

UKRAINE'S TRANSIT POTENTIAL OF THE BLACK SEA AND DANUBE

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In today's globalized world and taking into account the current circumstances, in particular the Russian military aggression against Ukraine and the danger for the European Union (EU) countries in general, the Chinese financial aggression, the instability in the Middle East to its south, the EU-Ukraine partnership is a highly relevant issue at the moment. This partnership can bring the greatest benefits to both partners due to Ukraine's central location in Eurasia and its ability to connect East and West. Achieving a synergetic effect of such a partnership is possible only by joining efforts of the partners to achieve their own and common interests and economic development.

At present, leaders such as the EU, Russia and China are trying to dominate the geopolitical space of Eurasia, which leads to confrontations and intentions to redistribute capital and forces to search for new ways to gain dominance. The USA is certainly not standing aside, but is promoting its own interests on the continent in partnership with the EU. It is important to note that the Russian war against Ukraine is not only against Ukraine, but also against the whole West and the attempt to limit the expansion of the EU to the East.

The most optimistic forecast when Ukraine can become a member of the EU is 2027. Certainly, it will be a challenging process and will require transformation and change on the part of Ukraine and the EU. Nowadays the world is changing so fast and there is no possibility for Ukraine to return to the moment before February 24, 2022.

Geopolitical location of Ukraine

Ukraine occupies a unique geopolitical position in the central part of Eurasia, which has advantages and disadvantages and provides an opportunity to connect the West and the East of the world. An advantage is the location at the crossroads of strategically important trade and transportation routes, which allows to develop transit potential and the potential of the Black Sea and Danube rivers in cargo transportation¹.

As we know, nowadays the economic location dominates even the geographical location. Globalization processes are so fast, and in this reality, economic and geo-economic benefits are the most important, so they should be the first priority. The political system of each country depends on the

¹ Rowden T. Vice Admiral. Sea Control First. United States Navy. 2017 URL: <https://www.public.navy.mil/surfor/Pages/Sea-Control-First.aspx>.

external and internal economic relations. Economy is the material basis of any policy and its political system. Geoeconomics determines the policy of redistribution of resources and world capital in general, which is the key case of conflicts between world leaders. Having real economic interests, EU countries will take care of investments in Ukraine and encourage investments in the Black Sea region (BSR).

Black Sea potential

The EU was interested in the partnership of the Black Sea region, especially when Romania and Bulgaria, countries that have access to the Black Sea, became members of the EU. The Black Sea is located at the crossroads of Europe, Central Asia and the Middle East and is important strategic market, through which pass energy and transportation routes, borders with the rich of oil Caspian region and that can connect West and East.

According to this, the first EU interest of the Black Sea region is the process of EU enlargement and strengthening of EU position in the Black Sea region thanks to Moldova and Ukraine².

The second interest of the EU is the protection of its interests in the Black Sea region and neighboring regions, which are vital for the security and implementation of the EU's foreign policy plans, including the strengthening of the European Union's political and economic influence in this region. Examples of this can be the new pipelines from the Central Asian countries through the Black Sea region in passing Russia and the TRACECA strategy.

There are four pan-European international transport corridors crossing Ukraine:

– № 3 (Brussels-Aachen-Cologne-Dresden-Wroclaw-Katowice-Krakow-Lviv-Kiev, length 1640 km, of which 694 km are railways and 611 km are highways across Ukraine);

– № 5 (East-West: Venice-Trieste/Koper-Ljubljana-Maribor-Budapest-Uzhhorod-Lviv-Kiev, total length of 1595 km, of which 266 km are highways and 338.7 km are railways across Ukraine);

– № 9 (Helsinki-Vyborg-St.Petersburg-Pskov-Gomel-Kyiv-Liubashivka-Chisinau-Buharest-Dimitrovgrad-Alexandropoulos, total length of 3400 km, of which 1496 km of railways and 996 km of highways pass through Ukraine);

– № 7 by water (The Danube River Northwest-Southeast: Austria-Hungary-Croatia-Serbia-Romania-Bulgaria-Moldavia-Ukraine) – 2,300 km.

The TEN-T project within the framework of the TRACECA program supports the creation of a new transport system in the EU by 2030: the Mediterranean Corridor № 6 (Gdansk – Odessa (Ukraine) International Transport Corridor).

Now there are two transit oil lines bypassing Russia. The first is through Ukraine: Azerbaijan (oil producer) – Georgia – Ukraine – Moldova – Romania (Europe). The second is the Baltic Sea: Norway, USA and Finland – Lithuania (from Klaipeda) on the Baltic Sea.

² Aydin M. Europe's Next Shore: the Black Sea Region after EU Enlargement. European Union: Institute for Security Studies. Occasional Paper No.53. 2004. URL: OP-53-text.qxp (europa.eu)

The role of Ukraine for the EU in the Black Sea region gives economic advantages, first, in transport communications and in the field transit of energy carriers. In addition, through the above-mentioned interests of the EU we can identify the third important interest of the EU in the development relations with Ukraine, in particular in the realization of the potential of the Black Sea and the Danube. This is the possibility of developing a long Baltic line to Ukraine through the waterway and creating the Baltic-Black Sea Union. If we extend the Baltic transit line to Ukraine (the current end point of the Baltic transit line is Poland), we can have a full circle of transit from the West (Scandinavian countries) through Ukraine, Georgia, Azerbaijan or Kazakhstan to the East and can be used not only for oil transit but also for other cargo transportation. For Ukraine this project also solves great questions: increase export and transit potential, can improve relations between Belarus and Ukraine, between Poland and Ukraine, helps in perception of Ukraine as an important subject of political relations, increase importance of Ukraine's role in the global economic system and reduce pressure from Russia.

Danube potential

One of the ways to realize the potential of the Black Sea is to realize the potential of the Danube, Europe's second longest river, which flows through a large part of Central and Southeastern Europe to the Black Sea (Ukraine). The Danube region is considered to be the most heterogeneous European region. The countries that are part of this region have significant differences in the fields of innovation and information, society, infrastructures, competitiveness and others³.

The EU Strategy for the Danube Region – EUDR was designed to jointly solve the challenges faced by EU Member States and non-EU countries located in the same geographical region, including Ukraine and Moldova. Pursuing ambitious goals, the Priority Direction 1A – Inland Navigation focused on the increase of river freight transport, on the improvement of navigation taking into account the specifics of each sector of the Danube and its navigable tributaries, on the creation of an effective waterway management infrastructure.

Therefore, it is important for the European Union to be guided by geopolitical and geo-economic expediency, and for Ukraine to strive to become a member of the EU, but to have its own integral idea of its role, priorities and model of political and economic development in the geopolitical space of the world. One of the important steps in this direction is that Ukraine joined the Convention on Common Transit and the Convention on Simplification of Formalities in Trade in Goods on October 1, 2022, which helps to facilitate the movement of cargoes between the EU and Ukraine and the common transit countries.

³ EU Danube strategy by Danube transnational Program. 2020. URL: [Brosuracraineana \(danube-region.eu\)](http://Brosuracraineana(danube-region.eu))