# East-European Space in the Context of the New Geopolitical Architecture Configuration

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**Abstract**

Studying the geopolitical architecture of the East-European space we can say that this part of the globe is in the process of formation as a result of relations among geopolitical actors – power centers – the West represented by the US, NATO and EU on one hand and on the other hand the Russian Federation. Carefully analyzing the ongoing transformations in East- European space, we see that the content of geopolitics centered on the ability of states to divide geographical space has rapidly changed.

This article analyzes for the first time the subject of the "new configuration of East-European geopolitical architecture". Integration processes like the EU and NATO eastward extension, as well as those of integration / disintegration from post-Soviet space, the events in eastern Ukraine that resulted in the annexation of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol by the Russian Federation have had a significant influence on the creation of the new geopolitical architecture of the East-European space.

**Keywords:** Border, East-European space, geopolitical architecture, influence, interest, power center, state

## Introduction

Analyzing the geopolitical architecture of East-European space we can state that this part of the globe was formed as a result of the relationships among geopolitical actors - power centers. Geopolitical architecture depends on sharing influence in a certain area from the perspective of geopolitical actors' interests. The geopolitical space, emerged from the situation and conditions formed as a result of policies of actors in a specific geographic coordinate system that was handled as an environment of political, economic, military expression forms of the states - power centers. So in a physical (geographical) space takes place the manifestation of political, economic, military interests of geopolitical actors. Geopolitical space is treated as "real territory", on which some actors display the historical and political influence. With the increasing geostrategic and geoeconomic role of a geopolitical space, the interest in it is determined by the interaction of certain actors. The configuration trend of geopolitical space is characterized by the specific of political processes, nature and manifestation of geopolitical actors interests (Pushkarev, 2012) which causes the formation of a new geopolitical architecture in a certain area, and in our case, Eastern Europe.

Carefully studying the ongoing transformations in East-European space, we see that the content of geopolitics centered on the ability of states to divide geographical space has rapidly changed. If we analyze the process of East-European space "new geopolitical architecture forma-

tion", arises the need to determine the borders, as well as conditions, factors that have contributed to this geopolitical phenomenon. The new architecture of the East-European space signifies the configuration of geopolitical actors' interests, forms of manifestation and carrying out of national interests.

## East-European Space

Appealing to the category of East-European space is noted that so far there is no international definition of the exact delineation of geographical border of this area. In specialized literature there are multiple views on delimitation of Eastern Europe. Thus, Czech geopolitician O. Kreici proves that the region has no natural borders and the name if this space has more political overtones. Nonetheless some authors believe that there is a separation of East- European space and what is characteristic for this space - is historical unity, mentality, traditions, geopolitical specific and willingness of these states for self-determination. Belarus political scientist I. I. Leavis proposes for East-European space the name "Middle Europe". According to him, the "Middle Europe" space was formed as a result of historical and geopolitical transformations. Neither East nor West, but the historical reality, geostrategic and socio-cultural traits of nations from the area has contributed to East-European space (Biryukov & Kovalenko, 2012). Currently, if we are to make reference

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to the geographic location, then in East-European space the following countries are included: Belarus, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Romania, Moldova, Poland, Ukraine, Slovakia, Hungary and the Russian Federation.

Starting from the hypothesis that geographical space or the sovereignty of a state / center of power does not overlap with geopolitical space, the area of influence extends outside the sovereignty or the geographical area, a special attention is to be given to Caucasian states in the context of European integration processes and also the Eurasian processes, which have been contributing in a unique way to forming "the new geopolitical architecture "of East-European space. Although not the whole Caucasus belongs to the East-European space (in this case deserves attention the fact that the official border between Asia and Europe, represented in most geography atlases, including those recognized by National Geographic Community crosses through the Caucasus Mountains. Georgia and Azerbaijan are located in Asia, but the northern parts of these countries are in Europe according to the recent delimitation of political border between Europe and Asia. The UN considers Georgia and Azerbaijan as transcontinental countries. Including the Council of Europe considers Georgia and Azerbaijan transcontinental states, and Armenia, geographically being located in the Asian region, politically is under European influence (The border…) and the Rioni River in Georgia is the natural border that splits Europe from Asian continent. According to the Classification elaborated by the Russian Federation in 2015, Azerbaijan, Armenia and Georgia are considered Asian states. Although these countries are located on two continents, in terms of European values and aspirations, they are ascribed to East-European space.

Regarding Caucasus (more exactly Transcaucasia or the South Caucasus region including Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan) we should start from the fact that this area is one of the meeting points/crossroads of different cultural identities (some closer to Europe, others to Eurasia) and of different strategic interests (European, Eurasian and Euro-Atlantic). This cultural and geo-political combination is crucial for the role of the region's countries and the region as a whole, within the global order. Also, the Caucasian states can be included in East-European space because Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan were included in the European Neighborhood Policy (ENP). Another argument that allows us to incorporate Caucasian states in East-European space is the fact that these states, like Moldova, Ukraine and Belarus belong to the Russian Federation's sphere of influence, or in close proximity. Another precondition that would allow us to incorporate Caucasian states in the East-European space is their participation in European sports championships, competitions, cultural festivals etc.

Making a retrospective analysis of the processes and events in the East-European space from the post-Soviet collapse, it is noted that they are in a process of formation, unfinished at the moment. Referring to the post-Soviet collapse, in the process of configuration "the new geopolitical architecture" of East-European space can be highlighted several steps:

- The first stage of this phenomenon (forming process) takes place between the years 1989-1996.

The twentieth century ended with the disappearance of a geopolitical actor, whose importance would only be determined during history. Incredibly, the state that had been formed over a century ended its existence. The collapse of the Soviet Union, the biggest country with an area of 22.402 million square kilometers, and had direct access to the aquatic spaces of three oceans - Atlantic, Pacific and Frozen North, the state that owned land and direct access to the European Union, China and India, with huge natural resources (Russia has got natural resources equal to all chemical elements from the table of Mendeleev) produced a geopolitical confusion in the international arena, contributing to the formation of a "black hole" in the center of Eurasia (Koroliuk, www.oligarh.net). Now the territory of the Russian Federation covers an area of 17 million square kilometers and was reduced considerably, not 1/6 of the land but 1/8 of the land territory. Symbolic borders between East and West, were not removed, but were moved from west to east. Before the collapse of the socialist camp this border practically matched with the river Elbe, then, after its collapse, the border can be outlined on the River Narva. The fact that the city of St. Petersburg, is located about 1609 km away from NATO troops in 1989, and since 2008, the distance is reduced to about 113 km, makes the Russian Federation be more vulnerable to the international community. Moscow was 1930 km from the borders of NATO in 1989, whereas now the distance is only 322 km. (Friedman, 2015). Unlike the ex-USSR space where the former soviet republics have been trying to determine their place within the international arena, the processes in Europe which in their nature and character are complex and dynamic, contradictory and unfinished, directly act on national interests and foreign policy of former members of the Warsaw Pact. After the fall of the Berlin Wall on November 11th, 1989, the whole eastern Communist bloc collapsed. This event was the starting point of the reunification process of the European continent. In the period 1987-1996, thirteen countries applied to join the EU: Cyprus, Estonia, Hungary, Poland, Czech Republic, Slovenia, Bulgaria, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Romania, Slovakia and Turkey (The 2004 enlargement). As a result of the withdrawal of Soviet conventional forces from Eastern European countries and Mongolia, practically the defense system of the USSR was destroyed. Thus, according to the multitude of obligations undertaken by the USSR a mass withdrawal of conventional forces in Eastern Europe was carried out in 1991. In this context, from Germany were withdrawn 370 thousand soldiers, 100 000 officers, 1842 families members, three General Armies and two Tank Armies (8 Motorized Divisions, 8 Tank Divisions and a Separate Motorized Brigade) groups of Armed Forces were composed of the 16th Air Army (five Air Divisions). In order to maintain the army were 5000 tanks type T-64 B and T-80, 9500 BMP (Infantry Fighting Vehicles) and BTR (Armored Personnel Carriers), 4400 artillery pieces (land artillery), 1700 3PK (Air Defense Missile System), 620 Combat Aircraft, 790 helicopters and 1,600 military hardware and other equipment. Much of this weaponry was withdrawn and sent to Russia, some forces to Belarus – 11th Guards Tank Division and Ukraine – 17th Division. The withdrawal of conventional arms ended in June 1994. From Czechoslovakia, Hungary and Mongolia were withdrawn forces in number of

186 thousand soldiers (43 000 officers and warrant officers) 77 PU PTR (Launching Missile System), 3200 tanks, 5150 BMP (Infantry Fighting Vehicles) and BTR (Armored Personnel Carriers), 2350 artillery pieces (land artillery), 350 fighter jets, 364 helicopters (which were from the former Socialist Federal Republic of Czechoslovakia - 75 thousand soldiers, 1220 tanks, 2505 BMP (Infantry Fighting Vehicles) and BTR (Armored Personnel Carriers), 121 artillery pieces (land artillery), 77 Fighter Aircraft, 146 helicopters - these forces formed the Central Group). From Poland (Northern Military Staff) were withdrawn 73 thousand soldiers, including 4th Air Army. From the Baltic States, which declared their independence, was withdrawn the North Occidental Army - 250 thousand soldiers (95 000 officers), 32 divisions, including 1 elite Army, 56th Regiment with airplanes and helicopters. Some of the forces withdrawn from the Baltic States were deployed to Kaliningrad - in the 3rd Coastline Defense Division, 107th Motorized Division was withdrawn from Vilnius and deployed to the Moscow Military District (Atanasiu, 2014). From the above mentioned is clear that after the fall of the Iron Curtain of the Western community a new border appeared at both practical/real and symbolic levels. Russian world had significantly been restricted both territorial and in terms of culture. Thus, according to the T. Pichering, the US ambassador in Moscow, "in geopolitical terms, the collapse of the Soviet Union represented the end of the strategic advancement over past 300 years of Saint-Petersburg and Moscow. Russia retreated north and east, moving away from Eastern Europe and the Middle East, unlike in the XVII century. The processes of the creation of the new frontiers also included the active involvement of new ex-socialist states and former soviet republics in joining to the Euro-Atlantic structures (Tabirta & Berbeca, 2005).

- The second stage of establishing "the new geopolitical architecture" in East-European space took place between the years 1996- 2007.

Characteristic for the second stage were metamorphoses in European space, resulting from the collapse of the former Soviet Union, and extension of NATO and EU to the east - factors that determined the formation of "the new geopolitical architecture" in East-European space. The West support of so-called "colored revolutions" had given birth to political movements with anti-Russian tendencies (Ukraine, Georgia). The reserved attitude of the Southeast European states toward the Russian Federation was conditioned by the not so distant past, undetermined future and suspicions regarding Russia's expansionist tendencies.

Thus, the attitude of ex-soviet republics toward the Russian Federation has evolved differently. Some remained close to the Russian Federation (Belarus, Armenia, Azerbaijan has held a double position in relations with the EU and Russia), other countries have been making great efforts to ensure its independence and gravitate towards structures of European security and NATO (Georgia, Ukraine, Moldova) (Mikhaylenko, 1997). There was a difference in attitude of Eastern Europe countries concerning the Russian Federation. In the area of Eastern Europe, Russia faced a negative attitude especially from new states, former socialist bloc states, for which the Soviet experience remains to be recent history. Strained relations between Russia and these coun-tries, especially Poland and Romania, practically blocked the signing of the agreement that would replace the PCA between Russia and the EU.

Democratic revolutions in Southeast European states led to radical changes both among themselves (especially Poland, Check Republic, and Hungary) and in relationships with other European countries and the Russian Federation. Fusion of East European states to the EU has caused inconvenience and also contributed to diminishing the sphere of influence of the Russian Federation in this space. A pretext for initiating the ample wave of enlargement in 2004 was the fall of communist regimes in Eastern Europe and the processes of transformation initiated in these countries. At the same time, it could not be overlooked the socio-economic problems in this area and worrying issues that resulted in the desire to get the help and support of Western states.

The 5th enlargement wave of the EU had its origins in the desire of establishing peace, stability and economic prosperity on the united European continent. The EU underwent a process of expanding, encompassing in its structure on May 1st, 2004, some of the former USSR satellites. Enlargement from 15 to 25 members enabled broadening zone of stability and peace on the entire European continent, to avoid further conflicts, such as in the former Yugoslavia; encouraging economical growth and trade by expanding the single market from 378 to 453 million consumers in 2004 to over 480 million by 2007; strengthening Europe's position in the world (Treaty of Accession of Romania to the EU).

By signing on April 25th, 2005, in Luxembourg the Accession Treaty for Romania and Bulgaria (Berbeca, 2005), the European Union extended not only the number of members to 27, but also expanded geographically and geopolitically.

A milestone that marked the formation of "the new geopolitical architecture" in East-European space was the accession in March 1999 of the first wave of countries into NATO, including Poland, the Czech Republic and Hungary. Also, the second wave of NATO enlargement in April 2004 that included countries like Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, Slovenia, Slovakia, Romania and Bulgaria contributed to the formation of "the new geopolitical architecture" in East-European space (Features of modern integration, 2015). The EU experienced a process of expanding, encompassing in its structure on May 1st, 2004 some of the former USSR satellites. Security agreements between the US and East-European countries (the Missile System in Poland and Czechoslovakia, military bases in Romania and Bulgaria) also had a direct impact on the formation of "the new geopolitical architecture" in East-European space.

No less importance in the establishment of "the new geopolitical architecture" in East-European space had the policy proposed by the European Union on March 11th, 2003. It made the East-European countries, including Moldova, to become once again the protagonists of a new European Policy – the one of "New Neighborhood". "The new policy" launched by the EU "Wider Europe - New Neighborhood" in relation with the states after enlargement in 2004, was to have a common border, provided the deepening of

cooperation by offering greater access to European internal market, granting new perspectives such as political and economic integration for countries that cannot be accepted yet as members of the European Union (Russia and…), in order to create an area of security, prosperity, sustainable development and good neighborhood, "a circle of friends" at the external borders of the Union characterized by close and peaceful relations based on cooperation.

The new system of measures for the foreign policy was later grouped under the name "Foreign Neighborhood Policy" (ENP), by the Communication Commission from June 2004 (COM, 2004) and became the framework document of the ENP, together with the communication of the creation of the New Instrument for Neighborhood in July 2003. The year 2004 meant the beginning of implementation of the ENP for East- European states.

Characteristic for the period 2007-2014 was the fact that in this period of time took place a stagnation of processes in the East-European area. The Russian Federation strengthened its presence, became not only a regional power but had tendencies to show itself as an already world power – not supporting NATO and US policies in the Middle East but also in North Africa (2010 events in Libya, 2012- events in Syria).

- The third stage in the formation of "the new geopolitical architecture" in East-European space is the period from 2014 to present.

The events in February 2014 in Kiev contributed to the changes in "the geopolitical architecture" of East-European space. The political crisis in Ukraine began in November 2013 when the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine announced stopping the process of European integration of the state. On February 22nd, 2014 occurred the Ukrainian Government overthrow. The Russian-Ukrainian crisis was the consequence of initialing of the Association Agreement between Ukraine and EU, which had a problematic character with the Russian Federation relations (2004 enlargement). Coming to power of the President V. Yushchenko in 2004 fortified the Western vector of Ukraine's Foreign Policy and Russian-Ukrainian relations changed from confrontation to partnership. Ukraine's leadership sustained Saacaşvili's regime in Georgia, with whom tried to form in the CIS (Commonwealth of Independent States) space "Community of democratic choice" - or a pro-Western cordon around Russia. Ukraine's forthcoming to NATO and support of locating the Missile Defense Shield in Eastern Europe determined reaction from the Russian Federation. The EU was interested to include Ukraine within its influence sphere. For Europe Ukraine would be a huge territory with a population of 46 million inhabitants. The EU also intended to create a "cordon" formed from the states in the vicinity of its border. States must support democratic values respectively become markets for European goods. Ukrainian market liberalization was in favor of the EU, but could serve as a blow to the Ukrainian domestic goods (Ilin, 2014).

Although the agreement has been initialed, its implementation takes time. Strategic outcome was annexation of Crimea to the Russian Federation, which fortified the Russian space in religious sphere, cultural and historical heritage, contributing to the strengthening of Russia's position in the Black Sea. Also incorporating Crimea to Russia, meant forming an image of contemporary victory, made after 1945, and to demonstrate the international community that Russian territories could be returned peacefully at an increase of national consciousness, and the confrontation between the West and the East was not over it had continued. Crimean territorial reincorporation has had some negative processes, which have changed the architecture of the East-European space. Breaking commercial and economic relationships with the West, destroying the currency system, increasing prices, destabilization of the financial situation of citizens, the transition to new standards, changing the status of objects (Features of modern integration, 2015).

The Russian Federation's actions have been severely criticized by the international community. Appealing to several laws, including Constitutional provisions, Russia has been trying to justify its actions in Ukraine. Thus, on March 18th, 2014 by approving the Federal Law no.36 F-3, with 443 votes in favor and 1 against (The State Duma), was signed the International Treaty between the Russian Federation and the Republic of Crimea (Treaty between the Russian Federation and the Republic of Crimea) on the acceptance of the Republic of Crimea in the Russian Federation and establishment of a new subject within the Russian Federation.

According to the Treaty that entered into force on March 21st, 2014, Crimea has been considered as part of the Russian Federation, formed as a new subject - Republic of Crimea and city Sevastopol with a federal status, people who lived at that time are recognized as Russian citizens, entitled to decide about their citizenship in one month from the Treaty. On the Crimean territory entered into force the legislation of the Russian Federation. The Land border between Crimea and Ukraine was declared as the border between the Russian Federation and Ukraine. Borders on the Black Sea water area and the Azov Sea were subject to delimitation according to the principles of international law. The decision on the Treaty validation was based on the results of the referendum held in Autonomous Republic of Crimea and Sevastopol city on March 16th, 2014, as a result of which Crimean citizens decided to unite with Russia and have the Russian Federation subjects' rights and against "the Constitution of Crimea from 1992 and the status of Crimea as part of Ukraine". On March 17th, 2014, president V. Putin by presidential decree no. 147 "About recognizing the Republic of Crimea" (Presidential Decree on March 17th, 2014 N 147), taking into account the right of states to determine their fate, recognized the Republic of Crimea as a sovereign subject of international law (Moses, 2014).

Thus, according to the Constitution of the Russian Federation, approved unanimously on December 12th, 1993 [40] the acceptance of a new subject within the Russian Federation has been made in accordance with Federal Law and Constitutional Law (Article 65, paragraph 2). According to Article 4 Section 2 the acceptance in the Russian Federation of a "foreign state" or part of a state shall be done on mutual agreement between the Russian Federation and that state in accordance with the principles of international

law, even more the initiator of the proposal for incorporation in Russia was the foreign state (art. 6, paragraph 1) - the Republic of Crimea.

In accordance with the international law and its principles two subjects became part of the Russian Federation - Republic Crimea and federal city of Sevastopol (art. 2 of the Treaty) (Treaty between the Russian Federation and the Republic of Crimea ). Also, under principles of the international law, any state has the right to sign international treaties. International Treaty between the Russian Federation and the Republic of Crimea has had historical significance (Moses, 2014).

The declaration of independence of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and Sevastopol city was approved by the Supreme Council of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and Sevastopol city on March 11th, 2014 (Autonomous Republic of Crimea and Sevastopol Declaration of Independence). The Declaration demands the right of people to self-determination and recognition and support by the UN International Court of Justice with reference to Kosovo from June 22nd, 2010, whereby the unilateral declaration of a part of a state did not violate International Law. Thus, according to the International Court decision "there is no prohibition on unilateral declaration of independence which arises from the practice of the Security Council". The International Law does not contain any prohibition on the unilateral declaration of independence of a state or territory. This idea was stated on March 18th, 2014 by President V. Putin (March 18th, 2014). It is also noted that under Chapter 10 of the Constitution of Ukraine [41], the population's right to self-determination also applies to Crimea. Crimean referendum on March 16th, 2014 was conducted comply with of citizens' rights and democratic values, but under a new illegal leadership. Constitutional norms cannot be applied (Moses, 2014).

An argument for justifying the Russian Federation actions in Ukraine was the referendum in Crimea. The referendum, according to the Russian position, would have been illegal if Ukraine had had a constitutional government. If the government had come to power illegally, it could not have prohibited the right to self-determination of the population in peninsula (Sharvili 2014).

Another argument brought by Russia in order to justify its actions in Crimea has been the treaties signed between the Russian Federation and Ukraine. According to the Russian position there wasn't an unlawful intervention in Crimea from the Russian Federation. Treaties signed between the Russian Federation and Ukraine at that time allowed the Russian army to be stationed in Crimea. Thus, according to the Agreement of Friendship, Cooperation and Partnership between the Russian Federation and Ukraine from May 31st, 1997 (Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation and Partnership between the Russian Federation and Ukraine) and from Harkov Agreement on April 21st, 2010 (http://sevkrim-rus.narod.ru/ZAKON/2010sogl.htm) stationing the Russian military forces on the territory of Crimea is legal.

Some researchers, like G. Mirşamaier believe that Ukrainian crisis was conditioned by the involvement of the West in this area. Intending to draw away Ukraine from the Russian Federation sphere of influence (Orlov, 2014), which being oriented towards integration into Euro-Atlantic structures, the West had caused the Russian-Ukrainian crisis. The Russian Federation from the 90s has opposed NATO expansion to the east and near the Russian border and it wouldn't leave Russia remain indifferent to what happened in East-European space (Oganesyan, 2014). West through the eastern enlargement policy of NATO and the EU to Eastern European space acted against the security interests of the Russian Federation (Orlov, 2014).

Thus, the Russian Federation wanted to return to the circle of world powers, but its return was not welcomed by the international community. Although the Russian Federation brought argumentation and justification of its actions in Ukraine, the West still considers it to be illegal and contrary to the International Law (Pellitstsari, 2014). The European Parliament, in its resolution from February 4th, 2015 invited the Russian Federation to the negotiating table with Ukraine on the settlement of Crimean problem. Also taking into account the point A of the European Parliament resolution of February 4th, 2015 (European Parliament resolution on the Crimea), Russian Federation violated International Law, including UN status (The United Nations Charter ), Final Act Helsinki (Helsinki Final Act).

## The Memorandum on Guaranteeing Security and Accession of Ukraine

Analyzing the provisions of the Memorandum on guaranteeing security and accession of Ukraine to the Treaty on Non-proliferation of nuclear weapons, signed in Budapest between the leaders of Russia, USA, Ukraine and the United Kingdom on December 5th, 1994, in accordance with article 1 of the Memorandum - the Russian Federation, along with the UK, US confirmed the recognition of independence, sovereignty and the existing borders of Ukraine. According to article 2 of the Memorandum, the Russian Federation assumed responsibility to refrain from any threat or threat of force in violation of the territorial integrity and political independence of Ukraine (Orlov, 2014).

United Kingdom, represented by Prime Minister D. Cameron with G-7 partners harshly criticized Russian actions in Crimea, didn't recognize the referendum and considered it as annexation of foreign territories and being contrary to the International Law (Andreeva, 2015).The same opinion was supported by US President B. Osama, French President F. Hollander (A week of fire - G7 summit, 2012) and the German Chancellor A. Merkel. Western leaders' position was supported by international organizations such as: United Nations Security Council, OSCE and the European Council (Agreement on annexation peninsula is contrary to international law, 2014).

Starting from the idea that a referendum could be considered valid only if it has been organized throughout the State and being voted by the whole population, the referendum of Crimean Peninsula is to be considered invalid and the Russian Federation's actions are contrary to the rules and principles of International Law. In this case, we cannot consider Crimea to be reincorporated or reunified

to the Russian Federation. Rather I would consider joining/ annexation by the Russian Federation of the Crimea peninsula to its territories.

Analyzing the consequences of annexation of the Crimea peninsula and Sevastopol city to the Russian Federation, we witness geopolitical changes on the world map. Thus, analyzing the latest events between the Russian Federation and Ukraine can be traced some consequences that conditioned changing of "the new geopolitical architecture" of East - European space:

1. Russia has acquired strategic control over the entire region of the Black Sea because the Crimea peninsula is placed in the center of Black Sea and Azov Sea. It has significantly increased the possibilities of Russia's sea and air space control in the Black Sea region. Also, Russia has obtained unlimited control over maritime fleet in Sevastopol base which allows it to modernize the Black Sea fleet, and thus, got all ports and military bases in Crimea.

2. With the annexation of the peninsula the Naval Forces of Ukraine were totally destroyed, the system of military bases location and the military training system were destroyed as well. The Azov Sea currently is under Russian jurisdiction through the control of the Kerch Strait. The economic zones of the Black Sea countries have essentially been changed. We note that the changes have been against Ukraine and Ukraine lost about 70% of previously owned economic zones. With the loss of the control over the Kerch Strait, Ukraine lost control over the Azov Sea (Bagrov, 2001). Two from the 27 Ukrainian regions got under Russian jurisdiction, and two others declared their independence (Features of modern integration, 2015). After losing Donbas and the collapse of a considerable part of the industry in the Ukraine eastern zone, Ukraine lost its leadership at the regional level in industrial and energetically importance. Dependence of European states from Russian gas has contributed again to approaching EU to the Russian Federation.

3. Another negative impact of the Russian-Ukrainian crisis on the Ukrainian territory is its ability to be subjected to a territorial division. Taking into account that the majority of the speaking population, language and traditions, linguistic and ethnic peculiarities of population within the borders between Ukraine and its neighbors, Ukraine could be divided in areas of responsibility of Poland, Romania and the Russian Federation (Bagrov, 2001).

4. If Russia has paid until the annexation an annual fee for crossing the strait for both the Navy and the Merchant Fleet, now the situation is totally different. As a result of the annexation of the Crimean peninsula and the city of Sevastopol, the Russian Federation obtained equal status with Turkey in the exclusive area and got about 40% of the Black Sea, moreover, acquired de facto control over the Black Sea, because this area is geographically located in the center of the sub-region (Features of modern integration, 2015).

5. The Russian-Ukrainian crisis has given Belarus a new geopolitical role in the region. Partial transfer of the Ukrainian industrial technology already shifted to Belarus. The best example to be given is the beginning of construction of military helicopters at the factory building airplanes in Orşnsk (from the company "Мотор Сич"). Also, took place the transfer of Ukrainian military industry to Belarus. Currently, Belarus has got the position previously held by Ukraine. It received a contract for building 1500 military helicopters annually for Russia. In the future is expected modernization and construction of armored vehicles, military aircraft, missiles and also, anti missile system. Belarus has got benefits from transiting its territory by the Russian heavy machinery to Europe. This leads to the modernization and construction of land communication routes. Currently, Belarus became a regional leader. Situation in eastern Ukraine, transformed Belarus in an energy hub between the eastern and the western areas, as well as became a more important partner for the Russian Federation in comparison to the period before the Russian-Ukrainian crisis. Also, the Russian-Ukrainian crisis gave Belarus a new impetus to development of relations with the Russian Federation. In Belarus has been started the construction of CAE (atomic power plant) with the support of "Rostam" and Russian investments. During the visit of D. Rogozin in Belarus in 2014, the Russian official stressed the new value of Belarus to the Russian Federation (The annexation of the Crimea, 2017).

6. The Russian-Ukrainian crisis has an impact on relations between Balkan states and the Russian Federation. The project of building an AOP (Atomic Power Station) in Hungary contributed to fostering the two issues. Avoiding the territory of Ukraine has brought tensions to the pipeline "Южный поток/ South Stream" construction.

As a result of the Crimean annexation by the Russian Federation "the geopolitical architecture" of East-European space in its essence changed, and hence the role of the Black Sea. The Crimean annexation by the Russian Federation has been considered by the West as a threat to European security. As a result, the reaction of NATO for ensuring security of European states - members of NATO, as well as the whole European area was to strengthen its presence in the region. Events in Ukraine have drawn the US attention, which in turn has developed a new strategy of development of US maritime forces. The Russian Armed Forces modernization, illegal annexation of Crimea, requires the involvement of NATO in order to ensure European security.

The same view was supported by Admiral G. Stavridis, the former Commander of NATO Armed Forces in Europe and Admiral B. Williams, Commander of NATO exercises in the Black Sea (Foreign Affairs, 2017). A similar view had R. Greimer the Deputy Director of the International Security Center of the Atlantic Council who considered strengthening NATO presence in the Black Sea to be necessary. The Black Sea is a strategic hub, is the crossing point of energy and trade roads between Europe, Central Asia, Turkey and the Russian Federation (The standoff in the Black Sea…).

Geostrategic landscape changes and development of military infrastructure in the Black Sea have been considered by the European Parliament (EP) to be "serious problems after the end of the Cold War". European states must have a proper response to all actions of the Russian Federation, to update the Foreign Policy and Military Security Policy in the EU Strategy for the Black Sea, if the strengthening

of Russia's presence in the Eastern European area, would take place near the borders of the EU, including Romania, Poland, the Baltic States.

According to the estimates made by the US agency Stratfor on the situation in the Black Sea, after the Russian annexation of Crimea the balance of power in the region changed and it led to NATO appropriate reaction (Anaconda 2016).

NATO has increased its presence in Europe to deter any Russian military operations. NATO Strategy "Anaconda 2016" summed in 31,000 troops from Poland, the United States and 17 other states members of NATO (i.e. the five partner countries), equipped with 3,000 military vehicles, 105 aircraft and helicopters and 12 military ships, forces deployed from the Baltic to the Black Sea [24]. NATO exercise "Anaconda" carried out in Poland was the most important military event in the modern history of the country, involving more than 27,000 troops from 22 countries (NATO extensive exercises).

Also, from May 30th until June 9th, 2016, in the Estonian town of Tapa were conducted NATO exercises within "Saber Knight" operation, involving about 10,000 troops from 13 NATO member countries (The US decided…).

While conducting military exercises of NATO and Ukraine in the Black Sea, the commander of 6th Fleet, US Maritime Forces, G. Foggo on August 31st, 2015 promised to use "the right to move freely" of maritime forces around the Black Sea and permanent presence of the US fleet in the Black Sea. The exercises in the Black Sea can be considered as the most extensive and far-reaching in the NATO history, in which took part 2, 5 thousand soldiers (1,000 representatives of the US Armed Forces). In exercises also participated four Littoral Combat Ships (LCH), 2 submarines, planes and 6 helicopters, 40 mobile technical units - under the Pentagon aegis. The Ukrainian side involved 1,000 soldiers, 9 ships (LCH), tens of the powerboats of the Border Patrol Service, 8 airplanes and 8 helicopters and 80 vehicles. The total area of military exercises – the Black Sea water area, Military Training Area of the Armed Forces of Ukraine, Military Airfields: "Şcolinâii" in Odessa, "Kulibakino" in Nikolayev, "Cernobaevka" in Kherson, Landing Fields in Ociakovo and island Pervomaisk, "International Airport" in Odessa, Commercial-sea Port "Iujnâii" in Odessa and Military Port Ociakovo (Nikolayev region) (2004 enlargement).

## Conclusion

The US desire to be "always present in the Black Sea area" is contrary to the Montre Convention from 1936 on the status of the Black Sea channel, limiting the presence of military ships of the states not bordering the Black Sea water area. US practically violated the Convention.

The structure of contemporary world in the transformation process is dynamic. The political reality increasingly focuses more and more "on global political instability" which proves the erosion of Westphalia. International relations, focusing on pluricentrism principle, contribute to a "new geopolitical architecture" in general and East-European space

in particular. On the other hand, it has destroyed the World System focused on the principles of Yalta- Potsdam Agreement.

Thus, analyzing the process of "the new geopolitical architecture" configuration of East-European space, and also dividing the influence spheres of power centers (in this case west -represented by the EU, US and NATO on the one hand and the Russian Federation on the other hand), we could make the first attempt to define this phenomenon. The "new geopolitical architecture" of East-European space was formed as a result of disappearance of an actor (the USSR) and strengthening of new geopolitical actors (EU), and the consequences of sharing influence spheres in this area. The "new East-European geopolitical architecture" is the space created as a result of dividing the sphere of influence between two power centers.

Even though, Belarus, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Moldova, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Ukraine, Hungary and the Russian Federation are included geographically in the East-European space from the geopolitical point of view the East-European space may expand its area over the Caucasus zone.

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