

## Regional and International Development Policy of Georgia International Formats of the Black Sea and Georgia

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### Abstract

*In the wake of global geoeconomic and geopolitical changes, Georgia, as well as a number of European countries, is undergoing the heavy dynamics of the foreign policy, as well as the diversification of forms of regional and international relations. The welfare and security of the Georgian population depends on how rational the process will be.*

*We need to talk about formats, conflicts and future cooperation of the Black Sea basin, both economically and geopolitically. The topic is devoted to the political perspective of the Seven of the Black Sea and gives an in-depth analysis of the strategic importance of the Black Sea as a whole, the role of the EU in terms of the partnership of the Seven Seas and the development of regional and Black Sea cooperation in Georgia.*

**Key words:** Foreign policy; Regional development; Strategic geopolitical cooperation; Geopolitical status of the Black Sea Basin

**J.E.L. classification:** F5, H5, H7

### 1. Introduction

For the last 15 years, the attention of European politicians was mainly focused on the traditional, South Caucasian dimension, which included Azerbaijan, Armenia, Georgia (AGA). There have been serious efforts to enhance the trilateral cooperation, and there have been major investments, but these processes finally broke at the beginning of third millennium because of the unresolved Karabakh conflict.

Since the beginning of 2004, the intensification of cooperation of Georgia with the Black Sea countries has caused jealousy of Azerbaijan and Armenia, despite they are they are represented in some Black Sea formats.

It is important for Georgia to build an international political concept in itself that does not exclude regional cooperation of different dimensions and strives to complement one another and focus on effective cooperation. Georgia should be interested in the cost-effective diversification of dimensions and the process of international regional cooperation.

Against this background, it is important by neighboring countries and partners to be understood the fact that the country can and should participate simultaneously in different regional dimensions and in their respective formats.

A variety of dimensions and formats provide additional resources for responding to various challenges and threats of modernity. At the same time, the EU should bear in mind that the pace of diversification of regional dimensions / formats for Georgia may be preceded by a lengthy process of planning and decision-making at EU level.

Each regional dimension (South Caucasian, Caucasian, Black Sea, Black and Mediterranean Sea, Black and Baltic Sea, Black and Caspian Sea, etc.) in which Georgia participates, has several relevant formats - applicable and promising. The variety of combinations of these different forms of cooperation can have a very positive impact on the development of political and economic indicators of the country.

## 2. Theoretical background

Georgian authors and governmental institution working on problems of foreign diplomacy point out that one of the task of this type of diplomacy is to facilitate the implementation of this type of inclusive and sustainable economic and geopolitical policies that provide all strata of the country's population the results of the country's development. It's plays a main role in Georgia's geopolitical development and involvement of the country in international relations processes. (Rusetski, 2014, p.25).

Regional policy in Georgia is now gaining momentum an important area of cooperation under the Association Agreement and the Single Support Framework 2018-2021, which define the priorities for EU support in Georgia.

Government of Georgia recognizes principles of democratic development, rule of law, efficient administration, respect for human rights and basic freedoms; the Government's policy is based on those principles. Integration in the European Union is the cornerstone of Georgia's foreign and internal policy. Government of Georgia intends to adhere to democratic development course and ensure firm Social-economic Development Strategy of Georgia 4 support to universal European values, which will be basis for getting closer to the EU. Correspondingly, effective implementation of Association Agreement between EU and Georgia (whose integral part is Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area) is very important as it is a precondition for political association and gradual economic integration with the EU. (Regional Development Programme of Georgia "GEORGIA 2018-2021")

## 3. Dimension of the Black Sea Basin

The maritime neighbors of Georgia, such as Ukraine, Bulgaria, Moldova and Romania are one of the most important partners in the fields of politics and economics. Today, they are perceived as neighbors, while only a few years ago only Russia, Azerbaijan, Armenia and Turkey, which have land borders with Georgia, were considered neighbors.

Some impediments to the development of Black Sea Basin cooperation:

- The imperfection of the concept of development of its dimension and formats;
- The absence of a common geopolitical view of Black Sea regional cooperation. Different geopolitical orientations of countries;
- Uncertainty with subregions of the Black Sea basin. Ignorance of this important component at the state level, lack of funds, necessary to organize subregional and regional cooperation issues;
- Negative historical stereotype related to pressure, distrust from neighbors; the desire to dominate the region in large countries, the problem of leadership distribution between countries, confessional differences;
- Armed conflict in Abkhazia.

At a meeting of the BSCC Experts at the Black Sea Commission on Conflicts in Vienna in November 2005, the suggestion was adopted, that if the definition of large Black Sea Coast is introduced at the expert level then the notion of a small Black Sea is logical.

This issue is very important to determine the future structure of Black Sea security. According to BSCC, the small Black Sea Coast includes the coastal region of seven Black Sea countries - Bulgaria, Romania, Ukraine, Russia, Georgia, Turkey and Moldova.

The resulting system may look like this:

- The Black Sea coast country – that is the country that has a Black Sea coast and has a navy (such countries are six - Ukraine, Russia, Turkey, Bulgaria, Romania and Georgia);
- The Black Sea Basin country - that is a country that has a coast or direct access to the Black Sea (such countries are seven - Ukraine, Russia, Turkey, Bulgaria, Romania, Georgia and Moldova).

#### **4. European Inner Sea - Black Sea ?!**

The notion of the Black Sea - as of inner Europe, is actively supported by analysts and politicians of Tbilisi, especially after the "Rose Revolution". They perceive the Black Sea region as strategically correct, as the part of the European macro-region.

They outline three key strategic priorities of international regional policy:

- NATO integration;
- EU integration;
- Development of Black Sea Regional Cooperation.

As we can see, Black Sea regional cooperation is discussed along with the above dimensions. This is very important, despite the regional dimension of the Black Sea is much lower than the first two, which have transcontinental and macro-regional levels, to say nothing about the Black Sea institutions, which are underdeveloped. (Chitadze, 2017, pp. 89-110)

#### **5. The European Union as a partner of the Black Sea region**

Ideologically and according to the integration, the processes in the Baltic region are far ahead of the Black Sea region. It is due to the fact that once Germany, Sweden and Finland appeared in the role of locomotive, which have received a significant financial support from EU for the development of the Baltic region. Those in the southern dimension are also keen on facilitating the process.

The European Union should launch moral and strategic moves in the region by adoption of a new European and Euro-Atlantic strategy. In this respect, the EU has already taken decisive steps, by engaging South Caucasus and Ukraine in the European neighborhood policy.

The question, why the EU did not create the "Black Sea dimension" in its policy, when the regional approach would be more effective in supporting the development of some of the Black Sea and Baltic states, which is fully applicable to Georgia and the entire South Caucasus region, is timely and needs in-depth study. This would facilitate development of sectoral initiatives such as INOGATE, TRACECA, the pan-European transport corridor, etc.

The absence of a systematic approach is evidenced by the real steps already taken in the field of cooperation within the common foreign and security policy, which also requires "regionalization", i.e. it should be given a regional character and dimension, as well as the rest of the EU strategy. (Heywood, 2016, p.28)

Therefore, it would be desirable to support the following initiatives:

- Support of the conceptual issues related to the Black Sea region;
- Popularization of the idea of "Black Sea –European Inner Sea";
- Development of identification of the Black Sea region as part of the South European macroregion;
- Development of relations with small countries of the Black Sea;
- Commence of the process of resolving the conflict in Abkhazia and Samachablo as an armed conflict in the Black Sea coast;
- Developing cooperation with the Society of Democracy and the United Nations Democracy Fund;

#### **6. Conclusions**

Georgia should not slow down the pace of European and Euro-Atlantic integration, as Azerbaijan and Armenia fail to resolve the conflict and reach mutual understanding. This tripartite format is not a panacea; there are other less conspicuous formats in this regional dimension (though its potential is not exhausted yet). Closer relations with the European Union allows us to implement a number of reforms today and to bring the country closer to the Copenhagen standards for common standardization and harmonization. The positive and negative experience of Turkey in the process of EU integration is also very interesting. Thus, the declared aspiration of the four countries towards European integration would contribute to the formation of the new South

Caucasus regional format (AGAT - Azerbaijan, Georgia, Armenia, Turkey). Prospects for regional cooperation of states in the format of transport is also very interesting, which becomes urgent by the construction of the Kars-Akhalkalaki-Tbilisi-Baku railway, connecting Central Asia with the Balkans. This is a very promising project not only for Georgia but also for the countries of the South Caucasus as a whole.

The prospect of increasing the railway lines to Central Asia is not only a regional but a transregional, continental initiative, which, if properly managed, can play a major role in global transport and energy security.

By participation of Iran, the energy interests and global security issues form the basis for another successful South Caucasus format (GITARA - Georgia-Iran-Turkey-Azerbaijan-Russian Federation-Armenia), however, there is a difference of opinion among experts - whether Iran is a country of the South Caucasus, or just borders it. Discussing this issue and the existence of such an important neighbor in regional politics is one of the priority tasks. It is necessary notness this format with the six-sided format (3 + 3), supported primarily by Iran. The project (GITARA) is a development of the AGAT format and all other formats.

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