

CONCEPT “TRYMOR’YA” AND NATIONAL INTERESTS OF UKRAINE

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Summary

The article scrutinizes the «Intermarium» concept, evolving into the broader «Trymor’ya» project within the Eurasian realm. The author underscores Ukraine’s role in this context and explores the benefits for the country within the ambit of this initiative. This project aspires to achieve military-political and economic integration of nations situated between the Baltic and Black Seas, facilitating their transformation into autonomous geopolitical and geo-economic entities. The article highlights the potential formation of a functional federal organization with defense capabilities as part of the «Intermarium» project, contingent upon Western support and Russian weakening. Ukraine’s success in the war against Russia could result in a shift in the geopolitical landscape of Eastern Europe and a change of regime in Belarus, establishing a buffer for strategic allied countries. The article also notes transformations in the economic and geopolitical dimensions, citing support even from previously inactive countries. For instance, Germany and China exhibit a change in their positions influenced by events in Ukraine. The article advocates for the creation of a broad alliance based on shared values, universally applicable to all countries. Overall, the article analyzes the prospects and possibilities of the «Intermarium/Trymor’ya» initiative in the context of the Eurasian space, defining Ukraine’s key role in this process.

Key words: «Three Seas» concept, full-scale Russian invasion, integration associations, geopolitical players, countries of Central and Eastern Europe.

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1. Introduction

Modern realities necessitate substantial changes in shaping the European security space. In Central and Eastern Europe, a considerable group of states is identified, connected by a shared history and having endured the period of communist regimes, both Soviet and Yugoslav. Many of these countries share a deeper history rooted in their affiliation with the Austrian and Austro-Hungarian monarchies, contributing to the emergence of a common religious and cultural tradition. In this regard, the concept of «Intermarium», now transformed into a broader initiative project called «Three Seas», becomes relevant. This initiative, founded on common historical, cultural, and religious ties, provides an opportunity to reconsider the format of European security to ensure stability and development in the region.

The study aims to thoroughly analyze the possibilities of reformatting the Eurasian space involving the countries of «Three Seas», particularly Ukraine, within the context of contemporary challenges and threats. Research tasks encompass studying the geopolitical and geo-economic potential of the initiative, analyzing Ukraine’s role in this context, and identifying potential scenarios for regional security development.

The research methodology relies on the analysis of historical, political, and economic processes, as well as on the logical presentation of the studied material. Understanding the dynamics of interaction among the countries of the «Three Seas» and their role in creating a new security space involves a comprehensive analytical approach.

In the context of contemporary geopolitical challenges and opportunities, this study offers new perspectives on the interweaving of interests and the shared future pragmatics of the «Three Seas» states within the new European security landscape.

2. Geopolitical and Economic Integration in «Intermarium»

The idea of Intermarium was initially formulated by Prince Adam Jerzy Czartoryski. Later, supporters of the Baltic-Black Sea Union/Intermarium included the first head of the Second Polish Republic, Józef Piłsudski, and its foreign minister, Józef Beck. Among Ukrainian politicians, Viacheslav Chornovil, a leader of the late 20th-century national-democratic movement, was also a proponent. In the conditions of full-scale Russian aggression against Ukraine, this idea became highly relevant, as the project could serve as a key to addressing various security issues – military, energy, economic, and others – through the creation of a durable political and economic union of Central and Eastern European countries (*Ławski & Maliutina, 2018*).

The idea of military-political and economic integration of countries located between the Baltic and Black Seas is a way to transform them into independent geopolitical and geo-economic players. For Ukraine, Intermarium could be a useful tool to counteract the hegemony of superpowers. Of course, this is based on the principles of «equality among equals», especially when it comes to building a sovereign and powerful country. States with low or moderate potential, in particular, must safeguard their sovereignty diligently, as being in the shadow of larger states may lead to the imposition of certain «standards» of behavior both on the international stage and in domestic politics. As the experience of the European Union shows, small and medium-sized states (primarily Poland and Hungary) often lament threats to their sovereignty from both major powers (Germany) and central EU authorities (*Krasnodebski, 2022*).

Intermarium in the 21st century is a potential interaction for accelerated development after the full-scale Russian aggression against Ukraine, Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, Poland, Slovakia, the Czech Republic, and Ukraine itself. Under favorable conditions, Romania, Turkey, Georgia, and other countries could also become participants in this project. If the Intermarium project is implemented, it would require at least the formation of a functional federative organization with defense capabilities. Obviously, this would be possible with the approval of the West, especially the United States, and significant weakening of Russia. Such conditions did not exist in the 20th century, but in the 21st century, they are gaining substantial realization (*Nagel, 2022*). The success of Ukraine in the war against Russia could lead to a change in the geopolitical status of Eastern Europe and a change of regime in Belarus, creating a buffer for strategic allied countries. Additionally, for the first time at least since the 17th century, «we would overcome the «neighborhood» problem – a convenience that most Western Europeans perceived as an imperative fact after the end of World War II. A unified region of Eastern Europe with a human and economic potential of over 100 million citizens could balance the dominance of the old Rhineland region in the EU» (*Makhno, 2022*).

It is important to note that the Eurasian space is currently undergoing a transformation, with Ukraine taking on the role of the central part. Together with Poland and the Baltic countries, it forms a community of states that cuts Eurasia in half – from the Baltic to the Black

Seas. Many countries have expressed readiness to help Ukraine resist Russian aggression, providing it with modern weapons from various sources. There is a growing belief globally that Ukraine will prevail in this war. As winners of wars always possess centripetal attractiveness, even Germany, previously unimaginable, has started assisting Ukraine. The German establishment seeks to demonstrate a negative attitude towards Russia and support for Ukraine. Articles accusing politicians of receiving Russian money for many years and effectively becoming Russian lobbyists have appeared in the German press. Similar processes have also begun in France (*Shcherbyna, 2022*).

Interesting transformations are occurring in China as well. China aimed to become a global power through «soft power» methods – economy, trade, investments, corruption of officials in various countries, etc. The extensive Russian invasion of Ukraine dealt a severe blow to this Chinese strategy. Due to military actions in our country, several supply chains have been disrupted, and the world imposes sanctions against firms collaborating with Russia. While initially trying to maintain neutrality, the Chinese press now calls the Russian-Ukrainian war an actual war. Chinese firms are avoiding collaboration with Russia and are instead attempting to maintain their relations with the West. Thus, by its resilience on the battlefield, Ukraine struck at the central, albeit weak link of the «Continental Block». Now, the axis from Scandinavia to the Black Sea, or Intermarium, may be the leading force of the Eurasian continent, not the axis of «France – Germany – Russia – China» (*Shcherbyna, 2022*).

3. Transformation of the Eurasian Space and Prospects of "Intermarium" in the Context of Russian Aggression

Following the onset of the second Russian invasion of Ukraine, unlike in 2014, there are signs that the former Polish-centric concept could become a reality, albeit under different conditions and principles. Nevertheless, its aim remains to counter imperial policies, this time exclusively from the East. Paradoxically, it is not Russian imperialism that threatens the emergence of such a transnational, broadly inclusive alliance based on shared values but the potential competition for leadership within it. The exacerbation of this competition may repeat past mistakes, as the future union should be grounded in the principles of mutual respect and equality among its subjects. There should be no distinction between small and large countries, as common values and goals are universal for all—democracy, freedom, and security (*Nagel, 2022*).

The extensive Russian aggression has caused a crisis in international collective security overall, and European continental security in particular. A farsighted and evident response to these challenges is the formation of a new defense alliance (beyond NATO and EU structures) in the triangle between the Baltic, Adriatic, and Black Seas (and potentially the Caspian Sea). Ukraine, whose Armed Forces are currently gaining invaluable experience in combat with the aggressor, could play a leading role in this alliance (*Kovalov, 2022*). Currently, there is no clear vision of how Intermarium would function or who exactly would be a member of this union. However, it is evident that the alliance's format would differ from the project that existed after the First World War: it could include Baltic countries, Poland, Slovakia, the Czech Republic, and Ukraine (*Nagel, 2022*). Moreover, Ukraine's western neighbors (Poland, Finland, Baltic countries, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Slovenia, Croatia, and Romania) have expressed maximum readiness to contribute to our victory over the aggressor, laying the foundations for the «Intermarium» union (*Kovalov, 2022*). Ukraine's inclusion, including Crimea, while maintaining its membership in other international structures, is one possible post-war arrangement

for Europe. Currently, the idea of an alliance of states from the Baltic to the Black and Adriatic Seas is considered a future option for interaction and development among these countries (Podolyak, 2022).

Simultaneously, as evidenced by the Estonian case, there is a significant likelihood that any group associated with Intermarium would function for a limited time as a platform on the path to full integration of its members with the EU. Over the years, strong alliances of the past transform into more thematic debates and negotiations depending on the needs of current policies. In this case, Ukraine could potentially already assertively shape its tactics in institutions of the EU. Ukraine's desire and request to be accepted into the EU and become part of a larger and real European security (NATO) and economic (EU) system are still in the interests of all the aforementioned parties. Without achieving these strategic goals, Ukraine would remain a perpetual periphery of Europe with accompanying threats and limitations (Nagel, 2022).

It is also essential to consider the advantages of «Intermarium» for the Ukrainian Crimea. By participating in the integration within «Intermarium», Ukraine not only gains access to a vast European market of goods and technologies but also provides an opportunity for the revival of the Slavic environment for the Ukrainian population of the peninsula and restores global contacts for the Turkic environment through the community of Lithuanian Tatars, descendants from Crimea. Being part of international organizations, Ukraine could benefit from the help and support of all «Intermarium» countries. Political experience from Poland and Baltic countries regarding the construction of new relations with Russia, which will undoubtedly resist releasing Ukraine, especially Crimea, from its sphere of influence, could be a crucial segment of cooperation for Ukraine. Thus, Ukraine could form the sovereignty that Poland and Baltic countries managed to build earlier and much faster (Podolyak, 2022).

Moreover, for Crimea, it is crucial that most candidate states in «Intermarium» have a developed tourism industry. This would not only provide new prospects for Crimean resorts but also introduce new global technologies, approaches, and standards, which cannot be achieved within Russia. Although Russian officials in Crimea occasionally declare lofty challenges akin to Monaco or Wimbledon, in reality, they cannot create basic conditions for recreational or therapeutic vacations. Within «Intermarium», Crimea could transform into a new center for yacht tourism and be included in routes across the Mediterranean and Baltic Seas. «Intermarium» could create a favorable market for Ukrainian and Crimean agricultural products, and Ukraine could borrow the experience of these countries in organizing the production and processing of agricultural products.

Finally, in the context of cooperation with partners within «Intermarium», including Crimea, Ukraine could receive new incentives for the development of the once powerful but neglected shipbuilding industry due to Russia's actions. Both passenger and cargo, civil and military shipbuilding could be revitalized. Of course, the emergence of international alliances and Ukraine's development within them cannot be predicted precisely, but it will make Ukraine's international relations and the development of Crimea within it more harmonious and comprehensive (Podolyak, 2022).

4. Conclusions

Summarizing the conducted research, it is crucial to note that Ukraine finds itself at the crossroads of civilizational influences between Central and Eastern Europe, the worlds of Catholicism and Orthodoxy, and between Europe and Asia. The preservation, strengthening,

and full development of the country require comprehensive integration into Central Europe as a civilizational phenomenon.

In the context of the opportunities presented by the «Intermarium» as a response to Russian aggression, the research indicates potential advantages and prospects for creating a defensive alliance in the region between the Baltic, Adriatic, and Black Seas. The realization of this project could strengthen the unity of Europe and respond to the challenges of Eurasian expansion, particularly from Russia.

Successful implementation of the «Intermarium» demonstrates the ability of the political elites of participating countries to reach understanding and cooperation in building a secure and integrated space. Bold and unconventional steps are key elements of this process.

In the event of failure to establish new forms of integration, countries may remain within old mechanisms that do not correspond to current realities. It is essential to emphasize that defining the paths of integration and cooperation in the "Intermarium" is critically important for the future of Europe.

This project could determine the success or failure of the region in the face of a changing global order. Therefore, national and global interests must be balanced to achieve stability and progress in the Central European region.

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