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THE PROSPECTS FOR BALTIC – BLACK SEA COOPERATION IN THE CONTEXT OF CURRENT RUSSIAN-UKRAINIAN RELATIONS

Abstract: This article proves relevance of the cooperation between the states of the Baltic and Black Sea region and reveals the prospects of Ukraine's participation in interstate cooperation within the Baltic-Black Sea region in view of the current state of the international system and the conflict with Russia. Also the review of ideological and theoretical approaches to understanding the Baltic and Black Sea region is carried out and its potential is emphasized from the point of view of policy of NATO and the EU. It is established that the priority of cooperation in the Baltic and Black Sea region is the transport, economic policy of the sphere. The emphasis is placed on distinctions between the certain states of the region (Russia, Turkey) concerning regional security. The need of attraction to cooperation for the Baltic and Black Sea region of a wide range of the states for the purpose of overcoming the unsuccessful experience of cooperation and creation of new effective regional security architecture is confirmed.

Keywords: Baltic and Black Sea region; regional cooperation; regional security; Ukraine; Russia; Baltic States.

1. INTRODUCTION

From historical perspective Russia always considered a large part of Eastern Europe, first of all the territory of Ukraine, as a component of its own geopolitical space. Thus the concept of the Russian power relying mainly, on the military force, and the idea of greatness of Russia as a superstate, has not only spatial and territorial measurement, but it's also associated with the spread of its cultural dominance.

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Failure of the Russian efforts to keep Ukraine in an orbit of its geopolitical influence and obvious objection from Ukraine to merging with Russia in the context of realization of integration ideas of the Customs Union, induced Russia to launch a direct military assault. Annexation of Ukrainian Crimea and invasion of the Russian army in the southeast of Ukraine forced the international community to resort to reconsideration of bases of regional security and brought a question of the future of all international system on the agenda of the world community. The need for such approach, global by nature of statement of problems, arose, first of all, not only due to the rank of the parties in conflict or due to their territorial agreement, but also due to taking into account the violation of the basic principles of functioning of the international community and threat of distribution of democratic principles of development of the sovereign states.

From the geopolitical point of view, the question of allocation of «geopolitical spaces» doesn't belong to objective aspects of international policy functioning. Substantially «geopolitical spaces» are formed by attraction of the political means focused on maximizing advantage at an embodiment of certain kinds of a state policy by interested actors. Therefore, the modern nature of the Ukrainian-Russian conflict, we can state, first, the failure to form the uniform Euroasian geopolitical space and loss of advantages from its functioning to Russia and, secondly, considerable ineptitude of uniform European space formation the integral component of which would be Ukraine, Belarus and Moldova. Unfortunately, integrity of this space still didn't gain necessary expressiveness in representations of the European politicians. The accompanying problem of the specified tendencies is uncertainty of the geopolitical future of Russia itself. It makes valid the importance of the Baltic and Black Sea region, the development of which as a separate geopolitical space contains considerable potential from the point of view of environment safety stabilization policy and deepening of cooperation not only between the states located in its remit but also in the Euroasian continent in general.

2. UKRAINIAN MEASUREMENT OF GEOPOLITICAL TRANSFORMATIONS: IS IT THE PROSPECT FOR THE BALTIC AND BLACK SEA REGIONAL COOPERATION?

Today it is possible to claim without exaggeration that there are considerable changes in global geopolitical structure. A number of analysts of the international relations even see in them the sign of the new «Cold War». The main argument of supporters of this view is that the conflict in Ukraine is a classic example of geopolitical war, during which geopolitical poles, without entering open opposition, combat in territories of other actors for establishing the spheres of their respective influence. Therefore, in spite of the fact that Ukraine wasn't directly involved in the formation of a modern world order and isn't one of geopolitical poles, it significantly influences the reformation of the global geopolitical structure.

Researchers, in general, separate the following powerful consequences for a world order through the Russian invasion into Ukraine: violations of a standard and contractual basis of the international system and the related updating of the questions of collective security connected with it; creation of unauthorized annexation precedent of the other state territory; legitimization of military intervention in affairs of other states under cover of one's own diaspora protection (the doctrine of «the Russian world» of Russia in its application concern-

ing the states in which ethnic Russians live); the resort to the so-called «hybrid war» which unites involvement of irregular troops, and also not military means of pressure (Horbulin, 2015, October, 23); incapacity of international safety organizations (UN, OSCE); the lack of the mechanisms of the international order (for example, «state gendarme» or «a concert of superstates») at the global level (Ischinger, 2014, October, 21).

In new geopolitical conditions Ukraine is searching for the opportunities of development. Thus it should take into account such factors as the growth of authoritarianism of the Russian power, strengthening of nationalist sentiments among the population of neighboring states (Hungary, Turkey), existence of the “frozen” conflicts in Transnistria, Abkhazia and South Ossetia and so forth.

In our opinion, the dynamism of the modern political situation calls for the pursuance of safety, which could result from the cooperation the regional level for Ukraine. Therefore, the purpose of the present article is to find out the conditions of development and prospects of the Ukrainian relations with the states of the Baltic and Black Sea region. It is necessary to notice that questions of Ukrainian regional cooperation were covered in the researches by the leading Ukrainian and foreign scientists and analysts: O. Zarubinskyi, V. Madisson, O. Poltrakov, A. Riley, L. Rassokha, V. Slovian, O. Sushko, V. Chornyi, V. Shakhov. Based on their conclusions and using methods of the event-analysis, forecasting, synthesis and generalization, this article will aspire to realize four main objectives. First, we will present the main approaches to validation of the Baltic and Black Sea cooperation in a scientific discourse; secondly, we will analyse prerequisites of enhancing of cooperation in the Baltic and Black Sea region; thirdly, we will define priority enhancing the cooperation that Ukraine can join; and, fourthly, we will find out prospects and risks which can arise on the way of realizing the cooperation in the Baltic and Black Sea region.

3. IDEOLOGICAL FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLES OF THE BALTIC AND BLACK SEA REGIONAL COOPERATION

Considering a situation faced by Ukraine today– critical strain of relations with Russia and complication of process of rapprochement with the European Union because of the conflict in the east of the country, alternative option of cooperation is the Baltic and Black Sea region.

The idea of development of the Baltic and Black Sea region was put forward by S. Rudnytskyi and Yu. Lypa in the first half of the XX century. Except domestic scientists, the great value of a Baltic–Black Sea Union was provided by the classic of the Polish geopolitical thought Yezhy Nebzhytski (Richrd Vraga), in the work «Geopolityka: strategija and granice» (1945) he proved the thesis about an outstanding role of the Baltic and Black Sea region on «the map of Europe». In particular, the scientist claimed that the space between Baltic and Black seas constrains expansion of the Western Europe states to the east and vice versa (Potocki, 2009). Considering the significant potential of the Baltic and Black Sea region, the western and east neighbors tried not to allow for the creation of a uniform political and cultural organism. According to Ye. Nebzhytski, the origin of political axes in the direction from the north to the south within the Baltic and Black Sea region happened in the X century. In particular, Ukrainian researchers Vadym Madisson and Vleriy Shakhov in the monograph «Modern Ukrainian Geopolitics» (2003) note the necessity of adjustment

of the Baltic and Black Sea region cooperation: «From the point of view of the geostrategic situation, Ukraine can be «the natural intermediary» between regions of the Baltic and Black seas» (Maddison, Shakhov, 2003). According to their belief, cooperation on an axis «North-South» will promote strengthening the safety in this part of Europe.

In the article «Prospects of Balto-Black sea Cooperation» (2005) Oleh Zarubinsky and Volodymyr Chorny also put an emphasis on efficiency of regional cooperation. Here, first of all, it is about the transport capacity of the region (Zarubinsky, Chorny, 2005). Another Ukrainian scientist Oleh Soskin, the director of Institute of Society Transformation, concentrates on the following main modules of the Baltic and Black Sea cooperation: transport, connected with overland freight transportation by rail; pipeline, which is based on the development of the international oil pipelines system and the formation of the international oil consortium; shipping, providing transformation of the Black Sea to a complex transport system with use of experience of shipping by the Baltic Sea (Soskin, 2014).

Yulian Skzhyp emphasizes that cooperation in the sphere of defense in the Baltic and Black Sea region has a strategic importance. He, in particular, defines an axis Gdansk – Odessa as an important transport corridor and an outpost against potential threats from the East (Sykulski, 2013).

Alan Riley, professor of the London City University, points to the prospects of power cooperation within the Baltic and Black Sea region. He claims that on the basis of the Ukrainian gas pipelines (with a general extent about 40 thousand km.) and the largest gas storages in Europe, it is possible to create powerful gas trade center (hub). A. Riley also considers slate gas as a prospective production in the west of Ukraine and in Poland. If these two countries are able to join forces and they begin to extract shale gas together, this project will provide significant dividends and will allow to get rid of gas dependence on Russia (Riley, 2015).

4. COOPERATION POTENTIAL IN THE BALTIC AND BLACK SEA REGION

The idea of development of the Baltic and Black Sea cooperation for Ukraine is attractive for several reasons. First, as it was noted above, the Black Sea region has the considerable potential connected, first of all, with use of its shelf that will give the chance independently to extract oil and gas independently. Within regional cooperation with Turkey there is a possibility of development of metallurgical industry. The prospective branch of cooperation is the ecology (Smirnov, 2011).¹ In the Baltic direction, it is expedient to recall the experience of Poland and the Baltic States related to implementing reforms, modernizations and diversifications of power branch and try to follow its example.

Secondly, reasonable prospects of logistics is cooperation in transport, transit and communication areas. Back in 2003, together with Lithuania and Belarus within the international transport corridor No. 9 the railway project of the combined transportations «Viking» along a route Ilichivsk – Klaipeda was launched. This corridor, on condition

¹ А. Смірнов, *Балто-Чорноморський регіон. Геополітичний аспект*, , <http://www.kyumu.edu.ua/vmv/.../smirnov.pdf>

of joining with a ferry railway line which connects Ukraine and Turkey, can receive an exit to the Middle East.

Also do not leave without attention Latvian initiative of restoration of the shortest «Daugava-Dnieper» Waterway and railway communication Libava – Romny, there is since 1874, and also an Estonian offer to exploit the opportunities of the Estonia developed ports for expansion of communications with the countries of Scandinavia (Zarubinskyy, Chornyy, 2005, March, 5).

According to the Ukrainian researcher Yuriy Romanenko, in the plane of cooperation with Turkey it is expedient to concentrate on an autobahn construction round the Black Sea which will «be attached» to the Caspian hub (Romanenko, 2015), and the logistics will develop in China further. In this context it is necessary to notice that China considers the North Black Sea region a part of the Great silk Way.

Thirdly, security aspect is important after all considerable part of the states of the region bordering either the European Union or with Russia. So, in modern conditions cooperation in the sphere of defense both for Ukraine, and for the Baltic States and Poland makes mutual benefit. In 2014 discussion of an initiative of creation of the Polish-Lithuanian-Ukrainian military crew took place. Estonia declared its readiness to help Ukraine with creation and development of cyber defence (Slovyan, 2014).

Emergence of the Baltic and Black Sea union can appear to be a favorable factor for the EU and NATO as on their borders there will be a desired «buffer organization» that separates Western Europe from the countries of Central Asia – a source of illegal migration and drug traffic. Regional cooperation also allows to combine efforts of the states in fight against corruption and to promote counteraction to soft threats to security, settlement of the frozen conflicts, according to the European principles, «by their removal from a «Post-Soviet» paradigm»(Sushko, 2007) and also to interact in the information sphere. Thus, the part of the obligations of military character assigned to NATO and the EU will be able to somehow aid the states of the Baltic and Black Sea Union (Slovyan, 2014).

5. PRIORITIES OF COOPERATION OF UKRAINE IN THE BALTIC AND BLACK SEA REGION

At the state level the initiative of activization of the Baltic and Black Sea cooperation was taken by the president of Lithuania A. Brazauskas in 1997. In two years in Klaipeda (Lithuania) presidents of Lithuania, Poland and Ukraine discussed joint projects on the creation of optimum transit routes, which would have practical geoeconomic value in communications between Baltic and Black seas.

In August, 2005 the president of Ukraine Viktor Yushchenko and the president of Georgia Mihail Saakashvili took the initiative to call in Ukraine the summit with participation of leaders of the countries of the Baltic and Black Sea and Caspian region, Russia and the USA. Subsequently this initiative was supported by Latvia and Romania. On December 2 of the same year the constituent meeting of Community of a democratic choice or “community of democracies of the Baltic and Black Sea and Caspian region” took place, which was attended by the presidents of Ukraine, Moldova, Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia, Slovenia, Macedonia, Romania and Georgia, and also representatives of Poland, Azerbaijan and Bulgaria (Rassokha, 2009).

It is worth noting that issues which were touched upon at the summit, are still valid in our times. As it is specified in the declaration of the countries of Community of a democratic choice, the purposes and problems of this forum is safety in the region, cooperation in the economic and social sphere, fight against terrorism, money laundering, drug traffic, the weapon and people, counteraction of ethnic and religious hatred all the way to separatism; support of independent mass media and public organizations; exchange of ideas concerning democratic transformations (Joint Comunique, 2006). In May, 2006 in Vilnius the «General Vision of the Joint Neighbourhood» conference took place, it was devoted to problems of the Baltic and Black Sea cooperation. The summit was organized at the initiative of presidents of Lithuania and Poland – Valas Adamkus and Leh Kachynsky.

It is necessary to notice that if the situation for development of cooperation with the states of the Baltic region is favorable, in the case of the Baltic Sea states, the situation can be difficult. Considering that the safety issue in the context of modern events rose especially sharply, obstacles can arise, in particular, to the clear perception of the cooperation features by the different states and ways of regional development.

6. PROSPECTS AND CHALLENGES OF THE REALIZATION OF COOPERATION IN THE BALTIC AND BLACK SEA REGION

Russia and, partly, Turkey, which apply for the role of regional leaders, hold special positions in security issues in the Black sea region. Both countries oppose the strengthening of the NATO presence here and defend their own vision of regional cooperation on security issues. Professor of Economic and Technological University in Ankara M. Tselipkala in the report of the Commission on the Black Sea confirms the difference of the Russia position on this issue from the approaches of other States (Tselipkala, 2010). Factors that may affect the security issues in the region, among other things, classifies non-state actors, frozen conflicts and unrecognized breakaway territories, the presence of refugees. Instability of individual states makes the region one of the “hot spots” in the world where such threats as terrorism, proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, illicit trafficking of drugs, arms and people can develop. Given these circumstances, the issues of security in the region is of paramount importance.

Yordan Bozhilov, the former Bulgaria Minister of Defence, and presently – the chairman of the Forum on safety in Sofia (Bulgaria), supports the previous approach. In the article «The Black Sea Region Needs New Architecture of Safety» he, in particular, notes numerous attempts to adjust regional cooperation in the sphere of safety, none of which being productive (Bozhilov, 2014).

On Bozhilov's belief, BLACKSEAFOR, the Agreement on creation of the Working group of naval cooperation in the Black Sea, was the most effective project within which the cooperation was launched. Cooperation in the sphere of peacekeeping and stability in the region by mutual trainings of the Navies was the purpose of this project, which was begun in 2001. The following initiatives also had similar character: The contract on creation of security measures in the naval sphere in the Black Sea;² “Border cooperation of the Black

² The document was signed on April 25, 2002 in Ukraine. It was called to provide mutual understanding, openness and security.

Sea” and Information center in Bourgas (Bulgaria).³ It should also include attempts to create a political format of cooperation – «The Black Sea Forum for Dialogue and Partnership», initiated by Romania in 2006.⁴ “Harmony of the Black Sea” was the Turkish initiative directed at keeping of safety in the region. However, considering that other states invited to join this initiative, did not always divide approaches of Turkey to cooperation in the Black Sea, “Harmony of the Black Sea” had no chances to become the real regional organization (Bozhilov, 2014).

According to Y. Bozhilov, “...Today the Black Sea is a region in which division of [interests] passes between Russia and the European Union and NATO. It fills the region not only with internal disagreements, but also gives rise to conflicting interests” (Bozhilov, 2014). To resolve safety issues in the Black Sea, it is necessary to develop new approaches and a format of cooperation. A key problem, according to the author, is the modern conflict between Russia and Ukraine due to which there is an urgent need to create of new architecture of regional security.

This architecture of security has to cover the countries from the Black Sea region in broad understanding which face similar problems and calls for safety, including Armenia, Azerbaijan and Moldova. The new system has to have various levels – political, military, police and other. Considering the specified security threats, and also unrealized initiatives, it is necessary to restore effective regional cooperation and to bring closer cooperation between the countries of the Baltic region.

7. CONCLUSION

Modern events of local and global character induce Ukraine to search for its own place in world geopolitical structure. Turbulence of world politics, having taken Ukraine, confirmed J. Rozenau’s thesis that all events which occur at the local level, are reflected in the global one. Therefore, the conflict between Russia and Ukraine loosened the international system and called into question a modern international order. However, despite difficult conditions, Ukraine had a chance to realize itself as a full actor of international policy and to take its own place in geopolitical structure of the world.

The idea of the Baltic and Black Sea cooperation is based on a considerable theoretical groundwork of both the Ukrainian, and foreign scientists of the past. Both modern politicians and the top officials of the states of the region are supporters of closer regional relations. Considering it, many initiatives in various spheres were introduced, none of them were completely realized. On the basis of theoretical groundwork consideration and the introduced initiatives we can claim that the priority and perspective directions of cooperation are the power policy and spheres, and also the sphere of transport and communications.

Interaction of the region states in these directions will give the chance to resolve a number of the vital issues, first of all, such as power independence. Along with advantages and opportunities, a number of factors which can complicate cooperation are at play. In par-

³ Initiative among all riparian States, started with the aim of combating illegal migration, trafficking in drugs, weapons and illegal fishing.

⁴ The creation of the forum was preceded by the idea of regular meetings of state heads and government of the countries of the black sea basin to discuss all security issues of the region.

ticular, it is about difference of opinion of the certain states on development of the regional relations in certain spheres.

Prospects of further researches of the problem under consideration are connected with the need for scientific research and justification of an appropriate place of Ukraine in the global political and economic systems. The creation of the mechanism of realization of the Ukrainian national interests at the global and regional levels would become a practical result of scientific research. Enhancing cooperation at the regional level will give the chance to Ukraine to come nearer to standards of the European and euroatlantic structures and to come to qualitatively new level in global system of the international coordinates.

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