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## Geostrategic Significance of Ukraine in the Region of Central and Eastern Europe in the Works of Dmytro Dontsov and Yurii Lypa

Znaczenie geostrategiczne Ukrainy w regionie Europy Środkowo-Wschodniej  
w pracach Dmytra Doncowa i Jurija Łypy

### • Abstrakt •

Celem niniejszej pracy jest określenie geostrategicznej roli Ukrainy w Europie Środkowo-Wschodniej oraz w regionie bałtycko-czarnomorskim, jej potencjału geopolitycznego, by stać się głównym czynnikiem integracji dla tego makroregionu, a także – poprzez ekstrapolację poglądów ukraińskich myślicieli D. Doncowa i J. Łypy – wskazanie możliwości przeciwstawienia się Ukrainy ekspansywnym zakusom Rosji.

Region Europy Środkowo-Wschodniej stał się terenem działań prowadzonej na wielką skalę wojny hybrydowej. Bez wątpienia głównym celem rosyjskiej agresji wojskowej i informacyjnej pozostaje Ukraina. W obliczu rosyjskiej agresji kraje Europy Środkowo-Wschodniej muszą wypracować wspólne, skonsolidowane i skoordynowane stanowisko w celu utrzymania stabilności i bezpieczeństwa w makroregionie.

W pracach Dmytra Doncowa i Jurija Łypy arcyważne miejsce zajmuje zagadnienie rozwijania współpracy między krajami Europy Środkowo-Wschodniej i regionu bałtycko-czar-

### • Abstract •

The purpose of this paper is to determine the geostrategic role of Ukraine in Central and Eastern Europe and the Baltic-Black Sea region, its geopolitical potential to become a major integration factor for this macro-region, and its ability to withstand the expansive challenges of Russia in extrapolating the views of Ukrainian thinkers D. Dontsov and Y. Lypa.

After all, the region of Central and Eastern Europe became the base for a large-scale hybrid war. Undoubtedly, Ukraine remains the main target of Russian military and information aggression. However, in contrast with Russian aggression, countries in Central and Eastern Europe have to develop a common consolidated and coordinated position in order to maintain stability and security in this macro-region.

A significant part in the works by Dmytro Dontsov and Yurii Lypa is given to the development of cooperation between the countries of Central-Eastern Europe and the Baltic-Black Sea region to restrain Russia's aggression. At

nomorskiego w celu powstrzymania rosyjskiej agresji. Jednocześnie ukraińscy myśliciele określają miejsce i rolę państwa ukraińskiego w procesie integracji tej przestrzeni geopolitycznej oraz jego strategiczne znaczenie w rozwoju Europy Środkowo-Wschodniej.

**Słowa kluczowe:** Europa Środkowo-Wschodnia; region bałtycko-czarnomorski; geopolityka; państwo ukraińskie; rosyjska agresja

the same time, Ukrainian thinkers determine the place and the role of the Ukrainian state in the integration of this geopolitical space and its strategic importance in the development of Central and Eastern Europe.

**Keywords:** Central and Eastern Europe; the Baltic-Black Sea region; geopolitics; Ukrainian state; Russian aggression

## Introduction

The region of Central and Eastern Europe has become the staging ground for the large-scale hybrid war waged by the Russian Federation, which has all the hallmarks of turning into a full-scale war.

Undoubtedly, Ukraine remains the main target of Russian military and information aggression, without which Russia will not be able to fully realize its military political and ideological expansion in Central-Eastern Europe and the Baltic-Black Sea region as a whole. At the same time, Moscow is stepping up its efforts to deepen its historical contradictions in order to escalate the conflict between Ukraine and its neighbors – Hungary and Poland.

A striking example is the arson of the Hungarian Cultural Center in Uzhhorod, organized by Russia and carried out by Russian agents recruited and subsequently financed by Moscow.

Therefore, stability, security and development of the entire macro-region depends on the adequacy of the response of Central and Eastern European countries to these challenges and threats from Russia. Only the consolidation and coordination of the actions of all the countries of Central Europe and the Baltic-Black Sea region may become a condition for mobilizing necessary resources to stop various forms of Moscow aggression and strengthen the geostrategic importance of this macro-region while preserving its civilizational uniqueness.

Ukrainian politicians and theorists of geopolitics at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century realized the grave importance of consolidating the efforts of the countries of Central and Eastern Europe to form a common bloc of states capable of effectively resisting Russian imperialism of all kinds.

Dmytro Dontsov and Yurii Lypa in their works pay close attention to the development of cooperation between the countries of Central-Eastern Europe and

the Baltic-Black Sea region to restrain Russia's aggression. At the same time, Ukrainian thinkers determine the place and the role of the Ukrainian state in the integration of this geopolitical space and its strategic importance in the development of Central and Eastern Europe.

## **State of Research on the Topic**

The given topic has been closely considered by such Ukrainian researchers as: Oleg Bagan (Bagan, 2016), Ruslan Demchyshak (Demchyshak, 2014), Leonid Chuprii (Chuprii, 2017), Yliya Vasylevych (Vasylevych, 2012), Igor Todorov (Todorov, 2016), and others. Also, the place and the role of Ukraine in the region of Central and Eastern Europe have become a hotly debated issue for Zbigniew Brzezinski (Brzezinski, 2000), Yevhen Kaminskyi (Kaminskyi, 2008), Yaroslav Polishchuk (Polishchuk, 2020), Igor Zagrebelnyi (Zagrebelnyi, 2019), and others.

## **Aim of the Article**

The purpose of this paper is to determine the geostrategic role of Ukraine in Central and Eastern Europe and the Baltic-Black Sea region, its geopolitical potential to become a major integration factor for this macro-region, and its ability to withstand the expansive challenges of Russia in extrapolating the views of Ukrainian thinkers D. Dontsov and Y. Lypa.

## **Ukraine and Russia**

The main geopolitical opponent of Ukraine, which has launched another war against our country, remains the Russian Federation. The way this military and diplomatic confrontation between Moscow and Kiev will end depends on the further vector of the geopolitical development of the Ukrainian state, its positioning in the region of Central and Eastern Europe.

Geopolitical studies by Dmytro Dontsov, who has clearly identified the reasons which may always induce Moscow to be an aggressive party towards Ukraine, are still relevant today. The Ukrainian thinker has outlined major foreign policy priorities of the Ukrainian state. Having implemented those, Ukraine could be able to successfully counter Russia's aggressive policy and destroy its influence in

Central and Eastern Europe, at the same time establishing its dominance in this natural geopolitical region.

According to Dmytro Dontsov, Russia has always been the ideal of messianism, on which the development of Ukraine's domestic and foreign policies depended. Whatever challenge history may pose, we are constantly confronting the same mysterious sphinx that wants to engulf us. Actually, the Russians, who do not make any compromise on the choice of our civilizational foreign policy vector of movement, are waiting for the choice to be made by us, namely, if we are for them, or against them.

At the same time, Dmytro Dontsov argues that Russia's great power and imperialist policies were formed after Moscow's complete conquest of Ukraine, on which all of Russia's economic and political power depends. However, a well-established historical fact is that it was only after the enslavement of Ukraine that Russia seized its dominant position among the Slavic peoples, which in turn created all the opportunities for a pan-Slavic (Pan-Moscow) movement. At the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> century Ukraine was completely enslaved and conquered by Moscow, the borders of which then extended all the way to the Black Sea. Thus, the legend of Russia's "historic mission" to liberate the Slavic peoples was created.

Dmytro Dontsov explains why the Russian Federation is trying in every way to prevent and make it impossible to integrate the Ukrainian state into the European Community. After all, in his opinion, Moscow, whether royal or Bolshevik, has always instinctively felt threatened, both politically and culturally by Europe, and constantly fought against the latter under various forms of disguise. The conflict between Europe and Russia is a fight between two hostile civilizations. The profound differences that underlie this civilizational confrontation will promote constant opposition between these two different worlds and cultures (Dontsov, 1957).

Therefore, Dmytro Dontsov concludes that such confrontation between two different civilizations: Europe and Moscow (Asia), forces us to choose clear and unambiguous major strategic vectors for the development of our foreign and domestic policy. Therefore, the main task for the Ukrainian state, for its internal and external policy, should be the principle of complete independence from Moscow and the imitation of the main principles of Western culture that save Europe from the Moscow invasion.

In his geopolitical writings, Yurii Lypa also emphasizes that in the current circumstances of Russian aggression in the Ukrainian territories, it is impossible to reconcile with one another, or to speak of interstate equal cooperation between the two irreconcilable centers of two different civilizations – Kyiv and Moscow. Even

the geographical location of the two states determined their complete opposite. Since, according to Yurii Lypa, the terrestrial axis of Ukraine is the northeastern shore of the Black Sea, such axis for the Muscovy (Russia) is the upper reaches of the Volga region. The difference between the two states is also that in Muscovy, the overwhelming majority of the rivers flow north, while in Ukraine they flow south. Thus, Yurii Lypa comes to a conclusion that Ukraine is the South and Russia is the North.

Therefore, the author of the Black Sea Doctrine comes to a conclusion that only a geopolitically relying on the Black Sea and the destruction of Russia as an imperial center over the Volga, the Pechora and the White Sea will make it impossible for Ukraine to compete in the North and will become the main prerequisite for a strong Ukraine as a geopolitical center of the Black Sea countries. After all, Ukraine, unlike Russia, is nationally and culturally related to all the Black Sea countries.

At the same time, strengthening its primacy in the South, in the Black Sea region, it is necessary to strengthen its presence in the North. Yurii Lypa's geopolitical conclusions about Russia's northern neighbor of Ukraine are clear and unambiguous: "The destruction of Russia, as the center of supranational distribution of land over the Volga, the Pechora and the White Sea, according to their national and historical content, is a prerequisite for a strong Ukraine" (Lypa, 2013). Ukraine can maintain its geopolitical leadership and sustainable economic development in the Baltic-Black Sea region only if there is no geopolitical threat and rivalry from the North.

However, it is worth noting that Yurii Lypa does not consider the complete, irrevocable and final destruction of Russia, but the existence of the Moscow State within its historical geographical boundaries, but not a supranational geopolitical imperial state formation that carries a threat to the whole civilized European community. Instead, national independent states of the Finnish and Ural peoples have to be formed in the territory of the present-day Russian Federation, thus defining the national borders of the "Russian" and creating a state formation much smaller than the Ukrainian state.

## **Ukraine and Central and Eastern Europe**

The geopolitical region of Central and Eastern Europe is an extremely important strategic direction for Ukraine's foreign policy development, a guarantee of its stability and security, especially actualized in the context of the Russian threat.

Dmytro Dontsov was, to certain extent, categorical about the choice of the worldview and civilization and foreign policy vector of the development of Ukraine and emphasized that Ukraine in view of geological and climatic conditions and its river system is not a continuation of the East-Russian plain, but on the contrary, taking into account Lithuania and Poland and their river system, it is a continuation of Central Europe. Although politically Ukraine fell away from Europe at the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, culturally it has always belonged to European civilization.

Based on the fact that historically Ukraine belongs to the Western European community and is entrusted with the historic mission of being a shield for Europe against Russia, which is constantly destroying the fundamental forces of our nation, then upholding our national independence is an equal and integral element of Europe's victory over Russia. After all, as Dontsov argues in his writings, "The keys to the mastery of the Slavs, and through this to the whole Europe, can only be obtained by the one who owns Ukraine" (Dontsov, 1957).

In fact, Ukraine has always been the first to accept the pressure of Moscow's political, social and cultural expansion into the West. This is the main essence of our national idea, foreign policy and our geopolitical importance in the Central and Eastern European region: in the fight against chaos in the East – to protect our own statehood and culture, while at the same time protecting global civilizational and cultural values. As Dmytro Dontsov points out, the victory of one of the two principles on the continent: European or Moscow, in this struggle depends on Ukraine's fate.

According to Dontsov, it is necessary to implement Ukraine's foreign policy by seeking allies among those countries whose interests contradict Russia's interests.

Dontsov suggests that Poland is the main strategic partner among European countries in the fight against Russia. Although he notes that we still have many unresolved issues with the Poles. However, they are local in nature and will not have an ultimate influence on the overall state of Ukrainian-Polish relations. After all, Russian imperialism requires the destruction of Kyiv and Warsaw as independent political centers in order to achieve their geopolitical goals. But to prevent this from happening, it is necessary to rely on those European states that currently oppose Russian imperialism. In this regard, Dontsov rightly refers to Alexander Herzen's statement: "Russia can conquer Europe to the Atlantic Ocean, just as it can be conquered all the way to the Urals. In the first case, Europe must be differentiated. The second is that Europe must be firmly united" (Dontsov, 1957). In fact, association with such a Europe should be a major foreign policy guide for us.

Oleg Bagan highlights that Ukraine is situated on a civilizational rift between Europe and Asia and the guarantee of its security and strengthening is com-

plete and wide integration into Central Europe, because there is no alternative. As a result: “Either Central Europe will strengthen or it will be the victim of new expansions by Eurasia (Russia)” (Bagan, 2018).

Therefore, Ukraine must respond timely and effectively to all challenges in the geopolitical region of Central and Eastern Europe, and Ukrainian political elites must offer constructive ideas, initiatives and current projects, and finally become aware of Ukraine’s leading role in this geo-strategic macro-region.

But the question is, to what extent the political elites of other countries of Central and Eastern Europe are ready for such consolidation.

### **Ukraine and the Baltic-Black Sea Alliance**

The idea of establishing the Baltic-Black Sea Union is periodically actualized among the political elites of the countries of Central and Eastern Europe, especially Poland and Ukraine. But in practice, the ways to implement the idea have not been actually considered. However, as Oleg Bagan emphasizes, it is worth noting and should be proved to both, the West and the East, that the Baltic-Black Sea region is an organic, historical and civilizational, cultural and mental continuation of Central Europe (Bagan, 2016).

From this point of view, geopolitical vision of the foreign policy development of Ukraine in this Black Sea geopolitical space by Yurii Lypa might be quite interesting.

Yurii Lypa identified the main geopolitical coordinate for Ukraine and its most natural foreign policy axis is the South. Not the choice between the East and the West, as traditionally imposed on Ukraine, but complete control of the Black Sea coast with further territorial extension to the North. Therefore, South-North, according to Lypa, is the main geopolitical coordinate of Ukraine, which is conditioned by the stable geopolitical Ukrainian tradition (Lypa, 2013). This may remove any conflict with Poland, which is an organic geopolitical Baltic country.

Yurii Lypa presents the Black Sea doctrine as the basis for the activity of Ukrainian foreign policy. After all, the Black Sea space is a life-giving space of Ukraine, and therefore, the first place among the Black Sea countries belongs to Ukraine in view of its space, wealth and energy of the population. Ukraine is a vault around the Black Sea that has its key, its points of support, and its geopolitical content. This vault, according to the Ukrainian thinker, has a beam of 800–900 km in length around its natural center – the Crimean Peninsula, extending from Prut and Transcarpathia in the west with the support on Danube – all the

way to the Transcaucasia and Iran in the east with the support on the Caspian (Lyba, 2007).

Crimea is the center of all Black Sea seas. Yurii Lyba emphasizes on Ukraine's unconditional right to own the Crimea, whether as heir to the Bosphorus Empire, or as the heir of the Kiev Great Power.

While the main command center of the Black Sea vault is Crimea, its key is Belarus.

Yurii Lyba pays attention to the mutually beneficial good neighborly relations between Ukraine and Belarus, which are a matter of life for Ukraine. Belarus should always stay the most important geopolitical priority and interest for the Ukrainian state, so that Belarus does not become a geopolitical tool in the hands of its neighbours, and therefore a real and open threat from the North.

Nowadays, we can witness the implementation of this unacceptable geopolitical scenario by the northern neighbour of Ukraine – the Russian Federation, which has annexed Crimea, seized under the complete control the Kerch Strait, continues the gradual occupation of Ukraine in its eastern territories, and is in constant readiness to conquer the southern territories of Ukraine, and thus finally cut off Ukraine from the Black Sea. Moscow, at the same time, continues its advance from the north to Ukraine, geopolitically absorbing Belarus under the guise of peaceful integration of the two countries (the Russian Federation and Belarus) into one center, obviously, in Moscow.

In fact, Ukraine found itself in an extremely difficult geopolitical position, which Yurii Lyba had warned about in his writings long before. After all, Crimea gives the opportunity to fully control the Black Sea. And this is well understood by Russia and its leadership today.

Important allies for Ukraine in the Black Sea are the Caucasus and Transcaucasia countries. The Kuban is the connecting link, or platform, as Y. Lyba calls it, between Ukraine and the Caucasian peoples.

Yurii Lyba emphasizes on the affinity of the population of southern Ukraine and the Kuban, which since the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century has become the center of Ukrainian settlement. Only their common state life will give this region the opportunity for comprehensive economic and cultural development.

Therefore, Ukraine must fully support and promote the unification of the Caucasus in geopolitical, economic and cultural aspects, so that this geopolitical region contributes to the strengthening of the entire Black Sea macro-region.

At the same time, Turkey should become the main partner in the Black Sea region for Ukraine. Not only the geographical proximity and economic benefits between Ukraine and Turkey, but also the common threat to Ukraine from the



north and Turkey from the south and southwest, make the political alliance between them decisive for security and cooperation in the Baltic-Black Sea region.

Another strategically important geopolitical region for Ukraine is the Balkans, where Bulgaria is the central state. In addition, Bulgaria is very closely, both culturally and mentally, related to Ukraine, on the territory of which there are quite a lot of Ukrainian settlements (near Varna, Plevnya, and Dobrudja).

According to Yurii Lypa, the Black Sea space has a special assignment, its psychology and the rhythm of social life. He also emphasizes that the Union of the Black Sea Powers is capable of promoting the initiation of a new form of socio-state system and will give rise to the growth of European culture with peculiarities inherent in the mentality of this Black Sea region.

The basis for the Black Sea integration will be the mutually beneficial economic cooperation of the participating countries, which should in the future join the Customs Union of the Black Sea countries.

It is to Yurii Lypa's deep conviction that Ukraine should be the main initiator of this association, considering its geopolitical position and the huge Ukrainian vault, which is four of the seven Black Sea wealths.

The Union of the Black Sea States, in Yurii Lypa's opinion, is the union of living state organisms that are related by common economic and political interests that follow from a reluctance to dissolve in any "Union of Three Ruses" (Lypa, 2007).

It is obvious that the three Baltic countries (Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia) are quite confidently integrated into the European community. They have become the members of NATO and the European Union. Therefore, with the exception of Turkey, which is also a NATO member, the Black Sea component of this Baltic-Black Sea region seems a weaker link.

That is why, as Oleg Bagan emphasizes, the geostrategic accent in the activities of the Baltic-Black Sea Alliance must be shifted south to the Black Sea area, where Russia conducts aggressive military activities (Bagan, 2016). A vivid example of this is the annexation of the Crimean peninsula.

Therefore, the ideas of the Black Sea doctrine by Yurii Lypa do not look so unpromising and utopian, on the contrary, they offer realistic analysis and calculations, considering that in perspective this Alliance of the Baltic-Black Sea countries can transform into a large Alliance, which will include: Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Bulgaria, Moldova, Ukraine, Turkey, Georgia, and Azerbaijan. The bloc could also be joined by the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary, and Belarus.

It is worth noting that Central and Eastern European countries are increasingly aware of danger from Russia. In the early 1990s, Polish then-President Lech

Wałęsa declared for the creation of a subregional union of the Mizhmor'ya. This topic periodically becomes relevant to the Polish and Ukrainian authorities, in particular, to the present President of Poland, Andrzej Duda, who emphasized on the need to create such a geopolitical association.

However, in practice, such cooperation is still taking place between the countries of Central and Eastern Europe. Active bilateral cooperation takes place between Ukraine on the one hand, and Poland or Turkey on the other. Multilateral cooperation within the Lithuanian-Polish-Ukrainian military brigade (LITPO-LUKRBRIG) may well be mentioned. Also, the GUAM Organization for Democracy and Economic Development (Georgia, Ukraine, Azerbaijan, Moldova) and the Commonwealth of Democratic Choice (Ukraine, Moldova, Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia, Slovenia, Macedonia, Romania, Georgia) should be paid attention to, notwithstanding the fact that they have turned out to be less effective.

Therefore, as Ruslan Demchyshak rightly points out, as there are no reliable guarantees against Russian aggression, even for the Eastern European countries of NATO, "the ideas of the Baltic-Black Sea Community are gaining new topicality in one form or another" (Demchyshak, 2018).

## Conclusions

Ukrainian thinkers Dmytro Dontsov and Yuriy Lypa have identified the main vector of the Ukrainian state's development – a complete integration course towards the European Community and the formation of the Alliance of the Baltic-Black Sea Nations in the Black Sea geopolitical region.

The whole foreign policy strategy of the Ukrainian state should be directed at finding and establishing close mutually beneficial relations with those countries of Central and Eastern Europe whose geopolitical interests coincide with those of Ukraine in restraining Russian aggression and preserving and strengthening security and stability in the geopolitical and Central European region.

Poland should be the main strategic partner of Ukraine in the CEE region, which has more common geopolitical interests with Ukraine, despite some misunderstandings of local character that have developed in the process of historical coexistence.

Ukraine should become a major geopolitical actor and a uniting factor in the Black Sea region. In this regard, Turkey and Bulgaria, which unite common economic and security interests with Ukraine, should become Ukraine's main strategic partners. At the same time, good-neighborly, mutually beneficial rela-

tions between Ukraine and Belarus should be a guarantee for Ukrainian borders in the north.

Despite differing views on geopolitical coordinates (East-West by D. Dontsov and North-South by Y. Lypa), these theorists are deeply convinced that it is practically impossible to reconcile two irreconcilable centers – the Russian Federation and Ukraine. According to Yurii Lypa, a number of independent states should be formed in the Russian Federation, and the foreign policy vector of development of the Ukrainian state should work in this the most strategic direction.

In the conditions of Russian aggression and unstable political and economic situation in Ukraine, it will be extremely difficult for our country to implement these geopolitical projects by Ukrainian thinkers Yurii Lypa and Dmytro Dontsov. In any case, Ukraine must put every effort to realize its geopolitical potential, on which will largely depend its further development as an independent state and a major actor in Central and Eastern Europe and the Baltic-Black Sea region.

Therefore, only united Europe is able to withstand Russian aggression with its geopolitical effects. At the same time, strong and independent Ukraine, as an independent geopolitical actor in the CEE region, is a reliable guarantor of security and stability on the European continent.

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