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Regionalism

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H.E. Ambassador Michael B. Christides

Is the Black Sea a region?

It certainly is and, perhaps, one of the most geostrategic regions between central Europe and Asia, with a common history that goes back to thousands of years. The connecting factor, the Black Sea itself, makes the region attractive and interesting for various economic and geopolitical reasons. Just consider its importance in what today concerns Energy, in general, or even the "revival" of the Silk Route uniting Europe to Asia and vice versa.

Can such organizations as BSEC construct a regional identity?

Indeed, they can, if this is one of the aims of its Member States. The idea and initiative for the establishment of this Organization in the far away 1992 was, admittedly, a stroke of genius: it represented an earnest effort to promote and consolidate in a systematic manner a pattern of cooperation and coordination among its Member States, in a region gaining every day in geostrategic importance. For the last twenty five years, BSEC is establishing not only a dense network for dialogue and cooperation among public and private entities of its Member States, but it also consolidates a valuable precedence of synergy and coordination in almost all sectors of economic life, thus contributing to the formation of a collective identity of the Black Sea region.

How protracted conflicts in the region influence the work of the BSEC and regional cooperation?

As we all know, our wider region faces today unique issues, like political and economic uncertainty, terrorism, tension among States, rising xenophobia, even conflicts! According to the latest data by the Black Sea Trade and Development Bank, the region of the Black Sea faces the greatest problems, has the lowest index of development and is negatively rated by international economic agencies.

No doubt, the above problems cast their shadow on the quality and effectiveness of the BSEC Organization. Yet we enjoy a long tradition of avoiding the Organization's involvement in political issues (solutions to which are sought in other fora), by concentrating in the promotion of the economic cooperation among BSEC Member States and beyond. The fact that despite the existence of bilateral issues or conflicts, representatives of all Member States meet several times a year around a table, in order

> ***Regional cooperation should be possible – and desirable – among neighbouring States of a certain geographic area, irrespective if these neighbours are economically equal or not.***

to promote concrete projects of economic nature, clearly indicates the added value of BSEC's existence and activity, in a sense as a first, initial mechanism for confidence building, dialogue and understanding.

What are the most perspective spheres of cooperation in the Black Sea region for 2017-2020?

We wish to be able to concentrate our efforts in promoting, in a coordinated way, concrete projects and the implementation of good practices in what concerns cooperation in crucial sectors like Transport, Trade, Tourism, Energy sources, preserving the Black Sea environment, among other by promoting Fisheries and Aquaculture in a sustainable way, and on so many other issues in which our Organization is involved. We will be trying very hard, with the help of the relevant authorities of our Member States, to fulfil if not all, most of the above objectives.

Should the regional cooperation have the single leading country as a locomotive or is regional cooperation possible only among equals?

Regional cooperation should be possible – and desirable – among neighbouring States of a certain geographic area, irrespective if these neighbours are economically equal or not. Regional cooperation, in essence, means that you wish to address common issues influencing and affecting more than one State in a coordinated way, with a sense of balance among all those interested and committed to the principle of good neighbourliness. The existence of a single leading country as the locomotive of regional cooperation can be useful only if this leading country avoids to gradually adopting autocratic or domineering attitudes.

Amb. Michael B. Christides, *citizen of the Hellenic Republic, assumed his duties as Secretary General of the BSEC PERMIS on 1 July 2015. In 1976, he joined the Hellenic Ministry for Foreign Affairs, from where retired in 2014. A career diplomat, Ambassador CHRISTIDES held various key positions at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Hellenic Republic and served in a number of Greek diplomatic and consular missions abroad, including in Tripoli, Naples, Milan, Sofia and Ankara. He served as the Ambassador of the Hellenic Republic to Bulgaria, Turkey, Argentina and Bolivia.*

THE EMPTY SHELL OF BLACK SEA REGIONALISM

Dr. Dimitrios Triantaphyllou
Kadir Has University, Istanbul

At a time when Russia has become more assertive to the point of challenging the mainstay of the international order, it helped establish since 1945, and Turkey seeks to maintain the status quo in the realm of maritime security, the European Union struggles to define its foreign policy objectives and priorities towards the Eastern Neighborhood, and thereby show its gravitas. Consequently, the Black Sea region finds itself more divided, unsteady, and uncertain about its future as regional actors such as Ukraine and Georgia have cast aside their balancing acts towards a turn to the EU and NATO with negative territorial implications. Thus, the fluidity of the international order raises doubts as to whether regionalism is a realistic prospect in this region or it needs to be replaced by another model of regional governance.

The Black Sea Economic Cooperation Organization (BSEC) is about to receive a ton of silver as it will celebrate its 25th year of existence in late June 2017. An example of institutional regionalism, the BSEC, in spite of its membership being stuck at 12 since April 2004 with the accession of Serbia, keeps on ticking with its member states undoubtedly preparing another high profile commemoration, as it seems to do every five years attesting to its longevity and purpose. Yet, this venerable institution with its complex, yet comprehensive decision-making structure has not been meeting its benchmarks. To a large extent, the culprit is not the Organization itself and its people; it is the context, which smacks of a fluid regional and global order that finds the states comprising it increasingly at odds with each other. In other words, the BSEC is emblematic of the state of regionalism in the Black Sea Region or lack thereof.[1]

Black Sea Regionalism

The reasons for the not so steady ride towards the Black Sea regionalism are many. Yet, they are also telling of its complexities as a region. It should not be forgotten that the drivers behind the construct or attempted construct of the Black Sea regionalism were the uncertainties the end of the Cold War brought to fore as the search for stability and security became sacrosanct among all the states of the region. In fact, the littoral states grew from four to six, further adding an element of urgency to the post-Cold War security architecture for the region. From a Turkish and a Russian perspective, the fluidity of the regional and European order also meant addressing the issue of maritime security and preservation of the acquis of the Montreux Convention. This kept their relations in a sort of equilibrium, albeit their strategic divide, which allowed for the

[1] T. Japaridze, P. Manoli, D. Triantaphyllou, and Y. Tsantoulis, The EU's Ambivalent Relationship with the BSEC: Reflecting on the Past, Mapping out the Future, "ICBSS Policy Brief", January 2010, pp. 1-34. [http://icbss.org/media/133_original.pdf access: 15 December 2016]

common quest of some sort of regionalism in the region.

Over time, the region has grown in size to include non-littoral countries with constantly shifting interests, and priorities, while the relations among some of the littoral states have progressively worsened, in particular with regard to those between Russia and Georgia, and Russia and Ukraine, as well as between Armenia and Azerbaijan given the volatility of the tenuous cease fire in Nagorno-Karabakh. These aforementioned undercurrents project the changing nature of the power dynamics among the states of the region where its hegemons – Russia and, to a lesser extent, Turkey – have become more active in trying to project their dominance, notwithstanding the fact that the reasons might have more to do with regime legitimacy or redefined foreign policy choices.

Linked to the issue of defining the region, anywhere from the narrow one, composed of the six littoral states, to the BSEC's membership of twelve countries, is whether the Black Sea Region can be perceived to be a product of the single region-building project or the encounter or cartographic space of many. These range from the vision of Turkey and Russia leading them to establish the BSEC in the early 1990s to cope somewhat with the exigencies of the changing global order, to the European Union vision of an all-compassing space, that looks towards it as the states and peoples comprising it, are attracted by the magnetic power of the European integration process. It is inevitable to the Euro-Atlantic version of the Black Sea regionalism that emerged in the mid-1990s, first as a German Marshall Fund initiative led by the late Ron Asmus, inspired by the accession of the Baltic states to NATO and the EU, and later adopted by the George W. Bush administration as it sought to contain Russian aggression during the Putin era.[2]

Simultaneously, the changing nature of the Black Sea regional framework reflects the limits of the European integration project, which has always been perceived as the optimal model of regionalism to be replicated elsewhere, in particular, around its borders. The proximity of the European Union to the Black Sea Region, and the osmosis between the two in terms of the multiple identities of some countries, as they belong both to the Union and the Black Sea Region, have a powerful effect on Black Sea regionalism. In other words, if the experiment falters in Europe, why should it succeed around the Black Sea? The exclusionist, national identity based, and in some cases, segregationist vision of those rejecting integration within many EU member states is mirrored by the rise both of exceptionalist agendas among the Black Sea states as well as those that seek solace or protection in the arms of other integrationist projects such as NATO.

Nevertheless, as a unit of analysis, the Black Sea Region remains in play in spite of its variable, accordion-like membership. Though, interests among the regional state actors may diverge, leading to potential conflicts. The frozen or protracted nature of these conflicts imply a certain regional security regime of the type Robert Jervis writes about: "Security regimes are thus both especially valuable and especially difficult to achieve - valuable, because individualistic actions are not only costly but dangerous; difficult to achieve, because the fear that the other is violating or will violate the common understanding is a potent incentive for each state to strike out on its own even if it would prefer the regime to prosper."[3] This, of course, implies a region-building process out of necessity. Thus,

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2 See, for example, Y. Tsantoulis, Towards a geneology of regions in International Relations: an autopsy of the Black Sea (region), "unpublished PhD Dissertation, University College London", 2016, p. 289.

3 R. Jervis, Security Regimes, "International Organization", Spring 1982, p. 358.

according to Anssi Paasi, "[r] egional identities and affiliations with region are not always rosy visions of solidarity or unity but may coexist with internal oppositions based on cultural, economic and political conflict and processes of Othering, i.e. in making distinctions with other groups of people."[4] There is a valid argument to be made that we are living in an era of enhanced competition among and between state actors, or in other words, in a world of pronounced realism. This return of the state coupled with "the emergence of autocratic or semi-autocratic regimes that have high levels of legitimacy, whether real or perceived, among the population, based on the primacy of a mix of national security and identity concerns" has, undoubtedly, an impact on the Black Sea Region.[5]

> ***the changing nature of the Black Sea regional framework reflects the limits of the European integration project, which has always been perceived as the optimal model of regionalism to be replicated elsewhere***

Individual Actors' Factor

The **Russia** factor in particular is crucial here due to a number of reasons. The first has to do with its attempt to maintain its rank as a first-tier power both at global level via the promotion of what some refer to as a "Eurasian pole" and a regional revisionist heavyweight in the Black Sea region. According to Janusz Bugajski and Peter Doran, "[f]or the first time since the Cold War, it is no longer unthinkable to consider the possibility of Moscow extending its future control along the northern coast of the Black Sea. This would position Russia to exert greater pressure on NATO members Romania and Bulgaria, including the mouth of the Danube and, among other targets, the maritime energy fields of Romania's exclusive economic zone (EEZ)."[6] The same pressures apply to Turkey, whose interests are directly challenged in particular with regard to the delicate equilibrium fostered by the Montreux Convention that has allowed it give a heads up in a domain of maritime security. The Russian actions in Abkhazia and South Ossetia, its annexation of Crimea, and its fuelling of the conflict in Eastern Ukraine coupled with Turkey's own troubles along its borders with Syria and Iraq have led it to acquiesce in part to "Russia's gradual re-imperialization" of the Black Sea and its neutralization of its southern littoral.[7] Pavel Baev puts it best when he writes that Russia plays on "the unpredictability of the New Cold War",[8] where with fundamentally no allies even in the post-Soviet space, Moscow has been making use of "hybrid" methods in its quest to compete globally.

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4 A. Paasi, The region, identity, and power, "Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences", 2011, p. 15.

5 For more on the return of the state, see D. Triantaphyllou, Reflections on the fluidity of the international order, "CIES Commentary", 21 December 2016, pp. 1-3.
[http://www.khas.edu.tr/cms/cies/dosyalar/files/CIES%20Commentary%20-%20Dimitrios%20Triantaphyllou.pdf access: 23 December 2016]

6 J. Bugajski and P. B. Doran, Black Sea Rising: Russia's Strategy in Southeast Europe, "CEPA Black Sea Strategic Report", February 2016, p. 2.

7 J. Bugajski and P. B. Doran, Black Sea Rising: Russia's Strategy in Southeast Europe, "CEPA Black Sea Strategic Report", February 2016, p. 6.

8 See P. Baev, Russia plays of the unpredictability of the New Cold War, "CIES Commentary", 31 October 2016,
[http://www.khas.edu.tr/cms/cies/dosyalar/files/CIES%20Commentary%20-%20Pavel%20Baev.pdf access: 23 December 2016]

In the meantime, the region's other big power, **Turkey**, has also misread the tell-tale signs of a regionalism in need of repair. In its attempt to ensure that it plays a pivotal role in what happens in its northern backyard, it has seen its relations with the European Union and NATO worsen considerably. Part of the reason for the aforementioned development is that it considers the Black Sea as a privileged sphere of influence over which its share of control has historically shrank and, as a result, it tries to maintain its hold. The loss from exclusive control over the sea during early Ottoman times to sharing it with Russia's historical expansion to the south in the quest of Peter the Great's vision of a warm sea port strengthened both Ottoman, and later, Turkish resolve, to keep the Black Sea away from big power politics. Eventually, the signing of the Montreux Convention in 1936, which gave Turkey the right to control access to and from the Black Sea, shaped its perception of its role in the region. As a result, as Mustafa Aydin notes, "[m]aritime security in the Black Sea as Turkey's sine qua non" became the order of the day with the evolving post-war regional context threatening Turkey's hold over the region.[9]

For Turkey, thus, regionalism has been a means to an end; i.e., ensuring its leadership in maritime security related issues via the proliferation of initiatives such as BLACKSEAFOR and the Black Sea Harmony while Black Sea regionalism was limited to the economic agenda of the BSEC. Consequently, this has meant limiting the aspiration of other security actors such as NATO and, transformative entities, such as the EU, from having a significant role in region.[10] By seeking to minimize the role of the European Union in particular by not accepting it as a key stakeholder in the region and playing only lip service to EU-led initiatives such as the Black Sea Synergy, which aim to enhance regional cooperation, Turkey has contributed to the region's vulnerability in these times of Russian revisionism.

The inability of the Atlantic Alliance to have a Black Sea policy in light of Ankara's objections imply a weak role for NATO in the region. A cursory look at the July 2016 Warsaw Summit Communique reflects the presence of the term "Black Sea" eight times mainly in terms of recognizing the emerging challenges by Russia to the regional security order. It offers no concrete proposals for action other than developing a "tailored forward presence" and assessing "options for a strengthened NATO air and maritime presence."[11] This "Turkey First"[12] approach has weakened regionalism, the aspirations of countries like Ukraine and Georgia to come closer to the West, and the ability of the EU to contribute positively to a more comprehensive sort of regionalism than the one the BSEC is currently able to implement.

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9 M. Aydin, Geographical blessing versus geopolitical curse: great power security agendas for the Black Sea region and a Turkish alternative, "Southeast European and Black Sea Studies", September 2009, p. 280.

10 See S. Petriashvili, Where is the Black Sea Region in Turkey's Foreign Policy?, "Turkish Policy Quarterly", 13 December 2015, [http://turkishpolicy.com/article/777/where-is-the-black-sea-region-in-turkeys-foreign-policy#_ftnref1 access: 31 December 2016]. See also, H. Shelest, What is the Future for Navy Cooperation in the Black Sea?, "UA: Ukraine Analytica", Issue 3 (5), 2016, pp. 56-61.

11 See Article 41 of NATO Summit Communiqué issued by the Heads of State and Government participating in the meeting of the North Atlantic Council in Warsaw 8-9 July 2016,

[http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_133169.htm access: 30 December 2016]

12 This approach is clearly elucidated in M. Aydin, Geographical blessing versus geopolitical curse: great power security agendas for the Black Sea region and a Turkish alternative, "Southeast European and Black Sea Studies", September 2009, pp. 271-285. See also, O. Ozdamar, The Black Sea Region in the New Turkish Foreign Policy, "EDAM, Black Sea Discussion Paper Series", 2011/2, pp. 1-14,

[http://edam.org.tr/document/BSPaper_Series2.pdf access: 30 December 2016]

The European Union Approach

The European Union is the other key component in the quest for regionalism in the Black Sea Region. One cannot deny that it has produced a great number of initiatives, policies, and instruments that propound the virtues of regional cooperation as well as its interests.[13] Nevertheless, their effectiveness is in doubt for a number of reasons. First, the EU has failed to convince both Russia and Turkey that it is a regional stakeholder in its own right. Second, as a corollary to the aforementioned, the continued insistence of Turkey of decoupling its membership perspective from its "Turkey First" approach in the Black Sea Region has weakened the Union's hand in prioritizing regional cooperation.

Third, the EU simultaneously invariably projects contradictory policies. On the one hand, it promotes the Black Sea Synergy as a new regional cooperation initiative very much modelled after its own model of regionalism within the EU space, while on the other, it promotes deeper integration for the regional countries via the Eastern Partnership (EaP). Though fundamentally, this has been the model of integration the EU has been pursuing elsewhere such as Southeastern Europe, it has faced major stumbling blocks in its Eastern Neighbourhood due to the overweening presence of the Russian Federation, as has projected a competing historical and "manifest destiny" narrative towards its near abroad. The dissonant perspectives between countries within the EU proper, many of which considers the Eastern Partnership and its value laden approach as the primary instrument of curbing Russian influence, exacerbate the dividing lines among regional actors. The EU's ambitious approach suffered a significant reversal with the EaP Vilnius Summit of Late November 2013, which led to a political volte-face within Ukraine with negative territorial implications.

Fourth, this EU overreach represents its underperformance as a foreign policy actor as its "capability-expectations gap" has not necessarily narrowed albeit its many efforts to reform its foreign policymaking capacity.[14] Invariably, this deficit implies, as has been stated repeatedly by this author, the Union's lack of a strategy towards its Eastern Neighbourhood, or even in terms of its general foreign policy making priorities, as Robert Cooper suggests.[15] The mix between values and principles, a sense of unity and purpose, and realism has lacked the potency to deal with the evolving and fluid global order where revisionism and realpolitik have never really been absent. At the same time, the European project finds itself under attack from within with growing differences between its member states on the economic front, the handling of the refugee crisis, the reality of BREXIT and the lingering omen of GREXIT, and populism threat to undo the elitist politics of integration, the EU's foreign policy challenge in the Black Sea is plainly evident.

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[13] For an extensive list of EU initiatives towards its eastern neighbourhood, see D. Triantaphyllou, The European Union and the Black Sea Region in Search of a Narrative or a New Paradigm, "Journal of Balkan and Near Eastern Studies", June 2014, p. 289.

[14] The term is borrowed from Christopher Hill's seminal article on explaining the EU's foreign policy role. See C. Hill, The Capability-Expectations Gap, or Conceptualizing Europe's International Role, "Journal of Common Market Studies", September 1993, pp. 305-328.

[15] See D. Triantaphyllou, The European Union and the Black Sea Region in Search of a Narrative or a New Paradigm, "Journal of Balkan and Near Eastern Studies", June 2014, pp. 286-299; R. Cooper, The EU's global strategy: Three quotations, "ECFR Commentary", 15 July 2016,

[http://www.ecfr.eu/article/commentary_the_eus_global_strategy_three_quotations_7077 access: 15 December 2016]

The new Global Strategy announced by its foreign policy chief Federica Mogherini on 28 June 2016 does suggest some effort on the part of the EU to be more coherent and emphatic with its "principled pragmatism" approach and its emphasis on supporting "cooperative regional orders".[16] In other words, "Mogherini aims for a more realist approach without abandoning the EU's transformational agenda".[17] However, the EU's capacity to deliver is already fundamentally challenged with the advent of BREXIT and the loss of the UK's military capabilities. Thus, how it can work in the Black Sea Region at the time when Ukraine and Georgia, for example, have invested heavily in their ties with the West in the face of Russian revisionism, remains to be seen. In other words, although regionalism still commands a high place in the EU's foreign policy, in practice its reach in the Black Sea region is very limited.

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Future Perspectives

The Black Sea Region is thus in flux as is the nature of its regionalism. Sergii Glebov correctly asserts that "[m]ore or less stable before 2014, the Black Sea security system has been rapidly moving from the multilateral cooperative military mechanisms to the bipolar balance of power format."[18] In this context, the foreign policy priorities of Ukraine and Georgia reflect foreign policies visions or approaches that present "no alternatives" in terms of what their directions should be. As indicated by the latest findings of the Foreign Policy Council "Ukrainian Prism" regarding Ukrainian foreign policy, "the engagement and political interest of most domestic policy actors in foreign policy issues was defined by the armed conflict in the East and the need to contain the Russian aggression."[19] In the Georgian case, the 29 December 2016 parliamentary resolution on foreign policy clearly states that the country's main foreign policy priorities are EU and NATO membership as well as the pursuit of a "rational policy" with Russia in order to minimize threats and restore "territorial integrity."[20]

As Russia challenges the postwar order to which it has been a privileged stakeholder by seeking to rewrite its terms, for the Black Sea, this implies one of two possible trends. The first is a continuation of the current regional order that favours cooperation among the region's countries while fundamentally maintaining the status quo and, hence, the primacy of Turkey and Russia. The second is a regional order that a sort of bipolar (Russia and the West) or even trilateral (Russia,

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16 Shared Vision, Common Action: A Stronger Europe: A Global Strategy for the European Union's Foreign and Security Policy, "European External Action Service", June 2016, [https://eeas.europa.eu/top_stories/pdf/eugs_review_web.pdf access: 24 December 2016]

17 S. Lehne, The EU Global Strategy, a Triumph of Hope Over Experience, "Judy Dempsey's Strategic Europe, Carnegie Europe", 4 July 2016, [http://carnegieeurope.eu/strategiceurope/?fa=64003 access: 16 December 2016]

18 S. Glebov, The Black Sea Security Architecture in Times of Collapse: The Case of Annexed Crimea and Military Challenges for the US, NATO, EU, Turkey, and Ukraine, "UA: Ukraine Analytica", Issue 3 (5), 2016, p. 45.

19 "Ukrainian Prism: Foreign Policy 2015": Overall Assessment of Ukraine's Foreign Policy, "UA: Ukraine Analytica", Issue 2 (4), 2016, p. 10.

20 Parliament Adopts Resolution on Foreign Policy, "Civil Georgia", 30 December 2016, [http://www.civil.ge/eng/article.php?id=29737 access: 2 January 2017]

Turkey, and the West) balance of power whereby minimal cooperation at regional level is ensured while its parts enhance their cooperation with the others that share the same aspirations and objectives.[21] The question in this case is whether the key stakeholders are ready to work toward such a security order or regime where all sides balance the others out in order to ensure regional stability.

Undoubtedly, as the BSEC prepares to celebrate its 25th year in existence in late June 2017, none of the issues presented here will be at central stage as the longevity of the Organization and the usefulness of its work will be highlighted. Yet, the end of utopianism is here as is the need for a strategy to counter Russian revisionism and aggression. Regionalism will undoubtedly survive for some time to come in the Black Sea Region but its current shape and form is not sustainable as it risks collapse from within as its dominant actor risks subverting it completely. Also, one should not discount the risk of an accidental conflict.[22] Yet again, much will depend on whether the incoming Trump administration will strike a Faustian bargain with Vladimir Putin's Russia that will have implications in the Black Sea Region and pretty much everywhere else.

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[21] For a two scenario variant regarding the future evolution of relations between Turkey and Russia in the Black Sea Region, see M. Celikpala and D. Triantaphyllou, The Changing Face of Black Sea Security, "PONARS Eurasia Commentary", 31 May 2016, [http://www.ponarseurasia.org/article/changing-face-black-sea-security access: 2 January 2017]

[22] See, for example, R.N. Burns and J.L. Jones, Restoring the Power and Purpose of the NATO Alliance, "Atlantic Council Brent Scowcroft Center on International Security" June 2016, p. 8, [http://www.atlanticcouncil.org/images/publications/Restoring_the_Power_and_Purpose_of_the_NATO_Alliance_web_0624.pdf access: 20 December 2016]

EAST EUROPEAN REGIONAL IDENTITY: MYTH OR REALITY?

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The political and economic fragmentation of the EU, intensified by the migrant crisis, leads to the intensification of nationalism and regionalism. In this context, East European common historical heritage as well as current economic and security challenges encourage speculations that enhanced regionalization may bring additional resources to empower resilience capacity of the regional countries. Given that the European integration is a remote prospect, the ideas of subregional alliances are becoming popular among Ukrainian politicians and analysts, and the issue of the East European regional identity as a possible unifying factor arises. Analysing the origin and evolution of this perception and self-perception of Eastern Europe in the context of the regional identity, we come to a conclusion that it cannot become a crucial factor for subregion consolidation. This fact should be taken into account in Kyiv when shaping long-term foreign policy goals and developing relations with its neighbours and partners.

Eastern Europe is one of the most vulnerable regions in the world, a shatterbelt consisting of relatively small nations, which try to withstand the pressure of neighbouring powers while being fragmented into several areas with inconsistent positions and unpredictable perspectives. Historical heritage and common problems as well as security challenges encourage a generation of ideas that enhanced regionalization. This may bring additional resources to empower resilience capacity for the countries of the region. The regional security complex theory by Barry Buzan and Ole Waever[1] is yet again actual today within the Russian-crafted security environment. The political and economic fragmentation of the EU intensified by the migrant crisis poses a threat to the common European identity and leads to the intensification of nationalism and regionalism.

Regarding this, it seems rational to analyse the issue of common regional identity, which could be considered as one of the most fundamental and interlocking substances for the regionalization. Anticipating the reveal of the regional identity issue, two conceptual issues should be stressed and indicated. The regional identity will not be considered in terms of primordialists and perennialists, who study identity as a given, something inherent and immanent that existed from the very origin. We will apply the constructivist

[1] Barry Buzan, Ole Wæver (2003) Regions and Powers: The Structure of International Security, Cambridge University Press, 564 p.

perspective of identity as a mental construct that has been revealed in an intellectual and political discourse of respective countries since the beginning of the 20th century.

The approach to the East European regional identity has a dual nature. On the one hand, it is based on social constructivism and means that the East European regional identity is a construct, an image, an idea that arouses and is realized by the countries of the region, their political elites and academicians as well as other representatives of their intellectual sphere and aimed to perform a certain function. On the other hand, it is a result of some empirical experience that is a complex of different elements: common values and interests shaped by common historical and cultural practices as well as their religious heritage.

Herein, the boundaries of Eastern Europe will be referred to in the broad sense, including Poland, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary, Ukraine, Belarus, Moldova and the Baltic states. The Southern flank will be set aside due to the unique Balkan identity significantly influenced by the Ottoman Empire that should be a subject of separate analysis. It should be noted that up to the middle 19th century both terms – Eastern Europe and Central Europe – were rather obscure. The latter one was used for a long time to denote the territory of the Holy Roman Empire, and only after the World War I, it became a term to describe the countries between Germany and Russia.

Any type of collective identity derives from psychological analyses and should answer several key questions: Who am I? Where am I from? Which group do I belong to or which group do I affiliate myself with? The central determinative factor for any collective identity shaping should be the division into the Self and the Other (alien, the one who differs from me). Identity can exist only in the "Self-Other" dichotomy and self-perception is realized via attitude to the Other. The markers of attribution of this or that subject to "Self" or "the Other" are usually narrowed to the following similarities: locality, shared values, norms and traditions; articulated sense of belonging to this or that group that is seen as a single unit; affiliation with the group (region in our case) should be a source of self-esteem and even pride; collective historical memory with certain common myths and narratives, culture and religion; models of political and economic development. Such markers in a very general form could be found in the Charter on European Identity (1995), initiated by Vaclav Havel[2]. Based on these markers, a group experiences self-perception via attitude to "the Other". The same should be said about the regional identity. "The identities of regions are constructed through their relationships with other regions".[3] In this sense, the representatives of a region consider themselves as one group opposing the other group.

> ***Historical heritage and common problems as well as security challenges encourage a generation of ideas that enhanced regionalization.***

Eastern Europe as an "Invented" Mental Construct

East European regional identity has

[2] Charter of European Identity, October 28, 1995, [daten.schule.at/dl/Charta_europ_Identitaet_119142657213287.pdf]

[3] John Allen, Doreen Massey, Allan Cochrane (2002), Rethinking the Region: Spaces of Neo-Liberalism, Routledge: New York, p.10.

ambiguous nature. On the one side, its emergence was historically driven; on the other side, it was shaped by the Western Europe, in Edward Said's Orientalism terms. The latter developed an idea of the East / Orient as a concept designed by the West as its own opposite in the image, idea, individuality, experience, a symbol of otherness (that is alien / external), and of the "Orientalism" as a style, with the help of which the West suppressed, reshaped and colonized the East[4]. Larry Wolff, in his book "Inventing Eastern Europe"[5] developed the idea of Eastern Europe as an image created in the era of Enlightenment as a "subsidiary half" of the West, something "belated", "underdeveloped", the edge of barbarism and backwardness. This vision laid down the idea of Eastern Europe as a marginal zone, a belt that comprised features of the West European civilization as well as barbarian features from the East. Therefore, Eastern Europe including Russia became that image, opposing which the West shaped its own identity, it was a kind of "alterity making" process. In Western self-realization, Eastern Europe has never been an integral part of genuine Europe.

The crucial indicators of the Eastern Europe dissociation from the Western one, outlined in that discourse, were the following: social and economic society structure; deep stratification of societies; sharp contrast between the nobility and the peasantry; lack of discipline in the army; absence of attempts to cultivate national culture and art; deficit of education and knowledge; high level of diseases; great desolated territories, fertile but uncultivated land (mismanagement), poor roads; special role of Jews in trade at the territories of modern Poland, Lithuania as well as Ukraine. These indicators generated by Larry Wolff from the works of writers, historians, philosophers of the Enlightenment period were presented by him as an absence of civilization.

Immanuel Wallerstein, who analysed Eastern Europe as a periphery region dominated by Western European economic core since the 16th century, introduced its differentiation from the economic perspective. It seems that nothing has changed in perception of the West up to the collapse of the Soviet system. It was 1985 when the Rockefeller Foundation hosted in Bellagio an international conference named "Origins of backwardness in Eastern Europe".

A new vision of the region emerged in times preceding or during the collapse of several empires at the beginning of the 20th century. Swedish and German scholars and civil activists, primarily Rudolf Kjellen, Joseph Partsch and Friedrich Naumann, introduced a notion of "the Middle Europe" as a kind of Germany-dominated buffer with common geographic fate, located between Russia and Western Europe. Friedrich Naumann wrote in his "Mitteleuropa" ("Central Europe")[6] about the need to shape, in between France and Russia, the Baltic, Adriatic and Black seas, a common economic, cultural and legal space that would embrace the peoples who have generally common historical, economic, cultural, and religious characteristics. These geopolitical in their essence concepts resonated with ideas pursued by some regional activists like Tomas Masaryk who stood for a "Central Europe of small states" liberated from German, Austrian and Russian imperial domination.[7]

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4 Edward W. Said (1995), Orientalism. Western Conceptions of the Orient, Penguin Books: London, p.2.

5 Larry Wolff (1996), Inventing Eastern Europe: The Map of Civilization on the Mind of the Enlightenment, Stanford University Press, 436p.

6 Friedrich Naumann (1916), Central Europe, P.S.King & Son: London, 388 p.

7 Timothy Garton Ash. History of the Present: Essays, Sketches, and Dispatches from Europe in the 1990s, Vintage Books, 1999. – p.350.

The academic substantiation of East Europe concept, evolved in post-Versailles Europe, was especially followed by the establishment of the Federation of historical communities of Eastern Europe (1927). A Polish historian Oscar Halecki, in his speech at the Congress of historians (1923), stated that Eastern Europe was merely a geographical notion and in civilization terms, it was divided into a Western part as an organic compound of the Western world, and an Eastern part under civilization domination of Russia with immanent Byzantine and Tatar tradition. Oskar Halecki coined the notion of East-Central Europe that according to him was situated "between Sweden, Germany and Italy, on the one hand, and Turkey and Russia on the other".[8] His ideas were followed by other historians, including well-known Piotr Wandycz.[9]

The terms Middle Europe / Central Europe were obliterated after the World War II, when Western Europe began to call the region under Soviet domination as Eastern Europe. The term Central Europe was revived and further coined by Hungarian, Polish and Czech writers[10] as an alternative to the Soviet-dominated Eastern Europe notion. This split was actively exploited in political discourse of these countries aimed at implementation of the "Back to Europe" concept and gaining pace of their recognition by the Western world as its compound, alternative to space in the East. In 1990, Vaclav Havel called to the Polish Sejm: "We have an opportunity to transform Central Europe from what has been a mainly historical and spiritual phenomenon into a political phenomenon. We have an opportunity to take this wreath of European states – so recently colonized by the Soviet Union ... and fashion it into a special body. Then we can approach the richer nations of Western Europe, not as poor failures or helpless, recently amnestied prisoners, but as countries that can make a genuine contribution."[11] This was the very case when the representatives of the region were themselves the authors of the construct named Central Europe. Since the early 1990-s, the term Central Europe emerged in diplomatic turnover as applicable to Poland, Czech Republic, Slovakia and Hungary.

The terms Middle Europe/ Central Europe were obliterated after the World War II, when Western Europe began to call the region under Soviet domination as Eastern Europe

The emergence of the term Central-Eastern as well as East-Central Europe is associated with the Polish political discourse. These geopolitical notions embrace the Visegrad Four (V4) countries as well as the Baltic states, Ukraine and Belarus, and reflect the Polish dubious historical perception – Poland belongs to the Western civilization

8 Oscar Halecki (1923), L'histoire de l'Europe orientale. Sa division en époques, son milieu géographique et ses problèmes fondamentaux, [in:] La Pologne au Ve Congrès International des Sciences Historiques, Bruxelles.; Warsaw: Comité National Polonais, 1924, pp.79-94.

9 Piotr Wandycz (2006), The Price of Freedom: A History of East Central Europe from the Middle Ages to the Present, Routledge Press: New York, 335 p.

10 Jenő Szűcs, Julianna Parti (1983), The Three Historic Regions of Europe. An Outline, Acta Historica Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae, Vol. 29, No. 2/4, pp. 131-184; Czeslaw Milosz (1984), The Witness of Poetry, The Charles Eliot Norton Lectures, 128 p.; Milan Kundera (1984), The Tragedy of Central Europe, The New York Review of Books, Vol. 31.

11 Speech by Vaclav Havel before The Polish Sejm and Senate, Warsaw, January 25, 1990, [http://www.vaclavhavel.cz/showtrans.php?cat=projevy&val=324_aj_projevy.html&typ=HTML]

world, but the boundaries of Rzeczpospolita, stretched far to the east, affiliate this space in Polish self-perception as a part of its identity. Polish intellectual heritage favours the term East-Central Europe because it: 1) separates Poland from German Friedrich Neumann's Mitteleuropa, and 2) indicates at Rzeczpospolita and Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth legacy. A special place in advocating East Central European regional identity via Polish-Lithuanian state legacy belongs to the representatives of the "Jagiellonian" concept,[12] who stated that the impact of Rzeczpospolita became a decisive factor for culture and mentality of Ukraine, Belarus and Lithuania, and endued them with Central European features. According to this concept, there is no Eastern Europe; instead, there is Central Europe and Russia, which is associated with Eurasia.

The Czechs and the Slovaks quite evidently feel no connection to nations of the former Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth and its eastern borderlands. They bear in their historical memory a cultural space of the Austro-Hungarian Empire that stipulates their adherence to the Central European concept. For Czechs, their identity (illustratively described by Tomas Masaryk) was tightly connected with self-affirmation as Protestants (posed as carriers of progress) opposing to the Austria-imposed Catholicism (considered as alien to Czechs).

One of the most popular approaches in Hungary is to identify Central Europe with the former territory of the Austro-Hungarian Empire that embraced Austrian and Hungarian lands, the Czech territory, parts of Poland, Ukraine, Romania, Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Croatia. A famous Hungarian novelist György Konrád[13] presented Central Europe not as a compound of Western Europe, but as an autonomous unique unit with its own specific identity. Jenö Szücs named Central Europe as one of the "three Europes",[14] placed between Western and Eastern Europe (mainly Russia). Distinguishing Central Europe from the Eastern continental part, the Hungarian authors stated that in the Middle Ages this territory experienced a profound Westernization, which laid down structural changes not shacked by any following changes and transformations.

The abovementioned examples illustrate the efforts of the V4 countries to escape from the broad inclusive definition of Eastern Europe during the Cold War period towards distinguishing Central Europe as being different from the Eastern Europe space. The line in distinguishing Central Europe from Eastern Europe lies in its involvement into the Renaissance and Enlightenment cultural processes. As Milan Kundera states[15], Bohemia, Poland, Hungary and Austria have never been a part of Eastern Europe. Central Europe gave the world its rich cultural heritage, but the Soviet influence in the second part of the XXth century led to losing its gravity centre by Western culture. Milan Kundera considers that Central Europe lacks the centre and the feeling of belonging; it is torn between West and East, "culturally it is in the West and politically in the East".[16]

With this, as it was shown above, even the V4 countries lack a common interpretation

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12 Illya Prizel (2004), National Identity and Foreign Policy: Nationalism and Leadership in Poland, Russia and Ukraine, Cambridge University Press, p.57.

13 György Konrád (1985), Does the Dream of Central Europe Still Exist?, [http://www.konradgyorgy.hu]

14 Jenő Szűcs, Julianna Parti (1983), The Three Historic Regions of Europe. An Outline, Acta Historica Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae, Vol. 29, No. 2/4, pp. 131-184.

15 Milan Kundera (1984), The Tragedy of Central Europe, The New York Review of Books, Vol. 31.

16 Ibid, p.1.

> ***With this, as it was shown above, even the V4 countries lack a common interpretation of the regional identity, and they in different ways interpret their own "otherness".***

of the regional identity, and they in different ways interpret their own "otherness". Their idea of belonging to Central Europe turned out to be not so much a unifying concept of regional identity, but rather a technology of "fellow travellers" to jointly escape from the Soviet legacy and integrate into the Western regional security, political and economic structures, namely NATO and the EU. After reaching these goals, the Visegrad Four reduced their activity within the V4 sub-regional format as well as the level of foreign policy coordination, and now they show different approaches even in such sensitive issues as their policy towards Russia after its aggression against Ukraine.

Negative Identity – Who Is the "Other" For Eastern Europe?

The crucial feature of the East European identity is its negative nature stipulated by historically driven processes of self-affirmation via opposing or even confronting the external pressure of the Other. The nomad tribes' invasions in the Middle Ages, European and Ottoman empires domination, Soviet subjugation, permanent division, shifting and redistributing territories and peoples, assimilation and imposition of alien values – all of this determined turbulent times for Eastern European nations' statehood development. As Milan Kundera states,[17] when the identity is threatened, the cultural life grows correspondingly into a more intense, more important one, until the culture itself becomes the living value around which all people rally. That is why, in each of the revolts in Central Europe, the collective cultural memory and the contemporary creative effort assumed roles so great and so decisive. These were writers, philosophers, historians, political activists and dissents, who stood for the liberation of the small nations from the imperial domination and later from the Soviet control.

The authors from the region emphasized the Western character of their countries, such as the tradition of democracy, Latin Christianity, Western art, architecture and literature etc. According to them, only due to a political misfortune their countries came under the influence of the Eastern empire, whose values were foreign to Central Europeans. For the Central European countries, Russia / USSR was posed as the Other or even the Significant Other with such principal criteria of otherness as the following: synthetic (not analytical) thinking, the extensive way of economic development, low density of population, low level of culture materialization, collective forms of relations in the societies, neglecting law, recognition of egalitarianism but not democracy, wars not for profit but for "brotherhood", offensive and expansionist foreign policy. A Polish essayist Kazimierz Brandys says that "the fate of Russia is not a part of our consciousness; it's foreign to us; we're not responsible for it. It weighs on us, but it is not our heritage. That was also my response to Russian literature… I do know it is different: Russia knows another (greater) dimension of disaster, another image of space (a space so immense that entire nations are swallowed up in it), another sense of time (slow and patient), another way of laughing, living, and dying".[18]

[17] Ibid, p.2.

[18] Ibid, p.4.

Milan Kundera's argues that "the Czechs and the Russians have never shared a common world, neither a common history nor a common culture. The relationship between the Poles and the Russians, though, has never been anything less than a struggle of life and death".[19]

Difficult historical legacy brought a syndrome of victimization and trauma in self-consciousness of the nations of the region. Milan Kundera brightly describes this negative self-identity: "Central Europe as a family of small nations has its own vision of the world, a vision based on a deep distrust of history. ... The people of Central Europe are not conquerors. They cannot be separated from European history; they cannot exist outside it; but they represent the wrong side of this history; they are its victims and outsiders. It's this disabused view of history that is the source of their culture, of their wisdom…"[20]

The negative self-identity is also immanent to Ukraine, the historical and literature heritage of which is a history of permanent struggle for survival.

The negative self-identity is also immanent to Ukraine, the historical and literature heritage of which is a history of permanent struggle for survival. In 1918, a famous politician and thinker Volodymyr Vynnychenko wrote: "Ukrainian history should be read only with taking bromine as it is one of the most unfortunate, senseless and helpless stories ... All its history is a non-stop, continuous series of uprisings, wars, conflagrations, famines, invasions, military coups, intrigues, quarrels and plots." Even the first lines of the Ukrainian and the Polish state anthems indicate the permanent struggle of these nations for survival.

Region's Function, Destination and the Issue of Identity

Eastern Europe in a broad sense has always been a European frontier that defined limits of the Western world in Eurasia, the borders of the Western and Eastern empires and later a zone of political and ideologies rivalry. From a geopolitical perspective, Eastern Europe is a large strategically located region consisting of a number of relatively small countries placed between the conflicting interests of neighbouring Great Powers. It is an area from which the Halford John Mackinder's Heartland might be controlled, a Crush Zone in James Fairgrieve's terminology or a Shatterbelt in Saul Cohen's language.

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, the countries of the region exerted efforts to change a notion of the barrier / buffer region through their integration into the EU and NATO – and nowadays they actually perform a function of the EU and NATO eastern borders, the edge of stability and security. With this, the function attributed to the countries of the region was not always an external construct, but their own perception as well. It is a sense of national mission that became an object of pride and self-esteem. The Czechs had a belief in a special national mission rooted in Hussite movement. The Polish and

[19] Ibid, p.5.

[20] Ibid, p.8.

[21] Володимир Винниченко (1918), Щоденник (Diary), p. 285.

> ***After the collapse of the Soviet Union, the countries of the region exerted efforts to change a notion of the barrier / buffer region through their integration into the EU and NATO***

Hungarian peoples perceived themselves as a frontier or "a pivot wall" of Christianity against pagans and Muslims. This sense of national mission was embodied in literature, national myths and narratives and gave a rise to national ideology. A Polish ideological project known as "Prometheism" also shaped a vision of Poland's civilization mission among neighbouring Slavic nations. Besides, Polish Jagiellonian concept and Intermarium geopolitical construct exploit the legacy of Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth to create a new kind of sub-regional consolidated area.[22]

The function of a buffer at peacetime and an area of clashes at wartime could not but influence to a certain degree the self-identification for the countries of the region. However, this influence did not lead to the domination of the concepts, which promoted the idea of regional exceptionalism and unicity for the sake of any unique regional mission. Peoples disregarded the region's functions and role in the international relations, and preferred integration into the Western projects to get rid of their own past and geopolitical fate. The concepts exploiting the ideas of regional exceptional mission, from Mitteleuropa to Prometheism, Intermarium etc., turned out to be by far less popular than the perspective to melt down in the Western world, and these ideas failed to become a sufficient substratum for shaping genuine regional identity.

Conclusions

Thus, the issue of the East European regional identity turns out to be more a matter of speculations than a fact of reality. The geographical location and the realization of its own otherness from the West and Russia is not enough for shaping a certain common regional identity, it cannot become a crucial factor for region consolidation; and one should not be misled by the temporary coincide in the foreign policy goals of the countries in the region.

This should be taken into account in Kyiv, when shaping long-term foreign policy goals and developing relations with its neighbours. The decisions on strategic partnership and possible regional alliances should not be guided by misleading illusions of a common regional identity. Ukrainian historical tradition exploits the notion of Central Eastern Europe that includes Poland, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary, Baltic States, Ukraine, Belarus, and Moldova as well as Balkan peninsular states. The speculations on the extended V4 with the inclusion of Ukraine (V4+1 formula), of Intermarium and other sub-regional integration projects are to some extent popular in Ukraine, but they often do not properly consider the actual geopolitical situation, differences in power status of the countries of the region, and non-conformities in national interests.

[22] Prometheism, a concept elaborated by Jozef Pilsudski and Edmund Charaszkiewicz, stated that Poland by virtue of its history was called to civilize and emancipate countries oppressed by Russia, which were crucial for Polish independence. Jozef Pilsudski endorsed the Jagiellonian concept according to which the Jagiellonian period of the Polish history was the ideal for Poland, and should have been replicated. The concept considered Ukraine, Belarus and Lithuania as a zone of Polish cultural influence and in this sense rivaled the Piast concept, which advocated western orientation of Polish foreign policy. The Jagiellonian concept influenced the emergence of the Intermarium or Międzymorze geopolitical concept regarding unification of Poland, Ukraine, Belarus and Lithuania into a single political space opposing Russia.

It is highly probable that the latest events in Europe including the migrant crisis may challenge the idea of European identity as a holistic phenomenon, and the issue of regional identities will be shadowed by the return of national identity factor. In this regard, it would be more pragmatic for Kyiv's foreign policy to pay more attention to consideration of common coinciding interests with the partner countries than to the search of common identities or common fate.

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RUSSIA'S PARTICIPATION IN EUROPEAN REGIONAL ORGANISATIONS AT THE PRESENT STAGE

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The article is devoted to the analysis of participation of the Russian Federation in the European international organizations (OSCE, CBSS, and BSEC), its goals and the efficiency of use of multilateral platforms for the Russian international agenda. It considers the level of correspondence of Russian goals with the basic goals of the given international organizations and the influence of the military conflict between Russia and Ukraine on the policy within the organizations.

The membership of Russia in international organisations is one of its foreign policy priorities. The Russian Federation participates in numerous European organisations and initiatives: this, inter alia, goes in line with the EU strategy considering involving Russia as much as possible within various cooperation formats. The nature of Russian policy on participation in European regional organisations can be observed through the example of the Organisation of Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), Council of the Baltic Sea States (CBSS), and Organization of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC). These three organisations totally demonstrate the specifics of unions in Europe: by purpose, by geography, by influence on international policy and by Russian influence on such organisations.

Organisation of Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE)

OSCE is the most sizeable organisation in Europe. Considering its political influence, wide geographic representation and tools for activities, it is a focal area of Russian diplomatic actions in the continent.

In two latest foreign policy concepts of the Russian Federation as of 2008 and 2013, the definition of the main goal of Russian foreign policy within the European field remains constant: "establishing a really open and democratic system of the overall regional collective security"[1] that shall be implemented through "rendering legally mandatory political declarations on indivisibility of security regardless of affiliation of a state to any military-political alliances"[2]. Thus, the goal of Russia is to erode the Euroatlantic security system and

[1] Концепция внешней политики Российской Федерации. 15 июля 2008 года. Web-ressource: http://kremlin.ru/acts/news/785

[2] Концепция внешней политики Российской Федерации Утверждена Президентом Российской Федерации В.В.Путиным 12 февраля 2013 г. Web-ressource: http://www.pircenter.org/media/content/files/9/13617765900.pdf

make the idea of the common security space "from Vancouver to Vladivostok" come true by gaining an opportunity to influence the decisions of European countries and the EU, in particular, in the aspect of security policies. Russia has been striving to gain such rights through signing new binding international treaties, namely, by reforming OSCE and providing it with a legal standing.

In January 2004, the Russian Federation proposed to shape a common pan-European security space based on the OSCE; in 2008, drafting of a legally binding European Security Treaty was initiated. As a reaction to the Russian initiatives, Greece (chairing in the OSCE at that moment) launched a Corfu Process promoting a dialog on Euroatlantic and Eurasian security and the perspective of adoption of the OSCE statutes[3]. The need of enhancing OSCE functioning was well-considered by all member countries, so the Corfu Process gained an overall approval. Meanwhile, member states of the EU and NATO were not considering as necessary to restructure the bases and tools of European security in a way as it had been proposed in the EST draft. Both ideas were actively discussed for a while; however, today, considering that European states have recognised Russia's involvement in the conflict at the East of Ukraine, the authority of Russia as of a participant of shaping the common security area has significantly dropped down as well as its position in the context of the OSCE reforming, whereas the idea of EST absolutely disappeared from international agenda. Meanwhile, the issue of expanding the possibilities of the OSCE and gaining international legal standing of the OSCE is still up to date.[4]

Despite internal disputes and crisis aspects in the OSCE, this organisation remains being an important tool of monitoring and collecting information from conflict zones, including the territory of war actions in Donbas. Nowadays it is the only international organisation able to inform the international community on the course of events at the East of Ukraine. Conversely, the presence of Russian representatives in the process of regulation and monitoring at Donbas is a risk factor. In theory, it is possible to push Russia, as an aggressor state, completely aside of OSCE activities on the Ukrainian territory and of making decisions on conflict resolution at Donbas. OSCE has a legal tool for this: so-called "consensus minus one" principle[5] approved at the Prague meeting of the OSCE Council of Ministers in 1992, which was once applied to ex-Yugoslavia. However, such a decision is less probable in view of the Russian influence, consensus principle in the OSCE and the overall political and diplomatic situation with the Russian aggression against Ukraine (not even all the European states made the decision to join the EU sanctions against Russia).

Thus, membership and activities within the OSCE are important for the Russian politics in Europe. Due to the aggression against Ukraine, a "moral" influence of Russia in the OSCE has decreased. On the other hand, Russia keeps the necessary toolkit for influencing the organisation's activities. Using the consensus principle, Russia allows OSCE taking only those decisions that do not impede Russian goals.

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3 Снігир О.В. "Російські ініціативи для загальноєвропейської безпеки". Аналітична записка Web-ressource: http://www.niss.gov.ua/articles/254/

4 Renewing dialogue, rebuilding trust, restoring security. The priorities of the German OSCE Chairmanship in 2016 Web-ressource: http://www.osce.org/cio/215791?download=true

5 The procedures and mechanisms of the OSCE Web-ressource: http://www.cvce.eu/content/publication/2006/2/16/32a78695-6b86-46d0-98cc-e6db63fd4037/publishable_en.pdf

Council of the Baltic Sea States (CBSS) and Organization of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC)

The activity of Russia in minor European regional organisations might be studied through the example of cooperation within regions of Baltic and Black seas. Council of the Baltic Sea States and Organisation of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation have a lot of common: a union based on a joint economic interest, similar geographic particularities, the willingness of members to support the regional environment, etc. The membership in these organisations also looks similar: members are seaside states, some being members of the EU and NATO. Russia is the only country with a membership in both CBSS and BSEC. For the sake of cooperation with Russia, the EU adopted the Northern Dimension Strategy in the Baltic region and the Black Sea Synergy in the Black Sea region, involving not only Russia but all other states of the Black Sea region that are not members of EU (Turkey, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine). After Russia has launched its aggression against Ukraine, EU has amended both strategies, restricting cooperation with Russia by sanctions. Thus, in the Black Sea region, all the projects related to Crimea have been suspended except those directed at supporting civil society and human contacts[6]. When comparing the Baltic and the Black sea regional cooperation, it may be affirmed that CBSS is a much more effective and functional organisation with higher region-consolidating potential that BSEC. This is mainly because most of the Baltic States are consolidated around the EU policy and due to a low Russian influence on the policy shaping in these countries[7], unlike a stronger position of Russia in the BSEC. It is worth to study these two organisations separately for better understanding of peculiarities of Russian activities in CBSS and BSEC.

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Council of the Baltic Sea States is the biggest among regional cooperation structures in the Baltic Sea area. CBSS has 12 members (11 states + Eurocommission) and 10 observers. The organisation is a well structured institution with regular consultations at a high political level. Since the very beginning CBSS has two priorities: 1) to provide a common ground for development of regional cooperation between partners, having a common legal framework and ready to combine resources (Germany, the EU, Northern countries); 2) to involve Russia in the cooperation through numerous institutional relations, like connections between cities or participation of Russia in various regional projects.

Russian interests in the regional cooperation in the Baltic region in general and within CBSS in particular have consisted in involving financial resources for economic, infrastructural and educational projects, whereas CBSS itself has been considered by

[6] Joint Staff Working Document. Black Sea Synergy: review of a regional cooperation initiative. Brussels, 20.1.2015 Web-ressource: https://ec.europa.eu/maritimeaffairs/sites/maritimeaffairs/files/docs/body/swd_2015_6_en.pdf

[7] Andrey Makarychev. The Baltic Sea Region: Does Russia Fit In? (Hint: In Many Indices its Way Worse than the Worse Performing) Web-ressource: http://www.ponarseurasia.org/article/baltic-sea-region-does-russia-fit-hint-many-indices-its-way-worse-worse-performing

Russia rather as a platform for a diplomatic dialog. The notions of the region sustainable development including business and economic cooperation, implementation of joint actions on environment protection, development of energy and transport network, support of activities of democratic institutions, assistance in humanitarian contacts enlargement — all these have not been perceived as of interest by Moscow.

Differences in the definition of priority areas of the regional cooperation show the difference of approaches of Russia and other partners of the CBSS. This was especially well demonstrated in the program document of the Russia's presidency in CBSS in 2013.[8] Neither environment protection nor energy efficiency, so important for the region, are mentioned; two out of four Russian priorities concern the regional partnership in modernization and entrepreneurship, and two others, such as extremism prevention and visa-free regime promotion, are absolutely out of CBSS prerogative.

Interests of Russia might be observed through projects that were promoted during the Russian presidency: an agreement between Vneshkombank and KfW German State Bank was signed on the joint loan program for the small and medium businesses in South-Western regions of Russia (with a $110 mln fund); work was conducted on creation of a touristic cluster at the border between Kaliningrad and Lithuania; the Baltic Artek project was launched, as well as the project of development of Eurofaculty in Pskov State University. However, the SEBA project (Partnership for modernisation on the South East of the Baltic Sea), aimed at the cooperation for boosting the development of Kaliningrad and surrounding districts, has demonstrated poor efficiency due to discrepancy of approaches of the partners to its implementation: Russians were ready to obtain funding from the European partners for the implementation of infrastructural projects, whereas those partners preconditioned such funding with ensuring reforming the legislation and State institutions, responsible for enhancing the investment climate in the region and for preventing corruption and abuses of office[9].

In some areas, Baltic countries' priorities are fully contradictory with the Russian strategy: first, it concerns the program of energy supply diversification, energy efficiency program and the program of implementation of innovative energy saving technologies. Instead of participating in the regional program on energy supply diversification and energy efficiency, Russia has been promoting Nord Stream, the bilateral project with Germany. Another example of divergence of the strategical development perception is that Russians consider the Internet as a field of battle for influence and as an area requiring state control and regulation unlike the European approach on accessibility of the Internet as a crucial human rights component.

However, even in the areas of its priority, Russia failed to benefit from all the opportunities of cooperation due to traditional obstacles, such as protectionism, absence of legal safeguards, corruption etc. This is why Russia was unable to fully profit from the institutional mechanisms of CBSS, preferring bilateral cooperation.

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8 The Russian Presidency of the Council of the Baltic Sea States (July 2012 – June 2013) Web-ressource: http://www.cbss.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/04/The-Russian-Presidency-Priorities.pdf

9 А.А. Сергунин. Россия и Европейский Союз в Балтийском регионе: тернистый путь к партнерству / Сергунин А. // Балтийский регион. 2013 № 4 (18). С.61 (с.53-66) Web-ressource: http://cyberleninka.ru/article/n/rossiya-i-evropeyskiy-soyuz-v-baltiyskom-regione-ternistyy-put-k-partnerstvu

When Russian aggression against Ukraine started, the Baltic regional partnership revealed to be in crisis: as a multilateral format, it was not suspended, yet the partnership with Russia was to be revised since EU policy on Russia had changed. Russian aggression and the following introduction of sanctions against Russia caused cancelling (for the first time in 22 years of organisation's existence history) the 10th summit of CBSS planned for June 2014 at the level of Prime Ministers[10]. This type of summits has not been resumed since then.

In this regional cooperation crisis, at least partial excluding of the aggressor state from the full CBSS working format is representative. The level of consolidation of other member states is high enough, and their position is clearly stated in two regional reports of 2014, economic and political ones. The first[11] begins with the following words: "When the leaders of the Baltic region countries meet at the 16th summit of the Baltic Development Forum in Turku, a usual dialog on economic opportunities shall go along with a tough discussion of the political context. Russian actions against Ukraine and the consequences of such actions for relations between Western Europe and Russia influence the basic cooperation principles in the Baltic region. ... "As an appropriate reaction to the Russian actions against Ukraine, the region shall revise its economic cooperation and fields of development". In the political report,[12] it is stated as follows: "2014 cannot be a year of business as usual since Russia, one of the members of the Council of the Baltic Sea States, has annexed the part of the territory of the state observing the organisation". It is also stated over there that the Russian economy "pays a price" for the Russian actions in Ukraine even though it is the whole region that suffers from losses.

Thus, the crisis of trust because of the Russian aggression against Ukraine caused the suspension of the political dialog in the Baltic region. The main indicator is the cancellation of CBSS summits and ministerial meetings since 2014. Cooperation with Russia is limited to the lower regional level and regular meetings of high CBSS officials. Meanwhile, Eurocommission and partners of Russia in the Baltic region show their interest in a wide involvement of Russia to regional projects: this is also demonstrated in the EU's updated strategy of Northern Dimension. Nuclear technologies, the prevention of trafficking radioactive materials, strengthening readiness to emergency cases — those are traditional fields of cooperation of Russia in CBSS. Another Russian priority within regional cooperation is fight against organised crime. In 2015-2016 Russia was heading an appropriate Target group aiming at enhancing cooperation of police and prosecutor offices of the Baltic states

In this regional cooperation crisis, at least partial excluding of the aggressor state from the full CBSS working format is representative

[10] President of the Republic and the Cabinet Committee on Foreign and Security Policy discussed the situation in Ukraine. Government Communications Department. Press release 159/2014 Web-ressource: http://www.formin.fi/public/default.aspx?contentid=304007&nodeid=%2015146&contentlan=2&culture=en-US

[11] 2014 State of the Region Report. The Top of Europe – Emerging from the Crisis, Adapting to a New Normal Web-ressource: http://www.bdforum.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/BDF_SORR_2014_web.pdf

[12] Political State of the Region Report 2014. Web-ressource: http://www.bsr2014.eu/wp-content/uploads/BDF_PSoRR_2014_web_03.pdf

in the prevention of illegal migration, human trafficking, and drug trafficking. Today, Russia basically has a possibility to cooperate within all Baltic initiatives related to environment protection, development of infrastructure capacity and humanitarian partnership. It is highly probable considering the applied sanctions that Russians now will pay more attention to all available opportunities they used to ignore before, bearing in mind obtaining additional financial aid and compensating their partial political isolation.

Ukraine is present in CBSS as an observer. This status provides the tools enabling monitoring how Russia attempts to overcome sanctions through participation in regional projects, and therefore, widely publicize such attempts, including informing the EU institutions. It is also worth to constantly bring to the attention of CBSS member states an inappropriate use of funds by the Russian part and emphasize the necessity of financial control and quality monitoring during the implementation of the project scope of work.

In the Baltic region, environment protection topic was also lobbied as an area of cooperation with Russia. Despite the fact that Russia itself did not set this topic as priority during its presidency in CBSS in 2013, Paavo Lipponen (Finnish Prime-Minister in 1995-2014, now Nord Stream independent consultant), one of Kremlin lobbyists, insists on keeping the ecological partnership with Russia within the frame of Northern Dimension and openly declares the sanctions impeding such cooperation shall be subject to be revised or cancelled (EBRD and EIB have blocked financing new projects). "And if the sanctions cannot be lifted then new mechanisms shall be developed for financing projects by EU."[13]

Within such a framework, Russia has a powerful leverage by sabotaging solving environmental issues under its competence. A bright example is ignoring the problem of Krasnyi Bor, an overloaded hazardous waste landfill in Leningrad region. The dumpsite already threatens the Gulf of Finland, creating a problem of international scale. Concerns have been expressed by Estonia, Sweden, Finland and Baltic Marine Environment Protection Commission HELCOM.[14] Ekokem, a Finnish company declared its determination to launch the decontamination of the waste at the landfill[15]. The position of the Russian side is still unknown.

The regional cooperation in the Black Sea region, foremost, through the format of **Organisation of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation** includes more diverse actors, whereas the position of Russia is considerably stronger that other countries of the region. BSEC has 12 member states and a developed institutional structure including the highest political level of representation: Council of Ministers of Foreign Affairs.

Unlike a tough and compelling stand of the Baltic region states, the Black Sea states continued to communicate as usual at the level of Ministers of Foreign Affairs. At the session in January, 2016, Ukrainian delegation demonstratively left the meeting to show their protest against Russia taking

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[13] Paavo Lipponen. The future of northern dimension cooperation must be secured. Web-ressource: http://www.northerndimension.info/component/content/article/50-category-eng/norhern-dimension/nd-institute/activities/335-the-future-of-northern-dimension-cooperation-must-be-secured?highlight=WyJtaW5pc3RlcmlhbCIsIm1lZXRpbmciLCJtaW5pc3RlcmlhbCBtZWV0aW5nIl0=

[14] Меликян Татьяна. Не НАТО угрожать. Как президенты России и Финляндии обменялись угрозами вместо любезностей. Web-ressource: https://lenta.ru/articles/2016/07/02/suomi/

[15] Ekokem может помочь России с полигоном токсичных отходов «Красный Бор». Web-ressource: http://inosmi.ru/social/20160705/237072162.html

the presidency (from 1st January to 1st July 2016) and during the 6 months Ukrainian representatives did not participate in meetings held on the territory of Russia, including BSEC Parliamentary Assembly (28 June 2016) and Council of Ministers of Foreign Affairs (1st July 2016).

It is difficult for BSEC members to develop a consolidated stance due to a considerable divergence of their interests. The EU keeps being the most powerful integration project of the region, therefore, the majority of the BSEC projects will be most probably implemented within the Black Sea Synergy, the EU strategy for the region and in compliance with the EU regulations. Meanwhile, considering the growing interest of China to the Black Sea region and Chinese readiness to finance the projects interesting for them, additional cooperation opportunities are expected to be created within the BSEC. However, everything listed above still does not make BSEC an effective regional organisation since the member states do not have the political will to develop neither regional cooperation nor clearly stated mutual obligations and liabilities within the organisation. Thus, BSEC today is still more of a platform for a dialog.

BSEC is of Russia's interest in two ways: 1) using organisation's opportunities for attracting financial resources to implement Russian projects; 2) attempting to legalise Crimea through the involvement of Crimean players of economic, educational, civil society (mainly ecological) activities to international projects within the BSEC (this was almost clearly announced by Yevgeniy Stanislavov, the Director of Economic Cooperation Department of the Russian MFA on 22 January 2016 in Istanbul during representation of priorities of the Russian Presidency in BSEC)[16]. Among the Russian Presidency priorities, the following shall be mentioned:[17]

1. Expanding the use of warranty funds for simplifying the access of small and medium businesses to credit financial resources, as well as their perspectives of international expansion;
2. Implementing the Russian initiative on development of the multimodal freight and passenger ferry traffic in the region;
3. Implementing the project of the circular road around the Black Sea and development of maritime passages in the region;
4. Implementing the project of creating an Electric power belt around the Black Sea;
5. Shaping new and enhancing existing mechanisms of interaction of national emergency services;
6. Developing cooperation in the area of food security, involving investments into agricultural complex development in Russia and the BSEC countries;
7. Developing the common research environment through the creation of mechanisms of financing multilateral research projects; support of network cooperation of research and educational institutions, mainly within the network of Black Sea Universities (BSEC's partner on sectoral dialog); joint use of the research infrastructure of BSEC countries.

Russia is very much interested in implementing infrastructure and transport projects in the Black Sea region, including as follows[18]: 1) construction of the new Taman

[16] Россия стала председателем ОЧЭС. Web-ressource: http://sputnik-abkhazia.ru/world/20160122/1016970539.html

[17] Приоритеты российского председательства. Российское Председательство в ЧЭС. Web-ressource: http://bsec.mid.ru/priorities

[18] Россия развивает транспортную инфраструктуру в рамках ОЧЭС. Web-ressource: http://ac.gov.ru/events/08787.html

deep-water port (using the concession tool); 2) construction of the bridge through Kerch Strait; 3) extension of capacities of the Krasnodar railway junction.

Russia is also interested in developing bilateral business contacts. For this purpose, they use BSEC platforms, foremost, the Business Council. During the Russian Presidency in the Organisation, the activity of this Council was, in fact, continuing the activities of the Russian National Committee of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation, and the Head of RNCBSEC was elected the Head of BSEC Business Council for the period of Russia's presidency. RNCBSEC declared the following priorities of its activities: 1) development of Situation Information Analysis Centre (preventive informing on probable technogenic accidents); 2) Black Sea Basin Ecological Monitoring project; 3) interaction of RNCBSEC and the delegation of the Stavropol Government to the Federal Russian Government. Meanwhile, activities

> ***In this regional cooperation crisis, at least partial excluding of the aggressor state from the full CBSS working format is representative***

of both RNCBSEC and BSEC Business Council in the first half of 2016 were in fact concentrated on organising and holding an international trade exhibition in Russia.

The main task of Ukraine in facing the Russian policy is monitoring and preventing the attempts of involving Crimean legal entities in international projects, the intentions of international partners to do business in Crimea, implementation of any infrastructure projects related to Crimea, as well as attempts of Russia to obtain international funding bypassing sanctions through participation in international projects. It is crucial for Ukrainian delegation to include an issue of condemning the annexation of Crimea and occupation of the part of Ukrainian territory to the agenda of every meeting of BSEC high bodies, and to insist on including such statements in the minutes and summaries of these meetings.

Conclusions

To summarize, we may state that participation and activity of Russia within the frame of regional European organisations is defined by its revisionism policy and striving for gaining the status of a regional and, in prospect, worldwide power. In no way Russia considered regional organisations as a region-consolidating tool through uniting the potential of member countries, but only through the prism of usefulness of organisations for gaining its primary goal of strengthening Russian influence and/or as an additional source of funding Russian business entities and local administrations.

- Through membership in the OSCE, Russia strives to reinforce its influence on decisions of European countries in the area of foreign relations and security. A useful tool for Russia in this case is lobbying acceptable decisions on European multistake platforms. Notably within the OSCE, Russia was trying to legalize its influence before 2013 via initiatives on signing legal binding international agreements, and after 2013 via the OSCE's bureaucracy and consensus principle for promoting Russian stance on current events of European security. For this purpose, Russians working in OSCE structures and missions, as well as foreign representatives engaged by Russia are used as influence tools.
- In European international organisation of the regional format (Council of the Baltic Sea States and Organisation of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation), Russia is concerned about involving

funding through the tools of the organisations, about lobbying its own infrastructure projects and conserving its own presence at regional negotiating platforms. In CBSS, Russia has been rendering from the full extent of cooperation at the highest level, and the implementation of joint projects has been revised in compliance with the sanctions imposed by EU. This was enabled by a consolidated stance of the Baltic region states on inadmissibility of the annexation of Crimea, occupation of the part of Ukrainian territory and continuance of aggressive actions at the East of Ukraine by Russia.

- Striving to overcome a partial obstruction on behold of CBSS members and seeking for using tools of obtaining international funds through the programs of organisation, Russia increases its activities in the areas not interesting before: ecological, humanitarian, energy saving etc. In order to promote such cooperation, Kremlin will use both risk factors and lobbyists of Russian interests.
- In Organisation of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation Russia has kept its position as the member of organisation. In the meantime, in compliance with the revised EU policy on the Black Sea region, all regional international projects related to Crimea have been suspended. The implementation of major infrastructure projects with Russia's participation is also stopped. Most of economic activities of Russia within BSEC today concentrates on creating opportunities for bilateral contacts of Russian business representatives with possible international partners. Meanwhile, the main purpose of Russia is still trying to legalise the status of Crimea through involvement of Crimean entities of economic, educational, ecological and other activities in international projects within BSEC. Considering a growing interest of China to the Black Sea region, attempts of Russia are to be expected to participate in economic projects of China for Black Sea region for finding a possibility to bypass economic sanctions and legalise the status of Crimea.
- Russia was not interested in developing effective regional organisations neither before nor after 2014. This is confirmed by the absence of effective international projects initiated by Russia in both organisations, CBSS and BSEC. Projects being implemented with Russia's participation are also estimated to be of low-level. However, considering EU striving to conserve the "policy of Russian involvement", continuation of cooperation with Russia is to be expected within European formats of regional cooperation. Meanwhile, stricter control procedures of using project funding and of scope of work implementation can be predicted to be introduced by European countries.

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NETWORKS AND NODES: EURASIAN REGIONALISM REVISITED

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The very existence of international regions in post-Soviet space remains one of the central issues of international cooperation as lack of cohesion and collective actions manifested by weak regional institutions remain one of the features of Eurasia even twenty five years after the collapse of the USSR. With ongoing economic recession and rising security challenges, Eurasian nations need closer cooperation with each other more than ever. However, it is not just their reluctance to engage into wide-range regional cooperation that interferes with cooperation efforts. Current rationale of regional integration in Eurasia and the latest history of regionalization take little account of region's potential and needs. Thus, a shift from already traditional geopolitical regionalization to network-like regionalism is seen as vital for the whole region in order to attain positive dynamics of development at both regional and national levels.

Eurasia on the Political Map of the Modern World

The landmass of Eurasia encompasses plenty of different nations and stretches for huge distances. Yet nowadays when this term is used to denote some political unity it attributes to a much smaller region, mostly consisting of nations that emerged in the wake of the Soviet Union collapse. These post-Soviet nations are involved in active interaction with each other and participate in several projects of regional cooperation. Nevertheless, Eurasia is still not reintegrated nor even shows steadiness in the development of regional institutions and initiatives. Thus, the question remains whether Eurasia even exists as an established region in contemporary international relations.

Regionness defines a position of a particular region in terms of regional cohesion, which can be seen as a long-term historical process, changing over time from coercion, the building of empires and nations, to voluntary cooperation[1]. The latest introduction of the term "Eurasia" into political and academic discourses was itself undermining this idea. From the start of the 21st century, steady migration from the use of "post-Soviet" designation to the Eurasian one was designed to signal the final departure from Soviet legacy. For post-Soviet nations, this move was seen as the end of the transitional period – at least in political rhetoric – while they tried to establish their position in the international system[2].

For outsiders, mostly in the West, this was a symbolic gesture to hail the shrinking of the

1 B. Hettne, Beyond the 'new' regionalism, "New Political Economy", December 2005, p. 548

2 E. Vinokurov, A. Libman, Eurasia and Eurasian Integration: Beyond the Post-Soviet Borders, [in:] EDB Eurasian Integration Yearbook, Eurasian Development Bank: Almaty – 2012, pp. 81-82; also see T. Carothers, The End of the Transition Paradigm, "Journal of Democracy", January 2002, pp. 5-21.

Russian zone of influence in the region[3] and to denote the fragmentation of the space left by the collapsed Soviet Union.

However, this rhetoric turn had little to add to the ongoing quest for tracks of development in the region. Novelties in regional discourse depicted what region-building in the post-Soviet space should not be like: it should avoid reinstating a unified state even in the mid-term perspective. While delivering a strong message about the intentions of some parties engaged in post-Soviet international politics, it gave little insight into their potential actions and possible scenarios of cooperation. As an immediate outcome of this state of affairs, Eurasia witnessed several competing trajectories for individual nations.

> ***Eurasia is still not reintegrated nor even shows steadiness in the development of regional institutions and initiatives***

One trajectory is set for the so-called core of Eurasia – Russia, Belarus, and Kazakhstan, nations involved in the deepest integration in the region under the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU), and having the most interdependent economies within this integration community. This trajectory is heavily influenced by the Russian Eurasianism, the policy-determining concept of the Russian control over transit routes from Europe to Asia. Eurasianism is often seen both in the region and in the West as Moscow's neo-imperial project, designed to re-conquer its command over post-Soviet space[4]. Thus, while the trajectory represents the only viable region-building project in Eurasia, many nations are cautious if not reluctant to join this enterprise.

Other nations found themselves on the periphery of the Eurasian regionalism. However, their individual trajectories also vary a lot. For the East European nations – primarily Ukraine and Moldova – the European Union presented a viable alternative of regionalization or even regional integration, promising to end their quest for development framework in the safe harbour. For the nations of South Caucasus, situation rapprochement with the EU was more complicated, both because of geography and for security reasons. Therefore, they were looking for closer ties with great powers, both regional and global, putting bilateral agenda ahead of regional cooperation. Finally, Central Asian nations still rely upon balancing between extra-regional powerhouses.

With such diverse dynamics and trajectories of regional consolidation, it is hard to find a definite pillar of region-building for the whole Eurasian space. One may claim that there is more consistency in dismembering Eurasia than in any attempt to bring its pieces together. Even with formal Eurasian integration under the EAEU, we see an obvious division in terms of consolidation between the old core (Russia, Belarus and Kazakhstan) and the latest additions (Armenia and Kyrgyzstan). Though on the other hand, the current development in Eurasia makes dramatic changes in regional dynamics inevitable. The push by the EU eastward stalled, and with the Eastern

[3] While definitions of Eurasia differ a lot from one another, for many experts, Eurasian means Russia with only part of the former Soviet space, either its Slavic core or Central Asia – otherwise named as Northern and Central Eurasia. This point of view has many proponents both in Russia and in the West.

[4] M. Laruelle, The two faces of contemporary Eurasianism: an imperial version of Russian nationalism, "Nationalities Papers", March 2004, p. 115-136.

Partnership under deep revision, it seems highly unlikely that European integration is able to substitute local regional cooperation options. In South Caucasus, conflicts, once frozen, are threatening regional security again. Central Asia, in its term, faces a major challenge of its sub-regional organization from internal instability and the raise of Islamism all over Asia. It means that already imperfect Eurasian regional cooperation is rapidly becoming obsolete, and regional actors risk to fall from the cooperative trend of contemporary world.

Sources of Regionness in Eurasia

A fair question should be asked whether the nations of Eurasia need to be engaged in any regionalization. After all, for decades some countries existed outside of regional establishments, relying exclusively on bilateral ties with great powers. Is this an option for Eurasia? It looks like latest international developments already ruled out this option. Eurasian nations' shares in the world GDP and the world trade are diminishing[5]. The same is true about attracted investment, while most of the region witness capital flight. Considering the current state of the world economy there are few opportunities for the region to catch up. As a result, the most viable option is seen in developing intra-regional cooperation.

Eurasian nations do not just need more investment to boost their economic development. They also need to ensure stability and steadiness in their social progress. Regionalism is apt to provide all these products simultaneously because this phenomenon of international life is, as Haas pointed out, "covering any interstate activity with less than universal participation designed to meet commonly experienced need"[6]. While regionalism is truly lacks the transformation power of high-end regional integration projects, it still bears the ability to reorganize regional space along defined economic and political lines[7]. For Eurasian nations, this sense of control over development trajectory is necessary: it will allow regional actors to ensure that the transformation of the political space will promote their individual interests, it will leave enough room to renegotiate previous agreements if necessary, and it will balance different interests within regional establishment. Accordingly, region-building precludes accommodation for the national interests of individual nations, with further regional negotiations aimed to support the equal accommodation of these interests for all partners[8].

Another very important feature of regionalism for the Eurasian space comes from interdependence inherent in the region. Within the social structure of the region, its constituent elements show their dependence on each other from the inauguration moment (as any regional establishment arises because of regional agreement, whether formal or informal) to further activities. Together with norms and informal rules produced in the process of regional cooperation, the interdependency increases the level of predictability in the regional space and contributes to regional

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5 United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, World Economic Situation and Prospects 2015: The Global Economic Outlook, New York 2014, pp. 107-109; World Trade Organization, International Trade Statistics, 2015, pp. 48-53.

6 E. B. Haas, The Uniting of Europe: Political, Social and Economic Forces, Stanford University Press 1958, p. 16.

7 A. Payne & A. Gamble, Introduction: the political economy of regionalism and world order, [in:] A .Gamble & A. Payne (eds.), Regionalism and World Order, Macmillan 1996, p. 2.

8 W. A. Axline, Cross-regional comparisons and the theory of regional cooperation: lessons from Latin America, the Caribbean, South East Asia and the South Pacific, [in:] W. A. Axline (ed.), The Political Economy of Regional Cooperation: Comparative Case Studies, Pinter 1994, p. 217.

stability – which is exactly what the Eurasian nations need to show to the outside world in order to succeed in their joint development efforts.

It would be incorrect to say that Eurasia was completely alien to the region-building for the last quarter of a century. Contrary to that, the post-Soviet space saw numerous attempts to define its new regionness – from the Commonwealth of Independent States to several Central Asian sub-regional institutions, to Nazarbaev's Eurasian Union idea. But those efforts were undermined by one fundamental flaw. They were all defined primarily in territorial terms, precluded exclusive affinity to one regional grouping and represented the so-called "closed regionalism", the one to defend the regional space from external influences, as opposed to "open regionalism" meant to enforce regional influence on external entities. This combination of major elements turned post-Soviet region-building into an exercise in geopolitical regionalism, in its almost typical Cold-war era edition[9]. Nevertheless, this approach to regionalization requires regional leaders to establish firm control over geopolitical regions. That is the exact scenario most post-Soviet nations were eager to avoid. As soon as they were reluctant to concede a part of their sovereignty (neither to supranational integration institutions nor to another nation within some single-leader political community), it was obvious that the attempts to build a classical full-fledged territorial region are bound to fail.

So if Eurasian nations need regional cooperation but remain unwilling to build an all-around political, military and economic supranational community, what kind of region are they ready to build? The current state of post-Soviet cooperation is far from a full-scale integration. Amid economic crisis, domestic markets are shrinking, thus nations in the region have less incentives to promote an open market

> ***if Eurasian nations need regional cooperation but remain unwilling to build an all-around political, military and economic supranational community, what kind of region are they ready to build?***

strategy, to introduce free trade or to launch the integration project. As most successful and the strongest economies in the region – Russia, Kazakhstan, Azerbaijan – depend heavily on oil and natural gas sales, the current low prices on hydrocarbons curb their ability to be the locomotive of industrial development, thus the potential push for deeper industrial cooperation is also diminished.

Potential of Network Regionalism in Eurasia

While full-scale economic integration remains an unlikely scenario for further regional dynamics, there are several elements of typical regional cooperation pattern available for Eurasia. Firstly, it is trans-regional transport infrastructure development. The transit potential of Eurasia has been praised since the mid-1990s. It is the most universal currency in every Eurasian development strategy because all nations of the region, even those without energy resources or developed industries, do represent a valuable asset for numerous international transport projects. Trans-Caspian routes to bring oil and gas from

[9] This type of regionalism is best described in S. B. Cohen, Geopolitics of the world system, Rowmann & LittleField 2003.

Central Asia to Europe, a Chinese endeavour to reach the EU market by land, an Indian search for alternative energy supplies – those are only few reasons behind regional urge to develop transport capacities.

Transport infrastructure in the region in most cases is not developed to meet potential requirements for mass transit, or is absent at all for required destinations. Transport routes in the region were mostly constructed during the Soviet period and were never meant to provide huge international transit. Besides, both Central Asia and South Caucuses had very limited cross-border transport infrastructure to connect with foreign countries. After these nations gained independence, only few big infrastructure projects were completed in the region. That means that infrastructure will require huge amount of investment. China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, a collection of transport projects comparable in scale and complexity to those to be constructed in Central Asia or Southern Caucasus, has an estimated cost of more than USD 46bln[10]. Hence, harnessing regional transport potential is an obvious choice for the driver for Eurasian regional development.

> ***Network regionalism does not harm individual sovereignty in a profound way like traditional regionalism does***

However, while it may cast financial inflows big enough to meet current aspirations of regional actors, investment is neither guaranteed nor sufficient for region-building. Most Eurasian nations are unable to provide a significant portion of investment on their own, so they will entirely depend on foreign investors. They still see each other as competitors, so any collective and coordinated action requires much political effort and remains an exception in behaviour. With little joint stand to face major international investors Eurasian nations put themselves in a weak negotiation position. Another reason for failure to convert transit potential into sealed projects relates to security issues. Most nations in the region are weak internally and exposed to numerous external threats. Their traditional balancing approach to relations with major powers backfires as none of those powers is engaged enough to be obliged to intervene should some threat transfer into crisis. That is signalling potential investors that security risks may rise above acceptable level.

The major task is to ensure deep regional cooperation that will allay the fears of investors, and at the same time to enable all Eurasian nations to gain their ends through the cooperation. Transport infrastructure projects will not just tie different nations in the Eurasian space with each other, but will also create a physical network equally important for every regional state. This transport network will become a backbone of regional cooperation capable to generate joint interests and to change development dynamics in Eurasia. Network regionalism does not harm individual sovereignty in a profound way like traditional regionalism does, but it still has potential to transform regional space and to promote Eurasian regionness. All nations are expected to profit from major infrastructure projects so their individual interests should not contradict each other in this instance. The inclusive and mutually beneficial nature of network

[10] Z. T. Ebrahim, China-Pakistan Economic Corridor: A boon for the economy, a bane for locals, "Dawn", 12 May 2016 [http://www.dawn.com/news/1236159 access: 5 December 2016]

regionalism should mitigate a competitive attitude between neighbours and enable effective region-building in a more profound way.

There is another feature of network regionalism that is important for discussed regionalization in Eurasia. Lately much attention was paid to the issue of interregionalism – a phenomenon of formal and protracted cooperation between different regions within the contemporary international system. Interregionalism is seen from two different prospective. On the one hand, it deals with a special type of international cooperation where regional activities are add-ons to traditional inter-state diplomatic relations, which makes diplomatic agenda more complex and multifaceted. On the other hand, engagement in interregional cooperation contributes to the development of region's actorship, which enables them to establish links with each other and to transform interregional and global structures within the international system. The global impact of interregionalism may be a matter of distant future. Even established regions, albeit harbouring potential structural changes in world governance, are still embryonic[11]. Yet interregional ties are already material and in case of Eurasia they may constitute the supra-regional tissue that will not only enforce regionness for the most of the post-Soviet space, but may also widen Eurasian regional space into neighbouring regions – East Asia, South Asia, and the Middle East.

Secondly, regional structure needs the strongholds of regionalization capable to generate mutual interest to cooperate for regional countries and for extra-regional actors involved in major regional projects. A generation of secondary interest within the region is vital. It does not matter what kind of interest it will be: self-sustainable consumer markets able to compliment emerging infrastructure with local demand, or exclusive high quality services, or production hubs enhancing existing trade flows with additional supply. The main purpose is to provide some unique incentives to investors and operators to invest to full capacity into regional partners and to choose the region as a primary destination for its transport flows. Such strongholds will supplement network regions with nodes crucial for stability of regional operations and able to deliver additional development impulse.

The attractiveness of a regional project to extra-regional actors is especially important for the network regionalization because for its development such regions rely heavily upon external intervention – financial, organizational, and even institutional one. To illustrate the matter we may use one of the latest – and most important – initiatives to promote infrastructure projects in Eurasia. "One Belt, One Road" initiative elaborated by China and mostly Chinese-funded, which provides a unique opportunity for many Eurasian nations to participate in a major international investment project. Presented by Xi Jinping in 2013, originally the "Belt" part of the initiative targeted only Central Asia[12]. Yet soon China dramatically expanded the number and scope of the overland routes within the initiative. Now Central Asia is not even designated as the major transport corridor under "One Belt, One Road". To much extent, the lack of uniqueness of the Central Asian regional space for China is reducing the opportunity

[11] B. Hettne, Beyond the 'new' regionalism, "New Political Economy", December 2005, p. 558

[12] P. Zhiping, Silk Road Economic Belt: A Dynamic New Concept for Geopolitics in Central Asia, "CIIS Time", 18 September 2014, [http://www.ciis.org.cn/english/2014-09/18/content_7243440.htm access: 10 November 2016]

to attract bigger portions of investment and, in a more distant future, transit freight.

Thirdly, Eurasia needs to translate its regional undertakings into effective institutions of regional cooperation. Institutions are very important elements of regionalism. As Hettne noted, "the region as community takes shape when an enduring organizational framework facilitates and promotes social communication and convergence of values and behaviour throughout the region. [R]egion as institutionalized polity has a more fixed structure of decision making and stronger actor capability"[13]. Formal institutions provide interplay of mutual efforts, coordination and cooperative control. On the one hand, coordinated actions empower regional establishment with greater leverage in negotiations of the agreements with extra-regional actors. Ad-hoc instruments are likely to fail when it is necessary to develop a collective approach to the issue and to implement a joint decision. Formal permanent institutions produce better coordination and mutual trust crucial to stand united.

Another aspect of intervention by regional formal institutions is their coordination of efforts to implement joint projects within regional cooperation space. The lack of collective management was already affecting the ability of Eurasian nations to deliver joint projects in time and to their full capacity. One of the latest examples also comes from infrastructure development. In 2014 Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, and Iran launched a railroad corridor to give two Central Asian nations access to the Iranian ports in the Persian Gulf. This project represents one of few successful regional cases of investment and construction of a major transport corridor – a more than one thousand kilometres long railroad cost around USD 1bln, and after completion it became a part of a bigger North-South international transport corridor[14]. Yet the lack of coordination, when each nation constructed its section of the link separately, led to substantial delays in the process. Thus, an initially complete freight link had to be inaugurated in December 2012. However, the Turkmen side failed to fulfil its obligations. Even though Turkmenistan did not face any shortage of funding, it failed to organize the construction process properly but did not inform their partners about the incoming delay until after it happened.[15] This example illustrates the importance of coordination mechanisms, which should definitely be implemented under institutionalized regional cooperation.

Region-building in Eurasia based upon regional networks and primarily linked to major transport infrastructure projects, may represent the most viable and promising option for regional cooperation. As nations in Eurasia are inclined to extend cooperation with each other, this approach allows to remove political obstacles for those nations reluctant to participate in more centralized vertical forms of regionalization. The focus on the creation of a new long-lasting regional network to promote development efforts rather than on integration of national economies will grant regional countries a possibility to concentrate on negotiating mutually beneficial conditions of cooperation with extra-regional actors. Joint projects to develop nodes of cooperation within the

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13 B. Hettne, Beyond the 'new' regionalism, "New Political Economy", December 2005, p. 54

14 J. Lillis, Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan and Iran Launch Railroad to Get Trade on Track, "Eurasianet", 3 December 2014, [http://www.eurasianet.org/node/71166 access: 7 December 2016]

15 С. Расов, Дорога не достроена, вице-премьер уволен (Road is not completed, Deputy Prime Minister is fired), "Gundogar", 14 January 2013, [http://www.gundogar.org/?01305132360000000000000011000000 access: 7 December 2016]

network structure of the region, as well as inauguration of regional institutions directly linked to the concrete projects will provide additional incentives for Eurasian nations to participate in deep regional cooperation and to promote a balanced regionalization approach.

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THE BALTIC STATES AND THE EASTERN PARTNERSHIP: A STRENGTHENING FACTOR FOR REGIONALISM?

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When newly arising challenges constantly threaten to divert European capitals' attention from the EU Eastern Partnership (EaP)[1], the position of three Baltic States – Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania – remains unshaken. Such solidarity and assistance to democratic reforms can be compared to one of Nordic states, which invested a great deal into the post-Soviet transformation of the Baltics. However, the Baltic states' engagement into the EaP region, which often includes criticizing Russia, is more complex than a policy of 'giving back'. The article takes a closer look into the role the Baltic States play in the EaP region, with particular attention to Ukraine. In addition to estimating the Baltic support, the main aim is to assess the impact that active involvement and transfer of the best reform-related practices to the EaP countries has on the Baltic States. It will also evaluate the hypothesis that the Baltic States' actions in the EaP region strengthen them as a region.

The restoration of independence of the Baltic States in 1990/1991 and their accession to the EU/NATO in 2004 are both watershed events that shape popular understanding of how far the three countries have gone - and how far they still have to go. Their progress is often credited to intra-regional cooperation, while existing competition, which is a strong motivator to do more and surpass one another, is little known. Comparing the Baltic development with that of their EU counterparts, the further North and West one looks, the more unfulfilled potential is detected at home

By contrast, the EaP target countries remind of what might have happened if political unity and will for a democratic and liberal economic transition had not been found. Currently, the Baltic States are among the strongest supporters and contributors to the EaP countries' reform processes and their ambitions for closer cooperation with the EU and NATO. Such involvement strengthens their image as a trustworthy partner and neighbour and also witnesses their transformation from a recipient to a provider of international support, including political, economic and expert assistance, among others. But does this also strengthen the Baltics as a region?

The Baltic States as a Region

The understanding of the Baltic States as a regional unit is influenced by historical events and daily life perceptions. Interestingly, it is not necessarily the Baltic States themselves

[1] The EaP region encompasses the following six countries that are part of the EU's Eastern Partnership programme: Azerbaijan, Armenia, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine.

that encourage understanding them as a regional unit. Instead, they pragmatically and selectively refer to themselves as Baltic when it delivers concrete benefits, for example, when advocating for common interests within the EU and NATO, but they do not do that when other relations are seen as more influential. Estonia, for example, seeks to leverage its advantages in economic growth and the IT sector to portray itself as a Nordic country.

> ***as the Baltic states were an example to be followed in Soviet times, their post-1989 evolution is also appealing to the EaP region***

During the Soviet period, the Baltics were known as Pribaltika, or the "countries by the Baltic Sea." They were idealized for their economic development and quality agricultural and industrial products. As a result, other Soviet republics wished to emulate their example.

In the West, there was relatively little attention paid to the Baltic States until their Singing Revolution and the 1989 Baltic Way. The latter - a chain of 2 million people connecting Vilnius, Riga, and Tallinn - once again intertwined countries' destinies. This time, however, it resulted in liberation and return to the family of democratic European nations.

The EaP countries are able to relate to both interpretations of the Baltic states. Actually, they complement each other: just as the Baltic states were an example to be followed in Soviet times, their post-1989 evolution is also appealing to the EaP region. Moreover, common history, which is not limited to the Soviet period but reaches back to the years of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, which encompassed the lands of what is now Belarus, Ukraine and Moldova and which, from the 13th to the 18th centuries, fostered the development of societal links, that currently serve as a strong link for transmitting Baltic experiences. In case of Ukraine, the country reaches out and accepts Baltic assistance in seeking closer ties with the EU and NATO.

In addition to the mentioned EU and NATO platforms for cooperation, the Baltic States also use Nordic-Baltic Eight (NB8) or e-PINE formats. The latter in addition to the five Nordic countries includes the U.S. Furthermore, during its Presidency, Latvia promoted the idea of a Euro-Atlantic Eastern Partnership, which would involve such third countries as the U.S. and Japan.[2]

The Baltic States within the EU's Eastern Partnership

Though official initiators of the Eastern Partnership were Poland and Sweden, the Baltic States have always been strong supporters and advocates for greater EU engagement in the EaP region because of the following factors. Strengthening democracy in the EaP region was perceived as the best way to ensure stability and security. Experiences of the Baltic States demonstrate that EU-dictated reforms via 'carrots and sticks' have the strongest success rate in achieving democratisation. Second, Russia's continued approach towards the post-Soviet space as the area of its influence is a common problem. Thus, assistance to the EaP region does not only limit the reach of Russia but also increases regional security by expanding the boundaries of

[2] Diana Potjomkina, "A More Geopolitical Eastern Partnership: U-Turn or "the Ladies Not for Turning"?", Latvian Institute of International Affairs, Report, November 2015, http://liia.lv/site/docs/Eastern_Partnership_Diana_Potjomkina.pdf

democratic countries together as well as lessens the influence of Russia to the East. Third, as previously mentioned, the Baltic States and the EaP region have elements of shared common past from which a feeling of solidarity arises. For example, many Lithuanians were present at the Maidan to repay support that was expressed by Ukrainians during the acts of civic resistance in 1991 that became known as the January Events. In general, the Baltic States relate well to the EaP countries and it is in their interest to see the EaP region advanced and successful.

Both Lithuania in 2013 and Latvia in 2015 used their Presidency in the Council of the EU (hereafter – Presidency) to prioritise EU engagement in the EaP region. Estonia, which is to assume the Presidency in the second half of the 2017, has also pledged to do the same. During each of the Baltic Presidencies, the EaP Summits took place. The 3rd EaP Summit in Vilnius was a historic one, with Georgia and Moldova initialling their Association Agreements (AA), including the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area (DCFTA) treaties, with the EU. Moreover, and most importantly, the Summit marked the beginning of what soon happened to be the end of the President Viktor Yanukovych's rule in Ukraine and a change of the country's geopolitical orientation towards Europe. The 4th EaP Summit in Riga took a closer look at the other three EaP countries without AAs in force, and offered alternative agreements to Azerbaijan and Armenia, as well as additional cooperation possibilities to Belarus. The 5th EaP Summit is to take place under the Estonian Presidency in November 2017. During Lithuanian Presidency, the EaP Civil Society Conference was organized for the first time and later continued by Latvia. Estonia is to follow the tradition and to host the 3rd Conference. The first EaP Youth Conference was also initiated by Lithuania and then continued by Latvia. (However, the next one will be held in Warsaw in June 2017, outside the auspices of the Estonian Presidency.

> ***The Baltic States are still investing into themselves and cannot be expected to donate as much as rich countries like Sweden***

During their Presidencies, the Baltic states facilitate numerous processes focused on deepening EaP countries' engagement with the EU. Ministerial meetings are used to assess and further assist the adoption of EU regulations, while such events as the EaP Business Forum are organised to boost EaP economies and attract additional support. Spurred on by the Russian-Ukrainian war, the Latvian Presidency distinguished itself by hosting the 1st EaP Media Conference, which addressed the danger of Russian language media channels that intentionally or unintentionally broadcast Russian propaganda, and called for greater support for independent journalism in the EaP countries. The event will be followed up by a 2nd EaP Media Conference in Kyiv, held under the Estonian Presidency.

Even outside the six-month Presidency term, the Baltic States are constantly vocal about the events in the EaP region. They criticize Russia for non-compliance with the Minsk Agreements, remain among the strongest advocates for continuing sanctions against Russia, and actively support Ukrainian forces in eastern Ukraine. In addition, the Baltic States offer various training programmes either bilaterally or within the framework of NATO. The Lithuanian–Polish–Ukrainian Brigade, operationally ready since 2016, acts as a sign of security commitment and interest to reform Ukrainian military by making it interoperable with NATO forces.

Many experts within the Baltic States are involved in assisting the EaP countries. The Estonian government even established the

Estonian Center of Eastern Partnership to provide training programmes to EaP officials and civil society and to promote EaP-related issues. In Latvia and Lithuania local think tanks, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and educational institutions fulfil such functions.

Bilateral Support for the EaP Countries: The Case of Ukraine

Based on how actively the Baltic States advocate within regional and international formats for the EaP countries and their societies, it can be assumed that their political support is of greater significance than the financial one. The Baltic States are still investing into themselves and cannot be expected to donate as much as rich countries like Sweden, whose official development assistance (ODA) in 2015 reached 1.5 percent of its gross national income (GNI) or USD 7.09 billion, or Germany, which donated 0.53 percent of GNI or USD 17.78 billion. Estonian, Latvian and Lithuanian ODA totalled 0.15 percent, 0.09 percent and 0.11 percent of GNI respectively.[3] As a result, the Baltic States aim to optimize and channel their development cooperation assistance funds to areas of common interest with a possibility to transfer their transitional experiences and success stories.

According to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Estonia, the country's budget for development cooperation and humanitarian aid for Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine in 2016 consisted of EUR 3.32 million. Estonia's bilateral development cooperation with Ukraine in 2015 amounted to EUR 998 779.[4] In 2015 Latvia devoted EUR 644 250 to Ukraine of which EUR 150 000 went to international organisations and foundations supporting the country. An additional amount of EUR 161 278 was given as humanitarian aid.[5] Lithuania's bilateral development assistance in 2015 accounted for EUR 8.3 million, most of which was given to the EaP countries. Also, EUR 400 000 out of EUR 600 000 for humanitarian aid were earmarked for Ukraine.[6] Projects for development of cooperation and democracy promotion implemented in Ukraine in 2015 accounted for EUR 356 000, while in 2016 there was an increase to EUR 452 000.[7]

A great part of Ukraine-focused development cooperation projects funded by the Baltic States prioritise actions contributing to the implementation of the Association Agreement. Particular attention is given to good governance and strengthening the rule of law, economic development (especially of regions), development of civil society, and education. Estonia and Latvia allocate a significant share of their assistance to Chernihiv oblast, where Latvia facilitates region's territorial reform and municipal cooperation, while Estonia focuses on environmentally friendly farming models.

Each country focused on its own strengths in providing assistance. Estonia supported training programmes for Ukrainian officials

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3 OECD, "Development aid in 2015 continues to grow despite costs for in-donor refugees", April 13, 2016, http://www.oecd.org/dac/stats/ODA-2015-detailed-summary.pdf

4 Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Estonia, Estonian Aid to Ukraine in 2015, http://www.vm.ee/sites/default/files/content-editors/development-cooperation/estonian_aid_to_ukraine_in_2015_0.pdf

5 Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Latvia, Latvia's support for Ukraine, May 4, 2016, http://www.mfa.gov.lv/en/news/developments-in-ukraine/latvia-supports-ukraine

6 Official Website of the Lithuanian Development Cooperation, Lithuanian Official Development Assistance 2004-2015, https://www.orangeprojects.lt/en/statistics

7 Official Website of the Lithuanian Development Cooperation, Development Cooperation and Democracy Promotion Programme in Ukraine,
https://www.orangeprojects.lt/en/ukraine-projects

on e-governance and cyber security, while Latvia focused on anti-corruption and transparency in the use of public funds, as well as urban development planning. Lithuania, for its part, assisted with the creation of a sustainable system of state registers and shared experiences of increasing energy efficiency and independence.

Many initiatives are aimed at assisting Ukrainian internally displaced persons (IDPs), especially conflict affected children and war veterans. The first Ukrainian soldier who travelled abroad for medical assistance and rehabilitation was received in Lithuania. Multiple summer camps aiming to provide friendly environment and psychological assistance to refugee children were held in the Baltic States. Furthermore, government-funded scholarships for the EaP students were initiated in the best Baltic universities. For example, in 2015 Latvia allocated EUR 40 000 EUR for 15 Ukrainian students to study the European Studies program at the University of Latvia. The same year, a scholarship program in Estonia accounted to nearly EUR 200 000.

Each country focused on its own strengths in providing assistance. Estonia supported training programmes for Ukrainian officials on e-governance and cyber security, while Latvia focused on anti-corruption and transparency in the use of public funds, as well as urban development planning. Lithuania, for its part, assisted with the creation of a sustainable system of state registers and shared experiences of increasing energy efficiency and independence.

Lithuania has used its success story of the EU integration to increase public support for pro-European course and to refute myths about the West spread by Russia. In 2013, a Ukrainian-language magazine containing stories of renowned Lithuanians reflecting on the advantages of the EU membership was published[8]. Currently the Baltic States are focusing on increasing their own societies' resilience to Russian propaganda; as a result, numerous projects facilitating exchanges of experience and even content between Baltic and EaP journalists are now underway.

Due to good knowledge of the EaP region, Russia and Russian language, many professionals from the Baltic States were sent by their governments or assumed positions at different international missions aimed at assisting the Ukrainian government with reforms. The first post-Maidan Cabinet of Ministers even included Lithuanian-born Aivaras Abromavičius as Minister of Economic Development and Trade.

Future Cooperation

Among briefly described cooperation areas where Baltic experiences are of use to the EaP region, a continuous attention should be given to the following, among others:

- Supporting implementation of AAs and DCFTAs in Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine;
- Detecting areas of mutual interests with Azerbaijan, Armenia and Belarus and using them as a basis for strengthening democratic developments, especially respect for human rights;
- Developing people-to-people contacts with focus on the youngest citizens of the Baltic States and EaP countries. Since young people in both regions have not of

[8] Magazine can be accessed here: http://www.eesc.lt/uploads/news/id668/UKR.pdf

course had a common Soviet experience, thus, the risk of weakened ties arises. The implementation of visa-free travel for Ukrainian and Georgian citizens is a part of solution;

- Contributing to the common security by using NATO as a platform for initiatives such as the above-mentioned Lithuanian-Polish-Ukrainian battalion. Support for the NATO integration of interested EaP countries should be provided;
- Improving communication, first, by using success stories of the Baltic states when arguing for pro-European reforms and geopolitical direction, and second, by informing local populations about the EU support to the EaP region and raising public awareness about the actions of their respective governments;
- Creating a multi-layered cooperation, which would not rely on the activities of the Baltic and EaP NGOs, but involve inter-governmental/parliamentary/ party cooperation. Bigger challenges arise when aiming to change the mind-set of EaP political elites. Paradoxically, most resources are directed towards already advanced EaP society.

The ultimate advice is to accept the EaP countries as equal partners able to contribute to the development of the Baltic States. For example, Ukrainian experiences are of great use for increasing the Baltic States' resilience to Russian propaganda and modern unconventional warfare. Furthermore, not all of the Baltic experiences are applicable to the EaP region. They often need revision and adaptation to current realities. Therefore, an open mind when it comes either to bilateral or regional cooperation is essential.

Conclusions

The links between the Baltic States and the EaP countries are strong. The testaments of existing friendships are such initiatives as Vilnius square in Tbilisi and Tbilisi square in Vilnius. Recently, a Lithuanian square was opened in Kyiv.

Development cooperation of the Baltic states more or less covers similar areas. However, it is nothing close to the Visegrad Group (V4) engagement, where supported projects have to include at least three of the V4 countries. The application of a similar approach and a joint fund for development cooperation projects would avoid overlapping and would efficiently increase the Baltic States' support to the EaP region.

As long as the Baltic states and the EaP countries' cooperation is dominated by bilateral initiatives, the hypothesis that their actions in the EaP region have a role in strengthening the Baltic states as a region cannot be confirmed. Of course, any positive developments within the EaP countries do have an effect on the Baltic States, as they increase the perception of safety in their neighbourhood. But it is in times of instability, for example, after the emergence of Ukrainian-Russian war, when Baltic states lean towards each other, assess their joint capacities and advocate within the EU and NATO for greater support. It can be concluded that, despite existing competition, the Baltic States have a strong tendency to stick together in the most difficult times. This pattern should prevail in the future.

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THE IDEA OF EUROPEAN INTEGRATION AND THE CROSS-BORDER COOPERATION OF UKRAINE WITH THE EU

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The main goal of this paper is to analyse cross-border cooperation (CBC) of Ukraine with the EU in order to present a set of ideas and activities, which turned the EU into a key actor of multi-level cooperation. The main research questions are the following: researching the aims of cross-border cooperation of the EU and Ukraine; analyses of the EU's CBC politics in the areas of fighting corruption and bringing multilateralism and transparent politics to Ukraine; researching the example of the EUBAM as the EU experience in the sphere of CBC.

The Aims of Cross-Border Cooperation of the EU and Ukraine

The policies of enlargement are a success story of the EU, which should be continued. The last accession of Romania and Bulgaria brought the EU to the Ukrainian border and raised new direct concerns, such as building a deep sustainable democracy, supporting an inclusive and sustainable economic growth, strengthening the Eastern regional dimension and providing mechanisms and instruments to support these objectives. The EU's approach to a cross-border cooperation (CBC) politics has a main goal to bring multilateralism and transparent politics to Ukraine as a part of its neighbouring strategy.

The core policy objectives of the EU cross-border cooperation are to support sustainable development along both sides of the EU's external borders, to reduce differences in living standards and to address the challenges and opportunities following the EU enlargement or otherwise arising from the geographic proximity of cross-border regions. Different modes of bilateral CBC between the new EU member-states and Eastern Partnership countries, in particular Ukraine, have been introduced since the 2004 and 2007 EU enlargements. They seek to maintain existing links in the areas of human contacts, cultural exchanges, trade and seasonal migration. The role of CBC in regional/spatial development is stipulated by its ability to mobilise and efficiently use the existing potential of border areas and to join the resources of border regions of neighbouring countries to find solutions to common problems and to foster co-operation within trans-border regions.

One must understand that in many aspects the EU member-states are no longer individual actors. In terms of communitarian policies, competences have been transferred to the institutions, including the Commission (such as movement of goods, services, persons and capital, as well as other common policies). Despite general policy implications, there are psychological barriers of internal political thinking about it. Security, democracy, human rights, illegal migration etc. related to the Republic of

Moldova and Ukraine became new challenges for the EU as well as it had previously been for Romania. Despite the fact that ENP does not give a European perspective to the new neighbours, it does not establish any "ban" for this process in the future. This partnership is orientated at achieving first the goals of a free and democratic society and a functioning economy orientated to the EU model. The support granted by the EU would also compensate the "adverse" (collateral) effect of its extension on trade agreements, trans-border cooperation etc. (GSP +, visa liberalisation agreements, autonomous preferences etc.).[1]

Poland and Romania are the most interested countries in this dimension. They could accept the responsibility of sharing the task of assessing, planning, and enforcing those policies at the border, first of all in the Black Sea Region and second in the Baltic region. The assistance of all European countries in this field will be very much welcomed. The differences between the specific weight of two neighbour spaces - in terms of values, way and means of living - are a common ground for encouraging and developing any emerging conflicts. At the same time, as the differences disappeared, the conflicts and divergent positions are less probable to appear or escalade and could be solved by diplomatic means. Another axiom of democracy states that democratic states arrive very hard to direct conflicts, do not fight and do not use violence one against the other[2] but have the diplomatic tools to solve those disputes. This is the theoretical grounds of the ENP. That is why reforms and progress towards the convergence of values by the neighbour countries are valued with economic advantages. Political interests include political cooperation and dialogue (comprising of human rights and good governance), cooperation in the field of security and foreign policy, cooperation in justice and home affairs as well as cultural cooperation and cross-border cooperation.

> ***reforms and progress towards the convergence of values by the neighbour countries are valued with economic advantages***

The EU is a key donor giving financial and technical aid to the South-West border regions of Ukraine (Odesa, Chernivtsi, Ivano-Frankivsk, Lviv, Zakarpattya, and Volyn oblasts). In 1998-2002, the European Commission through the TACIS CBC Programme granted to Ukraine 22.5 million Euros[3]. The CBC Programmes 2007-2013, in which Ukraine's involvement was approved in 2008 reached up to: 1) Hungary Slovakia-Romania-Ukraine: € 68.640 million; 2) Romania-Ukraine-Moldova: € 126.718 million; 3) Poland-Belarus-Ukraine: € 186.201 million; 4) The Black Sea CBC Sea basin programme: € 17.306 million.[4]

The ENP was updated in 2011, partly in response to the Arab Spring. In addition to supporting the Euro-Mediterranean and Eastern Partnerships as set out above, CBC in the Neighbourhood also complements

1 I. Chifu, The Eastern Dimension of the European Neighbourhood Policy: A Romanian approach [http://www.ieac.org.ua/pics/content/4/1184149091_ans.doc access: 7 November 2016]

2 J.M. Owen, How Liberalism Produces Democratic Peace "International Security", 1994, Vol.19 (2), p.93-94.

3 European Neighbourhood Policy. Country Report. Ukraine. Commission Staff Working Paper, Brussels, 12.5.2004, SEC (2004) 566, COM (2004) 373 final.

4 Implementation of the European Neighbourhood Policy in 2008. Progress Report: Ukraine. Commission Staff Working Document, Brussels, 23/04/2009, Sec (2009) 515/2.

other important regional or sub-regional initiatives including the Northern Dimension, Black Sea Synergy and the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region. CBC in the European Neighbourhood from 2014 onwards builds on experience of planning and implementing CBC in the European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument (ENPI) in the period of 2007-2013. It also draws on experience with CBC within the EU under the European Territorial Co-operation programmes and CBC between Member States and IPA beneficiaries under the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance, and under older instruments such as PHARE, TACIS and Meda.

CBC from 2014 is included in the European Neighbourhood Instrument (ENI) regulation covering the period 2014-2020. Within the general ENP policy context, CBC has an essential role to play, distinct from other forms of cooperation by virtue of operating for the benefit of both sides of the EU's external border, and drawing on funding from both external and internal headings of the EU budget. CBC contributes to the overall ENI objective of progress towards 'an area of shared prosperity and good neighbourliness' between EU Member States and their neighbours. To advance this goal, based on reviews and evaluation of CBC under ENPI, CBC under the ENI will have 3 overarching strategic objectives: promote economic and social development in regions on both sides of common borders; address common challenges in environment, public health, safety and security; promotion of better conditions and modalities for ensuring the mobility of persons, goods and capital. Each programme must contribute to at least one of the strategic objectives.[5]

For the period 2014-20, a total of 12 land-border and 1 sea-crossing programmes will be financed, as well as four sea-basin programmes. Among land-border programmes there are such programmes as "Poland/Belarus/Ukraine", "Hungary/Slovakia/Romania/Ukraine", and "Romania/Ukraine". These programmes are more or less identical, but the list of their priorities does not help to understand why their useful effect is so small. From our point of view, it becomes clearer if we look at the problem through the theory of transparency; in fact, it is exactly the absence of transparency that distinguishes Ukraine from the EU member-states.

Transparency studies are very popular and important in the EU today. The general concept of local government transparency incorporates a host of distinct forms of information pertaining to actions taken by local government. However, according to Gregory Porumbescu, the types of information publicly disclosed by local governments, often in accordance with various legal obligations, do not necessarily lead to increased availability of government information that the public views as relevant. Rather, merely adhering to legal obligations for disclosure is, in itself, unlikely to be sufficient for obtaining goals of engendering greater responsiveness and trust in local government. As such, efforts to enhance public disclosure must be supplemented by attempts to ensure that the transparency policies of local governments disclose the types of information that the public deems relevant, to improve the chances of the general public accessing and using the information afforded to them. It is only by ensuring the general public accesses government information that we can then

[5] Programming document for EU support to ENI Cross-Border Cooperation (2014-2020), European Commission [https://eeas.europa.eu/.../cbc_2014-2020_programming_document_en.pdf access: 7 November 2016]

[6] G.A. Porumbescu, Using Transparency to Enhance Responsiveness and Trust in Local Government: Can It Work? "State and Local Government Review", 2015, Vol. 47 (3), p. 208.

hope to see greater responsiveness and trust in local government.[6]

EUBAM as the Main Success in the Ukraine-EU CBC

The fight against organised crime is a key cross-border challenge. The EU supports bilateral, regional cross-border and international cooperation with third countries in improving the prevention of and fight against organised crime, corruption and terrorism. Specific emphasis should be on combating all sorts of organised crime, including illicit trafficking of human beings, smuggling of cigarettes, alcohol, counterfeited goods, firearms and stolen vehicles or other contraband. Close cooperation at the local and regional level between law-enforcement bodies and other competent authorities on both sides of the EU's external borders will be a valuable complement to cooperation at the national level.[7]

One of the tangible successes in the Ukraine-EU relations is fruitful cooperation on border and customs-related matters in the Ukraine – EU - Moldova triangle. The EU Border Assistance Mission to Moldova and Ukraine (EUBAM) is probably the best and the most efficient reform tool in the field of border management. On the other hand, it is an expensive exercise that proved the ability of the EU to set and organise a big mission rather quickly. It should also be mentioned that necessary political will had to be created previously in both neighbouring countries – the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine in order to allow the operations on their respective territories.

Launching the EU Border Assistance Mission at the Ukraine-Republic of Moldova border and establishing a new customs regime by Ukraine and Moldova on 3rd March 2006 became the first example of such successful multilateral cooperation under the EU's sponsorship. Despite the agreements that existed at that time between the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine, the initiation of the demarcation processes by a joint Commission, and also the drafts of bilateral agreements, there were some difficulties

> ***Ukraine and Moldova are requested to adapt their rules at the border to the European standards for controlling persons and goods.***

when establishing effective communication. Only for an illustrative purpose and as a matter of example, we would mention: "joint control posts" in the separatist region; border guards conflicts near the Novodnestrovsk Power Plant; territorial disputes in the demarcation Commission; Palanka border management etc.[8]

The customs and border dialogue between the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine has entered a new phase after the failed attempt in September 2001 to establish joint Ukraine-Moldova control posts on the Ukrainian territory. Later customs dialogue was focused on the reestablishment of joint control-posts, particularly on the separatist segment of the common Moldova-Ukraine border (including, Kuchurgan-Pervomaiskoe and Kuchurgan-Novosavitskoe). This bilateral dialogue has been mediated since 2003 by the EU.[9] By that time, the President of Moldova announced that German, British

[7] Programming document for EU support to ENI Cross-Border Cooperation (2014-2020), European Commission [https://eeas.europa.eu/.../cbc_2014-2020_programming_document_en.pdf access: 7 November 2016]

[8] Official site of EUBAM [http://www.eubam.org/en/about/what_we_do access: 7 November 2016]

[9] I. Chifu, The Eastern Dimension of the European Neighbourhood Policy: A Romanian approach [http://www.ieac.org.ua/pics/content/4/1184149091_ans.doc access: 7 November 2016]

etc. customs had agreed to substitute or observe on the ground the cross-border traffic between the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine.

The EUBAM is a compromise of "international customs control on the separatist segment of the state boundary line of the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine and assistance for an effective international mechanism of its monitoring …" as stated in a joint letter of the heads of the states from the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine on 2nd of June 2005.[10] EUBAM has no executive power and it cannot enforce legislation by itself, which is prohibited even by its mandate. However, there is an observer at the border who may ask for additional checks at the request or upon the information of the respective competent services.

Nonetheless, we would like to mention the collateral effects. First, it is the EU involvement on the ground and its presence in the region. It gave a better knowledge of the situation and a more effective policy orientation in the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine. Second, it has significantly improved the communication and trust between the competent border authorities of both neighbour countries. The third element to be mentioned is 41 recommendations of the Needs Assessment and Recommendations Report (NARR) that guide the reform process after 2006.[11]

Despite its actual technical role, the impact on modernisation of border authorities of the Republic of Moldova is the most relevant. It could also be envisaged to extend or transfer this experience from customs and border management matters to the cooperation on readmission procedures and investigations.

As a contribution to the fight against corruption, EUBAM strives to lead by example, espouse the most professional of standards in its daily work, and adhere strictly to the Mission's core values. The Mission has appointed an anti-corruption advisor to work with its partners and developed an Anti-Corruption Assistance Strategy to guide its approach, based on the European principles of good governance, namely: openness, participation, accountability, effectiveness, and coherence. The main areas of assistance EUBAM provides in this regard are related to regulatory framework, transparency and openness, audit and investigation, code of conduct, human-resource management, and awareness raising and training.

The first year's record of the monitoring mission of the Republic of Moldova-Ukrainian border was encouraging, issues like illegal migration, drugs, trafficking of Western stolen cars, chicken meat smuggling offering positive statistics[12]. Moreover, the implementation of modern container checking techniques proved fruitful in terms of hunting guns and unmarked cigarettes.

Some points remain to be better implemented. A new improvement is needed in the efficiency of Ukraine/Moldova border guards. Training and expertise for those involved at the border – border guards, police, and customs – should be more extensive and targeted. Ukraine and Moldova are requested to adapt their rules

[10] I. Chifu, The Eastern Dimension of the European Neighbourhood Policy: A Romanian approach [http://www.ieac.org.ua/pics/content/4/1184149091_ans.doc access: 7 November 2016]

[11] EUBAM Annual Report [http://eubam.org/wp-content/uploads/2007/06/EUBAM-Annual-Report-200506-ENG.pdf access: 7 November 2016]

[12] EUBAM Annual Report [http://eubam.org/wp-content/uploads/2007/06/EUBAM-Annual-Report-200506-ENG.pdf access: 7 November 2016]

at the border to the European standards for controlling persons and goods. The EU in its term has been preparing the second phase of its monitoring mission in the larger framework of the Concept on ESDP missions at the frontiers. The document envisaged a new approach towards border security challenges and risks brought forward by the eastward and southward expansion of the EU.

In July 2006, a new office and analytical centre of EUBAM was opened in Illichivsk and Odessa respectively, the staff of the mission was increased by 40 persons, and CEC allocated additional finances in the amount of 6 million EURO. EUBAM support was critical in the creation of the Pre-Arrival Information Exchange System (PAIES), which since April 2008 has given the customs services of Moldova and Ukraine a way by which they can share, quickly access, and coordinate information on imports and exports, thereby helping to tackle customs fraud and other illicit activities. EUBAM had a budget of €21 million (2011-13) and a staff of approximately 100 seconded and contracted staff mostly from EU member States, and more than 120 national staff of Moldova and Ukraine.[13]

However, the fundamental objective of this cooperation – effective border assistance and tackling with the challenges of TMR unrecognized status – cannot have been achieved without the settlement of the Transnistrian problem. The EU is interested in neutralizing a grey un-transparent zone in the shape of a breakaway republic. One of the EU priorities remains establishing control over freight traffic connected to Moldova, including what goes through ports in Ukraine, such as Odessa and Illichivsk. The main priority for the EU in the resolution of Transnistria is ensuring stability and regional security near its external borders. The EUBAM proposed that import flows are not forcibly reoriented from Transnistria to bypass the Transnistrian portion of the Ukrainian-Mol¬dovan border. The presence of the EU mission on the border and the Agreement on the exchange of information between the Customs Services of Ukraine and Moldova dated 16.11.2006 is used to organize the surveillance of all import flows in the region.

Conclusions

A new regional paradigm defines "peripheral", "rural", "provincial" in the condition of spatial cooperation network as something that is not necessarily structurally weak, as well as "central position" is not inevitably linked with economic prosperity. Nowadays CBC is an efficient tool of the border areas' development and is a means of fostering Ukraine's move towards the European integration. In this context, the role of cross-border cooperation in regional/spatial development is stipulated by its ability to mobilise and efficiently use the existing potential of border areas and to join resources of border regions of neighbouring countries to find solutions to common problems and to foster cooperation within trans-border regions.

Transparency has long been considered a cornerstone of good governance. It can improve decision-making, impede corruption, enhance accountability, and foster a more informed and understanding citizenry. When taken together, the varied benefits of enhanced transparency should culminate in more responsive and trustworthy public organizations. Therefore, EU's recent attempts in Ukraine to enhance transparency through all instruments (the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance, older instruments such as PHARE, TACIS and

[13] Official site of EUBAM [http://www.eubam.org/en/about/what_we_do access: 7 November 2016]

Meda, and specific initiatives like EUBAM) have generally been welcomed.

For better CBC cooperation of the EU and Ukraine the next steps are crucially important: 1) formulating clear positions of the EU in the sensitive areas in order to avoid misuse and misinterpretation of the EU goals, values and interests, in particular: stress on consolidation of democratic institutions and rule of law, and solution of regional conflicts on the basis of territorial integrity; 2) continuous specific regional initiatives on the basis of the EUBAM experience; 3) stronger support to Ukraine in the areas of border management, fighting corruption and transparency growing.

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NORTH AMERICA CHALLENGES: NEW PROSPECTIVES FOR THE REGION?

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This article is aimed to analyse the most prominent and essential political, economic and security trends of the last 20 years in this region, as well as to forecast further developments based on election promises of the President-elect of the United States of America, the key country in the region. Attention is also paid to the possible influence North American regional trends might have on world politics, economics and security in the next several years.

Today, in the time of increased political turbulence the world is facing, the North American region is considered, fair enough, as a key region in the international political affairs. The North America has a definition that in the early 2000s became a political one as much as it had been a geographical one. Today, the North American region is a complex political, economic and security system. This system is not a monolithic one, but it is stable as within the last 20 years it has been able to create necessary mechanisms and practices allowing to take coordinated decisions and to become a complex with unique environment that successfully reacts to current threats and challenges.

The United States of America, Canada and Mexico remain three different countries – with different interests, powers, and diverse style of leadership. However, despite the differences, these countries came to an agreement in 2005 – at the first annual North American Leaders' Summit in Waco, Texas – on being constructive and joined together to present a unique security system and a region like no other. The countries generally agreed on efforts to manage climate change and environment challenges, committed to deeper regional and global cooperation as well as strengthening regional security and defence. That was last stated and reaffirmed by the U.S. President Barack Obama, Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and President of Mexico Enrique Peña Nieto at the North American Leaders' Summit in late June 2016.[1]

Basic Stability: Common Vision and Strong Economic Ties

The economies of the three countries are deeply interrelated and integrated, especially in key export/import areas, including vehicles, machinery and electrical machinery, agriculture, mineral fuels, and plastics a.o. The countries enjoy stable and long-lasting trade relations benefiting the whole region, despite their different basic positions and asymmetric involvement: while the U.S. export to and import from Canada and Mexico reaches a partner share from 13% to 18%, Canada and Mexico

[1] FACT SHEET: United States Key Deliverables for the 2016 North American Leaders' Summit // The White House. Office of the Press Secretary. – June 29, 2016: https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2016/06/29/fact-sheet-united-states-key-deliverables-2016-north-american-leaders

partner share in export to the U.S. gets around 76% and 81%, and in imports from the U.S. – around 53% and 47% respectively.[2] Diversification of partnership puts the U.S. into a stronger position with more flexibility and broader negotiating capacity for creating economic agenda in the region.

A solid basis for beneficial economic cooperation has been created by the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). As reported by the USTR Office, since 1993, when NAFTA was signed, the U.S. exports to Canada are up 179% in goods (top export categories – vehicles, machinery and electrical machinery, mineral fuels, and plastics) and 237% in services (travel, intellectual property, including software and audio-visual, and transportation); similar data has been demonstrated in imports from the U.S. to Canada – up 165% in goods and 232% in services within the same perio[3]. An even more intensive dynamic remains in U.S.-Mexican trade relations: the U.S. exports to Mexico are up 468% in goods (top export categories – vehicles, machinery and electrical machinery, optical and medical instruments, mineral fuels, and plastics) and up around 196% in services (travel, transportation, intellectual property, including computer software) since 1993; the U.S. imports from Mexico are up 638% in goods and up 191% in services compared to pre-NAFTA relations[4].

The North American Free Trade Agreement has unlocked opportunities and has made the trilateral relations deeper: more than 3 million American jobs (Made-in-America jobs) and over 140 000 small & medium-sized businesses have been supported due to cooperation within NAFTA[5]. Expanding trade opportunities via North American Free Trade Agreement became an important precondition for ensuring stability in the region: by signing NAFTA Agreement and implementing this deal efficiently, the Governments of the U.S., Canada and Mexico have raised the bar for further eradicative changes in trade and economic rules existing among the countries for more than 20 years.

Politically the NAFTA project remains sustainable, as it has been supported both by Democrats and by Republicans: that was President George H.W. Bush who negotiated the deal together with Canadian Prime Minister Brian Mulroney and Mexican President Carlos Salinas and signed it. But it was President Bill Clinton who contributed the most and passed the NAFTA bill in the Congress on November 17, 1993, even with more Republicans voting for it (132) than Democrats (102), who

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2 Due to the World Bank data: the U.S. exports – to Canada worth US$ 279,990 million, with a partner share of 18.62 percent, to Mexico worth US$ 236,377 million, with a partner share of 15.72 percent; the U.S. imports – from Canada worth US$301,036 million, with a partner share of 13.05 percent, from Mexico worth US$ 297,500 million, with a partner share of 12.90 percent. [WITS: World Integrated Trade Solution: http://wits.worldbank.org/CountryProfile/en/Country/USA/Year/2015/SummaryText]

Canada exports to the U.S. worth US$ 312,131 million, with a partner share of 76.66 percent. Canada imports from the U.S. worth US$ 222,999 million, with a partner share of 53,25 percent. [WITS: World Integrated Trade Solution: http://wits.worldbank.org/CountryProfile/en/Country/CAN/Year/2015/SummaryText]

Mexico exports to the U.S. worth US$ 309,110 million, with a partner share of 81.18 percent. Mexico imports from the U.S. worth US$ 187,301 million, with a partners share of 47,39 percent. [WITS: World Integrated Trade Solution: http://wits.worldbank.org/CountryProfile/en/Country/MEX/Year/2015/SummaryText]

3 U.S.-Canada Trade Facts // Office of the United States Trade Representative. Executive Office of the President. – https://ustr.gov/countries-regions/americas/canada

4 U.S.-Mexico Trade Facts // Office of the United States Trade Representative. Executive Office of the President. – https://ustr.gov/countries-regions/americas/mexico

5 North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) // Office of the United States Trade Representative. Executive Office of the President. – https://ustr.gov/trade-agreements/free-trade-agreements/north-american-free-trade-agreement-nafta

supported the North American Free Trade Agreement Implementation Act.[6] Despite some discussions over several provisions, including taxes and anti-dumping measures, or slight scepticism over the free trade deals demonstrated even by then-Senator Obama during the 2008 elections, the major support of NAFTA was kept. Discussions brought better solutions, and the President Obama became an advocate of free trade in Washington.

Based on positive experience and following beneficial trade policy in the region, the Obama Administration committed to expand the stability zone by starting negotiations over and signing the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) on February 4, 2016[7] as well as by negotiating since early 2013 the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (T-TIP). While TPP addresses environmental challenges (including wildlife trafficking, illegal fishing a.o.), responds to newest global trade developments (including growing digital economy) as well as upholds cutting-edge labour and environmental standards for the workers[8], T-TIP is aimed to increase access for Made-in-America goods & services to the European markets with a commitment to unlock opportunities for business, farmers and workers as well as to keep high standards of consumer protection[9].

Thus, economically the North American region has been put under two-level barrier – by creating regional semi-domestic economic rules within NAFTA on the first level and by securing environment across the Pacific and the Atlantic on the second level. Regardless of some difficulties such as the negative impact of steel and aluminium excess production on companies, workers and trade in North America, the countries remain cooperative in solving sensitive issues both bilaterally and in trilateral format pointing to *'the fact that free trade also has to be fair trade'*[10]. By keeping these Agreements, the region will be saved from dramatic economic turbulence.

Thus, economically the North American region has been put under two-level barrier – by creating regional semi-domestic economic rules within NAFTA on the first level and by securing environment across the Pacific and the Atlantic on the second level.

Leading by Example: The U.S. Running the Region

Guided by the belief of the strong U.S. leadership both globally and regionally, based on dynamic economy, strong military power and American values, it is interesting to look through the basic origins and

6 H.R. 3450 (103rd): North American Free Trade Agreement Implementation Act // Voting the Bill in the House. – https://www.govtrack.us/congress/votes/103-1993/h575

7 Trans Pacific Partnership trade deal signed in Auckland // BBC News. – February 4, 2016. – http://www.bbc.com/news/business-35480600

8 The Trans-Pacific Partnership // Office of the United States Trade Representative. Executive Office of the President. – https://ustr.gov/tpp/

9 Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (T-TIP) // Office of the United States Trade Representative. Executive Office of the President. – https://ustr.gov/ttip

10 Remarks by President Obama, Prime Minister Trudeau of Canada, and President Peña Nieto of Mexico in North American Leaders' Summit Press Conference // The White House. Office of the Press Secretary. – June 29, 2016. – https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2016/06/30/remarks-president-obama-prime-minister-trudeau-canada-and-president-pe%C3%B1a

expanding tools defining the agenda in the region not only in terms of successful economic cooperation, but also by ensuring security as well as facing new challenges of the modern complex world.

In line for keeping security issues among the main priorities as well as putting appropriate spending in this regard, the U.S. is well positioned in supporting several regional formats for successful security cooperation aimed to face pressing challenges and make the environment in the region safe. In terms of regional cooperation that means focusing on homeland security, ensuring border security, improving security and inspections at ports as well as strengthening screening procedures at airports. A good example in this regard is the first annual North American Drug Dialogue held by the U.S. in October 2016 to create an opportunity for information exchange on drug trends as well as discussing regional tools to combat the heroin and fentanyl crisis in the countries, including respectively health care protection in this regard.[11] The three countries are also working with the private sector on implementing public awareness campaigns on human trafficking in order to educate the public in terms of this transnational challenge. The countries also benefited from information exchange between intelligence and law enforcement agencies.

The U.S. also remains strong in facing new challenges of the modern world, among others cyber security. By facing this transnational threat, the United States have expanded the partnership between governmental and private organizations and enhanced technical capabilities to withstand cyber threats, as well as improved the ability to recover from cyberattacks. In regional format, the U.S., Canada and Mexico are working within the Trilateral Cyber Experts Group led by foreign ministries and intended to strengthen cooperation aimed at *'an open, interoperable, reliable, and secure Internet underpinned by the multi-stakeholder model of Internet governance'*[12]. Moreover, the three countries continue with their joint work in 2016/2017 UN Group of Governmental Experts, the G-20 as well as within the Organization of American States supporting key cyber security objectives. That speaks loudly that in the World Order 2.0 as defined by Richard N. Haass, before establishing a special regime based on sovereign obligations of the Governments and by creating *'international agreements that encourage benign uses of cyberspace and discourage mailing uses'*[13], the U.S. keeps leading and proposes several options for safeguarding the region in this regard.

As Obama Administration set a decisive policy over the climate change, a lot has been done in this regard for the region. By maintaining the climate policy globally, including signing the Paris Agreement as well as contributing to the UN Green Climate Fund, the U.S. have taken important domestic steps in this regard: increased solar power 20-fold and tripled the amount of electricity produced from the wind since 2008, introducing new rules doubling fuel efficiency of the cars in the United States by 2025, as well as set the plan to reduce the amount of carbon dioxide emissions from the power plants. The example set by the U.S.

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11 North American Dialogue on Drug Policy // U.S. Department of State, Office of the Spokesperson. – October 28, 2016. – http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2016/10/263847.htm

12 FACT SHEET: United States Key Deliverables for the 2016 North American Leaders' Summit // The White House. Office of the Press Secretary. – June 29, 2016: https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2016/06/29/fact-sheet-united-states-key-deliverables-2016-north-american-leaders

13 Haass Richard N. World Order 2.0. The Case for Sovereign Obligation // Foreign Affairs. – December 12, 2016. – https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/2016-12-12/world-order-20

remains an example for other countries to meet their obligations for the overall good. In cooperation with Canada and Mexico, the U.S. proposed to amend the Montreal Protocol to phase down production and consumption of hydrofluorocarbons (HFCs), potent greenhouse gases.[14]

These vocal examples demonstrate the ability of the U.S to propose in the proper way, to manage well and to support the neighbouring countries with more opportunities in several areas facing new challenges efficiently, as well as to benefit jointly from a real platform and formats for cooperation, so as to deliver the best solutions for the region. It was defined by the U.S. Vice President Joe Biden, stating: *'America's greatest strength is not the example of power, but the power of example'*[15]. And more can be done on the trilateral level for adapting the regional countries to the new challenges. The example in this regard might be the Stakeholder Dialogue on North American Competitiveness held in late September 2016 in Washington D.C. to create the opportunity for the private sector, local government and civil society to share ideas aimed to increase competitiveness in the North America[16]. Such initiatives make the relations between the countries deeper and more comprehensive.

The challenge for further cooperation in the region, delivering successful projects and ensuring regional stability became the new political environment. That is not referred anymore as a global challenge: as it was already proved within the last seven years, the U.S. can lead the world facing new challenges from the ISIS to Ebola and climate change. Moreover, the Obama Administration has also renewed the focus on the Western Hemisphere that put a measurable impact on regional security and prosperity. The changing political environment is basically connected with domestic political processes, and the 2016 U.S. elections and their results are the most vocal in this regard.

Trap for Trump: Strong Leadership Needed

The new U.S. Administration is put in a complex situation of delivering the electoral promises by the President-elect and at the same time taking further sound and beneficial-for-the-region decisions based on previous experience and having *'the best information possible to make the best decisions possible ... for not flying blind'*[17]. The nominees for the Cabinet to be chaired by the President-elect Donald Trump look much different compared to the previous Administrations and represent a business-oriented establishment with less governance experience and close ties with Wall Street and corporate America.[18]

During the election campaign, the Presidential nominee from the Republicans Donald Trump was very generous with

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[14] See more: A Historic Commitment to Protecting the Environment and Reversing Climate Change // The White House. – Data as of December 17, 2016. – https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-record/climate

[15] Building on Success. Opportunities for the Next Administration // By Joseph R. Biden, Jr. – Foreign Affairs. – September/October 2016 Issue. – https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/united-states/2016-08-07/building-success

[16] Stakeholder Dialogue for the North American Leaders Summit // U.S. Department of State, Office of the Spokesperson. – September 29, 2016. – http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2016/09/262570.htm

[17] Donald Trump taking intel briefings only once a week // By Eugene Scott and Jim Sciutto, CNN. – December 9, 2016. – http://edition.cnn.com/2016/12/09/politics/intelligence-briefings-trump/?sr=fbcnni121316intelligence-briefings-trump0132PMVideoVideo&linkId=32319863

[18] Trump's $6 Billion Cabinet: Mostly Men, Mostly White and Not Much Government Experience // Bloomberg. –December 15, 2016. – https://www.bloomberg.com/graphics/2016-trump-cabinet/

promises that were rapidly growing from 76 in January 2016 to 282 before the elections in November 2016.[19] Part of Trump's electoral rhetoric may undermine the key preconditions for stability in the region, including renegotiating the NAFTA deal and pulling out the Trans-Pacific Partnership, replacing regional consultations by negotiating bilateral deals, constructing a wall along the border with Mexico, pulling out of the Paris Agreement on climate change, etc.. The only issue the President-elect promised to continue supporting is cyber security, and that will happen by assembling a cyber review team, establishing training programs for government employees as well as developing a cyber weapon.

In delivering the promises, the Trump Cabinet members should stand committed as well as get fast the necessary skills for cooperating with the Congress to get new decisions adopted. Regarding the NAFTA renegotiations, the discussion has already been started whether the only written notification to Canada and Mexico referring to the Article 2205 is enough or the final decision needs a special Congress decision as the deal had been enacted notably by the Congress through the NAFTA Implementation Act.[20]

Trump's promise of pulling out of the TPP Agreement correlates with his intention to support American manufacturing and to protect the U.S. workers. This at first glance good idea will place several challenges before the new Administration in making this promise a success, mostly in terms of changing the education system for the workers becoming well prepared for the manufacturing at home.[21] Moreover, in terms of regional stability such a step will create a different environment: without the United States, the Trans-Pacific Partnership will not proceed, and the vacuum of leadership in the region will be filled by another strong player, most likely China. If that is the case, the second level of securing the North American region will not be as strong and sustainable as it is needed. Furthermore, the bilateral trade deals the President-elect intends to choose as the main political tool, will also create fewer preconditions for regional cooperation, as well as will allow the countries to renew the deal by less means and with smaller economic loss.[22]

Building the *'impenetrable, physical, tall, powerful, beautiful southern border wall'*[23] will become a hard task with major economic and political risks for President-elect Trump, who has in fact already informed the President of Mexico Enrique Peña Nieto of such an intention. Such construction will require many technical, financial, and human resources, but also leadership skills

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19 'I will give you everything.' Here are 282 of Donald Trump's campaign promises. // The Washington Post. – November 28, 2016. – https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/i-will-give-you-everything-here-are-282-of-donald-trumps-campaign-promises/2016/11/24/01160678-b0f9-11e6-8616-52b15787add0_story.html?utm_term=.3622ad33fc21

20 What would it take for Donald Trump to rip up NAFTA? // By Mark Gollom, CBC News. – June 30, 2016. – http://www.cbc.ca/news/world/donald-trump-nafta-trade-1.3657673

21 See more: Make America Make Again. Training Workers for the New Economy. // By Katherine S. Newman and Hella Winston. – Foreign Affairs. – January/February 2017 Issue – https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/2016-12-12/make-america-make-again

22 Instead of blanket trade agreements, Donald Trump wants to negotiate one-on-one with countries. // By Jenna Johnson, The Washington Post. – May 2, 2016. – https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/post-politics/wp/2016/05/02/instead-of-blanket-trade-agreements-donald-trump-wants-to-negotiate-one-on-one-with-countries/?utm_term=.a3d7def76448

23 Transcript of Donald Trump's Immigration Speech. // The New York Times. – September 1, 2016. – http://www.nytimes.com/2016/09/02/us/politics/transcript-trump-immigration-speech.html?_r=0

both to negotiate with Mexico over terms and conditions for cooperation in this regard as well as to make this project a reality. Considering that nearly eight-in-ten Tramp supporters favour building a wall along the Mexico border[24], delivering this promise will be a key domestic issue in terms of getting on board the voters from the southern states at the 2020 election campaign.

In August 2016, in the rush election season, the U. S. Vice President Joe Biden told publicly several warnings over the future policy of their successors. In VPOTUS' summary of what Obama Administration has done for the country and common success, he states very clearly that it is *'worth remembering that our indispensable role in the world is not inevitable'.* According to his words, in case the new Administration decides to turn the policy inward, the hard-earned progress within the last seven years could be well squandered.[25] Generally, the Obama Administration keeps supporting the transition team in keeping long-term formats strong, but the final decision is up to the President-elect Donald Trump.

The Prime Minister of Canada Justin Trudeau has publicly stated his readiness to cooperate with the new U.S. Administration. But that change might be not easy considering a very close relationship between the President Obama and the Prime Minister Trudeau as well as several differences in views existing between the Prime Minister Trudeau and President-elect Trump. Special relations, so called 'bromance', between Obama and Trudeau were outlined during the first state visit in nearly 20 years paid by the Canadian Prime Minister to the U.S. in May 2016[26] and reaffirmed during the last meeting at the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation leaders' summit in Peru in late November 2016[27]. Now, the Canadian government should build a new type of relations with the U.S. by managing the disagreements over the climate change, NAFTA future, refugees' policy as well as military spending and participation at the UN peacekeeping missions.

The President of Mexico Enrique Peña Nieto looks more prepared to building constructive relations with the new U.S. Administration. Considering the hard election rhetoric delivered by that time GOP candidate Donald Trump, including renegotiating the NAFTA deal, constructing the wall on the U.S.-Mexican border as well as reconsidering the immigration policy, the President Peña Nieto has started with new nominations in his Cabinet for making the cooperation with the U.S. efficient from the first days the new Administration will begin operating. A good example in this regard is the appointment of Mr. Luis Videgaray, the former Finance Minister and a close ally of the President, to the position of the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Mexico[28]. It was Mr. Videgaray who organised the meeting with Mr. Trump for the President Peña Nieto in August 2016, and it will be Mr. Videgaray, who

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[24] Trump voters want to build the wall, but are more divided on other immigration questions. // By John Gramlich. – Pew Research Center. – November 29, 2016. – http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2016/11/29/trump-voters-want-to-build-the-wall-but-are-more-divided-on-other-immigration-questions/

[25] Building on Success. Opportunities for the Next Administration // By Joseph R. Biden, Jr. – Foreign Affairs. – September/October 2016 Issue. – https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/united-states/2016-08-07/building-success

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will become responsible for relations with the most important political ally and the largest economic and trade partner for Mexico.

Conclusion

The North American region enjoys strong political cooperation based on common values shared by the regional countries and strong economic ties established within the decades, which are beneficial for the regional players. The new political environment set up after the latest elections in the United States has created new challenges the region has to face further.

> ***expanded trade opportunities via NAFTA raised the bar for any eradicated changes and any reconsideration of current rules is weighed down by legal procedures***

The political cooperation in the region is more likely to develop smoothly as the three countries share common values and have many formats for discussion, including the North American Leaders Summit as well as specific platforms for getting key issues resolved and for threats overcome, for making the region safe and prosperous successfully.

In terms of economy, there are slight chances for a changing environment due to the possible cancelation of the TPP deal. At the same time, chances remain high for keeping basic stability in the region, because expanded trade opportunities via NAFTA raised the bar for any eradicated changes and any reconsideration of current rules is weighed down by legal procedures.

Several challenges, including ensuring cyber security, climate change, further cooperation and stability in the region depend on the decisions the President-elect Donald Trump will take in delivering his new policy based both on his electoral promises and on the experience his Cabinet will bring to the White House. The most interesting in this regard is how strong the current political system is for balancing basic rules with new initiatives to be beneficial for the whole region in the future.

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