



Marianna Gladysz

Ivan Franko National University of Lviv

Baltic-Black Sea Region in the European Security System – Ukraine’s and Russia’s Interests

Abstract

The article reflects on the issue of the modernization of the European system of security in the context of contemporary geopolitical challenges, especially the aggressive policy of the Russian Federation. The formation of the system of European security, taking into account the multi-dimensionality and the functionality of the system, is analysed in the article and the factors of threats and challenges that determine its modern functioning are indicated. The author draws attention to the inefficiency of the European security system, its problems and possible avenues of reform.

The place and role of Ukraine in the geopolitical architecture of Europe, particularly in the Baltic-Black Sea region, are also examined. The ideas of Ukrainian and foreign scientists and political leaders on creating the Baltic-Black Sea region are analysed as well as the existing experience of cooperation nowadays. The interests in the Region of the Russian Federation connected with its desire to strengthen its military presence on eastern and eastern-southern borders to confront NATO and the EU are highlighted.

Key words: *European security system, Baltic-Black Sea region, NATO, the European Union, Ukraine, Russian Federation.*

Abstrakt

Artykuł skupia się na kwestii modernizacji europejskiego systemu bezpieczeństwa w kontekście aktualnych zmian geopolitycznych, w szczególności ze względu na agresywną politykę Federacji Rosyjskiej. Układ europejskiego systemu bezpieczeń-

stwa, biorąc pod uwagę jego wieloaspektowość i funkcjonalność, jest poddany w artykule analizie oraz wskazane są czynniki zagrożeń a także wyzwania związane z jego nowoczesnym działaniem. Autorka skupia uwagę na nieefektywności europejskiego systemu bezpieczeństwa, jego niedoskonałościach i możliwych sposobach reformowania.

Badane jest także miejsce i rola Ukrainy w geopolitycznej strukturze Europy, w szczególności w regionie Morza Czarnego. Ponadto, analizowane są pomysły ukraińskich i międzynarodowych badaczy oraz liderów politycznych dotyczące stworzenia regionu Morza Czarnego w kontekście doświadczeń wyniesionych ze współpracy. Położony jest akcent na kwestię zainteresowania Regionem przez Federację Rosyjską z racji jej dążenia do wzmocnienia militarnej obecności na granicach wschodnich i południowo-wschodnich, celem konfrontacji z NATO i Unią Europejską.

Słowa kluczowe: *europejski system bezpieczeństwa, region Morza Bałtyckiego i Morza Czarnego, NATO, Unia Europejska, Ukraina, Federacja Rosyjska.*

Introduction

Nowadays global geopolitical structure is undergoing significant changes. The escalation of permanent political, diplomatic, cultural, ideological, economic and military confrontation on the European continent is linked directly with the Russian-Ukrainian conflict, which started in 2014 with the illegal armed seizure of the territory of Ukraine (the Crimea) and its accession to Russia and later expanded with the hybrid Russian aggression against Ukraine in the Donetsk and Lugansk regions. These actions have led the European security system and the system of international relations as a whole to a sharp exacerbation of a latent crisis.

Confrontation between the most powerful geopolitical players – the United States, NATO and the EU on the one hand and the Russian Federation on the other – for the first time since the end of the "cold war" has revealed unsolved problems and failures in the politics of "Western democracies." Russian military aggression against Ukraine has become the biggest challenge to the European security system and affected fundamental issues of European and global security.

Besides the Ukrainian-Russian conflict, Europe now faces the menace of terrorism, extremism and flows of immigrants from Islamic states. These problems have shown that the current system of international security is barely able to respond to these challenges. Assistance to the countries in

the fight against terrorism and extremism is largely in bilateral or block formats. The opportunities of the international security system to respond to challenges in the economic, information, and resource humanitarian security of individual countries seem to be insufficient and limited.

Russia's actions against Ukraine undermined regional stability in countries from the Baltic to the Black Sea basin, creating a challenge for NATO as a key element of European security. After the Russian invasion in Ukraine, the fears of most countries of Central and Eastern Europe have found justification. Consequently, they each requested an increase in the protection of the Eastern flank of the EU and most importantly to increase the NATO presence. Nowadays the process of strengthening eastern borders is underway, which demonstrates that NATO is fully committed to its obligations.

Taking into account current geopolitical challenges the following question arise: 1) is the existing European security system effective and if not in what ways may it be reformed?; 2) how did the Ukrainian-Russian conflict affect the European security system?; 3) how can regional and sub-regional alliances like Baltic-Black sea region strengthen it and can Russia's destructive and aggressive action ruin this union?; 4) what is the role of Ukraine in the new geopolitical alliance – Intermarium with or without Ukraine?

The place of the key institutions in the European security system

Security was and is one of the most important aspects in the functioning of international relations. In order to ensure and strengthen the external security of member states in the international community, a system of international security based on a system of obligations, guarantees and opportunities for its subjects has been created.

Among various systems of international security, the following may be singled out:

- Global (an example of such a system was a bipolar world with a system of deterrence and confrontations that existed between the Soviet Union and the United States);
- Regional, based on specific institutions in a particular region (they are the three institutions in Europe – the EU, the OSCE, NATO);
- Sub-regional, the priority of which is not military security, but the development of economic relations (such as, the Visegrad Group, the Black Sea Economic Cooperation, etc.);
- Bilateral agreements, which cover military-political and economic issues and are the lower basic level of the security system in Europe.

In general, the structure of the European security system includes: the United Nations (UN); NATO; The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE); The European Union (EU); The Council of Europe.

However, despite the relatively multidivisional structure of the European security system, it should be noted that the actual security tasks in Europe belong to three organizations – 1) NATO (including EU member-states, and also states outside it), 2) the European Union itself (closely cooperates with NATO on defence issues), 3) OSCE (includes European, Asian and North American countries).

NATO's role in the new conditions or threats to international and European security is greatly increasing and it has become the foundation of European security architecture. The most important and enduring purpose of NATO, set out in the Washington Treaty, is to defend the freedom and security of all its members through political and military means. The Alliance commits to ensure a lasting peaceful order in Europe; however, achieving that goal may be at risk due to the crises and conflicts that arise inside and outside the Euro-Atlantic area. Today, Alliance members, particularly Poland and the Baltic States remain concerned about the possibility that regional disputes or attempts at political intimidation could undermine security along its borders. The illegal annexation of Crimea by the Russian Federation and turning the peninsula into military centrepiece forced NATO to take steps to strengthen security on its eastern flank. In particular, this was one of the leading themes of the NATO summit in Wales in September 2014, where the allies placed collective defence back as the *primus inter pares* among NATO's three core tasks (the other two being crisis management and cooperative security) and it was decided to strengthen the military presence of the US and NATO, particularly in Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia and Poland. At the Warsaw summit (June, 2016) the Alliance agreed to deploy up to four thousand soldiers in the Baltic countries and Poland and enhance the measures of operational and combat training of NATO Allied Command Transformation (ACT) in the region (Shlapak, Johnson, 2016, p. 8). The Black Sea region as the south-eastern flank of the Alliance is of great concern and importance as well. In light of the regional realities and security challenges, NATO has strengthened air and maritime presence in the region.

Among the measures announced, the following have already been developed:

- The multinational brigade in Craiova, for which Romania is a framework nation, forms the land component of the forward presence. Cur-

rently ten Allies – Bulgaria, Canada, Germany, Spain, Hungary, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Poland and Portugal – have committed to it, contributing to the brigade headquarters and coordinating enhanced training.

- In the air domain, Canada and Italy are reinforcing the efforts of Romania and Bulgaria for air policing.
- In the maritime domain, standing NATO maritime forces are present with more ships and more naval exercises. A Black Sea functional centre has been established within the NATO Maritime Command, which focuses on the regional specific security issues and maintains tight links with the regional navies (Anastasov, 2018).

This shows that NATO is fully committed to its obligations towards its member-states and now can be considered as the main instrument to ensure Europe's security and stability. As NATO and the European Union share key security challenges it is vital nowadays to increase practical cooperation in different areas that would lead to more favourable outcomes for both. The Russian-Ukrainian conflict may become a powerful incentive to spread the influence of NATO on the global stage. The Alliance may find the role of its military remains in Europe, resorting to the functions of deterrence of war in Europe. This will mean an increased need for reorientation of its military power to perform the complex tasks of defence and increase readiness to deal with broad strategic confrontation. It is especially necessary for the defence of Central and Eastern Europe. All this requires substantial rethinking. NATO needs to reconsider collective defence in its current form, yet in a different setting, and find the answer to new geopolitical realities and challenges. Possible ways of meeting these challenges are a combination of the foundations of collective, cooperative security and crises management. That is why it is important not only to implement the programme adopted at the 2014 Wales Summit, but also preserve its internal unity and the ability of the Member-States to meet their obligations.

Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) (before 1994 – Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe) is also one of the most important elements in the European security architecture. It has to act in the following directions: political (including security aspects), economic (market economy, social justice), ecological (environmental protection) and "human" (human rights and development of democratic institutions) on the basis of generally accepted principles. The political dimension of the OSCE activities concentrates not only on the general principles of the relations development among the countries, but also includes more spe-

cific areas such as strengthening trust among member-states, arms control, prevention and resolution of conflicts and combating transnational threats. The need for strengthening the trust among European states was clearly understood by politicians taking into account ambiguous processes during the "Cold War," which included permanent crisis in relations between two warring military-political blocs, a constantly growing arms race and armed conflicts in various regions of the world. The high level of international tension could only have been removed through dialogue and the implementation of effective measures of confidence.

After 1990, the OSCE acquired more well-established organizational forms, sent observer missions to different elections and held field operations (for instance, Kosovo, Georgia, Ukraine) in Europe to monitor the situation and the possibilities of peaceful settlement in these conflicts. The OSCE has accumulated some experience in such activities as early crisis prevention, crisis management and post-conflict rehabilitation. The main OSCE achievement was coordination of the adoption of the Treaty on Reduction of Conventional Armed Forces in Europe, which established quantitative restrictions for European countries on the main types of conventional weapons. OSCE also tried to carry out mediation or monitoring in the conflict zones in the territories of the new independent states of the CIS – in Transnistria, Abkhazia, Nagorno Karabakh and Chechnya.

However, the results of the OSCE performance are not always effective. For example, OSCE failed to resolve the problems in Kosovo, where the organization was involved prior to the NATO action in 1999.

The activity of the OSCE mission in Ukraine today is rather controversial. On the one hand, by assessing the actions of international organizations in terms of Russian aggression in eastern Ukraine, some analysts highlight the positive effects of the OSCE activity. Mainly due to the participation of Russian experts in the OSCE, these assessments are questioned, however.

After the change of power in February 2014 and the annexation of Crimea, the role of OSCE significantly increased with regard to easing tensions between Ukraine and Russia and the promotion of a peaceful settlement of the conflict in eastern Ukraine. On March 21, 2014, the OSCE Permanent Council at the request of the Ukrainian government decided to establish the Special Monitoring Mission (SMM) in Ukraine, the mandate of which extends throughout the state. The purpose of the OSCE mission in Ukraine is to maintain dialogue and reduce tension in the country. However, many analysts are rather sceptical today about the activities of the OSCE mission, emphasizing the limitations of its activities. However, it should be under-

od that the OSCE is not a peacekeeping force, and its SMM representatives are unable to control the situation along the entire length of the border of the conflict zone.

Therefore, the purpose of the OSCE activity is different from that of NATO. First and foremost, it is conflict prevention, crisis management, compliance with the rights of people, refugees, arms control, economic development, political reforms, etc. Thus, the OSCE is not an organization that guarantees safety, rather the one that helps to create the conditions for security. Instead, NATO has the real tools of force impact and coercion to peace. To continue to play a useful role in resolving this issue and in easing tensions between Russia and the West, the OSCE needs to adjust its way of working and strengthen its toolbox.

The Russian-Ukrainian conflict has also become a new springboard for competition of the EU and the Russian Federation for spheres of influence. A desire to restore its sphere of influence on the European continent has become important to the Russian Federation. A period of "political and economic domination" and control over "zones of exceptional geopolitical interests" began in relations between the EU and Russia. The European Union began to noticeably tend to the Euro-Atlantic vector of development and the possible creation of Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership with the United States.

This also led to underestimation by the USA and the EU of the situation of the former Soviet Union states, including Ukraine, and Russia's imperial ambitions. They obtained the status of relatively affluent buffer areas with prospects of democratic development. The USA and Western European countries actually "gave" Russia the territories of its traditional geopolitical influence (except the Baltic states).

Only because of the tragedy of the "Boeing 777" in July, 2014 over the Donetsk region and the entry of regular units of the Russian Federation Armed Forces into the territory of Ukraine, the EU Council took the decision to impose system sanctions (the so-called sanctions of the "third wave"). They waited to impose these sanctions due to continued hopes for appeasement of the aggressor by means of diplomacy. Subsequently, Federica Mogherini, the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, announced the termination of the partnership relation of the EU with Russia.

The EU with its traditional paradigm to address transition, modernisation and steady integration into a shared European space to approach Russia became obsolete. The Global Strategy for the European Union's Fo-

reign and Security Policy adopted in June 2016 perfectly reflects this change when it states that 'managing the relationship with Russia represents a key strategic challenge'. Nevertheless, as a reflection of the deep divisions among European member states concerning Russia, Brussels is still willing to 'engage Russia to discuss disagreements and cooperate if and when our interests overlap'. In other words, the EU is committed to a dual approach that intends to consolidate a strong position (deterrence) with open channels for meaningful dialogue (diplomacy) (*Facing Russia's strategic ...*, p. 4).

Baltic-Black Sea region – perspectives for cooperation

There is no clear and generally accepted geographic and political definition of the Baltic-Black Sea region. Ukrainian and foreign researchers often include in this concept all Black Sea and Baltic countries (Turkey, Bulgaria, Romania, Norway, Sweden, etc.) adding to them Slovakia, the Czech Republic, Hungary and Austria. This understanding has affected European and American scientific thought, which considers the Baltic-Black Sea region in a broader sense. Also the space between the Baltic Sea and the Black Sea is often called "Intermarium", but the ambiguity of this geographical definition defines the existence of the geopolitical concept of Joseph Pilsudski with similar term "Międzymorza" (from Polish "Intermarium").

An important basis for cooperation in the field of security between the countries of the Baltic-Black Sea region is deep historical traditions of successful coexistence starting from the times of Kyiv Rus and the Byzantine Empire (through the ancient trade routes connecting the Baltic and Black Seas).

Ukrainian historian and first President of Ukraine (1917-1918) Mykhailo Hrushevsky emphasized the importance of the establishment of closer cooperation between the countries of the Baltic-Black Sea region that would be beneficial for both Ukraine and the region. In the section "Orientation on the Black Sea" of his work "On the threshold of a new Ukraine" Hrushevsky substantiated the "Black Sea prospects" of Ukraine by its historical past.

The founder of Ukrainian political geography Stepan Rudnytsky in his works ("Ukraine from the political and geographical position" (1916), "Ukraine and Great Powers" (1920)) saw the guarantees of the future of Ukrainian state and the region in the close cooperation of the Baltic-Black sea countries. The scientist proved the "historical gravitation" of the Ukrainian people to the peoples of the Black Sea and Baltic Sea regions.

One of the main ideologues in the formation of Baltic-Black Sea region was Polish politician Joseph Pilsudski who created two concepts: already

mentioned "Eastern European Inter-Sea Federation" (in Polish Międzymorze) and the complementary project of the idea of the federation – Prometheism (in Polish Prometeizm).

There are three approaches towards geopolitical concepts of the Baltic-Black Sea region: 1) the first one can be formulated as a conceptual one of the mapping of Europe, the idea of which was proposed by S. Rokkan in the article "Modelling of Europe in the logic of Rokkan" as Vienna – Moscow-Istanbul Triangle (Larsen, 1995, p. 40); 2) the second approach is based on the logic of the "Cold War" and conflict interaction between political actors. The basis of the approach lies in an agnostic interpretation that focuses on military-strategic aspects; 3) and the third approach can be defined as structural, treating changes as a geopolitical redistribution of territories

Analyzing theoretical approaches to the security problems of Baltic-Black Sea region four visions that are often synthesized with each other and somewhat modified can be underlined – historical, global, regional and Russian ones. It should be noted that depending on the approach, the geographic scope of the region is changing.

Historical approach considers the Baltic-Black Sea region as a region between Russia and Western Europe. When in different periods it fulfilled different functions, one of them was to preserve the independence of states and counteract the "imperial" ambitions of Russia. It was actually in the period between the First and Second World Wars when the region was seen as a "sanitary frontier," which separated Russia from the Western Europe. In the first years after the collapse of the USSR, the idea gained a new impulse – for the post-Soviet countries the Baltic-Black Sea region became a neutral "bridge" between Europe and Russia. The geographic scope of the region varied depending on political and historical conjuncture and included the territories of Ukraine, Belarus, Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, Poland, Moldova, Hungary, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Romania and Finland. The relevance of this approach was lost with the formation of the EU as an independent geopolitical actor and with integration of Poland, Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, Bulgaria, Hungary and Romania into the Euro-Atlantic security structures

Global approach or "Wide Baltic-Black Sea Region" geographically includes all coastal countries of the Baltic and Black Seas and often extends to the Baltic-Black-Caspian Sea region. It is considered by the scientists through the prism of contemporary global threats and from the point of view of the EU policy towards its neighbours.

The regional approach considers the region in terms of Copenhagen School of International Relations and Functionalism. The region, first of all, is interesting from the point of view of the recompilation of the post-Soviet space and is most appropriate for a future non-conflict development of the Baltic-Black Sea region.

The Russian approach considers the Baltic-Black Sea region through the prism of "special interests" of the Russian Federation. The main thesis of this approach is that "Russia as a country, which has access to the Baltic Sea and the Black Sea, should be involved in all forms of the Baltic-Black Sea cooperation". Its origin comes from the doctrine of "close neighbourhood". In the 2000's, it was grounded and developed by Russian philosophers and political scientists such as V. Tsimbursky and M. Ilyin (Tsimburski, 2006, p. 8; Ilyin, 2008, p.103).

The main challenge for the Baltic-Black Sea region is that it is a potential zone of the struggle between "Western Democracies" and Russia. The main problem of the countries in the region is that Russia will always struggle for this space as an important centerplate, while the loss of control on it would make them vulnerable. Belarusian official and scientist V. Konobeyev actualizes the role of Baltic-Black Sea region as follows: "Geopolitical importance" of the Baltic-Black Sea isthmus "is that possession of it (or control over it) by Russia (previously by the USSR) provided it an advantage as "overhang" of the Eurasian "heavy" monolith over fragmented and "lighter" Western Europe. Such position was after 1812 and then after 1945. Owning of the "Baltic-Black Sea isthmus" by Western Europe with its integration balances this geopolitical situation"(Konobeyev, 2008, p. 68). The perseverance of such rhetoric is supported by military defence strategies, where Belarus is considered as "the door to Moscow", "air shield of Russia," etc.

The advantage of the western integration vector in the region in the late 1990s and the first half of 2000s did not stimulate domestic, regional, and Euro-Atlantic discourse around the Baltic-Black Sea concepts. NATO enlargement took place within the framework of the European strategic concept of the regions. The lack of a clear understanding of the realities of post-Soviet space did not allow its developers to include Baltic-Black Sea region countries include into one strategic zone. As a result, the Baltic States were allocated to the north strategic district, and the countries of the Visegrad group, Ukraine and Moldova – in central.

Russia was deeply concerned about NATO's expansion to east, which meant its gradual loss of control over its "near abroad" and worked more actively in this direction. The consequence of this move was the prevalence

of Russian position on general security regional discourse and de facto agreement with it in Western Europe. However, attempts to justify at least some of the points of Russia's security order (Putin's Munich speech, reform of the OSCE, etc.) failed.

NATO enlargement and the implementation of the EU Program "Eastern Partnership" put under question favourable for Russia balance of powers. On the one hand, Russia's geopolitical potential allows it to influence only neighbouring countries, which means that Russia for the first time during the last three centuries freed itself from responsibility for the fate of the Baltic-Black Sea territories, and responsibility for their safety and economic development, ideally, should lie on the Euro-Atlantic community. On the other hand, Russia will never agree with such position that shows its inability to present itself as a leader in a big global game that, in turn, makes it impossible to reintegrate the post-Soviet space again.

From the abovementioned we can conclude that the existence of self-sufficient states, which would act as independent subjects of international relation even at the regional level contradict geopolitical aspirations of the Russian Federation in the Baltic-Black Sea region. This forces the countries of the region to search for allies beyond the region excluding Russia and it can also be a precondition of the temporal partnership between the countries of the region.

The emergence of the Baltic-Black Sea region may prove to be a beneficial factor both for the EU and NATO, because there will be a desirable "buffer organization/alliance/union" at their borders that will separate Western Europe from the countries of Central Asia – sources of illegal migration and drug trafficking. Regional cooperation also allows closer cooperation in the struggle against corruption and contributes to counteracting mild security threats and regulation of frozen conflicts, in accordance with European principles, "by removing them from "Post-Soviet" paradigm," as well as interacting in the information sphere. Therefore, part of the military tasks of NATO and the EU will be fulfilled by the state of the Baltic-Black Sea region.

At the end of the 20th century, the idea of creating the Baltic-Black Sea region/alliance was raised several times. For the first time after the disintegration of the USSR, the activation of Baltic – Black Sea cooperation at state level was initiated by the President of Lithuania, A. Brazauskas at the Summit in Vilnius in 1997. The idea was supported and even practically developed on the initiative of the President of Ukraine, Leonid Kuchma, to hold a meeting of all interested states in the Crimea in Yalta, in September 1999. In 1999, at the conference in Klaipeda, the Presidents of Lithuania,

Ukraine and Poland discussed joint projects to create optimal transit routes which have important geo-economic significance in relations between the Baltic and Black Seas.

Ukraine was particularly interested in accelerating this process – in 1993, the Ukrainian Institute of Society Transformation began to study potential features and advantages of a Baltic-Black Sea partnership. During the second half of the 1990s, the Institute developed a model of functioning of the partnership in the economic sphere. A strong transit and transport system that connects the Baltic and Black Sea" was offered as the basis of economic partnership. In fact, it was a kind of restoration of the trade route "from the Varangians to the Greeks."

On 10th-11th September, 1999, in Yalta a summit was held under the title "Baltic-Black Sea Cooperation: Towards Integrated Europe of the 21st Century without Division Lines." The representatives of 22 countries of the world in a joint statement expressed their desire to make joint efforts to resolve and prevent conflicts, and maintain security, stability and economic cooperation in the Baltic-Black Sea area through participation in joint projects in spheres of energy, transport, communications and ecology.

It was agreed to exchange information between the two regional organisations – the Baltic Sea States Council and the Organisation of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation. This should lead to the identification of priority cooperation areas. Some of them are: political dialogue on security, regional and European integration issues; sub-regional economic cooperation; the development of transport and energy infrastructure; third pillar issues – combating organised crime, illegal migration, drug-trafficking, increasing the efficiency of border controls (Rassoha, 2006, p.4).

It was natural to expect attempts to expand the geographical status of the region from the Baltic and Black Seas to the Caspian. Ukraine's President Viktor Yushchenko and Georgian President Mikhail Saakashvili, at a joint Press Conference on 12th August, 2005, in Borjomi, initiated the organisation in Ukraine of a summit with the leaders of the Baltic-Black Sea-Caspian region, Russia and the United States. Later, this initiative was supported by Latvia and Romania. On 2nd of December, 2005, a constituent meeting of the Community of Democratic Choice was conducted. The meeting was attended by the presidents of Ukraine, Georgia, Lithuania, Estonia, Latvia, Romania, Slovenia, Moldova and the Republic of Macedonia, as well as by representatives of Poland, Bulgaria and Azerbaijan. That same day, they adopted a Declaration of the CDC, signed by nine states, including 3 Baltic states (Lithuania, Estonia, Latvia), 4 states from the Black Sea region (Ukra-

ine, Georgia, Romania and Moldova), as well as two Balkan ones (Slovenia and Macedonia). Azerbaijan, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, United States, European Union and the OSCE have observer status at the CDC.

The next step in promoting further cooperation was the international conference "Common vision of common neighbourhood," held in Vilnius on 2nd- 5th May, 2006, dedicated to the problems of Baltic-Black Sea cooperation. During the summit, organised by the presidents of Lithuania and Poland, Valdas Adamkus and Lech Kaczyński, the heads of States and Governments of the new EU members and NATO (Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia, Bulgaria, Poland and Romania), and the heads of the states from so-called "new democracies" (Ukraine, Georgia, Moldova) in the presence of the NATO Deputy Secretary General, the EU High Representative for Foreign and Security Policy, Javier Solana, discussed the prospects and methods for deepening interregional cooperation and exchange of experience in the sphere of democracy and Euro-Atlantic integration.

On 31st October, 2008, in Riga, as a reaction to the Georgia-Russia war, the Baltic to Black Sea Alliance was founded. The BBSA is an International NGO Alliance for Regional Security and Democracy. The initiative group for forming the Alliance included Ms. Elina Lange (Latvia), Mr. Martins Murnieks (Latvia), Mr. Koki Ionatamishvili (Georgia) and Mr. Oleksandr Omelchuk (Ukraine). There are over 40 founding members, representing all three aforementioned countries.

The main areas of regional cooperation in the Baltic-Black Sea Alliance are as follows:

- Democratic Leadership Development – to bring together leadership groups in business, government, and non-governmental organisations with a special emphasis on youth, to promote the rule of law, transparency, accountability, and enhance the role of civil society;
- Economic and Trade Development – to identify and promote competitive opportunities in areas such as regional branding, tourism, wine exports and lowering cross-border trade barriers;
- Crisis Management – to promote effective regional responses to crises such as natural disasters or cyber wars;
- Conflict Prevention and Resolution – to promote civil society dialogue and open media discourse to identify confidence-building measures in resolving conflicts;
- Energy Security – to identify and promote reliable, efficient, and affordable energy strategies based on a diversification of supply sources and transportation.

To create a Baltic-Black Sea Economic Alliance (BCHEA), extensive coordination mechanisms of the national markets of the states of this region are required. They should operate in the following directions: eliminating restrictions on trade in goods and services; elimination of obstacles to free movement of people; formation of a common market of capital, its free import and export; joint ventures; formation of a common labour market; formation of joint commercial and investment banks, insurance companies and pension funds; formation of free trade zones; adherence to common migration policy; development of joint production infrastructure (roads, communications, telecommunications); cooperation in tourism; convergence of national civil codes; organisation of visa-free travel, etc.

Conclusions

One of the ways to strengthen the European security system is to support regional initiatives. The Baltic-Black sea region could become one of them as it belongs, in geographic and geopolitical terms, not only to the sphere of world geostrategic interests, but also is influenced by them. Countries belonging to this region have a very favourable economic and geographical position which is important both from an economic, political and security perspective. The idea of creating a Baltic-Black Sea region was reflected in many academic works by European and Ukrainian researchers and in the declarations of famous politicians. In 2015, the idea of the Baltic-Black Sea alliance gained new meaning after the newly elected President of Poland Andrzej Duda repeatedly stated that he intends to invite the heads of the Central and Eastern European countries to create a "partnership alliance of states" from the Baltic to the Black and Adriatic Seas. The creation of such an Alliance is now very important from different perspectives: 1) transit location of the Baltic-Black Sea region is in the geopolitical interests of the great powers and geo-economic blocs. Most initiators of the creation of the region see it as a regional project which has economical and transit importance. However, it is clear that the economy can function properly only in a prosperous security environment. In a broad interpretation the Baltic-Black Sea region includes political and strategic components – defence, economic development and communicative facilities. This alliance must be a counterweight to the common external enemy – the Russian Federation, which is a real military threat in the region; 2) if the Baltic-Black Sea union (alliance or confederation) appears on the political map of Europe, it has a favourable background for economic cooperation, which can

be expressed in the common economic space, common energy, logistics and infrastructure projects that promote economic development. Restoration of transit transport, economic, energy, financial, trade and social cooperation between the Baltic and the Black Sea region will allow them to increase their economic potential and defence; 3) cooperation in the security and military spheres can become a good basis for the creation of a zone of stability between the EU and Russian Federation. The countries belonging to the Baltic-Black Sea basin can create on their borders impregnable fortification against the looming threat from the East. Maybe that threat will help the countries to reject any misunderstandings and overcome the existing obstacles that now prevent them from uniting in a new defence, economic and political union within the EU and NATO structure.

Undoubtedly, such a union will make the EU stronger and improve the operational capabilities of NATO to protect its eastern borders. However, there are some obstacles for the creation of the Baltic-Black Sea region and they include differences in the interpretation of some historical events and ethnocentric vision of the future of the region. Only mutual understanding and possible benefits for all of the countries participants of this project can make it a reality and not only a declaration in the near future.

Bibliography

- Anastasov, P. (2018). *The Black Sea region: a critical intersection*, <https://www.nato.int/docu/review/2018/Also-in-2018/the-black-sea-region-a-critical-intersection-nato-security/EN/index.html>, 15.04.2019
- Facing Russia's strategic challenge: Security developments from the Baltic to the Black Sea*, [http://www.europarl.europa.eu/cmsdata/133503/Facing % 20Russia % 20strategic%20challenge,%20Security % 20developments%20from%20the%20Baltic%20Sea%20to% 20the% 20Black % 20Sea.pdf](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/cmsdata/133503/Facing%20Russia%20strategic%20challenge,%20Security%20developments%20from%20the%20Baltic%20Sea%20to%20the%20Black%20Sea.pdf), 17.04.2019
- Ilyin, M. (2008). "Baltic-Black Sea system as a factor of formation of the states in Eastern Europe". In: *Political science*, No. 1.
- Konobeev, V. (2008). "On the Line of the Rift". In: *Belaruska Dumka*, No. 6.
- Larsen, S. (1995). "Modelling of Europe in the logic of Rokkan". In: *Polis. Political Research Journal*, Vol. 1.
- Rassoha, L. (2006). "Baltic-Black Sea Partnership". In: *Ukraine and the world today*, No. 9 (359).
- Shlapak, D., Johnson, M. (2016). *Reinforcing deterrence on NATO's Eastern Flank*, https://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/research_reports/RR1200/RR1253/RAND_RR1253.pdf, 23.04.2019

Tsimburski, V. (2006). *The island of Russia. Geopolitical and Chronological Researches*. Moscow: ROSSPEN.

Correspondence concerning this paper should be addressed to Dr. Marianna Gladysz – Associate Professor of the Department of International Relations and Diplomatic Service, Faculty of International Relations at The Ivan Franko National University of Lviv.

E-mail: mgladysh@ukr.net