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TRANSFORMATION OF THE INTERMARIUM CONCEPT IN THE GEOPOLITICAL STRATEGIES OF THE BALTIC-BLACK SEA REGION (XVI-XXI CENTURIES)

ТРАНСФОРМАЦІЯ КОНЦЕПЦІЇ ІНТЕРМАРІУМУ В ГЕОПОЛІТИЧНИХ СТРАТЕГІЯХ БАЛТО-ЧОРНОМОРСЬКОГО РЕГІОНУ (XVI–XXI СТОЛІТТЯ)

Nataliia Lepska

PhD in Political Science, Associate Professor of the Department of Political Science, Faculty of Social Sciences and Public Administration, Zaporizhzhia National University,

e-mail: lepskanv@gmail.com

ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6010-423X>

Olesia Nadobko

PhD student at the Department of Political Science, Zaporizhzhia National University

e-mail: olesia.nadobko@gmail.com

ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0009-0005-7896-2765>

Наталія Лепська

Кандидат політичних наук, доцент кафедри політології факультету соціології та управління Запорізького національного університету

e-mail: lepskanv@gmail.com

ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6010-423X>

Олеся Надобко

Аспірантка кафедри політології, Запорізький національний університет

e-mail: olesia.nadobko@gmail.com

ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0009-0005-7896-2765>

Abstract. *The article is dedicated to analyzing the transformation of the Intermarium concept in the geopolitical strategies of the Baltic-Black Sea region from the 16th to the 21st century. It examines the historical development of this concept, its adaptation to modern geopolitical conditions, and its potential impact on the future of regional cooperation. Given that most Central and Eastern European countries are situated between two powerful blocs— the European Union and NATO on one side and Russia on the other— the necessity of forming independent regional development strategies is explored.*

The relevance of the study is determined by the growing security challenges and the need to find effective mechanisms for interstate interaction. The Intermarium concept envisions the creation of a geopolitical alliance of countries spanning the Baltic, Black, and Adriatic seas, which would enhance regional security, promote economic growth, and strengthen political stability. Various historical models of the Intermarium, its implementation in different historical periods, and its modern prospects in the context of increasing military threats from Russia are analyzed.

The article highlights five key stages in the development of the Intermarium concept: its emergence in the 16th–17th centuries, the interwar period of 1918–1939, the Cold War era (1945–1991), the post-Soviet phase (1991–2004), and the modern period (2004–2021). Particular attention is paid to the contemporary stage of the concept's development, including initiatives related to the Three Seas Initiative, which serves as a tangible mechanism for regional cooperation.

As a result of the study, it is concluded that the Intermarium concept is not only a historical phenomenon but also an effective tool for ensuring regional security. It has evolved from a military alliance to economic, political, and cultural cooperation and is once again gaining relevance as a potential defense alliance. Special attention is given to Ukraine's role in this process and its strategic interests in developing regional cooperation.

Keywords: *Intermarium, Baltic-Black Sea region, geopolitics, Three Seas Initiative, security, international relations, regional cooperation, Central Europe, strategic alliances, political stability.*

Анотація. *Стаття присвячена аналізу трансформації концепції Інтермаріуму в геополітичних стратегіях Балто-Чорноморського регіону від XVI до XXI століття. Досліджується історичний розвиток цієї концепції, її адаптація до сучасних геополітичних умов та її потенційний вплив на майбутнє регіональної співпраці. З огляду на те, що більшість країн Центральної та Східної Європи знаходяться між двома потужними блоками – Європейським Союзом і НАТО з одного боку та Росією з іншого – розглядається необхідність формування власних стратегій регіонального розвитку.*

Актуальність дослідження зумовлена загостренням безпекових викликів та необхідністю пошуку ефективних механізмів міждержавної взаємодії. Концепція Інтермаріуму передбачає створення геополітичного союзу країн Балтійського, Чорного та Адріатичного морів, що дозволить посилити регіональну безпеку, сприяти економічному зростанню та зміцненню політичної стабільності. Аналізуються різні історичні моделі Інтермаріуму, його реалізація в різні періоди історії та сучасні перспективи в умовах зростаючої військової загрози з боку Росії.

У статті виділено п'ять ключових етапів розвитку концепції Інтермаріуму: її зародження у XVI–XVII століттях, міжвоєнний період 1918–1939 років, період Холодної війни (1945–1991), пострадянський етап (1991–2004) та сучасний період (2004–2021). Особлива увага приділяється сучасному етапу розвитку концепції, зокрема ініціативам, пов'язаним із Триморською ініціативою, яка є реальним механізмом співпраці держав регіону.

У результаті дослідження зроблено висновок, що концепція Інтермаріуму є не лише історичним феноменом, а й дієвим інструментом забезпечення регіональної безпеки. Вона пройшла довгий шлях від військового союзу до економічної, політичної та культурної співпраці, а нині знову набуває актуальності у вигляді можливого оборонного альянсу. Особливу увагу приділено ролі України у цьому процесі та її стратегічним інтересам у розвитку регіональної співпраці.

Ключові слова: *Інтермаріум, Балто-Чорноморський регіон, геополітика, Тримор'я, безпека, міжнародні відносини, регіональна співпраця, Центральна Європа, стратегічні альянси, політична стабільність.*

Introduction. Most of the countries of Central Europe, including Ukraine, find themselves between two powerful blocks that can use them to protect and promote their own interests and ambitions. On the one hand, the western part of Europe is supported by the European Union and NATO and is the dominant force in the region. On the other hand, there is aggressive Russia, which is trying to restore its former power and geopolitical status as a superpower through military means. Therefore, this restrictive zone of the countries of Central and Eastern Europe, surrounded by more powerful neighbors, must satisfy its own interests and face all the economic and security challenges of modern times, as well as preserve its identity and build its own geopolitical strategy.

The relevance of the research lies in understanding the current geopolitical challenges and historical roots of cooperation and competition strategies in the Baltic-Black Sea region. Understanding the history of the Intermarium concept in the context of geopolitical strategies allows for a better reflect of current conflicts and development trends in the region. The research

includes an analysis of relations between countries in the region over a long historical period, taking into account their geopolitical strategies, ambitions, and interaction with other forces. Understanding the historical sources of geopolitical strategies in the region helps to forecast and respond to contemporary challenges, such as the influence of Russia, European integration, energy security, and others. The study of the development of the Intermarium concept indicates the possibilities and limitations of cooperation between countries in the region in the future. Analysis of historical interrelationships contributes to understanding common cultural aspects and forming internal unity in the region.

Thus, research on the concept of the Intermarium in the geopolitical strategies of the countries of the Baltic-Black Sea region is important for understanding the historical context and current trends in the development of this key geopolitical space. The problematic situation of our dissertation research is the need to form and implement an effective strategy for the geopolitical development of the states of the region, which would meet both the interests of Ukraine and the interests of European countries, in particular for the Baltic-Black Sea region, in the protection of their national interests, state sovereignty and subjectivity in the international arena. National interests must take into account the historical experience of the state's foreign policy, modern geopolitical processes and other features of the civilizational, historical and cultural development of the world, namely the entire range of political, economic, social, spiritual and intellectual aspects of public life.

Literature Review. The concept of Intermarium is examined from various historical, geopolitical, and political perspectives. M. J. Chodakiewicz (2017) studies historical and political processes in the region between the Black and Baltic Seas, analyzing the idea of Intermarium and its impact on contemporary geopolitics. P. Gotowiecki (2020) explores the contradictions and challenges associated with the implementation of the Intermarium concept, focusing on the political and security aspects of regional cooperation. O. Kushnir (2021) analyzes the historical and contemporary meanings of the Intermarium concept, examining Ukrainian and Polish academic and political thought on the organization of the space between the Baltic and Black Seas. O. Volovych examines the historical prerequisites and contemporary prospects for the creation of the Baltic-Black Sea Union, analyzing the opportunities and challenges for the countries of the region. T. Hrynevych (2008) investigates the representation of the Ukrainian issue in the Polish historical journal *Przegląd Historyczny* during the interwar period, helping to understand Polish-Ukrainian relations and their impact on the Intermarium concept. I. A. Zavodovskyi (2016) analyzes Ukrainian-Belarusian relations as a factor of security in the Baltic-Black Sea region, emphasizing their significance for the realization of the Intermarium concept. Yuriy Lypa develops a geopolitical concept in which Ukraine plays a key role in the Baltic-Black Sea region, justifying the necessity of close cooperation among the countries in this space to ensure their independence and prosperity. V. Poltorak (2020) explores the origins and development of the Baltic-Black Sea Union concept in Ukraine up to the 1920s, analyzing the historical and political prerequisites for its emergence.

These works provide a deep and multifaceted analysis of the development of the Intermarium concept, highlighting its historical roots, evolution, and contemporary prospects.

The purpose of the research is to develop a model of the evolution of the conceptual foundations of geopolitical strategies of the Intermarium in the historical discourse of the Eastern European region. **Conclusions.**

Summary of the main research material. This paper will focus mainly on the concept of the Intermarium ("Intermarium", Three Seas, Baltic-Black Sea Union (BBSU), a union of states "from sea to sea") as a potential direction of Ukraine's geopolitical strategy. This concept envisages the formation of a bloc of states from the Baltic to the Black and Adriatic Seas on the basis of partnerships. Also, in this context, the project of a kind of confederative formation is meant, which would include such countries as Poland, Ukraine, Belarus, Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, Moldova, Hungary, Romania, Yugoslavia, Czech Republic, Slovakia, and possibly Finland and Georgia. This project was put forward by Józef Piłsudski after the First World War [4].

In the current geopolitical discourse, various models of unification of states based on the concept of the Intermarium are being considered. One of the options is the so-called "small" Intermarium, which consists of only six countries: Ukraine, Belarus, Poland, Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia.

The ideas of the Intermarium concept are popular in most countries of the potential alliance, both at the scientific and political levels. At different times, the development of these concepts had its supporters and changed intensity depending on the dominant political forces.

Ostap Kushnir points out that "the inbred multi-layeredness of the Intermarium concept nurtured it diverse interpretations by different theorists and decision makers. One may even state that the Intermarium evolved into an all-embracing term in contemporary public and political discourses, a term equally suitable to define any international organization or framework of co-operation in central and eastern Europe" [3].

Based on the results of the analysis, we can distinguish five key periods of formation and development of the Intermarium concept, which has undergone a significant evolution from the idea of protection against external threats to modern forms of interregional cooperation, including economic, political and security integration:

1. The emergence of the Intermarium concept (XVI-XVII centuries).
2. The interwar period (1918-1939).
3. The Cold War (1945-1991).
4. Post-Soviet period (1991-2004).
5. The modern stage (2004-2021) - two sub-stages of development can be distinguished.

The emergence of the concept of the Intermarium (16-17 centuries)

The emergence of the idea of uniting the Baltic-Black Sea region has deep historical roots and is related to their geopolitical location. Back in the days of Ancient Rus, one of the largest transport and trade routes "from the Varangians to the Greeks" that connected the Baltic and Black Seas ran through the region. During the period of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, this region was a rather powerful union, the territory of which was already being fought over between the European West and the Russian East. [6, c. 13-15].

The concept of the Intermarium dates back to the 16th and 17th centuries, when the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth tried to create a union of states between the Baltic and Black Seas. At that time, the idea of uniting the countries of the region was aimed at protecting them from the expansion of the Ottoman Empire, the Muscovy, and other threats. The Ottoman Empire was exerting considerable pressure on the southern borders of Europe, in particular on the territories of modern Hungary, Romania, and Ukraine. The security situation in the region was also exacerbated by the expansion of the Muscovy to the eastern territories and attempts to establish control over the Russian principalities, which threatened the countries of Central and Eastern Europe.

The main initiator of the concept of the Intermarium in the 16th century was the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, which sought to create a federal union with Lithuania and other neighboring states, an attempt to create a strong political bloc capable of withstanding external threats from the Ottoman Empire and the Muscovy. The Union of Lublin of 1569 united the Kingdom of Poland and the Grand Duchy of Lithuania into a single state, the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, which was the first step toward realizing the concept of the Intermarium. The Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth also tried to establish allied relations with the Crimean Khanate to create a buffer zone against the Ottoman Empire.

As Pawel Gotowiecki notes: "from the Polish perspective, the natural reference to all federal concepts in Central and Eastern Europe was the so-called jagiellonian idea. In the Middle Ages, under the scepter of the Jagiellonian dynasty, it was possible to implement the geopolitical concept, which many historians compared to the Carolingian universum or the concept of Otto III. Thanks to the personal union, and then the real union between the Polish Kingdom and the Grand duchy of Lithuania, it was possible to create a state organism that became a real center of power, a late-medieval superpower capable of expanding north, east and south" [2].

In economic and political terms, one of the main goals was to ensure control over important trade routes between the Baltic and Black Seas. The creation of conditions for the development of economic ties between the countries of the region was aimed at increasing their economic stability. Formation of joint military forces to protect against external threats. Fortresses and other defensive structures were built to protect the territories from attacks by the Ottoman Empire and the Muscovy.

But in addition, the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth helped to preserve the cultural and religious identity of the peoples that made up the state. The development of the idea of religious tolerance within a multinational state contributed to political stability and internal peace.

In the 16th and 17th centuries, the concept of the Intermarium was implemented and developed through the efforts of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth to create a union of states in the Baltic-Black Sea region. The main ideas were to strengthen military cooperation, ensure economic stability and development, and preserve cultural and religious identity. These efforts laid the groundwork for future initiatives for regional integration and cooperation.

The interwar period (1918-1939)

In a new sense, the theoretical concept of the region began to be developed after the collapse of the Austro-Hungarian and Russian empires and the formation of a number of countries in Central and Eastern Europe, as well as with political changes and the First World War, which gave rise to the search for new geopolitical doctrines [6, p. 13-15].

The beginning of the development and justification of the idea of creating an alliance of countries "from sea to sea" is associated with Józef Piłsudski, who was a Polish military, state and political figure who, after the First World War, pointed out the need for such an association. Representatives of the "eastern" orientation from J. Piłsudski's camp considered the period of the Jagiellonian monarchy to be the time of the greatest prosperity, and saw the main direction of Poland's political development in the eastern policy and the concept of federalism with the peoples of Central and Eastern Europe on the basis of the so-called "Jagiellonian idea", which had a great influence on the formation of the model of relations between the Poles and the states of this region [5, p. 160].

Proposed in the twenties of the last century by Polish Marshal Józef Piłsudski, the federation was supposed to revive the multinational Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth in order to avoid domination in Eastern Europe by Germany and Russia. He began to actively promote the concept of the Intermarium after the First World War, which pointed to the need to unite the states of this zone to protect their interests and security. The federation was to include such nations as Polish, Ukrainian, Lithuanian, and Jewish. Thus, Piłsudski's first plan united Poland, Belarus, Ukraine, and Lithuania.

Because the member states were primarily afraid of their dependent position and the usurpation of their sovereignty by Poland, they did not support such a union. Józef Piłsudski and his followers saw the ordering of the old Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth in the form of a federation of Poland, Ukraine, Belarus, and Lithuania, which formed the Intermarium. The second plan already included a project of a confederation of states, which was to include the independent countries of Poland, Ukraine, Belarus, Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, Moldova, Hungary, Romania, Yugoslavia, Czechoslovakia, and possibly Finland.

Józef Piłsudski never managed to realize his plan, but he gained many followers who continued to develop the concept of the Intermarium. Polish Foreign Minister Józef Beck, General Władysław Sikorski, leader of the right-wing nationalist party, the Confederation of Independent Poland, Leszek Mochulski, and others were also involved in the development of the BBSU project to varying degrees. The plan of Polish Foreign Minister Józef Beck was to reduce the Intermarium to a union of Poland, Romania, and Hungary, based on realities.

In Ukrainian geopolitical thought, the idea of the Intermarium dates back to the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, when Ukrainian politicians and public figures Yuriy Bachynskyi (1895), Mykhailo Mikhnovskyi (1900), and Sergiy Rudnytskyi (1923) tried to develop the Baltic-Black Sea geopolitical concept. During the Ukrainian People's Republic, Ukrainian historian and head of the Central Rada M. Hrushevsky outlined the idea of creating a Baltic-Black

Sea alliance in his work "Black Sea Orientation" (1918). The public figure, writer, publicist and ideologist of Ukrainian nationalism Yuriy Lypa (1900-1944) created his own original geopolitical doctrine, in which he pointed to the historical commonality of the peoples inhabiting the coasts of the Baltic and Black Seas, as described in the monographic trilogy "The Destiny of Ukraine" (1938), "The Black Sea Doctrine" (1940) and "The Division of Russia" (1941) [7, 8].

After the First World War, the German, Austro-Hungarian, Russian, and Ottoman empires collapsed, leading to the formation of new independent states in Central and Eastern Europe. At this time, such independent states as Poland, Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, Finland, and the Ukrainian People's Republic (UPR) were formed, although the latter failed to maintain its independence due to Soviet aggression. In 1934, Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia established the Baltic Entente to coordinate foreign policy and provide mutual support in the event of external aggression. Poland also entered into an alliance with Romania to jointly confront the Soviet threat and support the independence of states in the region.

At that time, the initiators of the concept planned to create joint military forces to protect the borders and prevent aggression from large neighbors. Joint military exercises and exchange of experience between the armies of the Baltic-Black Sea region were organized.

Economic cooperation was marked by the development of trade agreements between the countries of the region to stimulate economic development and reduce dependence on foreign markets, and investments in the development of transport infrastructure to improve ties between the countries of the region.

In the international arena, support and recognition of the idea of the Intermarium was sought, in particular from the League of Nations and major Western powers. Diplomatic efforts were aimed at protecting the independence of the newly created states and preventing their annexation by aggressive neighbors.

In the interwar period, the concept of the Intermarium developed as a response to threats from Germany and the Soviet Union. The main ideas included the creation of a federation or confederation of states in the Baltic-Black Sea region, ensuring collective security, economic cooperation, and support for national identity.

The Cold War (1945-1991)

After the Second World War, the Baltic-Black Sea region came under the control of the Soviet Union, and the idea of the Intermarium was postponed. The countries of the region were looking for ways to preserve their national identity and cooperation under Soviet control. The Cold War period (1945-1991) was characterized by a sharp confrontation between the Western bloc led by the United States and the USSR, which affected the geopolitical situation in the Baltic-Black Sea region. At that time, the concept of the Intermarium took on new forms, as the countries were divided between two ideological blocs. The idea of uniting the countries of the region to ensure independence and security became especially important in the context of the rivalry between the two world systems.

Governments in exile and anti-Communist movements in the Baltic-Black Sea countries actively supported the idea of unification to counter Soviet influence. In turn, Western countries, in particular the United States and the United Kingdom, supported these movements through funding and political assistance aimed at weakening Soviet control. Various possibilities for creating regional alliances to counter the Soviet threat were considered. The ideas of military cooperation and coordination were important for security. Western countries conducted joint exercises with troops from the region, and facilitated the exchange of intelligence information to improve defense capabilities.

The West actively supported the spread of the ideas of democracy, human rights and independence among the countries of the region through radio, the press and other media. There was support for anti-Soviet movements, such as Polish Solidarity, Lithuanian Sayudis and others, which sought to restore the independence of their countries. Polish Solidarity in the 1980s became a powerful opposition force that contributed to the fall of the communist regime in Poland. Similar movements in other countries of the Baltic-Black Sea region received both material and moral support from Western powers.

The countries that were not part of the Soviet bloc also received economic assistance from Western partners, which helped to restore their economies and strengthen their independence. Economic sanctions were imposed on the USSR and its allies, weakening their economic base. Exchange programs for students, scientists, and artists contributed to the spread of democratic values and ideas of independence.

After the Second World War, the governments of Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, and other countries in exile in the region continued to work actively to appeal to the international community to support their independence. The programs and initiatives of the governments in exile were aimed at informing the international community about the situation in their countries and seeking support for the restoration of independence.

Although the Baltic states and Eastern Europe could not formally join NATO because of Soviet control, cooperation with the alliance in informal forms helped strengthen their defense capabilities. Western countries used international organizations such as the UN to raise the issue of the Soviet occupation of the Baltic states and other human rights violations.

The United States and other Western countries provided economic and humanitarian assistance to countries seeking independence from the USSR, helping to restore their economies and strengthen social stability. International conferences and forums discussed the independence and security of the Baltic-Black Sea region, which helped to draw the world's attention to their problems and aspirations.

In general, the Cold War period (1945-1991) was difficult for the countries of the Baltic-Black Sea region, which sought to maintain their independence and security under Soviet domination. The ideas of the Intermarium concept gained new meaning as the countries of the region sought support from Western allies and developed strategies to counter Soviet influence. Security cooperation, economic assistance, cultural diplomacy, and people-to-people diplomacy became important elements of these efforts, which ultimately contributed to the restoration of the region's independence after the end of the Cold War.

Post-Soviet period (1991-2004)

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, the countries of the Baltic-Black Sea region gained independence and began to actively seek new forms of cooperation. Many countries in the region focused on integration with the European Union and NATO as a strategic direction of development. In 1991, the Baltic-Black Sea countries faced the need to develop new geopolitical strategies to ensure their own security and economic development. The revival of the Intermarium concept was one of the directions of such strategies, which aimed to unite the countries of the region to jointly counter threats and strengthen independence.

With growing concerns about the possible resurgence of Russian influence in the post-Soviet space, the countries of the Baltic-Black Sea region have sought ways to strengthen their defense capabilities through regional cooperation. Increased military cooperation, joint exercises, and intelligence sharing have become important elements of regional security.

Many countries in the region saw membership in NATO and the EU as a guarantee of stability and security. Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic joined NATO in 1999, and the Baltic states in 2004. The countries actively reformed their armed forces, legal systems, and economies to meet EU and NATO requirements. Reducing dependence on Russian energy resources by developing alternative energy supply routes, including LNG terminals and new gas pipelines. Joint energy infrastructure projects, such as the construction of pipelines and power grids, have contributed to strengthening energy independence. Projects aimed at improving transport links between the countries of the region, including the creation of transport corridors to improve trade and logistics. Increasing the level of economic integration through the signing of trade agreements and stimulating foreign direct investment.

Establishment and activation of regional forums, such as the Visegrad Group (Poland, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary) and the Baltic Assembly, to coordinate political and economic efforts. Joint statements and diplomatic efforts to promote the interests of the region's countries in the international arena.

Key events and initiatives (1991-2004):

1. The Visegrad Group

Founded in 1991 by Poland, Czechoslovakia (later the Czech Republic and Slovakia), and Hungary to promote Euro-Atlantic integration and economic cooperation. The group was focused on joint projects to reform the economy and security, and prepare for accession to NATO and the EU.

2. The Baltic Assembly

Established in 1991 by Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania to coordinate efforts in the security, economic, and cultural spheres. The main goal is to actively cooperate with the Nordic countries and support the process of joining NATO and the EU.

3. NATO enlargement (1999, 2004)

Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic joined NATO in 1999, which strengthened the military potential of the region. Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania joined NATO in 2004, which strengthened the security of the Baltic region.

4. EU enlargement (2004)

The accession of Poland, Hungary, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, and Slovenia to the EU in 2004 was an important step for the economic integration and political stability of the region.

The concept of the Intermarium in the post-Soviet period (1991-2004) has gained new meaning in the context of strengthening security, economic cooperation and Euro-Atlantic integration of the Baltic-Black Sea region. Through the creation of regional organizations, cooperation in the field of security and energy independence, as well as active integration into Euro-Atlantic structures, the countries of the region were able to strengthen their independence and increase the level of stability.

The current stage (2004-2021)

In the 21st century, the concept of the Intermarium is taking on new forms in response to current geopolitical challenges. The current period of development of the concept can be divided into two stages - 2004-2014 and 2014-present.

The first stage of 2004-2014 was characterized by the following features and events. Russia, under the leadership of Vladimir Putin, sought to restore its influence in the post-Soviet space, which became especially evident after the invasion of Georgia in 2008 and the annexation of Crimea in 2014. This has had a significant impact on attitudes toward security policy in the region.

One of the key ideas was to reduce dependence on Russian energy resources. In this context, projects were developed to diversify gas and oil supplies, including the construction of LNG terminals and new pipelines. Initiatives to create new transport corridors connecting the Baltic and Black Seas were aimed at improving economic ties between the countries of the region and reducing Russia's influence.

The countries of the Baltic-Black Sea region actively supported democratic reforms and movements in the Eastern Partnership countries, such as Ukraine, Moldova, and Georgia. Joint diplomatic strategies were developed to counter Russian influence and protect national interests in the international arena.

Poland was actively involved in the Visegrad Group, which promoted policy coordination and joint projects between Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, and Hungary. Although the Three Seas Initiative was formally established later, the ideas of regional cooperation began to be discussed during this period, which laid the groundwork for future projects in the energy, infrastructure, and security sectors.

Projects to create new transportation and logistics routes, including highways, railways, and ports connecting the Baltic and Black Seas, were actively developed. Stimulating investment and expanding trade ties between the countries of the region for economic development and growth.

Strengthening military cooperation between the countries of the region, including joint exercises, information exchange and coordination of defense policies to counter the Russian threat.

Active support for Ukraine during the 2014 crisis, including diplomatic, economic and military assistance in response to Russian aggression.

In 2004-2014, the ideas of the Intermarium concept were reflected in the geopolitical strategies of the Baltic-Black Sea region. The main directions included ensuring energy security, developing transport corridors, strengthening military cooperation, and supporting democratic reforms. This period laid the foundation for further integration and cooperation of the countries of the region in the face of the growing Russian threat and strengthening of Euro-Atlantic integration.

The period since 2014

The annexation of Crimea and the war in Donbas in 2014, as well as Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022, were key events that affected the security situation in the region. An important factor in the development of the concept was also the strengthening of the region's integration with the European Union and NATO, in particular the signing of Association Agreements with Ukraine, Georgia, and Moldova.

In 2015, the Three Seas Initiative was founded by Poland and Croatia. It now includes 12 countries between the Baltic, Adriatic, and Black Seas and aims to strengthen infrastructure, energy security, and economic cooperation. Currently, projects such as Via Carpatia and Rail Baltica are being implemented to improve transport links between the countries of the region, as well as to develop alternative energy sources, build LNG terminals (for example, in Poland and Lithuania), and expand energy corridors to reduce dependence on Russian energy resources.

The military aspect of this period is characterized by the expansion of NATO's presence in the region, including the establishment of military bases and strengthening of the defense capabilities of member states. Regular joint military exercises, such as Saber Strike and Anaconda, are held to increase the interoperability and readiness of the armed forces of the region.

Joint diplomatic initiatives are characterized by coordination of diplomatic efforts to counter Russian aggression and support for international sanctions against Russia.

In the period 2014-2024, the Intermarium concept gained new relevance in response to the intensification of Russian aggression and the need to strengthen regional security. The Three Seas Initiative has become a key tool for implementing ideas for cooperation in infrastructure, energy security, economy, and defense. Joint military efforts, the development of alternative energy sources, and cultural cooperation have become important aspects. These initiatives helped to strengthen ties between the countries of the Baltic-Black Sea region and increase their resilience to external threats.

Conclusions. The Intermarium concept has significant potential to strengthen security, economic development and political stability in the Baltic-Black Sea region. The implementation of this concept through the Three Seas Initiative and other regional projects will contribute to the growth of the role of the countries of the region in the international arena and their resilience to external threats.

The development of the Intermarium concept is intensifying as the security situation in the region deteriorates. The idea itself originated a long time ago, but its development has an undulating character and peaks during periods of external threat to the Baltic-Black Sea countries. The transformation of the concept has gone a long way from a defense alliance to cultural, economic and diplomatic cooperation, returning and taking the form of a security alliance again. Thus, the concept of the Intermarium has undergone a significant evolution from the idea of protection against external threats to modern forms of interregional cooperation, which includes economic, political and security integration.

This research will help to clearly define the main actors of influence in the region, identify and characterize the geopolitical technologies that are currently used and can be effectively applied in the future. Ukraine's strategic interests in cooperation with its neighbors are covered very generally in official documents. Outlining the opportunities for Ukraine from cooperation with the countries of the region in the context of the Intermarium will also allow for a more precise definition of the state's strategic interests.

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