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### 3<sup>ST</sup> MEDITERREG GRADUATE CONFERENCE FOR MASTER'S STUDENTS AND EARLY STAGE RESEARCHERS

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The conference was held online on May 15, 2024. Among the issues discussed at the conference, the analysis of the practice of regionalism in the Mediterranean, with focus on modern conflicts and the role of external actors, occupied a prominent place.

**Key words:** regional studies, Mediterranean, conflicts, external actors.

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### THE STRATEGIC IMPLICATIONS OF NUCLEAR WEAPONS IN THE MEDITERRANEAN: A CASE OF RUSSIAN FOREIGN POLICY

The Russian Federation's engagement in the Mediterranean and the Middle East is deeply rooted in historical ambitions and strategic imperatives. Historically, Russia's southward expansion aimed at securing access to maritime routes in the Mediterranean, crucial for economic and military purposes. The post-Soviet era marked a reassessment of Russia's regional policies, with Vladimir Putin's presidency from 2000 onwards heralding a renewed assertiveness. Russia's contemporary strategy involves a multifaceted approach encompassing military intervention, diplomatic initiatives, and economic partnerships.

Since 2015, Russia's military involvement in Syria and support for private military forces in Libya have significantly altered regional perceptions, with some American allies viewing Russia as a counterbalance to Iran. Russia's diplomatic engagements have expanded, fostering relationships with various governments, including traditional adversaries and Western allies. This has been facilitated by Putin's pragmatic approach and willingness to engage with all regional actors, enhancing Russia's influence.

Russia's strategic interests in the region are driven by multiple factors. Militarily, Russia seeks to secure its naval bases and maintain a presence that can project power and influence. Economically, the region's energy resources are vital for Russia's economy, and partnerships with countries like Turkey through projects such as TurkStream highlight this focus. Additionally, Russia's arms sales to countries like Egypt and the UAE, free from the human rights conditions imposed by Western suppliers, bolster its economic ties and influence.

However, despite this resurgence, several factors limit Russia's dominance. The persistent presence of the United States, coupled with regional reliance on American security, constrains Moscow's influence. Countries like Saudi Arabia and Israel maintain security cooperation with the US while engaging with Russia to balance regional dynamics. Moreover, China's growing economic involvement presents a significant challenge, as its investments and strategic initiatives often surpass Russia's.

Russia's actions, such as its support for the Assad regime in Syria and its relationship with Iran, complicate its regional standing. While some countries engage with Russia to counterbalance Iran, they remain wary of Moscow's intentions and its close ties with Tehran. Additionally, Russia's alleged involvement in regional conflicts and support for certain factions have sometimes strained relations with other regional actors.

The future of Russia's role in the Mediterranean and Middle East is uncertain, especially in light of the on-going war in Ukraine and resulting international sanctions. These factors have strained Russia's relations with Western powers and limited its ability to manoeuvre diplomatically. Moreover, the conflict in Ukraine may divert Russian attention and resources away from its engagements in the Mediterranean and Middle East.

While Russia has reasserted itself as a significant power under Putin, its ability to maintain and expand its influence is contingent on regional cooperation and evolving geopolitical dynamics. Governments in the Mediterranean and Middle East may continue to engage with Russia for various reasons, but they also seek partnerships with the economically stronger China. Additionally, despite disagreements with Washington, regional actors are unlikely to rely exclusively on Russia, preferring to balance their engagements between major powers.

Ultimately, Russia aims to prevent NATO's dominance in the Mediterranean rather than achieving outright regional hegemony, reflecting its constrained resources and strategic priorities. Russia's historical involvement in the Mediterranean, motivated by longstanding ambitions and strategic interests, indicates a lasting commitment to the region. However, the reality of its limited capabilities suggests that while it seeks to reassert itself, it faces significant challenges in achieving its broader goals.

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## **JAPAN AND CHINA IN THE MEDITERRANEAN REGION: HISTORICAL CONTEXT AND MODERN DYNAMICS**

The Mediterranean region has emerged as a focal point of geopolitical competition and economic cooperation, with China and Japan playing increasingly prominent roles in shaping its dynamics. China's assertive economic engagement, propelled by initiatives like the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), reflects its ambition to expand influence and promote economic connectivity across Eurasia and beyond. Through platforms like the Forum for Maritime Cooperation with Southern Europe and the 17+1 format with Central and Eastern European countries, China seeks to deepen cooperation and investment in the region, particularly in infrastructure and energy projects.

Moreover, China's strategic emphasis on economic cooperation in the Middle East and North Africa, evident through initiatives like the China-Arab States Cooperation Forum and the Digital Silk Road, underscores its broader geopolitical objectives. Despite concerns over debt trap diplomacy and security risks, China's investments in energy projects and infrastructure construction in the Mediterranean are expected to bolster its influence in the coming years, reshaping regional dynamics.

In contrast, Japan pursues a diplomatic-centric approach to regional engagement, prioritizing defence-oriented policies and cooperation with like-minded partners. In the Middle East, Japan's reliance on energy imports underscores the importance of promoting peace and stability through diplomatic channels such as the Japan-Arab Political Dialogue. Similarly, Japan's active involvement in Africa, exemplified by its participation in the Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD), reflects its commitment to supporting sustainable development and addressing regional challenges.

Furthermore, Japan's diplomatic relations with key Mediterranean countries like Israel, Turkey, and Egypt highlight its efforts to foster regional stability and cooperation. Despite challenges such as the protracted Syrian crisis and political volatility in countries like Libya and Tunisia, Japan remains actively engaged in advocating for political solutions and providing humanitarian assistance, demonstrating its commitment to regional peace and security.

While Japan's interest in the Mediterranean is driven by energy security concerns, its broader aim of expanding global influence is reflected in its efforts to address security challenges and participate in military projects. However, Japan's influence in the region may face constraints from China's growing economic presence and assertive diplomacy.

Overall, the evolving dynamics of China's economic engagement and Japan's diplomatic initiatives in the Mediterranean underscore the complex interplay between global powers in shaping regional geopolitics and economic development. As these dynamics continue to unfold, the Mediterranean region is poised to witness significant transformations with far-reaching implications for global security and stability.

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## **POSITIONS OF MEDITERRANEAN COUNTRIES REGARDING RUSSIAN AGGRESSION AGAINST UKRAINE**

The topic is the positions of the Mediterranean countries in the context of the Ukrainian-Russian war. Starting with the countries that are most active in favour of Ukraine, and ending with those that adopt a neutral or hostile position, an analysis of the official statements and actions of the Mediterranean countries was performed.

Spain, as the most active among the pro-Ukrainian countries, openly condemned Russia's military aggression and supported a series of international resolutions, which included the demand for the immediate withdrawal of Russian troops from the territory of Ukraine and the suspension of Russia's membership in the UN Human Rights Council. The humanitarian, economic and military aid that Spain provided to

Ukraine, as well as active cooperation with the Ukrainian government and support in the international arena, deserve attention.

As for Italy, the country opposed Russian aggression and actively supported Ukraine, pointing out the importance of supporting democracy and fighting against authoritarianism. Italy has provided significant financial, humanitarian and military assistance, which demonstrates its determination to support Ukrainian sovereignty and territorial integrity.

In the period from 2022 to 2023, Italy provided assistance to Ukraine in the amount of more than 3.8 billion euros, including financial, humanitarian and military assistance. France, despite its traditionally close ties with Russia, also spoke out against Russian aggression and provided major military aid to Ukraine.

The study also highlights the support of the countries of the Balkan region, which immediately expressed their full support for Ukraine and condemned Russian aggression. Greece and Albania help Ukraine with military exercises of the armed forces, Slovenia provided weapons and financial aid, Montenegro and Bosnia and Herzegovina condemned the war and joined the sanctions against the Russian Federation.

In the initial phase of the war between the Russian Federation and Ukraine, Israel condemned Russia's aggression, but refrained from providing lethal aid and sanctions. Israel continues to provide humanitarian aid and medical equipment, but weapons are still unlikely.

Turkey, Serbia and Egypt are neutral countries. Turkey provides support to Ukraine, but does not join the sanctions against Russia due to economic and energy interests from the Russian Federation. Egypt remains formally neutral, but has close economic ties with Russia and even openly shows how bilateral relations are improving. Serbia officially maintains a neutral position, but there are speculations that it may secretly support Ukraine. Lebanon, Algeria and Morocco also take a neutral position and avoid active intervention and support a diplomatic path to peace. Libya and Tunisia concentrate on internal affairs and avoid active intervention in the conflict.

Syria is an anti-Ukrainian country that openly supports Russia in the war against Ukraine, even opposing the UN resolution condemning the invasion of the Russian Federation. On July 20, 2022, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Syria announced the severance of diplomatic relations "in accordance with the principle of reciprocity."

In general, most of the Mediterranean countries support Ukraine at this important time, which shows solidarity and determination in the struggle for peace and stability in the region. Such cooperation can help Ukraine regain its territories and preserve sovereignty, and positively influence and develop relations with other countries in the future.

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## **GEOPOLITICAL INTERESTS OF TURKEY IN THE MEDITERRANEAN AFTER 2022**

The rise to power of the Justice and Development Party (AKP) in 2002 marked a transformation of Turkey's foreign policy strategy. Initially, the emphasis was on

"soft power" and expanding cooperation. However, after 2011, Turkey shifted towards a greater emphasis on military power, tactical alliances, and assertive actions. This has led to the securitization of regional development issues.

Abandonment of the "Strategic Depth" Concept: Ahmet Davutoğlu's "Strategic Depth" doctrine envisioned a rethinking of Turkey's regional positioning. However, it failed to deliver on the promise of "zero problems with neighbours." After Davutoğlu's resignation, Turkey moved away from this concept in favour of a more independent and assertive policy.

"Blue Homeland" (Mavi Vatan) Doctrine: This doctrine calls for expanding Turkey's maritime territory to 462,000 sq. km. It is based on the Misak-ı Milli (National Oath) concept and is used to assert territorial claims. Turkey's growing ambitions under this doctrine are at odds with the interests of many countries.

"Active Neighbourhood" Policy: Turkey has improved its relations with some countries in the region, but this has led to tensions with others. Turkey's increased military spending and active involvement in regional conflicts are raising concerns among many countries.

Geopolitical interests of Turkey: 1) *Protection of the rights of ethnic Turks in neighbouring countries*: Turkey is committed to protecting the rights and interests of ethnic Turks in many Mediterranean countries. This could lead to tensions with some countries such as Greece, Cyprus and Syria. 2) *Opposition to Kurdish separatism*: Turkey has a long-standing conflict with the Kurdish population on its territory. It seeks to prevent the creation of an independent Kurdish state and support Kurdish separatist movements in neighbouring countries. 3) *Maintaining influence in the Balkans*: Turkey has close historical, cultural and economic ties with many countries of the Balkan region. Maintaining influence in the Balkans will allow Turkey to expand its sphere of influence and counter EU and NATO expansion. 4) *Complicated relations with the EU and NATO*: Turkey is a member of NATO, but its relationship with the European Union remains complicated. Turkey is concerned that the eastward expansion of the EU and NATO could weaken its influence in the region. 5) *Energy ambitions and disputes*: Since the discovery of offshore natural gas reserves in the eastern Mediterranean in the early 2000s, Turkey has challenged its neighbours regarding the delimitation of maritime boundaries and zones. Its actions led to tension and destabilization in the region. 6) *Neo-Ottoman geopolitical agenda*: Turkey's behaviour in the Mediterranean reflects its ambitious plan to regain its influence in the region. This plan involves expanding Turkey's influence from northern Iraq and Syria to Libya.

Turkey's tense actions in the Mediterranean have led to the country's isolation on the international stage. The EU has suspended Turkey's accession talks and frozen funding. Turkey needs to carefully weigh its actions in the Mediterranean so as not to worsen its position and destabilize the region even more.

So, the main geopolitical interests of Turkey in the Mediterranean: protection of the rights and interests of ethnic Turks living in many countries of the region; preventing the creation of an independent Kurdish state and supporting Kurdish separatist movements in neighbouring countries; maintaining its influence in the Balkans; opposition to the eastward expansion of the European Union and NATO.

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## NATO POLICY IN THE MEDITERRANEAN

The Mediterranean is important to NATO because of the various security challenges that arise in the region. The on-going conflicts in Afghanistan and Iraq, the war in Syria, the collapse of Libya and the possible further disintegration of states in the Middle East and North Africa create an environment of chaos. This makes it difficult to contain terrorism and manage migration flows. In addition, the presence of external players such as Russia and China increases geopolitical tensions in the region.

At the same time, the Mediterranean is a place where NATO's current and future role is ambiguous and contested by both its members and regional players. The Mediterranean area presents a huge number of challenges for NATO. Therefore, the main goal of NATO in this region is to overcome these challenges. Achieving this goal will require a distinct strategy and action from NATO that goes beyond traditional crisis management and capacity-building operations. NATO's actions must be consistent with the principle of effective allocation of resources.

Therefore, the existential question for NATO today is how to allocate its resources and attention between the relatively simple but demanding problem of defending against possible Russian aggression in the East against a diffuse, but perhaps more likely, set of threats in the South.

Today, NATO faces a number of challenges on its southern flank, including the lack of a comprehensive strategy, negative public perception of NATO's actions in the Mediterranean, and a lack of resources and attention from alliance members. In this context, the organization must increasingly rely on its partners to ensure security. Although NATO maintains a strategic advantage in the region, it can only be maintained through the development of partnerships. Therefore, it is advisable for the alliance to invest more resources in cooperation with the countries of the Mediterranean Dialogue, the EU and other regional organizations.

To counter these challenges, NATO should focus on three main areas.

First, it is necessary to develop a comprehensive strategy for the southern flank, which would take into account the specific threats and needs of the region.

Second, we should actively work on improving NATO's image among the public through transparency and the involvement of local communities in the decision-making process.

And finally, the alliance needs to increase funding and resources for its operations in the Mediterranean, in particular through increased cooperation with regional partners. Only under such conditions will NATO be able to effectively face challenges and maintain its strategic advantage.

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## **JAPAN AND THE MEDITERRANEAN: UNDERSTANDING JAPAN'S STRATEGIC PRIORITIES IN THE REGION**

In recent years, Japan has intensified its involvement in the Mediterranean region, forging strategic partnerships with countries like Spain, Italy, and Greece, and engaging in initiatives aimed at enhancing regional stability, addressing global challenges, and promoting economic cooperation. The text provides a comprehensive overview of Japan's evolving role in the Mediterranean, highlighting key developments, priorities, and challenges shaping its engagement.

The analysis begins by examining Japan's deepening bilateral relations with Mediterranean nations, notably through the elevation of partnerships with Spain and Italy to "Strategic Association" and "strategic partnership" status, respectively. These enhanced ties encompass diverse areas such as air services, tax evasion, defence collaboration, and joint military exercises, underscoring Japan's multifaceted approach to regional engagement.

Moreover, the text delves into Japan's strategic initiatives in the Balkans, where it collaborates with the US and EU to promote stability, socio-economic reforms, and EU accession. Japan's commitment to the region's integration into Europe is exemplified through initiatives like the Western Balkans Cooperation Initiative, reflecting its broader objective of fostering regional cooperation and addressing geopolitical challenges.

Furthermore, Japan's response to evolving geopolitical dynamics, including China's Belt and Road Initiative, which has prompted Japan to formulate its own strategic vision for Mediterranean and Middle East relations, is analysed. The "Kono Principles" guide Japan's policy in the region, emphasizing the importance of intellectual and human contributions, persistent efforts, and political engagement to promote stability and economic growth.

Japan's energy strategy in the Mediterranean is also explored, highlighting its continued focus on energy security despite commitments to carbon neutrality. The role of Japanese energy companies in oil exploration in the Middle East and North Africa underscores Japan's reliance on fossil fuel imports and the challenges it faces in transitioning to a greener energy mix.

Additionally, the text discusses Japan's economic initiatives in the region, including business investments, development aid, and humanitarian assistance, aimed at fostering bilateral ties and addressing humanitarian challenges. Japan's preference for multilateral frameworks in addressing peace and security issues in the Mediterranean is emphasized, reflecting its commitment to upholding a rules-based international order and promoting regional stability.

In conclusion, Japan's expanding role in the Mediterranean region reflects a strategic recalibration driven by a complex interplay of geopolitical, economic, and security considerations. Despite facing challenges and competition from regional actors, Japan's commitment to fostering partnerships, promoting stability, and addressing global challenges underscores its enduring relevance and potential to contribute positively to the Mediterranean's socio-economic and security landscape.

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## **THE EURO-MEDITERRANEAN POLICY: EVOLUTION, PROBLEMS AND DIRECTIONS OF DEVELOPMENT**

The Euro-Mediterranean partnership, as an interstate strategy and policy of cooperation, was initiated in the 20th century.

The first stage (Global Mediterranean Policy) was launched in 1995 in Barcelona, focusing on economic, trade, financial, innovation, and migration relations. The Barcelona Declaration outlined key directions of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership: political dialogue, security, energy, economic cooperation, and the creation of a zone of peace and stability.

The second stage (1995–2005) was marked by extensive cooperation, the establishment of multilateral and bilateral partnerships, and the development of trade relations, socio-cultural cooperation, and the improvement of the quality of life of the population.

The third stage (since 2004) introduced the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP), covering two vectors: Eastern European and Mediterranean, with an emphasis on differentiation and the uniqueness of each country.

The fourth stage (since 2008) is characterized by the transformation of the partnership, the strengthening of cooperation, and the implementation of large-scale economic and energy projects in response to security, energy, and economic challenges.

The Arab Spring brought about significant changes in Arab countries, prompting democratic transformations through mass protests and political instability.

In 2015, the European Commission proposed measures to improve migration policy, including strengthening the EU's presence in the Mediterranean and combating migrant smuggling, which entailed incentivizing law enforcement and judicial activities, improving the process of collecting and exchanging information on migrants, and enhancing cooperation with non-EU countries to combat illegal migration.

The Schengen Border Code of 2006 was also revised. According to the European Commission's provisions of March 15, 2017, mandatory regular checks were introduced for all persons crossing the borders of the European Union. Due to the increasing terrorism threat in the EU, complementary legislative acts were adopted—the European Travel Information and Authorization System (ETIAS) and the Entry-Exit System (EES).

In 2017, EU migration policy became stricter, with a focus on consolidating border control approaches at the summit in Brussels.

The initiative of the President of France to create the Union for the Mediterranean played a defining role in the development of the Euro-Mediterranean partnership, ushering in a new era of cooperation between EU countries, the Arab world, the Balkans, and Turkey, with a focus on socio-economic and energy projects and political dialogue. The political goals of cooperation include ensuring peace, and stability, combating terrorism, and illegal migration, and strengthening economic and energy stability in the Mediterranean region.

The Euro-Mediterranean Parliamentary Assembly has become an institutional form of cooperation between the parliaments of Mediterranean countries and the EU.

The reform of the European Neighbourhood Policy and the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership in 2015 aimed to enhance security, energy and economic development, democratization, and effective migration policy.

The implementation of the Mediterranean Energy Ring and the creation of a free trade zone are important achievements in strengthening economic and energy ties between the EU and Mediterranean countries.

To summarize, the Euro-Mediterranean partnership, despite problems, contradictions and challenges, has significant results and prospects for development. It is characterized by the intensification of cooperation between the countries of Europe and the Mediterranean and is marked by the dynamics and activity of interactions.

The issue of migration has become an important test for the stability of the EU, in particular after the energy crisis and the events of the Arab Spring. The EU faced the need to effectively solve the issue of migration and refugees who caused the need for humanitarian aid and cooperation with countries that were going through revolutionary processes.

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## **CULTURAL RELATIONS BETWEEN UKRAINE AND THE MEDITERRANEAN COUNTRIES**

Cultural relations between Ukraine and the Mediterranean countries are essential to understanding historical processes and the contemporary interaction between these regions. The study of these relations in the context of regional comparative studies allows us to identify key elements that promote sustainable international dialogue and mutual interaction.

Despite the geographical distance, Ukraine and the countries of the Mediterranean have a common historical basis, which was formed through centuries of trade, religious and cultural contacts. In particular, the adoption of Christianity from Byzantium in the 10th century was an important stage that laid the foundation for cultural ties. This event became a catalyst for the integration of Byzantine traditions in the architecture, art, and religion of Kievan Rus, which subsequently influenced the formation of a new identity.

The cultural features of these connections are also reflected in the influence of the Mediterranean on Ukrainian culinary. According to Mykola Vavylov's research, such ingredients as beets, cumin, dill, celery, parsley, cabbage, carrots, horseradish, and laurel were brought to Ukraine. This aspect of cultural exchange demonstrates how regional culinary traditions influence the formation of national cuisines and lifestyles.

In addition, Ukraine and the Mediterranean countries share many common cultural heritage sites, such as ancient Roman amphitheatres, Greek temples, and other archaeological sites.

Cooperation in education and science is another important aspect of cultural ties. The exchange of students, teachers and researchers between universities and scientific institutions of Ukraine and the Mediterranean countries promotes the exchange

of knowledge and ideas. In this process, new discourses are formed that reflect modern challenges and trends in international relations and cultural integration.

Now, in the context of the Russo-Ukrainian war, there is a positive trend in the acceptance of Ukrainian refugees in the countries which belong to the northern Mediterranean.

In addition, cultural exchange between Ukraine and the Mediterranean countries continues through tourism, educational programs, scientific research, and other forms of interaction. This exchange contributes to the rapprochement of cultures, the deepening of mutual understanding and the development of cultural diversity of both regions. The role of mediators in this process is often played by cultural institutions and public organizations working on the consolidation of various cultural influences.

Thus, the relations between these regions testify to the versatility and diversity of the cultural heritage, which is shared by Ukraine and the Mediterranean countries, and have a perspective for further research.

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## **THE POLICY OF CHINA TOWARDS TURKEY**

The launch of China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) in 2013 marked a watershed moment in Sino-Turkish relations, bringing a strategic dimension to the bilateral partnership. Envisaged as a modern incarnation of the ancient Silk Road, the BRI aims to enhance connectivity and cooperation across Eurasia, with Turkey positioned as a key node linking Asia and Europe. The initiative provided a framework for expanding economic, infrastructural, and cultural exchanges, aligning with Turkey's ambitions to become a central hub in Eurasia. Projects such as the Middle Corridor, which aims to connect Turkey with Georgia, Azerbaijan, and Central Asia, extending to China, exemplify the synergy between Turkey's regional aspirations and China's BRI goals.

Belt and Road initiative pushes the Sino-Turkish economic partnership to higher levels. Even more, through mutual security collaborations, shared concerns over the stability of this region disappear. Yet, to confront the issues, such as political distrust gaps, regional conflicts, and different allies are among the main factors.

The main question is how trade relations can be “the yardstick” of the performance of economic diplomacy in the effort to foster inclusive global governance.

In the realm of cultural and people-to-people exchanges, the post-Cold War era saw significant efforts to strengthen mutual understanding and friendship between the Chinese and Turkish peoples. Initiatives like the establishment of Confucius Institutes in Turkey and Turkish cultural centers in China facilitated cultural dialogue and educational exchanges. Tourism and student exchanges have also flourished, contributing to the deepening of societal ties.

In conclusion, the evolution of Sino-Turkish ties in the post-Cold War era reflects the dynamics of a relationship that is both complex and multifaceted. From cautious engagement in the early 1990s to the strategic partnership underpinned by the Belt and Road Initiative, the trajectory of bilateral relations underscores the impor-

tance of economic cooperation, strategic alignment, and cultural exchanges. As both nations continue to navigate the challenges and opportunities presented by a shifting global order, the resilience and adaptability of Sino-Turkish relations will be pivotal in shaping their future trajectory. While obstacles remain, the foundation built over the past decades provides a basis for continued cooperation, potentially contributing to regional stability and prosperity.

The lasting of solid Sino-Turkish dig together depends on an open communication, a broad mutual understanding, and common objectives in terms of profit from converting each other's strengths, in spite of the possible adversaries.

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**THE FRAGILITY OF SAHEL STATES AS A CAUSE OF THE MIGRATION CRISIS  
IN THE EUROPEAN UNION**

In recent years, the Sahel region has garnered significant international attention due to its high level of terrorist activity and its pivotal role in African migration processes. The Sahel's geographical location has turned it into a crucial transit hub for migrants from across the African continent. Additionally, the internal instability within its states has led to an intensification of uncontrolled migration processes that have a direct impact on the security and stability of European Union states. Establishing control over these processes is complicated by the traditional phenomenon of trans-Saharan migration, which is deeply embedded in local cultures and legitimized by the Protocol of the Economic Community of West African States on the Free Movement of Persons, Residence, and Establishment (1979).

The instability of the region is linked to the inherent fragility of Sahel states, which face numerous socio-economic, environmental, and political challenges. The inability of governments to provide basic amenities and the widening gap between society and the state contribute to the rise of Islamist extremism, a significant destabilizing factor in the region.

The stabilization of the Sahel has become one of the main priorities for the EU in addressing the migration crisis. The EU's approach to migration in the Sahel is based on the assumption that the fragility of the states of the Sahel is the primary source of the displacement crisis in the region. Since 2011, the EU Strategy for Security and Development in the Sahel has served as the basis for the EU's presence in the region. Initiatives such as EUCAP Sahel Niger (2012), EUTM Mali (2013), and EUCAP Sahel Mali (2015) aimed to enhance the operational capabilities of local security forces to address the root causes of migration, including organized crime and radical groups.

A significant milestone in the EU's migration policy in the region was the 2015 Valletta Summit, which led to the establishment of the EU Emergency Trust Fund for Africa. The Fund finances programs aimed at enhancing the capacity of states in migration management and border control. The new approach, termed the "externalization of European borders," involved transferring border control and asylum provision responsibilities from the EU to states of origin and transit of migrants.

The EU-initiated PARSEC and GAR-SI programs were designed to improve security and border management in the Sahel. PARSEC (2017) aimed to strengthen Malian security forces in the Mopti and Gao regions, while GAR-SI (2016) focused on training specialized counter-terrorism units within the gendarmeries of G5 Sahel states and Senegal to enhance border control and combat terrorism and organized crime.

Despite significant investments and efforts, the EU's migration policy in the Sahel has proven ineffective for several reasons. Firstly, the emphasis on border control undermines established community ties and fails to address the fundamental causes of instability in the region. Secondly, political instability in the Sahel countries hampers the implementation of EU initiatives. Military coups in Mali, Burkina Faso, and Niger have led to these countries' withdrawal from the G5 Sahel and the cancellation of the EUCAP Sahel Niger, casting doubt on the future of European migration and security initiatives in the region. Thirdly, the EU's intervention currently comprises a collection of disparate projects and ambitious funding schemes that often overlap in their objectives and lack coherence, rendering the overall approach ineffective.

In conclusion, addressing the migration crisis in the Sahel requires a more comprehensive approach that focuses on addressing the region's fundamental problems through systemic reforms supported by the international community.

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## **EU MEDITERRANEAN POLICY: PERSPECTIVES AND PRIORITIES**

The period of formation of the Euro-Mediterranean policy can be divided into 4 conventional stages:

1. The formation of the European Community and the emergence of its interest in the Mediterranean process (before the Maastricht Treaty).
2. Institutionalization and formalization of the European Union as an organization and the establishment of an orderly approach to the Mediterranean region (after the Maastricht Treaty and before the Arab Spring).
3. Increasing conflict potential in the territory of the Mediterranean countries, changing the EU's approach to the region as a place of instability (after the Arab Spring).
4. The period of settlement of economic and security policy in the region, the Russian-Ukrainian war (modern times).

The EU's approach to the Mediterranean underwent a significant shift after the September 11, 2001 attacks, with a focus on counterterrorism and managing Middle East conflicts dominating its foreign policy. The Arab Spring in 2011 marked a pivotal moment, challenging stability in countries like Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, and Syria, further complicating the region's dynamics. Migration emerged as a pressing issue, particularly from sub-Saharan Africa, driven by factors like poverty, war, and persecution. This influx strained EU countries, leading to humanitarian crises and debates over refugee responsibilities.

The self-immolation of Mohammed Ben Bouazizi, a university-educated street vendor, in the Tunisian town of Sidi Bouzid on December 17, 2010, is widely regarded

as the symbolic catalyst for the Arab uprisings. This event sparked a series of civil protests and revolutionary movements against uncompromising and authoritarian regimes across the Middle East and North Africa in the first half of 2011. The resulting revolt in the region was a significant test for Europe, which has been attempting to forge a common foreign policy since the 1950s. The European Union, in its efforts to enhance regional stability through initiatives like the “Union for the Mediterranean” and “Neighbourhood Policy,” found itself unprepared for the scale and intensity of the uprisings.

Security concerns intensified post-Cold War, with conflicts, civil wars, organized crime, and terrorism threatening the region. Terrorism, in particular, posed significant challenges, affecting human security and prompting debates over definitions and responses. The EU’s response reflected a proactive stance, aiming to shape Mediterranean development through strategic policies and partnerships.

Despite challenges, the EU prioritized stability and peace, emphasizing human security and wellbeing over military approaches. Efforts included fostering political dialogue, preventing conflicts, and addressing root causes, guided by initiatives like the European Security Strategy and the Union for the Mediterranean.

Economic development in the Mediterranean faced hurdles, including governance issues and the impact of globalization. The EU sought to improve economic performance and stability in the region, aiming for higher living standards and improved quality of life.

However, achieving these goals remained ambitious amid global instability. Cooperation, underpinned by deeper understanding and mutual interest, was deemed essential for shared prosperity and security. Sustaining long-term commitment despite crises and challenges was highlighted as crucial for success in turning interdependence into mutual benefit.

The challenges faced by EU southern neighbours are deeply rooted in their demographic dynamics. While the population of the region is half that of the EU, it is growing significantly faster. Between 1990 and 2019, the population of the five Maghreb countries increased by 57%, contrasting with a mere 6% growth in the EU. A quarter of the population in Southern Mediterranean countries is under 25 years old, compared to 15% in Europe. Despite their increasing education levels, their economies struggle to create enough jobs for these young people, leading to growing frustration and emigration.

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## **CHINESE POLICY TOWARDS ISRAELI-PALESTINIAN CONFLICT UNDER THE RULE OF XI JINPING**

China has begun to participate in the process of resolving international conflicts, especially those in the Middle East. China's peacekeeping activities have not extended beyond official statements, proposals for peaceful conflict resolution through negotiations, and condemnation of aggression and violence in any form by all parties involved. China's interests in the world are primarily economic. China

refrains from direct intervention in any conflicts as well as from "officially taking sides." The success of such an "economy-centric" policy of China can be clearly seen in the example of China's relations with countries in the Middle East and with parties involved in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict currently.

For China, certain aspects are crucial in relations with countries in the Middle East region: firstly, the energy aspect, secondly, security, and thirdly, geographical considerations. It is important for China to maintain and develop relations with oil-exporting countries, as ensuring the country's energy resources is necessary for stable modernization and industrialization. Importing oil from oil-exporting countries in the Middle East has become a good supplement to energy imports to China from Central Asian countries.

China recognizes the establishment of security and stability in the Middle East region as necessary for ensuring stable development of its own economy and its trade and economic initiatives. China considers the Israeli-Palestinian conflict as one of the key issues in the Middle East. Such instability jeopardizes China's trade and economic routes within the Belt and Road Initiative, which pass through countries in the Middle East. A notable aspect of China's approach to addressing the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is that China proposes resolving the conflict through "peace through development."

China's relations with Israel are actively developing. Currently, China's relations with Israel can be characterized as quite warm and cooperative in various spheres, especially in infrastructure, high technology, and counterterrorism. With the beginning of the implementation of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), China's cooperation with Israel has greatly expanded. For China, the importance of partnership with Israel is driven by several factors: firstly, China is interested in Israeli high technology; secondly, Israel's territory is an important link in the Belt and Road Initiative project; thirdly, China is interested in Israeli experience in counterterrorism.

In contrast to the rather close cooperation between China and Israel in the field of high technology, military equipment China's cooperation with Palestine mostly takes place in the sphere of humanitarian and technical assistance. China believes that Palestinians have suffered from historical injustice due to the absence of a Palestinian state. On May 6, 2013, Xi Jinping outlined China's proposal on the Israeli-Palestinian issue, consisting of four points for resolving the Palestinian issue.

Firstly, China will adhere to the position of creating an independent Palestinian state based on the 1967 borders and with East Jerusalem as its when Israel's right to exist and legitimate security interests should be fully respected. Secondly, negotiations should be the only way to achieve peace between Palestine and Israel. Thirdly, adhere to the principle of "land for peace." Fourthly, the international community must provide important guarantees for advancing the peace process. China is now pursuing an even more active policy regarding the resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, providing humanitarian support to Palestinians, and condemning the use of violence that harms civilians.

China does not take sides, maintains neutrality, and develops relations with both sides of the conflict. Peace-building through economic relations vividly underscores the foundation of China's policy in the Middle East and the world – with the economy taking precedence. For China, it is important to establish peace in the territories of Israel and Palestine, as well as to ensure the stability of transportation routes through these territories as part of the Belt and Road Initiative.

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## THE NEW DYNAMICS OF POWER IN THE EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN AND TURKEY'S ROLE

The Eastern Mediterranean, due to constant competition at various levels, has become a region of potential conflicts. Türkiye has a long coastline and faces challenges from the US, which could lead to conflict. The military forces of many countries are present in the Mediterranean, causing alarm. Russia and the West are also competing for influence in the region, increasing tensions. Instability in MENA allows external forces to intervene, particularly in the fight against terrorism. The discovery of hydrocarbon reserves has led to disputes between Cyprus and Israel.

Gas in the Eastern Mediterranean, discovered in the 2000s, had the potential to be a key factor in resolving political tensions in the region, but overlapping territories required negotiations. The agreement between the Greek Cypriots and other countries caused a conflict with Türkiye over gas rights. Türkiye insists on a comprehensive solution to the issue of Cyprus and its rights to the continental shelf. The conflict is deepening over support for the EastMed gas pipeline project, which may never get off the ground.

The EastMed project faces major challenges due to its huge costs and technical complexity. It is predicted that the cost may exceed 7-10 billion dollars, and the gas price will be twice the market price. Although the EU is considering EastMed as an alternative route for gas, the project has many obstacles, including technical difficulties and the need for compromises with Türkiye. Türkiye like Greece, has not yet defined an EEZ for the Mediterranean Sea, but is exercising its continental shelf rights by obtaining licenses for oil/gas exploration. In response to the actions of the Greek Cypriots, Türkiye sends Navtex and warships to defend its rights. Türkiye is also accelerating the modernization of its navy, responding to changes in the balance of power in the Mediterranean basin, including support from the US and Iran. This situation could trigger a new Cold War, with China also increasing its presence. Given the changing alliances in the Mediterranean basin, Türkiye must be ready for an aggressive policy that any external power may introduce. This applies to Russia, the USA and possibly even China. Considering the instability of the situation, Türkiye is modernizing its military capabilities. However, the expansion of Türkiye's naval capabilities could also be used for humanitarian operations in the Mediterranean.

The "Arab Spring" was followed by the "Arab Winter" in the Middle East, which led to greater instability in the region. The decline of the powers of some countries and the emergence of radical groups caused the intervention of external forces. The geopolitics of the Eastern Mediterranean has undergone changes, in particular under the influence of the USA and Russia. Militarization of the region has increased due to the fight against terrorism and other reasons. The fleets of more than 44 states are present in the Eastern Mediterranean, and Greek Cypriot gas licenses have complicated the situation. Türkiye responded to the actions of the Greek Cypriots with military exercises and the protection of seismic surveys

Proposed pipelines like EastMed, aimed at side-lining Türkiye, may escalate tensions, likely opposed by Russia to maintain dominance in European gas exports. Given the risky gunboat diplomacy among littoral states and external powers, strategies like the Trump administration's Mediterranean plan seem destined to fail. In international politics, energy trade rarely resolves conflicts peacefully.

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**EMERGING TRENDS IN RELATIONS BETWEEN CENTRAL ASIA  
AND MEDITERRANEAN COUNTRIES**

Central Asia is a region of five countries - the Kyrgyz Republic, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan - with a complex historical background and a high level of isolation. The region has rich natural resources, such as oil, gas and uranium, which have led to an increase in investment.

Since the start of the Russian war against Ukraine, the Kremlin's influence has decreased. And it opened up new opportunities for other countries, such as the Mediterranean, to intensify their cooperation with Central Asia. Two countries worth mentioning in this particular case are France and Turkey.

France has focused on the energy sector, and is seeking to expand its interests, in particular by importing uranium from Kazakhstan. Another key area of cooperation is the development of nuclear power, which contributes to the expansion of energy infrastructure and reduction of dependence on fossil fuel imports.

It is also important to support cultural and humanitarian ties, which facilitates people-to-people exchange and promotes education and culture. This includes the organization of festivals, language and literature studies, as well as the promotion of the restoration and preservation of cultural heritage.

The security aspect is also important to France, especially as the region borders Afghanistan. France is actively involved in strengthening the legal system, fighting organized crime and terrorism, which contributes to stability and security in the region.

Turkey has taken a position in the competition for the role of a center of power in Central Asia, and for this purpose, Turkey uses its cultural and historical ties with the region. Turkey's strategy in Central Asia is based on several principles.

First, it is to promote stability and security in the region. Ankara views Central Asia as a key region for ensuring regional stability and security. It is for this reason that Turkey is actively developing military cooperation, supporting them in modernizing their military forces and supplying military equipment.

Secondly, Turkey seeks to develop economic and trade ties. It is actively investing in energy, transport and tourism projects. Another example is the Middle Corridor initiative, which has the potential to become a key factor in maintaining stability and development in the region.

Therefore, the analysis of cooperation between the countries of the Mediterranean and Central Asia shows a growing interest and potential for further development of relations. Changes in the geopolitical arena create new opportunities for expanding cooperation in various areas, which requires active monitoring and adaptation by all stakeholders.

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## **FRANCE'S ROLE IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF COOPERATION BETWEEN THE EU AND THE EASTERN MEDITERRANIAN STATES**

The Eastern Mediterranean is a strategically important region for the EU and France in particular. At one time, it was the centre of civil wars, complex international conflicts, and an on-going struggle for leadership. And since the Arab Spring, it has been the route through which migration and terrorism have reached Europe. However, on the other hand, it is a region with large infrastructure and energy projects, established cooperation and great opportunities.

France considers the Mediterranean to be in its sphere of interest, viewing the Mediterranean Sea as a bridge to Africa and former French colonies. As one of the engines of the EU, Paris pays much attention to the implementation of the EU's policy of cooperation with non-member states. Proclaiming Europe as an absolute priority of its foreign policy, France has always emphasized the importance of the Mediterranean region in maintaining stability and peace in Europe. Since the launch of the Barcelona Process in 1995, France has seen deepening ties with its eastern and southern partners as a key condition for maintaining peace and stability in the region and for realizing common European interests. France's energy within the organization and at the individual level was also directed at resolving conflicts in the Middle East region by promoting political dialogue within international organizations (UN, LAS, African Union, etc.) and by assuming the role of the EU as a guarantor of international law and humanitarian assistance.

The idea of creating a Union for the Mediterranean was a success of French diplomacy in this area, although it had a number of drawbacks and mixed reviews among other EU member states. With this initiative, France tried to make the Union for the Mediterranean a bridge between Europe and Africa, uniting the Mediterranean countries under its leadership. This project launched a new phase in relations between Europe and the Mediterranean, characterized by regular summits, the creation of institutional entities, and greater emphasis on the intergovernmental dimension of cooperation. However, the aggravation of the Arab-Israeli conflict in 2008 froze a number of opportunities for further progress towards the Union, and the Arab Spring buried most of the ambitious French hopes for this project.

In addition to deepening cooperation with the Eastern Mediterranean countries within the EU and at the bilateral level, the confrontation with Turkey is a characteristic feature of French policy in the region. France is doing everything possible to maintain its position in the Eastern Mediterranean and the Middle East, where Turkey challenges French foreign policy, raising its political and economic concerns about gas reserves, etc. Therefore, France's anti-Turkish rhetoric is aimed at attracting EU member states to its side and supporting Greece and Cyprus in their conflict with Turkey over the division of maritime resources in the Aegean Sea. Also, over the past few years, Paris has been actively strengthening its defence cooperation with these countries, conducting joint military trainings in the region, which is constantly criticized by Turkey.

Thus, the current French Mediterranean policy is characterized by multilevelledness and interest in deepening relations with all countries of the region by expanding multilateral dialogue, promoting policies that focus on civil society and supporting European ambitions. Paris is an active participant in a large number of projects for cooperation with the countries of the Mediterranean region. France has also consistently emphasized that the EU could and should play a much greater role in the region than just being an observer or investor. However, today, the EU's position on the Eastern Mediterranean is characterized by contradictions and weakness due to the lack of an agreed action plan for the region itself and a number of pressing issues (Libya, Turkey, migration, etc.). Although the EU remains the region's main economic and trade partner, its diplomatic influence is much weaker. After Russia's invasion of Ukraine and the escalation of the Arab-Israeli conflict, the importance of the region has grown significantly. In this context, the partnership with Turkey, which is now France's main rival in the Mediterranean region, has become strategically important for Europe. So the current state of affairs forces Paris to accept the fact that its European vision and, in particular, its Mediterranean policy need to be rethought. However, it remains to be seen whether France is able to change its position on Turkey in order to realize the EU's strategic interests and stabilize the situation in the region.

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## **GEOPOLITICAL COMPLEXITIES IN THE WESTERN BALKANS IN THE CONTEXT OF THE WAR IN UKRAINE**

The evolution of foreign policy and national defence strategies in post-Yugoslav countries is a complex issue influenced by geopolitical shifts and regional dynamics. This analysis examines the foundational texts of Western Balkan countries, exploring their strategic thinking, national security priorities, and foreign policy objectives. The region is currently characterized by political instability, economic and social transitions, and challenges in the energy sector. Despite its diminished priority in Western countries' foreign policies, the region remains crucial for global and regional powers' geopolitical strategies. The complex environment created by internal problems and unresolved issues allows for potential conflict formation and tension.

The post-Yugoslav governments in the Western Balkans have gone through four main phases, each characterized by major changes in geopolitical dynamics and regional dynamics. In 2022, the Western Balkans' doctrinal texts reveal a focus on EU integration and NATO as security providers. All countries in the region enshrine their aspiration to join the EU and define Euro-Atlantic integration as a strategic priority. They are ready to carry out democratic reforms and participate in regional initiatives. Serbia, however, declares military neutrality while Albania and Montenegro are already part of NATO. The Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and *Republika Srpska* have differing foreign policy views due to their complex political structures and internal contradictions.

Russia's aggression against Ukraine has increased security risks in the region, with Serbia facing significant challenges due to historical, political, security, and

energy-related issues. Albania and North Macedonia have aligned with EU sanctions against Russia and condemned the invasion of Ukraine alongside with Croatia, which consistently stood behind Ukraine and endorsed European Union sanctions on Russia and Belarus despite having some political tensions inside. Kosovo's is fully pro-Western while threats from Serbia have led to its citizens' demands for NATO membership and a permanent NATO station. The tension between Pristina and Belgrade continues to be the primary source of tension in the region. Montenegro's policy stance is middle-ground, between the extremes of and it struggles to find a balance between EU commitments and its more close ties with Russia.

The Western Balkans are at a crossroads as they deal with the massive fallout from the situation in Ukraine, with North Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, and Montenegro all vulnerable to foreign geopolitical changes. The region is experiencing internal disputes and diverse geopolitical orientations, with the conflict response, public attitudes, and political contradictions within separate administrations making maintaining peace difficult. The economic fallout has led to more problems and possibilities, especially in energy dependence, real estate markets, and the flood of migrants from Ukraine. The region's capacity to conquer these obstacles will have far-reaching effects on European development going forward.

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**THE POLICY OF TURKEY AND IRAN REGARDING  
THE EAST MEDITERRANEAN SUB-REGION**

The Arab Spring events in 2011 brought many changes to the Middle East, significantly shifting the balance of power. Considering the regional tumult and political instability, naturally, it was a period of great risks for the regional countries, but, just like any other crisis, the Arab Spring uprisings also gave prospects of more dominating role for those states, who would be able to endure the regional turbulence. A prime example of states that have decided to take this chance is Turkey and Iran.

Both non-Arab, but, nevertheless, regional states had their own ambitions and interests to pursue. But apart from other powerful actors, that were quite dissatisfied with such rapid expansion attempts, both states were also competing with each other. Such rivalry can be easily explained with Sunni-Shia contradictions, especially considering Iranian policy of exporting the Islamic Revolution. Such competition can be seen in the context of the Syrian War, where Ankara was actively supporting Syrian opposition with Tehran backing Bashar Assad's government, who is an Alawite. For Iran, the prospect of Sunni leader replacing Assad meant direct threat for close ties between both states, meanwhile for Ankara it was a chance to spread its influence. But later on, for Turkey, the Syrian war became a problem for its domestic security, since the protracted civil war led to the establishment of Kurdish militant groups and ISIS on territories that were bordering Turkey. The Syrian Gordian Knot was a complex case, where Iran was pursuing its interest through its proxy, Hezbollah, which is a Lebanese-based militia that was created to fight Israel. This information gives as a glimpse of Iranian relations with other regional countries.

For instance, in case of Lebanon, it's becoming quite obvious, that Iran sees it through the prism of Hezbollah, being more involved into deepening ties and providing active support to its proxy, rather than to Beirut itself. Nevertheless, Tehran is also taking measures to spread its influence over Lebanon because of the considerable amount of Shia Muslims living there. Such behavioural patterns can be seen in Turkish policy towards Lebanon as well. By actively using its soft power in the context of “zero problems with the neighbours” policy and deepening ties with the Lebanese government, Ankara was trying to spread its influence as well. Such rapprochement is driven by desire to control the coast of the Mediterranean Sea, even indirectly, which can help Turkey to gain access to cheap energy resources.

As for the relations with Israel, it's necessary to mention that Israel was another non-Muslim regional state, who has hostile relations with almost all regional actors from the very beginning, but always had an exceptional support from USA. As for the relations with Iran, Tehran is considered to be Israel's biggest enemy. And even if during the Shah's regime, both states were actively cooperating with each other, after the Islamic revolution the situation has changed drastically. Considering the hostile relations between Washington and Tehran, it is becoming obvious that Iran sees Israel as a regional satellite of the US, therefore using all the possible methods to fight it and enhance its credibility in the Muslim world.

Israel-Turkey relations, in turn, went through different phases of their relations. While being equally dissatisfied with the Iranian regional activity, both countries are also two powerful competitors, whose relations are worsening from time to time due to the escalation of the Arab-Israeli conflict.

As of today, it can be stated, that Eastern Mediterranean remains to be a region with a complex situation, The Gordian knot which encompasses relations of regional states with other regional and non-regional actors, makes it not only impossible to establish peace, but may also trigger a full-scale war, which makes the researched topic even more relevant.

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## **INFLUENCE OF GLOBAL GOVERNANCE ON SYRIA**

The Syrian Civil war is perhaps the bloodiest conflict in the Middle East up to this day. The conflict itself is a product of the Arab Spring, which aimed to change the dictatorial rule in the Arab states. While some of the states, like Tunisia and Egypt did go through a transition, other states, like Libya, Yemen and Syria descended into Civil wars. Currently, only the Yemeni and Syrian Civil wars are still on-going. However, the Syrian conflict is more complex.

The Syrian Civil war encompasses a lot of actors, who strive to achieve their own goals in the conflict. The Russian Federation, Iran and Hezbollah are supporting the Assad government, while the United States of America supports the rebel forces. However the conflict also features some separatist movements from Kurdish population and terrorist activity, mainly from the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria. There are also Turkey and Israel who operate in a rogue status, not aligning themselves with any side of the conflict.

The Russian Federation strives to protect their strategic interests and assets in Syria. The main asset is the port of Tartus which acts as a supply hub for the Russian Navy. Iran helps Assad government on the basis of religion while Hezbollah aims to isolate the revolution, not allowing it to spread beyond, to the territory of Lebanon itself. Also, Syria plays a very important role, as the road that connects Hezbollah to Iran.

Turkey aims to create a sanitation zone in northern Syria to not allow the Kurdish independence movement to spread to the Anatolian peninsula and ignite a Kurdish insurgency there. United States, wants to preserve the Pax Americana in the Middle Eastern region, while Israel's aim in the war is to deter a possible attack from Assad government on Israeli territory. They try to reach this goal by conducting precision air strikes on important military objects in Syria.

The Syrian civil war gave rise to the influence of the private military companies, mainly the Wagner group that pursues its own personal goals of enrichment through the share of liberated Syrian oil fields in the state.

The ISIS appeared as a result of this Civil war, calling itself the Caliph, the organization strives to unite all of the Muslim states under its banner. Right now, the terrorist group is greatly diminished though.

The global governance, which in this case is the United Nations, is also involved in this conflict; however their only goal here is to help the internally displaced people of Syria (IDP) with basic needs and infrastructure. To reach that goal, United Nations cooperates with over 200 regional and non-governmental organizations. Some of the examples include, but not limited to: The Red Cross, Red Crescent, Doctors without borders, World Health Organization, etc.

The United Nations also established funding programs in order to help the civilians of Syria to get access to the medical help by providing payments to the medical staff, incorporated in the United Nations missions there.

The United Nations has overseen the creation of underground hospitals, whose goal is to safely provide medical treatment to the IDP, as well as provide shelter to those in needs.

In conclusion, despite the fact that the Syrian war is raging on and various actors in the conflict want to achieve their own goals, the United Nations, as a representative of the global governance is trying to help the people Syria, who were deprived of their basic needs. As a result, The United Nations is greatly influencing the lives of the Syrian population, by providing the war-torn people with needed food supplies, civilian infrastructure repair, medical staff and more.

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## **THE POLICY OF CHINA TOWARDS GREECE: PROSPECTS AND CHALLENGES**

There are broad prospects for economic cooperation between China and Greece. With the deepening of the Belt and Road Initiative and the gradual recovery of the Greek economy, cooperation between the two countries in many fields is expected to further expand and deepen. However, the two sides also need to face some challenges, including changes in geopolitical factors, competitive pressures in the inter-

national market and adjustments in the two countries' internal economic policies, among others. Therefore, strengthening policy communication, optimizing cooperation mechanisms and improving the quality of cooperation will be the key to the future development of China-Greece economic cooperation.

Cultural exchanges play an important role in promoting bilateral relations between China and Greece. Through cultural exchanges and cooperation, the two peoples' mutual understanding and respect have been enhanced, laying a solid social foundation for the in-depth development of bilateral relations. In addition, cultural exchanges also help build soft power between the two countries, enhance the national image and create favourable conditions for cooperation at the economic and political levels. However, cultural differences and cognitive biases remain challenges that both sides need to work together to overcome.

In the area of regional security, China and Greece have jointly maintained regional stability and peace by participating in regional security dialogues and cooperation mechanisms, such as the Mediterranean Dialogue Mechanism. The two countries have also conducted exchanges and cooperation on security issues such as counter-terrorism and combating transnational crimes through bilateral and multilateral channels, which has enhanced the depth and breadth of regional security cooperation.

Under multilateral frameworks, China and Greece have actively participated in the activities of the G20, the World Trade Organization (WTO), the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) and other international organizations and forums. On these platforms, the two countries cooperate on global economic governance, trade liberalization and other issues, and jointly promote the building of an open world economy. In addition, China and Greece have made positive progress in multilateral cooperation in science, technology, education, culture and other fields.

Despite some achievements in international political cooperation between China and Greece, the two countries still face some common challenges, including intensifying international geopolitical competition and rising protectionism. In order to cope with these challenges, China and Greece need to further strengthen strategic communication and coordinate their positions and actions in international affairs. At the same time, the two countries should continue to deepen practical cooperation, jointly promote the building of a community with a shared future for mankind, and contribute wisdom and strength to resolving global issues.

Looking into the future, the relations between China and Greece are expected to continue to deepen and develop on the existing basis. With the increasing trend of globalization and regional integration, the two countries have broad room for cooperation in jointly addressing global challenges such as climate change and unbalanced economic development. In addition, with the rise of emerging areas such as digital economy and green economy, China and Greece can explore new cooperation models and opportunities in these areas. However, the development of bilateral relations will also face uncertainties and challenges brought about by changes in the international political and economic situation. Therefore, the two sides need to continue to strengthen communication and coordination to jointly cope with possible risks and challenges. On the whole, the future of China-Greece relations is full of hope, and the friendly and cooperative relations between the two countries will continue to bring benefits to the two peoples and make positive contributions to world peace and development.

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## THE POLICY OF CHINA TOWARDS PALESTINE

China's fundamental principles in its Palestinian policy entail impartiality, objectivity, neutrality, and peaceful resolution, aiming to facilitate reconciliation and cooperation between Palestinians and Israelis. While China's policy garners widespread recognition and support internationally, it faces challenges due to existing disparities in international attention and support for the Palestinian issue. Hence, China needs to bolster its influence and engage in more proactive diplomatic efforts to advance dialogue and cooperation between Palestinians and Israelis, thereby making greater contributions to the just resolution of the Palestinian issue.

China's policy towards the Palestinian issue has been a subject of considerable attention due to its centrality in the Middle East. China, as a significant power, maintains a stance of fairness, objectivity, and balance, aiming to facilitate a just resolution of the Palestinian issue.

China's core position involves supporting the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people, including the establishment of an independent and sovereign Palestinian state. China advocates dialogue and negotiation while vehemently opposing violence and war. It supports the legitimate rights of Palestinians on the international stage and actively participates in Palestinian nation-building, offering economic aid and technical support. China consistently urges the international community to address the Palestinian issue and promote its fair resolution. It has engaged in various peace processes and proposed initiatives like the 'Four-Point Proposal' and the 'Two-State Solution' to foster direct dialogue between Palestinians and Israelis. Additionally, China actively contributes to discussions and resolutions in international organizations like the UN Security Council and General Assembly to uphold the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people.

Cultural exchanges and educational cooperation will become an important part of China's policy towards Palestine. China will strengthen exchanges and cooperation with Palestine in the areas of culture, education and tourism to promote mutual understanding and friendship between the two peoples. By holding cultural activities, exchanging international students and carrying out academic research, China will promote the inheritance and innovation of Palestinian culture and enhance mutual respect and trust between the two peoples.

At the same time, China will continue to firmly support the just cause of the Palestinian people and the national liberation movement. On the Palestinian issue, China will always stand on the side of justice and fairness and oppose any form of aggression and oppression. China will strengthen communication and cooperation with the international community to promote the formation of international consensus and synergy on resolving the Palestinian issue.

In addition, China will take an active part in the reform and development of the global governance system and provide stronger international support and guarantee for the settlement of the Palestinian issue. China will encourage the international community to strengthen its attention to and support for the Palestinian issue, and

encourage the United Nations and other international organizations to play a greater role in resolving the Palestinian issue.

Finally, China will always adhere to the path of peaceful development and promote the peace process between Palestine and Israel. China will encourage and support Palestine and Israel in resolving disputes through peaceful dialogue and negotiation and realizing peaceful coexistence and common development between the two countries. China will uphold a fair, objective and pragmatic position and contribute its wisdom and solutions to the peaceful settlement of the Palestinian issue.

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## **ЯДЕРНА БЕЗПЕКА В ЗОНАХ КОНФЛІКТІВ: НЕБЕЗПЕЧНІ ПРЕЦЕДЕНТИ ТА МІЖНАРОДНЕ РЕАГУВАННЯ**

Найбільша у Європі атомна електростанція в Запоріжжі вже більше двох років знаходиться у небезпеці через бойові дії, спровоковані російською війною проти України. Серед експертів та представників міжнародного співтовариства це викликало дискусію про те, як відновити безпечну та надійну роботу об'єкту. Експерти зосередилися переважно на критиці існуючої міжнародно-правової бази захисту ядерних об'єктів та сумнівах у її ефективності. Вражаючи своєю небезпекою ситуація навколо ЗАЕС та нездатність міжнародного співтовариства зупинити військові дії навколо об'єкта тільки підтверджує скептицизм експертів.

Не зважаючи на це, попри всю безпрецедентність, український випадок не є першим. Напади на ядерні об'єкти раніше здійснювали Іран, Ірак, Ізраїль та США. Наприклад, у 1980 році, коли дослідницький реактор Осірак в Іраку ще перебував на стадії будівництва, його атакував Іран, а згодом знищив Ізраїль. Сполучені Штати також атакували два дослідницькі реактори в іракському центрі Тувайта під час Першої війни в Перській затоці. Ірак сам атакував два іранські енергетичні реактори в Бушері. На цьому приклади не закінчуються: інші критичні випадки сталися в Словенії в 1991 році і у Сирії в 2007 році.

Таким чином, для того, щоб знайти превентивний механізм для усунення подібних випадків, необхідно розширити дискусію, включивши до неї вищезгадані випадки нападів на ядерні об'єкти. Особливо цікаво відзначити реактиву і проактивну відповідь міжнародної спільноти на ці дії. Реакція на атаки, розпочаті всупереч вже існуючим на той період положенням міжнародного гуманітарного права (МГП), демонструє, як ці атаки були виправдані державами, що їх здійснювали, і в якій мірі ці виправдання були прийняті. Вони також проливають світло на причини недостатньої розробки міжнародно-правової бази для заборони атак на ядерні об'єкти.

У випадках, коли міжнародне засудження атак було сильнішим, держави віддавали перевагу більш раціональній і переконливій позиції щодо здійсненої ними атаки. Однак не кожна атака була активно засуджена. Показовим прикладом є дослідницький реактор Осірак в Іраку, який двічі ставав мішенню для атак і врешті-решт був зруйнований Ізраїлем у 1981 році. В той час як перша атака на реактор Осірак не викликала особливої реакції та уваги, друга атака викли-

кала широкий резонанс і призвела до масового засудження та дій проти Ізраїлю. Частково це сталося завдяки дипломатичній активності Іраку, якому вдалося не лише засудити ізраїльське обґрунтування нападу і створити цілий наратив про нехтування Ізраїлем Договору про нерозповсюдження ядерної зброї (ДНЯЗ), але й змістити фокус уваги з нападів, які здійснював сам Ірак. Дійсно, в період з 1984 по 1988 рік Ірак здійснив щонайменше сім повітряних атак на іранські реактори в Бушері. Проте, міжнародна увага все ще була зосереджена в основному на ізраїльських атаках, і не було такої ж сильної реакції на дії Іраку.

Сполучені Штати знищили два дослідницькі реактори в іракському центрі Тувайта під час Першої війни в Перській затоці, стверджуючи, що вони використовувалися для виробництва ядерної зброї. Однак цей випадок також не привернув особливої уваги через мовчання як з боку Іраку, так і з боку США, і їхнє очевидне бажання уникнути будь-якої дискусії. Крім того, у 2007 році ізраїльські військово-повітряні сили знищили реактор в Аль-Кібарі в Сирії. Реакція міжнародної спільноти була вкрай недостатньою, особливо якщо порівнювати її з атакою 1981 року. Сирія не поспішала розголошувати деталі удару і висловила мінімальний протест у дипломатичних колах, тоді як Ізраїль також зберігав відносну мовчанку. Таким чином, беручи до уваги всі ці випадки, можна стверджувати, що міжнародне засудження і рівень реагування залежать від прозорості події.

Проактивна реакція на атаки включала пропозиції щодо ухвалення нових положень про забезпечення безпеки ядерних установок у воєнний час та заборону нападів на такі об'єкти. Фактично, перші пропозиції були зареєстровані майже одразу після прийняття Додаткових протоколів до Женевських Конвенцій у 1977 році. Зокрема, це сталося під егідою запропонованої Сполученими Штатами та Радянським Союзом Конвенції про радіологічну зброю (КРЗ) у 1980-х роках. Іншим прикладом пропозицій щодо прямої заборони нападів на ядерні об'єкти були переговори щодо Поправки до Конвенції про фізичний захист ядерного матеріалу (КФЗЯЗ) та Міжнародної конвенції про боротьбу з актами ядерного тероризму, а також під час оглядових конференцій ДНЯЗ у 2010 та 2022 роках. Академічна спільнота також закликала до активних дій та заборони будь-яких атак на ядерні об'єкти.

Незважаючи на це, вищезгадані зусилля могли б бути більш успішними. Після раундів переговорів щодо включення положень про заборону нападу до тексту КРЗ це питання поступово втрачало важливість, і зрештою було виключено з повістки. Поправка до КФЗЯЗ та Міжнародної конвенції про боротьбу з актами ядерного тероризму також не отримали більш глибоких положень проти нападів на ядерні установки, незважаючи на вирішення проблем, що існували під час переговорів щодо КРЗ, таких як визначення поняття «ядерна установка» та розмежування цілей таких установок. Це можна пояснити важливістю прийняття інструменту для боротьби з ядерним тероризмом, яка на той час переважила необхідність посилення правової бази щодо заборони нападів на ядерні об'єкти.

Це питання також обговорювалося під час оглядових конференцій ДНЯЗ у 2010 та 2022 роках, хоча жодна з конференцій не ухвалила підсумкових документів. На конференції 2022 року тема захисту ядерних об'єктів у воєнний час була надзвичайно гострою через російську окупацію Запорізької АЕС та постійні обстріли в її околицях. Однак після місяця переговорів держави-учасниці не змогли дійти згоди, насамперед через заперечення Росії щодо тексту і формулювань,

які використовувалися щодо її дій в Україні. Російська делегація намагалася виправдати свою присутність на ЗАЕС і пропонувала вилучити всі згадки про українське питання з тексту підсумкового документа. Щоб досягти консенсусу з Росією та ухвалити підсумковий документ, державам-учасницям ДНЯЗ довелося б відмовитися від ключових принципів і норм міжнародного права, що призвело б до слабкого підсумкового документа. Таким чином, нездатність ухвалити такий документ не означає, що конференція провалилася.

Багато науковців також пропонують посилити міжнародно-правову базу для захисту ядерних об'єктів. Однак поки що наукова дискусія не призвела до якихось серйозних кроків у цьому напрямку. Хоча існує загальне розуміння небезпечних наслідків, які може спричинити напад на ядерну установку, немає згоди щодо того, як захищати такі об'єкти. На міжнародному рівні також існує та сама проблема, а саме: нездатність знайти спільну мову для забезпечення безпеки ядерних об'єктів у воєнний час. Переговори щодо КРЗ продемонстрували, як легко можна забути про цю проблему заради досягнення консенсусу з інших питань. Така ситуація тільки підкреслює необхідність пошуку альтернативних шляхів для відновлення безпечної та надійної роботи ЗАЕС, а також повернення її під український контроль.

### **3-Я КОНФЕРЕНЦІЯ ДЛЯ СТУДЕНТІВ МАГІСТРАТУРИ ТА МОЛОДИХ ДОСЛІДНИКІВ «MEDITERREG GRADUATE CONFERENCE»**

Наукова конференція для студентів магістратури та молодих дослідників, які навчаються за спеціальністю 291 Міжнародні відносини, суспільні комунікації та регіональні студії, була проведена в рамках проекту 101047919 – MEDITERreg «КІЛЬЦЕ СЕРЕДЗЕМНОМОР'Я: РЕГІОНАЛЬНІ СТУДІЇ». Модуль Жан Монне (Тип гранту ERASMUS-JMO-2021-MODULE) реалізується кафедрою міжнародних відносин та очолюється завідувачкою кафедри Ольгою Брусилівською. Фінансується Європейським Союзом. Однак висловлені погляди та думки належать лише авторам і не обов'язково відображають погляди Європейського Союзу чи Європейського виконавчого агентства з освіти та культури (ЕАСЕА). Ні Європейський Союз, ні ЕАСЕА не можуть нести відповідальність за них.

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**Ключові слова:** регіональні студії, Середземномор'я, конфлікти, зовнішні актори.