

National Interests of Ukraine in Implementing the Baltic-Black Sea Union Project

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Abstract – *The aim of the paper is to determine national interests of Ukraine as a potential member of the Baltic-Black Sea Union. Also it is important to examine historical retrospective of the development the idea of the Baltic-Black Sea Union. Particular attention is paid to the advantages and disadvantages of new regional organization for Ukrainian national interests. It is hoped this study will inform students, scholars and other interested persons about idea of the Baltic-Black Sea Union, peculiarities of its implementation and prospects for development.*

Keywords – Baltic-Black Sea Union, Intermarium, Ukraine, national interests, Russian aggression, Baltic Sea region, Black Sea region.

I. Introduction

At the beginning of XXI century new challenges in Europe have become urgent for each EU state. The problem of refugees and terrorism is closely intertwined with political crisis within the EU, and Russia is trying to exert its influence on international politics. Taking into account such situation, Central and Eastern European Countries started to review an idea of creating an international organization in the Baltic-Black Sea region.

According to the "parents of geopolitics" Ukraine belongs to the countries of the Baltic-Black Sea belt. The stability of Euro-Atlantic system depends on these states. Countries of Central and Eastern Europe will play a significant role in the structure of European security over the next few decades. In this context, the relevance and curiosity of the idea of Baltic-Black Sea cooperation or, in other words, the Baltic-Black Sea Union project is a very interesting initiative, which, in case of its successful implementation will bring lots of benefits to member states, including Ukraine.

II. Development of the Idea of the Baltic-Black Sea Union

There are some differences in interpretation the region, where new organization is going to be established, because almost each state of Central and Eastern Europe has its own name and vision of the future organization. In particular, the Polish name Międzymorze (from między = "between" or "among"; + morze = "sea"), meaning "Between-seas", was rendered into Latin as "Intermarium." Three Seas initiative is a regional "soft" formation initiated by Croatia and Poland: a corridor on a North-to-South axis connecting Scandinavian states with Balkans through Poland. Mittleeuropa in German discourse notifies parts

of Europe allocated between its Eastern and Western poles. And Ukrainian term Baltic-Black Sea Union envisages the restoration the geopolitical patterns of the late Kyivan Rus [2]. In this paper the term "Baltic-Black Sea Union" is going to be used as the main.

In the post-Versailles era, Polish leader Józef Piłsudski proposed to the authorities of Lithuania, Belarus and Ukraine forge an interstate union. Piłsudski risked and pushed forward an intellectual speculation on how to strengthen subjectivity and sovereignty of the "young" states in games between major powers. From the perspective of time, this speculation can hardly be defined as a real-life success.

The confederative plan proposed by Juzef Pilsudski, Polish leader, today is considered as multilateral agreement on mutual assistance between the Baltic Sea and the Black Sea countries.

According to Pilsudski project, an organization should include countries of Central and Eastern Europe (Ukraine, Czechoslovakia, Poland, Romania, Hungary, Yugoslavia, Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia, Moldova, Belarus), which will unite in a new alliance in contrast to Germany and Russia.

Exploring Ukrainian historical visions of the Baltic-Black Sea Union also reveals some theorising and intellectual exercising. Among Ukrainians the Baltic-Black Sea Union project was actively supported by Y. Lypa, S. Rudnytskyi and M. Hrushevskyi. Ukrainian military chief and Piłsudki's partner Symon Petlura was the first to introduce an idea of the Black Sea union (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Kuban and Ukraine). Being fully functional, the union would allow regional nations to withstand Russian pressure and preserve national independence. Finally, Ukrainian geo-politician Y. Lypa is an author of the so-called Black Sea doctrine, the main idea of which was to unite Poles, Byelorussians, Ukrainians and Lithuanians in the Black Sea-Baltic federation. He believed that Ukraine should unite efforts of the Eastern European nations in order to secure their independence from colonisers. Ukraine had an "undeniable" right to become such a leader due to the largest and most densely populated state with considerable economic potential [1].

Also it is worth to mention that the idea of creating a regional organization in the Baltic-Black Sea region is an important element of modern interstate relations of the countries of Central and Eastern Europe.

For the first time since collapse of the USSR an idea to create such an alliance was proclaimed by then-President of Lithuania A. Brazauskas during the Vilnius summit of 1997. The desire of Brazauskas was also supported by presidents of Ukraine L. Kravchuk and L. Kuchma.

In 2006 during summit of leaders of the Baltic-Black Sea region in Vilnius participants emphasize the importance of regional cooperation for European and Transatlantic integration. The Croatian president made an initiative to establish the Adriatic-Black Sea-Baltic Union in 2015. In fact, in the early 2000s, there was an initiation and certain institutionalization of economic, historical and geopolitical cooperation in the Black Sea-Baltic region.

The aim of the Baltic-Black Sea Union in modern times is strengthening cooperation between member states in order to provide security, economic development, intergovernmental dialogue etc [6, P. 135].

Ukraine, despite the conflict with Russia and financial dependence from foreign partners still has a very powerful economic potential to get a leading position in future organization. In the post-Soviet space Ukraine is the second after Russia place by population. In terms of GDP, Ukraine ranked second in Central and Eastern Europe after Poland. According to the available scientific potential, it has one of the first places in Europe.

In Ukrainian society today there is a problem with interpretation of the Baltic-Black Sea project. Among Ukrainians, there is lack of clear understanding of what this project represents and which benefits Ukraine will get as potential member of the Baltic-Black Sea Union.

III. Advantages and Disadvantages of the Baltic-Black Sea Union for the Realization of National Interests of Ukraine

Taking into account different internal and external factors, membership of Ukraine in the Baltic-Black Sea Union may bring both advantages and disadvantages to our state.

In case of successful implementation of the project, Ukraine would become a driving force of the future geopolitical association. If during next 2-3 years Poland, Belarus, Lithuania and Ukraine will establish body of the organization, then in 10-15 years the Baltic-Black Sea Union will attain the level of Germany, France and Great Britain in terms of military and economic potential. It has been estimated that military alliance of Ukraine and Poland with defence expenditure of 16-20 billion dollars and the total number of armed forces from 400 to 500 thousand troops may become the most powerful military force in Europe which will play a leading role in NATO military policy [4].

Cooperation within the Baltic-Black Sea Union would strengthen the geopolitical role of Ukraine, which can become a decisive factor for Ukraine's accession to European and Euro-Atlantic structures [3].

The economic component of Ukraine's national interests as a member of the Baltic-Black Sea Union can be expressed in simplifying business operations in common economic market, implementation of joint logistical, infrastructure and energy projects etc.

The idea of creating the Baltic-Black Sea Union is increasingly coming forward in the forefront along with an increase in the problems of EU unity. These problems are due to factors such as huge inflow of refugees to EU countries, sometimes ambiguous Brussels policy in relation to most strategic issues, the discontent of some EU countries regarding the size of tax deductions to the common budget, distribution of quotas on agricultural products and so on. According to Y. Prykhodko, the Baltic-Black Sea Union should become not only a buffer, but catalyst for changes in the old Europe that are already taking place. The Baltic-Black Sea Union project will significantly change geopolitical situation in the region in terms of security, military cooperation and relationships between EU and member states of new organization.

However, not everyone expects that creating a new organization will have positive effects in the region. According to Henry Tendi, the negative side of this process is the fact that

Europe is not interested in supporting the initiative to create the Baltic-Black Sea Union. In this case, Ukraine risks lose support from EU in protection of territorial integrity, sovereignty and European integration. At the same time, Moscow has never concealed anger about formation of the Baltic-Black Sea Union and beginning of such a process will only worsen the situation in the East of Ukraine.

Y. Prykhodko also suggests that on the one hand the Baltic-Black Sea Union could become a perfect shield for EU from the Kremlin. But on the other hand Brussels will take a leading position in the whole Europe, trying to prevent development and prosperity of the Baltic-Black Sea Union [5, P. 42].

Among the negative aspects of creating a new regional organization most scholars determine the desire of Poland to take over all the power in the Baltic-Black Sea Union in order to promote its own interest. In this case, Ukraine will take a minor role in the organization and will not be able to defend its national interests to the fullest.

Conclusion

In this paper the national interests of Ukraine as a potential member of the Baltic-Black Sea Union were determined. Today for Ukraine it is important to be actively involved in the creation of new security unions, but it is also necessary to make efforts in order to protect its own independence, security and defence.

The Baltic-Black Sea Union may prove to be an effective way to strengthen the European security system, intensify the process of integration of the states of Eastern and Western Europe, stabilize and harmonize relations within the EU, and eliminate any attempts to separate Eastern European countries between the West and the Russian Federation.

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