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EU-Israel Relations, among the V4 – Analysis of Intelligence-sharing, Migration Crisis, Arms and Economic relations

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Abstract

The relationship between the European Union (focus on the V4) and Israel will be examined in the light of intelligence and information sharing. To what extent are EU intelligence organizations working well, is there an efficient flow of information between different organizations? I would carry out an analysis of the current state of cooperation and look at possible breakthroughs that could lead to a forward-looking cooperation between the agencies. This could have an indirect effect on cooperation between the European Union and the countries covered by the Union's neighborhood policy in order to develop security policy processes. In addition to the operation of intelligence, I analyze the armaments indicators of the V4s and the political and economic relations of the V4s with the Mashrek region.

Keywords: Intelligence-sharing, European Union, Israel, Mashrek, CFSP, Visegrad Group, migration

Introduction

The EU's foreign and security policy challenges concerning intelligence-sharing are crucial issues. In this article, I would like to highlight the importance of intelligence-sharing to overcome the possible difficulties and challenges which might arise concerning migration. Besides intelligence-sharing I would like to focus on the relationship between Israel and the EU, especially the V4 countries. According to empirical studies, it is necessary for the EU and Israel to work on several fields of expertise

together, as the potential crisis like migration, terrorism, drug trafficking, etc. can be solved or at least pushed back only in a framework of close cooperation. The aim of this policy paper is to present the potential for cooperation between the EU and Israel, as the next waves of international migration will be coming from the Sahel region. In the Mediterranean, Israel has a very important part in combating terrorism and illegal migration. The relationship between Israel and the European Union has been very hectic and complex. Indeed, the Mediterranean is a key area for the European Union. Buzan and Wæver's regional security complex theory was re-imagined by Astrid Boening, a broader and yet narrower classification was created. A new sub-region was established, complementing the previously existing regional security complex with the EU member states at the northern shores of the Mediterranean Sea. Besides this widening, the Middle East region was narrowed down. In the framework of the Helsinki Accords in 1975 among other important directives, it was stated that the member states should aim for European security. However, it is insufficient to maintain the focus only on issues concerning military, policy, and security policy, it is getting more important to consider other centerpieces such as economic, cultural, and societal mechanisms. The EMP, ENP, and UfM¹ appeared in the institutionalized system of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership, followed by the EU's Global Strategy² in which the EU has been put back on the international map as a global actor. The Mediterranean area has been extended to the Sahel. An important area for the Union is its relationship with the Mediterranean, including Israel. In the previously mentioned security sub-region of Buzan, Wæver, and Boening, which has been already well-known in the past,³ political and security policy challenges are becoming increasingly important - a close and prosperous relationship with Israel is even more essential for the European Union. The EU's 2016 Global Strategy also highlights the progressively precarious domestic political situation in the African countries in the Sahel - between Mauritania and Eritrea - and the potential migration crisis from this region. Since the foundation of the European Union, and in addition, the constant enlargement of the Union has given gradually more priority to these sources of danger. Along these lines, I would like to describe the conclusions that can be

¹ N. Rózsa Erzsébet: Az Európai Unió szerepvállalása a Közel-Keleten és a Mediterráneumban <http://real.mtak.hu/100105/7/NRE.pdf> (Last accessed 22 April 2022)

² A Global Strategy for the European Union's Foreign and Security Policy https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/global-strategy-european-unions-foreign-and-security-policy_en (Last accessed 22 April 2022)

³ Remek Éva: Az Európai Unió és a Közel-Kelet I. Nemzet és Biztonság 2017/5 P. 4-30 http://www.nemzetesbiztonsag.hu/cikkek/nb_2017_05_02_remek_e_-_az_europai_unio_es_a_kozel-kelet.pdf (Last accessed 22 April 2022)

demonstrated regarding the local and global involvement of the V4s, as the quantitative and qualitative indicators show that after the first wave of migration in 2015, the V4s convey standardized directives not only with the European Union but also with the Mashreq region. In this article, I would like to highlight the challenges of intelligence-sharing in the framework of international migration and in general, how Hungary and the V4s should reconsider and reorganize their foreign and security policy toward the Mashrek region.

Problematic intelligence-sharing – the bridge between intelligence-sharing and economic and political relations

Transnational information-sharing is getting more and more important and relevant among all the security agencies in the framework of the European Union. Networks and information are crucial for successful cooperation. Not only different types of networks can be used, but in general, having a database is essential. The next step is to combine several countries' databases into one, sharing all the information on one platform is an indispensable asset for the nations and for the European Union as well. The saying that information is power describes this problem very well. The police agencies and the intelligence agencies are protecting their information and secrecy is the key to their success. The question may arise, how to deal with information on this level if intelligence agencies and member states are willing to improve global security, but in a way, in which the information they possess is not being shared. The effectiveness of transnational cooperation depends on a wide and deep information sharing ability and willingness. The past twenty years have shown that after several terrorist attacks all the nations claim for a more organized and inclusive intelligence-sharing. There is a significant difference between information-sharing among police agencies and intelligence agencies. We are aware of the different organizations which were established as EU institutions, such as EUROPOL or the Schengen cooperation. The member states are sharing information in a commonly used database, but on the other hand, intelligence agencies might share some information in an unregulated way. European Arrest Warrant and the European Investigation Order makes it easier to share information among all the authorities and the member states. Intelligence-sharing should be built upon trust, which means that sensitive information will not be shared with any kind of third party. In most of the cases, information is being protected and intelligence agencies are not open to sharing information.⁴

⁴ Hartmut Aden (2018) Information sharing, secrecy and trust among law enforcement and secret service institutions in the European Union, *West European Politics*, 41:4, 981-1002, DOI: 10.1080/01402382.2018.1475613

This might get problematic in a case when a potential terrorist attack is being planned. If more agencies are possessing information, more officers can be involved in solving the case, and the potential for preventing the attack could be higher. Nowadays it seems very problematic, how to share information among agencies because all the parties are willing to protect their “sources”. If information is shared, “sources” could get compromised. On the other hand, sharing intel with another agency might give the possibility to ask for something in return. The business-wise sharing of information may cause corruption among law enforcement. The Convention Implementing Schengen Agreement and the Europol Convention made it possible to have a centralized European police database in which information can be shared. It is hard to argue with the statement that the EU has no legislative authority for secret service cooperation.⁵ The EU Intelligence Analysis Centre (INTCEN) has mainly a coordination role. As mentioned before, the intelligence sharing among secret services is less transparent compared to the police cooperation, still, there is an ongoing pressure coming from states and authorities to force secret service agencies to share more information. Interesting cooperation can be examined when dealing with information that has been shared among secret service agencies and the police. It is much more likely that police agencies and secret service agencies are sharing information on data analysis but not the operational data. It can be stated that terrorism is not only a threat against state actors but also terrorist actions may be a threat to the public. This is the main reason for the development of police and secret service information-sharing. To sum up, if a secret service agency is keeping information as a secret, police agencies cannot act quickly enough to prevent terrorist attacks. It is essential for fighting terrorism on time, but the loose cooperation is a barrier to having a well-working information-sharing system.⁶ Studies revealed that a well-established intelligence-sharing body of the European Union combined with a proper economic and political bond is essential for overcoming potential threats like migration.

The interest of a nation-state/EU or regional cooperation

It is indeed very hard to determine which countries belong to Central and East-Central Europe. The most relevant and thriving region might be the Visegrad Group, it is also important to see the diversity and different

⁵ Monica Den Boer (2015) Counter-Terrorism, Security and Intelligence in the EU: Governance Challenges for Collection, Exchange and Analysis, *Intelligence and National Security*, 30:2-3, 402-419, DOI: 10.1080/02684527.2014.988444

⁶ Jörg Monar (2015) The EU as an International Counter-terrorism Actor: Progress and Constraints, *Intelligence and National Security*, 30:2-3, 333-356, DOI: 10.1080/02684527.2014.988448

national interests among the V4 countries. Poland according to its size and population might be the predominant country among V4 and it is often called the boundary line between East and the West. In the shadow of the Habsburg-era, V4 countries have decided to work and cooperate along the democratic transition and the common history and geographical location. This also meant that there was a slight isolation from the West. The question always arises, what is more important for a regional cooperation? The national interest which might be projected to the regional cooperation, or the aim of the regional complex is to formulate common goals and strategies which can be elaborated as a joint project and communicated as a one voice position in the international or regional communities such as the EU and NATO. Concerning intelligence-sharing on a regional level should be self-evident, however that nation-state interest will always blur the possible cooperation. This is the reason, that a common information collector institution is essential.

Possible solutions

The best possible solution is to find a way in which intelligence-sharing is functional. If data is sensitive, there should be an intermediate solution for sharing the information, such as workshops and multilateral meetings where at least the best practices are shared among the countries. The legal and coordination role of institutionalized infrastructures are important, however, the actual cooperation in which both parties are satisfied is indeed inevitable. Strengthening political and economic relationships with the Mashrek region and other regional complexes in the EU could be the key to a new European order. Concerning intel-sharing regard to migration, the key is to focus on Israel and to develop the relationship with Israel in a way, which promotes not only economic but political cooperation. In general, the Mashrek region is not a common trading region for the V4 countries. The migration crisis and the fragility of the region, not to mention the current war between Russia and Ukraine, forced the V4 countries to deepen their relationship with the Mashrek region. Security and economic cooperation are highly valuable. In the 90s V4 countries have decided to conduct strong bound and relationships mainly with the Western World. This, on one hand, caused a very strong dependence on the Western market, and concerning the geographical location, Hungary is very much dependent on the Russian gas supply. After the membership acceptance to the EU, focusing on the West caused less attention to the Middle East region. V4 countries need to change their perception of building an economic relationship with the West, diversifying the connections between the West and the Mashrek region can be the only way for overcoming the financial obstacles and difficulties. With this close cooperation, intelligence-sharing can be put to the next level.

Information concerning migration, coming from the Mediterranean should be a very high prioritized focus point. Also, it is very important that a V4-Mashrek policy can be very much beneficial for the European Union. The European Union could benefit from a well-working regional relationship. Well-established coalitions and networks could support global development. To avoid setbacks in the relationship between the EU and the Mashrek region it is necessary to deal with migration quotas and border controls in a completely different aspect.⁷ It is indeed inevitable to take into consideration that not accepting the migration quotas as regulations entered into force by the European Union means that the allocation of refugees cannot take place. There is only one way of avoiding the allocation of refugees according to a migration quota, which is dealing with the potential crisis in the countries where refugees are coming from. There is a significant potential for developing intelligence-sharing among European countries. The establishment of an Information and Crime Analysis Center which collects all the relevant data concerning terrorism, arms trade, international trafficking of human beings, drug trafficking, etc. is clearly a gray spot the intelligence-sharing in the European Union. The next step would be to process all the collected data on a platform, which can be accessed by the member states, and upon request, intel could be shared with upcoming candidate countries or even with allies that are not members of the European Union. It should be also kept as a promising solution that a potential Information and Crime Analysis Center should work together with the institutions of the European Union, but only in a way, in which bureaucracy is not forming boundaries but helps with a clear vision for better and smoother cooperation. The national intelligence services should be connected on a regional level because the already existing or newly formulating regional complexes would have a potential ascension. Thinking about the Russian-Ukrainian conflict, which started on the 24th of February 2022, it is rightly presumed that nation-states need a local development of a defense force. Because of the constant and radical change in the world and international politics, humanity should acknowledge that a strong dependence on NATO or in general the dependence on transatlantic relationships is not anymore unequivocal. The aim of the nation-states should be to build a balance and its multipolarity should mean that besides the NATO there is a local or a common regional defense strategy and defense policy. In the case of a regional common defense force existence, it is easier to deploy military forces for protection, and threats can be tackled much more effectively and in a more targeted way. According to my

⁷ Franziska Döring (2019) Visegrad Group and its Presence in the Mashriq Region, Politics in Central Europe (ISSN:1801-3422) Vol. 15, No. 3 DOI: 10.2478/pce-2019-0026

research, strong political cooperation can only be built on a strong and solid basis of economic relationships. To understand the status and the relationship of the European Union, in particular the V4 countries and the Mashrek region, it is indispensable to analyze several economic and arms trade indicators. A specific part of the Arab world can be divided into two parts. One is the Mashrek region „where the sun rises” meaning the eastern part of the Arab world, which includes countries like Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, and Israel which are necessary to be examined in my research. The other part is the Maghreb region „where the sun sets”. This part includes countries like Morocco, West-Sahara, Algeria, Tunisia, and Libya. We must mention that going back in history to the crisis of Suez, Hungary indeed was very much connected to world politics and to the region. After the economic and financial crisis in 2009 V4 countries needed to change their perception of building an economic relationship with the West, diversifying the connections between the West and the Mashrek region was the key to overcoming the financial obstacles and difficulties. After 1989 the V4 countries have decided to put their efforts and their will to reach the European Union’s convergence criterion and reach all the expectations which were placed on the potential candidate countries. It follows directly from this that the relationship with western countries had a significant improvement not only economically but also politically. This also meant that the connections and relationship with the Middle East and the Mashrek region have shown a steady decline. At the same time, relations between the V4 and the West have deepened and there has been a degree of cooperation and interdependence in the most positive way. After the outbreak of the economic crisis in 2010 the V4 countries not only wanted the Western orientation to be important but also wanted to build their relationship in several ways, which would allow for economically and politically diversified cooperation. As I have stated, after the first bigger wave of migration in 2015, there was no consensus within the V4 on the distribution of refugees according to the quota, the situation concerning the refugees in the country of origin needs to be resolved, which has contributed to the appreciation of the Mashrek region. As an outcome, this meant that a political and economic relationship with the region needed to be strengthened, this has been the potential way for a more balanced and a multilateral economic and political commitment. In the following, I am willing to provide key economic and defense policy indicators concerning V4 countries to support my empirical research. First and foremost, I have compared the V4 government’s central spending and projected the percentage rate of defense spending on the total government spending. Comparing 2010 and 2019 there are significant raising in Slovakia and Poland. Slovakia’s defense spending grew by 1 %p., in 2010 the total defense spending was 3,2%, and in 2019 4,2%, which means a more

than 30% growth. For Poland the defense spending grew by 1,17%p., in 2010 the total defense spending was 5,94%, and in 2019 7,11% which means a 20% growth. To have a benchmark, the OECD (total defense spending) declined by 9%, the OECD average grew by 3% and the OECD EU members grew by 8%. The numbers are indicating that in the V4 region during the given period there has been a significant change and compared to the OECD general numbers, the defense spending increased significantly. On one hand, it means that the examined nation-states are spending more on defense than the OECD and it also means that the given nation-states and most probably the regions as well are investing more in their national defense policy not only for the fact, to have a stronger country. In my understanding, regionalization and collective defense policy could be the key to our potential threats. Another good indicator of the V4 countries is the military expenditure. All the V4 countries have spent three digits percentage more on military expenditures in 2020 than in 2001. Czech Republic grew by 175% (1,18 vs. 3,25 billion USD), Slovakia grew by 369% (0,39 vs. 1,83 billion USD), Hungary grew by 182% (0,85 vs. 2,4 billion USD) and Poland grew by 259% (3,63 vs. 13,02 billion USD) The V4 countries compared to Israel show an extraordinary growth. Israel grew by „only” 155%. Also, these results support the research hypothesis that V4 countries are spending more on military and defense policy. Finally, I have examined the V4 countries' export and import growth between 2016 and 2020 and between 2019 and 2020. In general, in Iraq, Syria, Jordan, Egypt, and Israel an increase in the value of imports/exports can be observed. Both short-term and long-term examinations showed that the Mashrek region is getting more popular among V4 countries. In general, we can say that the V4 countries had no success in formulating a common viewpoint concerning the relationship between the EU and the Mashrek region. However, following the migration and refugee crisis in 2015, there has been a significant rise in a common interest.⁸ It makes it even more complicated as V4 countries should step up as a regional synergy, in a very specific region, where the USA and Russia are dominating with their national political aspirations. Another question might be if the relationship with the region is going to be continuous, which does not specify if the trendline of the relationship is going to be ascending or decreasing, is it going to be addicted to the migration waves? Also, it is very important that a well-working V4-Mashrek policy can be very much beneficial for the European Union. The last years have shown that also the European Union could benefit from a promising relationship. Well-established coalitions and networks could support global development. If the V4 countries are willing to strengthen border controls and prevent migration,

⁸ data.oecd.org, data.worldbank.org

this might cause some stepbacks in the relationship between the European Union and the Mashrek region.

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