EUROPEAN POLICY FOR A SECURE AND PEACEFUL NUCLEAR FUTURE- PERSPECTIVES FOR THE REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA

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The following study provides a systematized attempt of analysing and evaluating the European Union's policies in the nuclear field and identifying the main challenges of the Republic of Moldova in the context of energy sector development. Examination of the evolution and actuality of the nuclear policy of the European Union and the opportunity to adapt these policies in the Republic of Moldova is the main focus of this thesis.

European Union continues to face energy security challenges. Given the geopolitical complexity and the need to diversify energy sources, nuclear energy remains an important part of the international debate. European Union has been consistently working towards ensuring a secure and peaceful nuclear future through various policies and initiatives. These efforts primarily focus on nuclear safety, security, nonproliferation, and the promotion of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes while emphasizing the importance of international cooperation and adherence to established treaties and agreements.

The accession process of the Republic of Moldova towards the European Union determined the need to align with European policies and standards, including the energy sector. The alignment of Moldova with European policies is essential for its potential accession to the European Union and its associated frameworks.

The purpose of the thesis is the comprehensive research and analysis of the European Union's nuclear policy in the context of ensuring a safe and peaceful nuclear future, including the evolution of the energy sector and Moldova's cooperation in this field. In order to achieve the purpose, the following research objectives have been proposed:

1. Studying the historiographical aspects of nuclear policy.
2. Analysing the theoretical and conceptual aspects of nuclear policy;
3. Examining the challenges of European policy in ensuring a safe and peaceful nuclear future;
4. Establishing the role of the European Union institutions with regard to the management of nuclear policy;
5. Studying the international cooperation of the Republic of Moldova in the development of the nuclear field;
6. Identifying the shortcomings of the energy sector of the Republic of Moldova.

Global security and peace are a subject that has been researched and investigated in all kinds of ways due to the many conflicts and wars that have occurred in the world. The nuclear sphere is currently a major interest for researchers in order to discover the right policy to promote nuclear policy and its improvement. However, it is worth mentioning the works of some authors who have been actively involved in nuclear research, and the need to use their work is, according to some, imperative, C. Parotte, A. Maarten, L. Sverre, S. Nasser is among the main authors whose works will be referred to. It is also worth mentioning the works of Romanian researchers who have been concerned with nuclear analysis and research, M. Mureşan, E. Ţugui, I. Bădăluţă şi C. B. Benea. From the Republic of Moldova, we must mention T. Busuncian, A. Buzdugan, V. Juc and N. Albu. On this note, I will also refer to some Russian researchers such as A. Arbatov, N. Cernov.

Over the years, nuclear policy has become a subject of major interest to the international community. The security dilemma is a well-known concept in international relations. It assumes that, in a world without a central authority, states will seek to ensure their own security by strengthening their military capabilities. However, this can lead to an arms race in which each state's efforts to increase its own security actually make all states less secure. In the post-World War II era, the security dilemma was particularly acute, as the major powers possessed nuclear weapons. The destructive power of these weapons was made clear in August 1945, when the United States dropped atomic bombs on the Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Despite this, the major powers did not agree to ban the development of nuclear weapons. Instead, they engaged in an unprecedented arms race, in which the development of nuclear weapons and the means to deliver them became a top priority.

For decades, security at nuclear facilities was synonymous with physical protection, focused on denying external adversaries access through a combination of guns, guards and gates [1, p. 5]. Nevertheless, this focus has changed over time, driven by the realization that these measures alone are unlikely to be effective against the entire range of contemporary threats.

Moving to a low carbon economy is a solution to reduce pollution and has many dimensions, as price structure, energy conservation and modernizing distribution networks, but according to current projections the share provided by nuclear power in primary energy consumption across the European Union is expected to be roughly 15 per cent in 2030 and roughly 20 per cent by 2050 [2, p. 1].

The development of the European Community's energy policy and legislation emphasizes the importance of having comprehensive and comparable European statistics. In this regard, the European Union has taken steps to create guidelines that set clear quantitative targets and deadlines for energy production and consumption. These guidelines are essential for assessing the progress made towards achieving the desired objectives. As a member of the Energy Community and in pursuit of obtaining the status of a candidate country for accession to the European Union, the Republic of Moldova is committed to aligning with the requirements of European policy in this area [3, p. 1].

Due to its geographical location, the Republic of Moldova has been strongly affected by Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine. The EU continues to stand in solidarity with Moldova, to support its sovereignty and territorial integrity within its internationally recognised borders and is committed to continue strengthening the country's resilience, including in terms of energy security, enhancing cooperation on security and defence and supporting its reform path. In May 2023 in Chisinau, President von der Leyen announced a support package for the country with two objectives: support in addressing the impact of the Russia's aggression on Ukraine and bringing Moldova closer to the European Union. The support package contains key priorities already delivering immediate results. Since October 2021, €1.2 billion has been made available for Moldova by the European Union, the European Investment Bank and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development [4, p. 1-2]. The European Union has for many years provided financial and human resources to help improve nuclear safety in countries outside the European Union.

In order to strengthen cooperation around European Union member states and including by linking internal and external dimensions of nuclear security it will be necessary to move beyond the historical perspective that nuclear security is an issue reserved to the competence of member states and look for frameworks where European Union and member state efforts could be combined in a coherent manner. The Russian invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 highlighted the vulnerability of Europe's reliance on Russian hydrocarbons for its energy requirements. European Union policymakers have taken commendable steps to alleviate the impact of short-term energy disruptions. However, the momentum for long-term resilience measures appears to be waning, and the unresolved debate surrounding the role of nuclear energy in the energy transition poses a significant challenge.

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