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Peculiarities of Modern Geopolitical Disputes of the Northern Black Sea Region Countries

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Abstract

Introduction. Modern regionalism in the political practices of the neighboring states of the Black Sea region has become a manifestation of various processes. In one case, as a mechanism of decentralization and liberalization within the framework of global integration trends, and in the second, as a practice of implementing post-imperial geopolitical ideologies. In this case, it is ultimately aimed at destroying the territorial status quo. Such processes at the stage of inception and formalization will manifest themselves in the form of a policy of “soft power” and occur under the guise of the “rebirth” of the nation and justice.

Materials and methods. This study uses interdisciplinary and dialectical scientific approaches. The first contributed to the attraction of individual ideas from the arsenal of philosophy, sociology, history, and jurisprudence. The second ensured the search for truth through the establishment of connections between various kinds of contradictory positions. In addition, the following was used: a systematic method, which made it possible to analyze the relationship between related concepts that characterize symbolic reality; structural-functional method, through which the structural levels of influence of symbols and features of the implementation of symbolic geopolitics are identified.

Research results. The article demonstrates that information and communication spaces have become an arena for political actions by states pursuing targeted cultural and memorial policies in the region. The purpose of such measures is declared to be the care and protection of compatriots, preserving the memory of a common past, and creating conditions for the integration of the region into the semiotic and institutional system of the state.

Discussion and conclusion. It is concluded that all subjects of regional geopolitical relations consider the transborder region of the Northern Black Sea region as a strategic space for further national development. It is noted that national strategies at the beginning of the 21st century. were transformed through an expanded interpretation of nations that went beyond state borders and included foreign compatriots who had lost citizenship, related ethnic groups, as well as historical and ethnogenetic spaces that in the past belonged to states and are understood as “lost”.

Keywords: transborder, regional policy, memorial policy

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Научная статья

Особенности современных геополитических споров стран Северного Причерноморья

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Аннотация

Введение. Современный регионализм в политических практиках сопредельных государств Причерноморья стал проявлением различных процессов: в одном случае, как механизм децентрализации и либерализации в рамках

глобальных интеграционных тенденций, а в другом, как практика реализации постимперских геополитических идеологий. В этом случае в конечном варианте он направлен на разрушение территориального статус-кво. Такие процессы на стадии зарождения и оформления проявятся в виде политики «мягкой силы» и происходят под ширмой «возрождения» нации и справедливости.

Материалы и методы. В данном исследовании использованы межотраслевой и диалектический научные подходы. Первый способствовал привлечению отдельных идей из арсенала философии, социологии, истории, правоведения. Второй обеспечил поиск истины через установление связей между разного рода противоречивыми позициями. Кроме того, применяются: системный метод, который позволил проанализировать соотношение между родственными понятиями, которые характеризуют символическую реальность; структурно-функциональный метод, посредством которого выявлены структурные уровни влияния символов и особенности осуществления символической геополитики.

Результаты исследования. Продемонстрировано, что информационные и коммуникационные пространства стали ареной для политических действий государств, проводящих в регионе целенаправленную культурную и мемориальную политику. Целью таких мер провозглашается забота и защита соотечественников, сохранение памяти о совместном прошлом, создании условий для интегрирования региона в семиотическую и институциональную систему государства.

Обсуждение и заключение. Сделан вывод, что все субъекты региональных геополитических отношений рассматривают трансграничье Северного Причерноморья как стратегическое пространство для дальнейшего национального развития. При этом отмечено, что национальные стратегии в начале XXI в. были трансформированы за счет расширенного толкования наций, которые вышли за государственные границы и включили в свой состав зарубежных соотечественников, потерявших гражданство, родственные этнические группы, а также исторические и этногенетические пространства, которые в прошлом принадлежали государствам и понимаются как «потерянные».

Ключевые слова: трансграничье, региональная политика, мемориальная политика

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Introduction. The Northern Black Sea coast for centuries remains a zone of geopolitical confrontation between border states. In constructing their geopolitical subjectivity, regional players view the region as an area of national genesis, politogenesis or ethnogenesis of the titular people. The practices of socio-political activity in the borderland by these states demonstrate different mechanisms of influence on regional social processes and different forms of regional politics.

Regional politics involves the search for historical arguments to legitimize political action, in order to seek interpretations of the past and create long-term memorial strategies that reinforce the contemporary version of national genesis. Thus, the diachronic dimension of regional policy creates a foundation for justifying the “historical right” of the state to space. The synchronous dimension of regional policy is focused on the formation of the population’s loyalty to the political center through social actions in the spheres of domestic relations, investment, education (formation of loyal intelligentsia), information (formation of regional memory and communication priorities).

In this case, the state “enters” or “returns” to the regional structure as a beneficiary. Investing allows to establish social ties and act as an economic entity, cultural and social patron, acting taking into account its geopolitical interests.

Materials and methods. General scientific methods are used, systemic, structural-functional and institutional approaches to the analysis of regional geopolitics of the countries of the Northern Black Sea region are applied.

Results. Analyzing the “map” of the Northern Black Sea region as an area that is a historical part of the great empires, we pay attention to the splits that their borders introduced into the regional socio-cultural structure (between the Christian and Muslim worlds, between the Latinized space of the Romanesque culture and the Cyrillic script culture of Eastern Christianity, between the culture of the agricultural population and the nomads, and so on).

The regional structure, as a result of the splits in the socio-political space, is characterized by unique features: 1) the formation of enclaves of “peripheral population”, which is characterized by multiple identities [1]; 2) the coexistence of cross-communication spaces that form a discrete-continuum system of multi-level interaction; 3) “phantom borders”, which manifest themselves during electoral processes, choice of migration directions, formation of integration vectors of local subjects of the region.

The Northern Black Sea coast has the features of a “buffer space”. Each of the empires that owned this space conceptualized it as a barrier that ensured that the “center” was out of reach: (a) Construction of fortresses, outposts, organization of military settlements; b) creation of conditions for settlement of the region by the population loyal to the authorities; c) implementation of protectionist policies in the region.

Social protectionism provided for the creation of preferential “social elevators”, special social and economic statuses for the population, granting autonomies or the right to self-government.

Economic protectionism manifested itself in the form of tax and customs privileges, porto-franco, special regimes of border movement, and the creation of infrastructural facilities.

As long as the region remained the “inner periphery” of the empire, it created conditions for the protection of the “central structure” and marked the spatial boundary of its territory. But in a situation of conflict, it was the object of “bargaining”, “sacrifice”, “conquest” as in the period of the Russian-Turkish-Polish wars of the 17–19 centuries or the world wars of the 20th century. The mobility of political borders explains the large number of relict borders in the northern Black Sea – “scraps” of competition between nations, states (Art. Rokkan). They manifest themselves during election campaigns, in the conditions of choosing a development strategy in the state, in situations of cultural and status conflicts.

Due to the volatility of political influence and weakness of the central government in the region, its status can also be interpreted as an “external” periphery. In favor of this characterization is the reference to the sea and to other “peripheries”. This gives grounds to consider the Northern Black Sea coast as a transboundary system. Remoteness from the political “center” explains the weakness and irrelevance of national identity in all regional historical groups.

There is a tendency in the region to form autonomist entities (regional “republics”), but usually without claims to self-determination. Autonomy in the face of frequent changes in the “center” is seen as a mechanism capable of preserving the social structure and guaranteeing stability to the inhabitants of the borderland. The politicization of regional groups can be seen as the consequences of strategic actions outside their own control and the result of external influences. In the Black Sea region this approach is relevant for the Gagauz, Bessarabian and Crimean situations.

If we define the “periphery” in relation to the center, we define the cultural minority in relation to the majority, which sets the norms of national culture. The modern ethnic map of the Northern Black Sea coast is the result of geopolitical transformations of the last 200 years. Most of the peoples living in the region in retrospect had a “titular” status and perceive themselves as “indigenous” inhabitants (Greeks, Jews, Tatars, Moldovans, Romanians, Russians, Ukrainians, and others), whose history is part of the history of the regional space. At the same time, most of the significant diaspora groups are ethnic enclaves of populations that have found themselves outside the homeland and can be seen as “cataclysmic diasporas” formed during the movement of political boundaries. It is legitimate that their identity is characterized as “capsule”, “diffuse”, “cluster”, “crisis”, “hybrid”.

All of the above characteristics of space explain the thesis that “peripheries” have always been difficult to conquer and difficult to manage. They pose a threat of autonomization or gravitate towards neighboring states. Therefore, in such spaces, social and memorial practices realize competitive centers, oriented towards their inclusion in the semiotic space of states and towards the incorporation of border groups to their own social structures. Comprehensive regional programs of “expansion” through kinship spaces and groups involve the actualization of previous sociocultural faults in order to deepen and “harden” them.

Regionalism in the practices of neighboring states has become a manifestation of various processes. In one case, it emerged as a mechanism of decentralization and liberalization within the framework of global integration (Bulgaria, Russia). In the second, as a practice of realization of post-imperial geopolitical ideologies (Turkey, Romania, Poland), when regionalism is aimed at the destruction of the territorial status quo under the guise of the revival of the nation and justice. Yes, the Northern Black Sea region is the arena of geopolitical projects reflecting the post-imperial ambitions of states: “Intermarium”, “Greater Romania” and “Greater Bulgaria”, “Turkic Belt”. These projects have become the basis for the national development strategies of the neighboring states. Let us focus on policy formation in some of the countries of the region: Romania, Bulgaria, Turkey.

The ideas of Romania’s “revival” during the presidency of Traian Băsescu (2004–2014) led not only to the revival of political unionism, but also to the materialization of territorial claims in the border zones. “Romanian Revival” is presented as a territorial unification of Romania, Moldova, Bessarabia, Maramuresu and South Bukovina. The sphere of influence of Unionism became the “lost territories”, which in practical ideology are presented as “temporarily occupied”. In 2017, the Romanian Parliament established the public holiday “Unification Day with Bessarabia” (March 27). In Ukraine and Moldova, this date is designated as “Occupation of Bessarabia Day”. The revival of pan-Turkism in the Republic of Turkey became noticeable in the second half of the twentieth century, when the “National Action” Party took possession of this ideology. In 2018 during the parliamentary elections, the “National Action” and “Justice and Development” parties formed the “People’s Alliance”, which received 61.4 % of the vote. Constitutional changes to empower the president are seen as a return to “Ottomanism”.

Neo-Ottomanism is Turkey’s unofficial doctrine of expanding its sphere of influence into adjacent territories through “soft power”. The component of neo-Ottomanism-neopan-turkism assumes integration of Turkic states based on their cultural proximity. The pan-Turkist basis of the ruling coalition’s programme is indicated by the work “Strategic Depth” (2001) by A. Davutoğlu (2014–2016 – Prime Minister of Turkey). The politician justified the path Turkey should take

to become a regional leader in the “post-Ottoman” space. Under his leadership, the doctrine of “zero problems with neighbours” was formulated, which turned into a means of justifying the management of processes in the spaces of neighbouring states [2]. The modern geopolitics of Turkey is realised at the expense of regions inhabited by Turkic peoples (“Turkic belt”).

In the Black Sea region, its targets are the Crimean Tatars and the Orthodox Gagauz. The idea of a “Turkic stability belt” is being developed by the World Assembly of Turkic Peoples, whose main task was to create a Commonwealth of Turkic States [3].

The Cooperation Council of Turkic States (Turkic Council) was institutionalised in 2009. This trans-state structure included the Councils of Heads of State, Foreign Ministers, Elders, Honored figures of foreign ministries and a permanent secretariat. The Commonwealth was the first institutional structure to unite the “Turkic world”.

The Northern Black Sea region remains a limitrophe for Eastern Christianity. Religious wars as an ideological component of geopolitical conflicts that have not left this space for a millennium.

The current process of establishing a local church in Ukraine exposes the conflict of the Westphalian era, when the thesis “whose power is whose faith” was relevant. The dispute between the Patriarchate of Constantinople and the Patriarchate of Moscow over the canonical territory and powers of the first patriarch is linked to the global restructuring in the world system of center-periphery relations.

In the context of these processes there is a shift of emphasis in the concept of “Russian World”, which acquires alternative forms: “Union of East Slavic Orthodox Peoples”, “Orthodox world”.

The National Strategy of the Republic of Bulgaria has been changed in the last decade. In 2014, the Ministerial Council adopted a new “National Strategy for Bulgarian citizens and Bulgarian historical communities around the world” [4]. According to the document, the Bulgarian nation is interpreted as an ethno-cultural entity of trans-state character. The integration of all ethnic Bulgarians of the world into a unified system of socio-cultural relations is presented as a task of the state.

The era of European postmodernity changed the actual space of interaction between political actors; in the new conditions, the information space began to fulfill the functions of the geographical space and post-facts acquired the ability to generate political reactions.

A marker of the development of regionalist programs and the design of geopolitical «expansion» projects is the policy and practice of bringing former compatriots into the sphere of state control. Among all the Black Sea states, the most developed such “politicians” are in Romania and Bulgaria.

In Romania, the beginning of the formation of such a policy was in 2007. with the adoption of the Law on Supporting Romanians around the World 2007 [5]. However, back in 1991, the Law “on Romanian citizenship” called as compatriots all those who, on the basis of the “right of soil”, were able to prove the existence of relatives born on the territory of Romania before 1940 [6]. Since 2009, for this category of compatriots the Law “on simplification of granting citizenship to persons who resided on the territory of Romania” has been implemented. The presence of citizens abroad gives rise to humanitarian issues in the cultural sphere and in relation to border disputes. The 2007 Romania’s National Security Concept enshrines the objective of protecting Romanian citizens, their rights and freedoms [6]. Passportization in Ukraine’s border regions is fueled by “pragmatic unionism”, which legalizes emigration to the EU in a systemic crisis. “New Romanians” often have multiple citizenship (Ukrainian, Romanian, Bulgarian, Russian, Moldovan, etc.), which reinforces the hybrid identity traditional to the region.

In Bulgaria, the policy of “foreign Bulgarians” began to develop in the early 1990s of the 20th century. The first document was Decree of the Council of Ministers No. 103 “on conducting educational activities among Bulgarians abroad”. The 1999 Bulgarian Citizenship Act and the Bulgarian Citizenship of Bulgarians Residing outside the 2000 Republic of Bulgaria Act [7] have created a basis for relations between the state and regional diasporas. This policy continues to evolve, as evidenced by the 2015 Draft Law “on Bulgarians living outside the Republic of Bulgaria” [8].

Since 1999, the policy of attracting compatriots has been developing in Russia. The 1999 Law “On the State Policy of the Russian Federation towards Compatriots Abroad” was updated in 2010 [9]. The Law focused on relations with compatriots abroad as an important area of its foreign and domestic policy and stated that compatriots living abroad are entitled to rely on the support of the Russian Federation in exercising their civil, political, social, economic and cultural rights, preserving their language and identity.

Expansion and simplification of mechanisms for attracting compatriots became the subject of discussion only in 2018. with the nomination of the draft law “On Amendments to the Law” “On Citizenship” [10]. According to the results of the VI World Congress of Russian Compatriots in Moscow in 2018. announced the adoption of a new Concept of State Migration Policy, which should provide for a program of relations with compatriots abroad.

The youngest among all state policies towards compatriots is the policy of the Republic of Turkey. Among the legislative acts, there is only the 2009 Turkish Citizenship Law, updated in 2017 [11, 12]. For the first time, the law provides for benefits (provision of a “blue card”) for citizenship for compatriots abroad, but only if dual citizenship is

not established in the state of residence of Turks. Mechanisms for involving the diaspora in public and political life were simplified (the right to participate in elections while abroad and to conduct commercial operations abroad appeared).

The state, building relations with compatriots can emphasize demographic and migration processes, but it can also contribute to the consolidation of the diaspora in the region and create a system of regular relations with its structures, which in this case is a support for the implementation of economic and political interests of the metropolis. By creating institutional and legal mechanisms of policy towards compatriots, the state integrates into the system of network transnational relations, gaining leverage in the global political system.

Institutionalization in the sphere of diaspora policy of the states of the region has achieved significant development. Romania has had a Council for Romanians Abroad under the Prime Minister since 1995. In 1998, the State Security Unit for Romanians Abroad was created, and in 1999, the Romanian Relations Unit for Romanians Abroad. For the first time, an independent body guiding state policy on diaspora relations was established in 2000 – Department of Romanians Abroad, which was subordinated in different years to the Ministry of Public Information, the General Secretariat of the Government, and the Office of the Prime Minister.

In 2005, Romanians Abroad Department was established under the Ministry of Foreign Affairs cases, and since 2009 subordinate to the Prime Minister [6]. The Department focused on Romanian minorities in Ukraine, Bulgaria, Serbia, Hungary and Albania, and worked on Romanian schools, Romanian citizenship, and policies to strengthen the identity of Romanian communities.

“Ministry of Romanians from Everywhere” emerged as the highest institutional level created only by states where the diaspora plays the role of a structural unit of the nation-state system in Romania in 2017. The same year, the Government of Romania adopted the “National Strategy for Romanians from Everywhere”, containing a programme for the period 2017–2020 [13].

In the Romanian Parliament, there are Committees dealing with Romanians from everywhere, there is a “Commission of Romanian Communities Abroad” in the Chamber of Deputies, and there is a “Commission of Romanians from all over the world” in the Senate. The Chamber of Deputies convenes the Congress of Romanians Abroad and ensures its company.

Bulgaria has created a well-developed institutional system for the implementation of the policy on foreign compatriots. It is possible to distinguish the bodies of general competence in the system of state power, these are the Commission for Bulgarian Citizenship and Bulgarians Abroad operating under the administration of the President of Bulgaria (operating since 22.05.2012); The Interdepartmental Commission for Bulgarians Abroad under the Ministry of Education and Science of Bulgaria on the initiative of the MES opened a Directorate responsible for Bulgarian schools outside the country, the Association of Bulgarian Schools Abroad is active; The Directorate of “Bulgarian Citizenship” and the Citizenship Council operate under the Ministry of Justice of Bulgaria. In general, the implementation of the state policy on Bulgarians living outside the Republic of Bulgaria is left to the Council of Ministers [8, 14].

In addition, special bodies responsible for Bulgaria’s policy towards the Bulgarian community abroad have been established. The first state body that used the term “Bulgarians abroad” in its name was the Committee for Work with Bulgarians Abroad (operated from 1982 to 1991). The committee combined the features of a state and community organisation. In 1991, the International Association of Bulgarians was established. It is a nationwide, public organisation which was engaged in the implementation of the state policy for persons of Bulgarian origin abroad. In 1992, the State Agency for Bulgarians Abroad was established as the government’s coordinating body for the implementation of state policy towards compatriots around the world.

Consequently, Bulgaria’s institutional system is the most developed in the Black Sea region due to the influence of the diaspora on the nation-state building process. For Bulgaria, its diaspora is a solid lobbying structure abroad, which should create an additional resource for the state.

The reasoning in Turkey is somewhat similar. It forms a policy of interaction with the diaspora based on the desire to get rid of the status of a regional state and gain influence on global international processes.

The development of foreign diasporas here is related to labour migration. Since the 1960s, a system of bilateral agreements between Turkey and European states has been taking shape. Currently, 32 countries have signed such treaties [15]. The need for a co-ordinating body was only fulfilled in December 2002, when the Office of Turkish Citizens Living Abroad was established by a decision of the Council of Ministers. The work of the Directorate was directed towards the creation of a strong Turkish lobby, which was to become a competitor to Armenian and Greek pressure groups in Europe and America.

It was at that time when the idea of creating a diaspora ministry was articulated, modelled on a similar structure in Armenia. In March 2010, the concept of “kindred peoples” was enshrined in the name of the state institution that dealt with diaspora policy and “Directorate for Turks Living Abroad and Kindred Peoples” was established. This concept is interpreted in different contexts depending on the situation: religious (all co-religionists), ethnic (all Turks), and even

imperial (the population of regions that were part of the Ottoman Empire). The Minister of Work and Social Security – Faruk Çelik [16] has been appointed in charge of the agency.

In November 2018, the “Joint Action Strategy of the Turkic Council of Turkic Speaking Diasporas” and the “Joint Action Plan for Turkic Speaking Diasporas for 2018–2019” were adopted at the meeting of heads of state bodies and organisations responsible for diaspora issues of the Cooperation Council of Turkic Speaking States in Ankara. It is significant that the first “contact group of diaspora decision-makers” was established under the RSTD in 2009. So, the consolidation of the diaspora, trans-state system on the basis of socio-cultural ties within the Turkic world has been going on for 10 years.

Discussion and conclusion. The Northern Black Sea region remains a space of competitive strategies of the border states. The history of socio-political cleavages in the region manifests itself in the form of phantom and relic borders, local ethno-cultural groups with multiple identities, and in the presence of cross-border socio-cultural systems that encompass regional diasporas, bringing them onto the world stage. Border states have over the past decades developed functional institutional and legal systems that allow them to exert a consistent and systemic influence on the region through local regional and kinship groups, acting as patrons. Local ethno-cultural groups have become recipients of regional policies of border states, which predetermines the realisation of different versions of historical truth, political expediency and social justice in the region.

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