

Ukrainian View on the Perspectives of Regional Organizations and Initiatives in the Black Sea Region

Or

Towards Wider Black Sea through the heritage of thousands-years cultural dialogue

The Black Sea region traditionally takes an important place in the system of international relations. Primarily this is due to the strategic location of the region on the crossing of strategic Eurasian traffic roads including important arteries of raw materials and energy resources transportation. Therefore, it is generally acknowledged that this region is extremely important for Eurasian stability and security. Moreover, Black Sea region is an area of thousands-years cultural dialogue, which made a remarkable impact on the whole history of European civilization.

Until recently countries of the Black Sea region had to settle for contacts on the bilateral level and this fact significantly complicated the elaboration of far-reaching transnational projects and cooperation coordination in different spheres. Ukraine's initiatives concerning the creation of Organization of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC) and the regional interstate organization GUAM may be considered as truly successful attempts to set cooperation on the multilateral level.

Penetration of the enlarged EU into the Black Sea region as an outcome of EU accession of Bulgaria and Romania resulted in reviewing EU policy concerning future integration of the Black Sea states. The latest evidence of this fact is the recent proclamation of new regional cooperation initiative „Black Sea Synergy – a New Regional Cooperation Initiative” made by the European Commission.

Preparation of new EC Communiqué is a certain reconsideration and initiative development on behalf of European party concerning strengthening European Neighborhood Policy (ENP). Incentive factors for concept formation of the given initiative were EU aspiration to strengthen the regional context of European Neighborhood Policy as well as recent EU accession of such Black Sea countries as Bulgaria and Romania. In this regard such countries as Bulgaria, Romania and Greece may be the motive powers of EU Black Sea policy implementation.

Formation of EU policy concerning Black Sea region is the reaction to present realia and reflects the growth of region's geopolitical role. On the other hand, taking into account the existence of Mediterranean policy and North aspect of EU policy, development of separate Black Sea policy allows filling the gap that

has existed till present time on the given direction in EU approaches and providing balanced distribution of EU attention and resources on all neighboring regions.

In addition to purely economic interests connected with operating on the new markets and providing important transportation routs for Caspian energy resources supply, to the key interests of EU in the Black Sea region one may include providing stability and security, strengthening civil society, trust and cooperation in the Black Sea region, promoting democracy and rule of law. This fully corresponds to the task on promoting stable democratic development of EU neighboring regions which was declared in European Security Strategy (2004).

It is noteworthy that not only Black Sea countries demonstrate practical interest in involvement into the cooperation projects in terms of the Black Sea region but the countries of the so called “enlarged Black Sea region” as well, in particular, Southern Caucasus countries (Azerbaijan and Armenia) and Western Balkans (Serbia, Montenegro and Albania), which are, for example, the members of BSEC. On the other hand, the number of Black Sea countries are the parties of other European regional initiatives (Community for Democratic Choice, Black Sea Forum for Dialogue and Partnership, Central European Initiative, Stability Pact, Southern Eastern European Cooperation Process, Danube Cooperation Process, Initiative on Cooperation in SECI, Council of Ministers of Defence of Southern-Eastern Europe), which in one way or another are aimed at strengthening stability and security in the enlarged Black Sea region, deepening European integration processes and fastening the process of meeting EU membership criteria by the countries of the region. At the same time, existence of numerous initiatives sometimes leads to duplication of their functions, vain distribution of limited financial resources set for implementing projects of the highest priority and importance.

Following integration course on European and Euro Atlantic structures in its foreign policy, Ukraine continues to make purposeful steps aimed at developing effective relations with respectful international organizations including regional ones, and I would like to point out BSEC and GUAM among them.

Organization of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation possesses new impulses in its activities and it may become leading economic organization of the Black Sea region in the perspective. Currently, as I have emphasized already, the question of close cooperation of this organization with EU becomes extremely important. There is a number of directions for such cooperation where the interests of EU and Black Sea countries coincide or are rather close. First of all it is the matter of energy security, development of alternative resources and routs for supplying energy carriers to the European market. We are convinced that combining economic possibilities of EU and potential of the Black Sea countries may not only result in significant economic effect but also

provoke substantial positive outcomes in political and security dimensions and benefit to the stability of Euro- Black Sea region.

From the 1st of November 2007 till the 30th of April 2008 Ukraine chairs in BSEC and it will use its position in this structure in order to:

- strengthen the influence on defining priorities in BSEC activities and approving in its format decisions on the questions that relate to the external policy and external economic interests of Ukraine;

- play an important role in solving the problems of providing stability and security in Black Sea region in terms of mandate realization of the BSEC Anniversary Summit of 2002;

- confirm Ukraine's course on European integration by strengthening the dialogue with EU and its transition into practical areas of implementing European instruments in terms of Black Sea regional policy;

- initiate multilateral field projects of regional value, important for realization of external economic interests of Ukraine, strengthening the role of Ukraine in implementing the ones which were already approved.

Let me specify Ukraine's objectives in concrete areas during its chairing period in BSEC.

Trade – continuing working on detecting and eliminating obstacles in inter trade, harmonization of custom and trade regimes based on WTO criteria in order to renew activities on creation regional zone of free trade in future perspective.

Transportation – cooperation with EC and UNECE in developing transport corridors for Eurasian conjunction in BSEC region, implementing memorandums concerning baggage car shipment facilitation, development of circular motor-road and marine sea arteries in Black Sea basin.

Energy – initiating, in terms of BSEC, review of the problems connected with providing energy security for countries of the region, including transit matters; initiating specific projects in the sphere of energy, in particular cooperation in intelligence and excavating carbohydrate resources of Black Sea basin.

Security matters – developing cooperation through implementing provisions of relevant multilateral agreements and additional protocols.

Humanitarian and cultural cooperation – establishing full cooperation in this sphere on the ground of the preparation of relevant agreement basis, developing mechanisms and instruments of cooperation in specific directions.

Ukraine acclaims the intention of European Commission to receive the status of observer in the Organization of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC) and is ready to review the official appeal on this matter in a constructive way. We support establishment and development of multilateral dialogue with EU in terms of this initiative as well. Foremost we mean regular ministerial meetings in the format of EU-BSEC countries, meetings of high officials of both parties in order to strengthen coordination in realization specific projects, reinforce parliament aspect of cooperation by dialogue development in the format of European Parliament – BSEC Parliament Assembly.

Another perspective regional organization is the Organization for Democracy and Economic Development – **GUAM**, founded by Azerbaijan, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine during GUAM Kyiv Summit on the 23rd of May, 2006.

The main aims of GUAM are:

- promoting democratic values, ensuring the rule of law, and respect for human rights;
- ensuring sustainable development;
- strengthening international and regional security and stability;
- deepening European integration for the establishment of common security space, and expansion of cooperation in economic and humanitarian spheres;;
- developing social and economic, transport, energy, scientific and technical, and humanitarian potential of the Parties;
- intensification of political interaction and practical cooperation in the field of mutual interest.

There are **eight branch working groups** in GUAM – on economy and trade; on energy; on transport; on culture, science and education; on tourism; on combating terrorism, organized crime and drug trafficking; on information technologies; on civil emergency.

In addition, **two separate projects** are implemented under the GUAM – USA Framework Program – the GUAM Virtual Center on Combating Terrorism, Organized Crime, Drug Trafficking and Other Dangerous Types of Crime (Virtual Law Enforcement Center – VLEC), to which the Interstate Information-Analytical System (ISIAS) is integrated, and the GUAM Project on Trade and Transport Facilitation (TTF).

Immediate proximity of Black Sea region to the sources of potential instability (Caucasus, Middle East, the Balkans), existence of a number of frozen

conflicts in the region as well as necessity of fighting illegal trade, human trafficking, drug and gun smuggling, danger of SGP distribution provokes numerous initiatives on regional cooperation in political and security spheres (for example, Document on Measures to Strengthen Trust and Security in the Military and Naval sphere in Black Sea region, Black Sea Naval Cooperation Task Group “BLACKSEAFOR”, Black Sea Initiative on Border Security, Operation “Black Sea Harmony”). One may state the fact that there is a wide system of treaties and agreements in the Black Sea region in the sphere of military and political security, to be more specific – in its military-naval aspect. Elements of this system may be used in other naval regions of Europe. On the other hand, there is a wide range of opportunities of EU security structures involvement into cooperation with Black Sea countries and such cooperation will, without any doubt benefit to strengthening European stability and security, wider and more effective reaction to new challenges and security threats.

It should be stressed, in addition, that the Black Sea area in 21st century should be considered as a multinational platform for further cultural dialog, people-to people contacts, youth exchanges and peoples’ diplomacy.

Summarizing the above mentioned facts, I would like to emphasize the following.

In our opinion, none of the current Black Sea region organizations or forums is self-sufficient or capable of performing system creating function of regional cooperation without any relations with other organizations or structures.

Therefore, while developing cooperation in the Black Sea region Ukraine takes into account the necessity of supporting non hierarchic net of different formats of cooperation such as BSEC, GUAM, Black Sea Forum for Dialogue and Partnership, BLACKSEAFOR, etc., regarding such cooperation as a part of our European integration course.

In other words, we consider the very idea of European integration based on the democratic values, rule of law and sustainable economic growth to be the bonding factor that will enable progressive and well balanced development of Black Sea region on the whole.