

ABSTRACT

The subject of this dissertation is the involvement of the Member States and institutions of the European Union in the process of protecting the Chernobyl Exclusion Zone. The topic constitutes an important area of research within international politics and international relations, particularly in the unique context of nuclear and radiological safety and security. In an era of diverse forms of international political activity, cooperation aimed at addressing the consequences of nuclear disasters represents an uncommon yet significant dimension of international engagement.

The primary objective of the dissertation was to examine the extent and nature of the involvement of the Member States and institutions of the European Union in the protection of the Chernobyl Exclusion Zone. To achieve this objective, the study analyzed cooperation between the Soviet Union and Western countries following the Chernobyl disaster, assessed the current situation of the Exclusion Zone in the context of the Russian Federation's aggression against Ukraine and the prevailing radiological conditions, examined the support provided by EU Member States and institutions as well as Ukraine's engagement in international cooperation, analyzed activities related to the complete decommissioning of the facility, and evaluated the rationale for supporting the development of renewable energy sources, SMR reactors, and tourism within the Exclusion Zone.

The dissertation addressed the following main research problem: How do the Member States and institutions of the European Union support the protection and development of the Chernobyl Exclusion Zone? To further specify this issue, a number of detailed research questions were formulated concerning the possibilities for conducting international activities within the Zone under conditions of the Russian Federation's aggression and radiological risk, cooperation between the Soviet Union and Western states and institutions following the Chernobyl disaster, the utilization of support provided by the European Union and its Western partners, Ukraine's involvement in international cooperation, activities related to the complete decommissioning process of the facility, and the prospects for the development of renewable energy sources, SMR reactors, and tourism within the Chernobyl Exclusion Zone.

For the purpose of achieving the research objective, a main hypothesis was formulated, assuming that the support provided by the Member States and institutions of the European Union constitutes a significant factor determining the security and development of the Chernobyl Exclusion Zone. The detailed hypotheses concerned the impact of the Russian Federation's aggression on the possibilities of conducting international activities within the Zone, the importance of Ukraine's cooperation with foreign partners in the protection and decommissioning of the power plant facilities, the role of financial and expert support provided by EU Member States and institutions, the prospects for the development of renewable energy sources, SMR reactors, and tourism within the Zone, as well as the nature of cooperation between the Soviet Union and Western countries in the immediate aftermath of the Chernobyl disaster.

The research process employed qualitative research methods, including field observations and structured interviews. Field studies were conducted within the Chernobyl Exclusion Zone and at the Ignalina Nuclear Power Plant. Interviews were carried out with

experts, representatives of scientific and medical communities, and individuals who participated in activities undertaken after the Chernobyl disaster in cooperation with the authorities of the Soviet Union.

The conducted research demonstrated that the protection of the Chernobyl Exclusion Zone is a complex and long-term process requiring continuous engagement from the international community. The analysis confirmed that the support mechanisms developed since the 1986 disaster have undergone gradual transformation in response to evolving political, technical, and environmental challenges. The findings also indicate that the Chernobyl Nuclear Power Plant remains a site of significant importance for both Ukraine's security and international security. Despite the passage of nearly four decades since the disaster, the area continues to require extensive international cooperation to ensure its long-term safety and to mitigate potential risks to both people and the environment.

The contribution of the dissertation to the discipline of political science and public administration lies in the identification and analysis of international cooperation mechanisms employed in the protection and management of an area affected by the consequences of a nuclear disaster. The research made it possible to demonstrate the forms of engagement undertaken by states, international organizations, and supranational institutions in activities carried out within the Chernobyl Exclusion Zone. The findings expand existing knowledge on international nuclear security policy and multilateral cooperation in transboundary crisis situations. The conclusions drawn from the study may serve as a reference point for further research on energy and nuclear security, including in the context of the development of nuclear energy in Poland.

Słowa kluczowe: Czarnobylska Strefa Wykluczenia, bezpieczeństwo jądrowe, bezpieczeństwo radiologiczne, Unia Europejska, współpraca międzynarodowa, polityka bezpieczeństwa, katastrofa czarnobylska, Ukraina.

Keywords: Chernobyl Exclusion Zone, nuclear security, radiological safety, European Union, international cooperation, security policy, Chernobyl disaster, Ukraine.