vulnerable groups, since refugees primarily have war traumas” (Appendix No.3:2).

This quote reveals that the policy tends to counter refugee integration. Its regulations would rather provide integration for those who chose immigration to Lithuania for economic reasons. The policy does not consider special status of this group, their plight is not voluntary, thus most of refugees are caring psychological traumas from their past. UNHCR representative Renata echoed that the system is not flexible and therefore, is not able to provide with the needs a wider range of refugees: *“So I think that it is necessary to revise the support and make it less stiff, more flexible, responding to different needs, because refugees’ needs varies a lot, and*

let's say that one size is not suitable for everyone" (Appendix No.4:5). Hence, if the integration policy would take into account differences among refugees, that their abilities and skills varies a lot, then this policy should produce moderated integration options. Difficult individual cases have to have additional mechanisms available in the policy; otherwise, the struggle is left on refugees themselves or NGOs, who are forced to look for unconventional solutions. Active search of ways to assist refugees is a very welcoming initiative, nevertheless, if refugees cannot trust that the legal framework will provide sufficient help and thus have to rely on goodwill of local NGOs, this might cause increased stress level.

As one of the NGO representative Rita said: *"There is experience, but there is a lack of analysis, to identify what is effective in Lithuania. Because direct transposition of the system is not always effective, since there is always national context and communication which matters"* (Appendix No.3:4). Thus, as earlier it was identified that foreign actors' influenced establishment of asylum legislation as now it can be pointed out that foreign experience affected construction of the national refugee integration framework. However, foreign experience adapted in the Lithuanian integration policy has to be adjusted according to national context and barriers caused by it.

Finally, Integration Support Order has one more change where it describes that RRC should consult non-governmental sector regarding questions related to refugee integration. Furthermore, the policy describes that NGOs have a right to participate in refugees' integration from early stage, as soon as an alien was granted asylum (No A1-238 2016: Article 5.3.13, Article 19). This change is very appreciated and its importance is well explained by UNHCR commentaries: *"NGOs play a crucial role in the integration of refugees and often have a unique experience and expertise in addressing the refugees' integration obstacles and strengthening the integration potential of refugee on a one-to-one basis."* (UNHCR Comments 2015). In addition to that, before all the changes were made, the government has created an official commission to promote cooperation among various stakeholders such as: Ministry of Social security and Labor, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Interior, Lithuanian Employment Market, Lithuanian Red Cross Society and Vilnius Caritas, UNHCR, International Migration Organization etc. This commission discussed relevant issues regarding refugee relocation to Lithuania and their integration. First intention of this commission was to coordinate work among institutions, which usually are involved in refugee assistance (My Government 2015). However, interviewed

representatives of NGOs revealed that this commission made it possible for them to be heard, yet they doubted how effective it might actually become (Appendix No. 5:6).

“Of course there are those government meetings, where NGOs and representatives of Ministries are participating, but as usually in Lithuania NGOs are considered to be “crazy” and that they raise irrelevant issues. And nobody takes into account that this (NGO experience) is what future problems will be based on.” (Appendix No.3:5).

The quote above demonstrates mistrust in the cooperation between state institutions and NGOs, even though the latter is an actor which deals with reality on the ground, it is able to identify and measure actual effects of the policies, yet its opinion is not always taken into account when making legal decisions.

Overall, it is possible to spot that changes made in the refugee Integration Support Order raises serious concerns among practitioners. Reduced monthly payments and time period to integrate show that the government is willing to provide just a little assistance and for rather short time. The policy is not flexible and rather ignorant for needs of those who are vulnerable, who are not able to join labor market right away and live self-sufficiently after six months of integration in a municipality. And as some of practitioners identified, this policy would be effective only for work migrants, as they are voluntarily choosing destination country and they arrive prepared with particular skills, which are needed in the country.

Existing Integration Support Order allows to see that there is a national program which describes official possibilities for refugees to integrate, but analysis or practitioners' perception reveals that the system is still very superficial and in reality for refugee integration to happen it requires additional efforts from NGOs.

Furthermore, as these changes reduces national funding for refugees' integration, it implies that earlier refugees were seen as receiving too much of national resources. Thus, by cutting monthly payments and omitting their right to prolong their integration period longer than 2 year, reducing amount of hours to their language tuition, all changes demonstrate importance to diminish expenses spend on refugee. This argument can be supported by the fact that such domain as Lithuanian language tuition, which according to practitioners is vital for success to integrate, was not improved, but even reduced. Existing problems such as inadequate funding was treated with silence and not considered to be an issue. The only change which could be seen

as positive was reduction of refugee stay at the Refugee Reception Center, yet this change also provides opportunity to save some funding if people move to municipalities earlier, therefore, this amendment can be perceived ambiguously.

To sum up, policy changes in terms of Bacchi's theory could be answered as: refugees' need for national support and funding during their integration was seen as a problem. This understanding of the problem led to a concrete practical effect: monthly allowance was reduced down to the minimum; maximal integration period was reduced from 5 to 2 years. On the other hand, important integration domains such as vocational training or language tuitions were treated with silence, issues within these domains were not considered, though according to interviewed practitioners they raise serious barriers.

Discussion

In this part, I seek to outline how each part of the analysis relates to each other; also I aim to discuss issues which were left out in the main analysis part. First part of the discussion is dedicated to show how the Conditionality strategy links historical and current contexts together. The second part highlights how securitization strategy was employed by Labor party as electoral campaign subject. The third part reflects how societal perception affects NGOs' work and refugees' possibilities to successfully integrate.

Conditionality in the past and nowadays

Analysis of the historical context has demonstrated that asylum emergence was caused by conditions set by International actors rather than by internal interest to help migrants who, at that moment, were using Lithuania as transition country. There is a specific argument that supports this finding. Since the Soviet Union times, foreigners in the Baltic region were seen as occupants invading the country. Though Lithuania managed to keep high homogeneity of nationals, as Thompson (1998) explained, they had to put effort in order to prevent high immigration rates. At the moment, societal perception is negative primarily towards foreigners from distant countries. According to the survey done by the Institute for Ethnic Studies of the LSRC in 2014, Lithuanians most negatively perceive Syrians, Lebanese, Afghans and people from African continent; percentages of negative perception towards these groups respectively are: 54.4%, 54.8%, 52.5% and 53.2% (LSRC (3) 2014:15). Whereas, negative perception towards citizens from Western and Eastern EU countries is much lower: 7% and 15.3% (Ibid.). This shows that generally Lithuanians do not perceive immigration as occupation anymore, but there is a clear tendency that in particular citizens of Middle East or African countries are approached negatively. In addition, analysis showed that in 2015 societal perception regarding refugees was permeated with fear and insecurity, thus, even in nowadays theory of Conditionality again gains relevant ground in the national context. As there is almost no bottom-up interest to host refugees in the country, but there is highly appreciated membership in the EU, politicians tried to convince society why it is important to accept refugee quota, therefore they highlight potential societal and economic rewards and also slightly reminded about possible punishments.

Continuity of the securitization strategy in electoral campaign

Moreover, after November 13th, when terrorist attacks took place in Paris security issues were in the center of political discourse. In order to maintain society calm and yet be able to fulfill official promise to accept a quota of relocated refugees Prime Minister A. Butkevicius announced that each refugee, who will be brought to Lithuania will be thoroughly checked and scanned. Otherwise, if information is not 100% clear they will not be able to enter the country (Appendix No2:4). On the other hand, some political Parties tried to use these events as a tool to securitize and frame refugees as potential threat. These Parties suggested to reject international commitment to share refugees across EU, this way they intended to show that they are ready to bear international punishment, in order to protect the nation. Possibly this role of a national savior was meant to gain electoral affirmation in elections, which were just 1 year away. Consequently, this year Labor Party presented its election campaign with a commercial where its leader V. Mazuronis said: *“(...) I do not want that Lithuanian newspapers would be marked with headlines about violence, rapes, robberies. Therefore, I promise you, that even if nobody else will fight against refugee invasion to Lithuania, we will fight until the end (...)”* (Labor Party 2016). This electoral campaign clearly constructs a threatening image of refugees. Parliament elections on October of 2016 will demonstrate whether this securitization strategy was successful one.

Impact of the negative societal attitude

Furthermore, in the analysis I did not have an opportunity to reflect how negative society's perception is affecting NGOs work and refugees possibilities to integrate in Lithuania. In order to maintain clear structure in the analysis chapters I left this argument for the discussion part.

As Rita stated, media is not always a source of objective information, therefore anger, fear and other negative emotions can prevail. The first time when strong societal reaction was provoked it was because of articles, which twisted information and announced that refugees will, get €600 monthly allowance, which is double than a minimal salary in Lithuania (Appendix No.3:4). This information was not true because this amount of money is not given for refugees, but it covers costs of: *“(...) tickets (public transportation), interpreters, medical checkups etc.”* (Ibid.). Another interviewed practitioner Lina mentioned that negative attitude towards people who were granted asylum is as a major obstacle to integrate them: *“In any field, which is related*

to persons granted asylum, as one of the biggest problem I see society's perception, which has been formed. (Negative) attitude which exists in the surrounding, in my opinion, is one of the major aspects why integration of those people is not successful." (Appendix No.6:2). Domains which namely were identified as mostly affected by negative attitude of society were: housing and employment.

Finding accommodation for refugees is highly difficult for several reasons beyond the difficulty of retrieving accessible cheap housing, "(...) NGOs says that if landlord finds out that tenant is going to be a refugee, then they say 'thank you we are not renting our property'." (Appendix No.4:6). This issue is rather old, but after the escalation of refugee related issues in the media the situation got even worse "accommodation, has always been difficult for foreigners (...) now it is even more complicated and with even higher (society's) anger." (Appendix No.3:4).

Regarding employment issues Lina explained that: "(...) employers are sometimes afraid to hire refugees, but their motives are not clear, maybe because those people are foreigners, maybe because they are intimidated by the refugee or subsidiary protection status" (Appendix No.6:2).

However, as practitioners expressed, negative attitude sometimes can be felt even at state institutions such as: municipalities, Migration Department of even doctors' office (Appendix No.4:4, No.5:2, No.4:6). In these institutions negative perception might be revealed as a lack of willingness to provide a service which by law is entitled, or sometimes the service might be provided but not in accordance with the standards as it was supposed to be.

When Rita was asked what in her opinion should be changed, so that refugee integration could be successful in Lithuania, she answered: "There is a need for attitude change in practice and in legislation (...) We have to provide possibilities and then let people live self-sufficiently. So that those people legally and practically would not be stamped by sign of exclusion, just because they are 'refugees'". (Appendix No.3:5). Hence, it is possible to spot importance of societal discourse in practitioners' work and especially in refugees' lives.

CONCLUSIONS

This chapter will summarize the main analytical findings and will provide the answer to the research question: *How should we understand recent changes made in the Lithuanian refugee integration policy?*

First of all, the analysis of historical context elucidates that foreign actors were able to apply *Conditionality strategy* and thus stimulate the country to implement asylum legislations. Analysis reveals that back in the 90s implementation of asylum legislation was imposed on Lithuania rather than implemented because it would be in its own national interest. The decision to ratify Refugee Convention was made by political elites who perceived this step as a necessary move in order to get closer institutional relations with the Western democratic countries. Nevertheless, even though asylum and refugee matters were defined in relevant policies, high numbers of asylum applications were never observed and thus refugee issues never concerned broader society.

However, the second part of the analysis shows that in 2015, when the refugee relocation plan was announced, societal discontent regarding refugees became more apparent. Moreover, inquiry into the political discourse showed that it was divided and broadly represented by two positions:

- Pro refugee relocation: as some politicians explained, EU was in need of solidarity and cooperation to manage the so called refugee crisis. The motives of this group of politicians can be once again explained by *Conditionality theory*. Participation in refugee relocation was a gesture which should have earned the country a ‘positive image’ within the union. It was expected that the act of solidarity would guarantee loyalty of the other Member States in case Lithuania would encounter security issues, such as military or economic threat from Eastern neighbors.

- Against refugee relocation: some political parties see refugees as a threat of terrorism or general criminalization. This group actively and intentionally tried to *securitize* the image of refugees. These political parties suggested limiting refugee mobility by isolating them in camps. Their suggestion perfectly reflected what *Securitization theory* refers to as hardly legitimate emergency action, though it was not implemented.

After political debates, the first group, which was concerned about EU solidarity managed to approve relocation agreement. Nevertheless, majority in the society at that time perceived refugees mainly negatively. Public surveys reflected fear that refugees might be a threat for societal order and safety. Refugees were also perceived as threatening competitors for state resources. Therefore, political discourse focused on refugee integration. It was expressed that the integration policy should be changed in a way that it would encourage refugees to live self-sufficient lives; also it was highlighted that refugees should not be entitled to higher financial support than citizens.

Consequently, analysis of the refugee Integration Support Order was made. It showed that most of the amendments were introduced in order to reduce expenditures for refugee integration. Thus, the problem reflected in these changes suggest that refugee integration consumes too much of the state's resources.

Nevertheless, interviews with practitioners who are supporting refugee integration in Lithuania revealed that the amended policy does not provide sufficient support. The provisions of the policy require that refugees would be ready to live almost entirely self-sufficient lives after six months of integration into municipalities. When looking through the lens of practitioners' perception, it is possible to spot that the policy is ignorant of the needs of particularly vulnerable refugees. In order to be more effective, Integration Support Order should obtain more flexible framework; it should foresee wider variety of support options. Further interviews with practitioners demonstrated that the current framework is still very superficial and that in reality, for refugee integration to happen additional efforts from NGOs is required. Thus, it can be identified that the government intends to shift major part of integration responsibilities onto the non-governmental sector.

Finally, changes done in the refugee Integration Support Order should be understood as the government's attempt to reach societal consent while improving the state's image with the international community. Both the society and international actors have effective tools to influence the government. Development of international relations has long lasting effects for the entire country, whereas, societal consent determines success of political parties during upcoming elections. This means that after complying with EU's need for solidarity in refugee relocation, the government, by reducing support for refugees, also complied with populist opinion and demonstrated solidarity with the majority of discontent citizens. Overall, it can be stated that the

government aimed to improve external relations and agreed to participate in refugee relocation, yet significant reductions of financial integration support reveals that the system does not intend to actually effectively assist refugees; rather it just provides possibilities to exist.

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