

## ROLE OF THE EU IN ENSURING REGIONAL SECURITY IN THE MIDDLE EAST: CASE STUDY ISRAELI-PALESTINIAN CONFLICT

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*This thesis examines the EU's role in ensuring regional security in the Middle East, focusing on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict as a case study. The author critically analyzed the effectiveness and significance of the EU's security strategies in the Middle East region. Research was structured according to four main security challenges in the region: regional conflicts, terrorist attacks, migration crises and nuclear weapons proliferation. These points are long time on the global agenda and the EU is also concerned about them. A special attention was given to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and involvement of the EU. Due to the lack of the national researcher who study this specific topic, the thesis is a unique work dedicated to the security cooperation of the EU with Middle East region.*

There is a strong link between what happens outside of the EU's borders and security within Europe. In a rapidly changing world, security challenges have become more complex. As a result, the EU made security a priority in its Global Strategy [1, p.36]. The Middle East continues to face ongoing conflicts and security challenges, including the Syrian civil war, the ongoing Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and the rise of terrorist groups such as ISIS. With the recent withdrawal of US and NATO forces from Afghanistan, the EU's role in ensuring regional security has become even more critical. In this context, the goal of the research is to develop theoretical and empirical study of the role of the EU in ensuring regional security in the Middle East, and a comprehensive analysis of the role of the EU in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict regulation.

**The Middle East** - region located at the crossroads of Europe, Asia, and Africa. Home to several major world religions, including Islam, Judaism, and Christianity, and is an important center for the global energy industry. There are several contemporary security challenges in the Middle East that pose threats to the region and to the stability of the European Union as well [2, p.86]. Some of these challenges include: Terrorism; Regional conflicts; Refugee crises; Nuclear arms proliferation.

In response to these challenges the EU has its own approach. The EU's counterterrorism efforts involve enhancing border security, sharing information, providing technical assistance, targeting terrorist financing, and preventing radicalization. In resolving regional conflicts, the EU employs diplomacy, supports democracy and human rights, provides economic and humanitarian aid, and works with regional organizations [3, p.94]. To address refugee crises, the EU offers humanitarian assistance, seeks political solutions, supports hosting countries, and collaborates with international actors. In com-

bating nuclear arms proliferation, the EU supports a nuclear-free zone, monitors nuclear activities, enhances nuclear security, and encourages non-proliferation treaties [4, p.63].

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict is complex and multifaceted, with deep-rooted factors at play. The EU's strategy focuses on diplomatic efforts, economic support, political dialogue, and security cooperation. It promotes peace negotiations through initiatives like the Quartet and the Middle East Peace Process. The EU provides direct economic aid and fosters cooperation. Political dialogue involves engaging with Israel, Palestine, and regional actors like Jordan and Egypt. Security cooperation includes training Palestinian security forces for stability in the region [5, p.57].

EU security policies in the Middle East have demonstrated both strengths and weaknesses. On the strengths side, the EU has successfully implemented security initiatives, including counterterrorism measures, humanitarian aid, and support for mediation, which have contributed to regional stability and peace [6, p.46]. Additionally, the EU's involvement in the Iran nuclear deal and promotion of a two-state solution for Israel and Palestine have been notable achievements. The EU's participation in the Middle East Peace Process and programs for security sector reform have also shown dedication to enhancing security forces in the region.

However, there are weaknesses to be considered. Internal divisions and a complex decision-making process in foreign policy and security hinder the realization of the EU's security strategies. Iran's pursuit of its nuclear program and non-compliance with international agreements pose challenges to the EU's efforts. The EU's attention can be diverted to other conflict-ridden regions, which draws focus away from the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The Middle East Peace Process has reached a standstill, and the involvement of external actors and global powers diminishes the EU's influence in the region.

In this context, to strengthen its role in the region, the EU should prioritize cohesion and unity in its foreign policy and security decision-making processes. It needs to establish itself as a credible and influential actor with an independent voice in the Israeli-Palestinian peace process. Developing its own approach, independent of other international forces involved, is crucial in this regard.

The EU can employ preventive diplomacy to address the cyclical nature of the conflict. By predicting and preventing annual escalations through negotiations and short-term agreements, the EU can utilize its high-level diplomatic services to serve as an effective mediator.

Exploring innovative approaches to conflict resolution is another avenue for the EU to consider. This could involve increased engagement with civil society organizations, grassroots initiatives, and track-two diplomacy efforts. By embracing these alternative methods, the EU can broaden its impact and contribute to sustainable peace in the region.

As a result of the research the following recommendations were made:

First of all, the political scientists, including but not limited those whose primary domain of expertise is the sphere of international relations, should in their sci-

entific research pay more attention to the security developments in the Middle East region. This recommendation is especially important for Moldova, where there is a clear lack of research papers on the issue. The author considers it necessary as threats from the Middle East have the potential to impact security situation in the Republic of Moldova.

Secondly, due to the candidate status of the Republic of Moldova to EU, it should be perceived as a part of European security mechanisms. The alignment to the EU's acquis is already proceeding with all necessary reforms in internal and external security domains. Thus, Republic of Moldova is addressing such issues as terrorism financing and illegal migration from the Middle East together with the EU.

Thirdly, Republic of Moldova should use all the assistance provided by the EU security institutions in the context of resolving Transnistrian conflict. Now, is the opportunity moment to solve it, due to recently launched security initiatives together with UE, such as EU Support Hub for Internal Security and Border Management in Moldova, Together for Home Affairs (T4HA).

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