

# Intermarium as One of the Future European Image of Ukraine

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*The Intermarium project is one of the most controversial and complex regional integration projects of Ukraine's European integration. The article proves that this project most accurately expresses the totality of common values and meanings that Ukrainians share with their closest neighboring countries. An attempt was made to give an integrative philosophical assessment to all the arguments in favor of the Intermarium project and its prospects for development in Ukraine. The Intermarium appears as one of the Future European Image of Ukraine, more alternative to the Eurasian project, but more complementary to the European Union project. The main arguments in favor of the Intermarium are, however, internal arguments rather than opposition to other projects of interstate integration. The Intermarium aims at preserving and developing the common cultural heritage of the countries of Central and Eastern Europe, as well as at developing and protecting their common economic, political, and other values. Territorial Neighborhood only creates certain prerequisites that can be used, and may or may not be used to create a neighborhood of value, that is, to form a common life world. This can happen and be maintained just if it will be provided, properly, and successfully implemented all components of the territorial neighborhood, such as geographical proximity, similarity of climatic conditions, use of common natural resources, creation of favorable conditions for cross-border cooperation, etc. The common regional values and meanings for the Intermarium should be protected by a joint effort — so that in any other format, larger or smaller than the Intermarium. It will not be possible to implement such protection more successfully.*

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## **Introduction**

The Intermarium project as a project of integration for the countries between Baltic and Black seas has been revived in recent decades as part of a new political strategy — namely, a post-colonial policy pursued by countries that until recently were part of the so-called “world system of socialism.” Moreover, this project was interpreted in different ways by different geopolitical actors: one version was offered by the potential participants of the Intermarium, the second by the representatives of the European Union (EU), the third by analysts from the United States of America (US), and finally the fourth, though not the last, by the Russian Federation. It is easy to see for each such position a certain private political and economic interest. However, the question should not be about which carrier of interest is more to be relied upon, because interests are not a sound basis for defining the concept of the Intermarium: these interests may change, or they may be better aligned with competitors, based on competing to the Intermarium geopolitical projects. The question of the appropriateness of the Intermarium concept must be considered at the level of productivity of the ideas underlying the concept of the Intermarium — that is, at the philosophical level. The philosophical view of the Intermarium is, first and foremost, the identification of the values and meanings that underlie it.

Therefore the purpose of this study is to represent the main arguments for the implementation of the Intermarium project and to give them a philosophical assessment.

### **The idea of Intermarium**

First, however, it is worthwhile to find out the actual state of affairs with the Intermarium project. In Ukraine, we find our inland definition of the inter-sea territory as “the southern regions of the Kherson and Zaporizhia regions, located between the northern coasts of the Black and Azov Seas” (Severyn, 2019: 1). This is a rather narrow definition, although the opposite one to it is too broad a definition of the inter-sea territory as a territory between three seas, such as in the Polish scientist Agnieszka Bieńczyk-Missala’s interpretation. By inter-sea territory, she means the space no longer between two — the Black and Baltic, but between the three — the Black, Baltic and Adriatic seas. A Polish researcher believes that “the Three Seas Initiative was launched as a brand-new political project, alas drawing directly upon the original, interwar concept of Intermarium. These efforts were accompanied by the government’s slogans of the need to oppose German domination in Europe” (Bieńczyk-Missala, 2018: 95). There are several recent studies of Intermarium from the Polish point of view (Ištók et al., 2018; Kushnir, 2017), but it is still a lack of Ukrainian studies of it. Both of these alternatives to the Intermarium concept positions are presented by their researchers as military-political and socio-economic projects, and the cultural component is barely mentioned here: interests here clearly dominate values. The Intermarium project is distinguished by its value and cultural basis.

However, the value and cultural basis of the Intermarium must be clearly defined — both for Ukraine itself and for other Central and Eastern European countries.

The first reason is sovereignty defense. National identity for them depends on their supranational identity. Because none of them could provide by its own efforts alone, it’s sovereignty. As it thoroughly shows Polish researcher Olha Tkachenko, “Ukrainian national and supranational identity has constantly been influenced by external actors, which is confirmed by abundant historical evidence. Thus, the contemporary Ukrainian identity is polarised between — and consequently, constitutes a combination of — pro-Russian orientation and post-Soviet style

of living on the one hand, and pro-European orientation and cultural aspirations on the other” (Tkachenko, 2016: 146-147). Even for recent eastern EU-members, this choice is still possible. Eurasian project could be more attractive if it would be provided by other operators — not aggressive Russian Federation that permanently makes military invasion into the territories of its countries-neighbors.

The second reason is the wider possibilities for cultural and economic development. So, Marta Grzechnik, the researcher from the German University of Greifswald, reminds “all the positive qualities associated with maritime cultures (to remind: willpower, enterprise, open-mindedness, hunger for knowledge, patriotism)” (Grzechnik, 2014: 93).

Marlene Laruelle and Ellen Rivera from Institute for European, Russian and Eurasian Studies at the George Washington University consider Intermarium as imagined geographic subject (Laruelle & Rivera, 2019). Not only the national identity, as stated by Benedict Anderson (Anderson, 1983), but the supranational identities are the imagined constructions too.

The European image of Ukraine cannot be separated from the image of Europe for Ukraine. The current image of Europe in Ukraine is the European Union. Still, not every European country is a member of this entity. EU is partly an intergovernmental organization and partly a supranational organization. Still, some European countries have special relations with the EU, conclude partial or temporary intergovernmental agreements, share some of the international treaties, but don’t recognize the supernatural protectorate of the EU. Intermarium is one of the most promising for Ukraine’s international European project that could integrate the policy, economy, and culture of countries in which territories are lying between the Baltic, Black, and Adriatic Seas. This project still needs its legitimization — ideological, political, legal, and last, but not least philosophical.

## **The emergence and development of Intermarium project**

In the past, the Intermarium project had a historical foundation, namely the unification of territories of several countries from the Baltic to the Black Sea by a common super-state entity.

Marta Grzechnik writes “Access to the sea — though earlier most often neglected — was appreciated, and the shape of the reborn state was designed as stretching, as in the past, *od morza do morza* — “from one sea to the other”: a reference to the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth’s times of greatness, when the country’s territory reached from the shores of the Baltic Sea in the north to the Black Sea in the south-east” (Grzechnik, 2014: 84).

Agnieszka Bieńczyk-Missala writes “co-sponsored by the Polish government, to develop robust regional cooperation. In the interwar period, these were the projects originally developed by Józef Piłsudski’s political faction, focused on setting up a federation and the Intermarium. The principal reason for their failure was attributed to the incidence of border problems. During the Cold War period and Poland’s membership in the Eastern Bloc, Poland as a state was effectively stripped of any chances to pursue an active and independent foreign policy, whereas Central Europe, as a political commonwealth of nations, remained merely a shell concept throughout. After 1989, the Polish government was keenly interested in developing regional structures and enhancing regional cooperation. Central Europe re-emerged, and so did a number of regional organizations” (Bieńczyk-Missala, 2018: 96).

Laruelle and Rivera differ six consecutive in time historical version of Intermarium project from Intermarium 1 to Intermarium 6. 1) The emergence of weak but independent

“Central Europe after the Empires” was the Intermarium 1, i.e., the creation of a third power bloc between Western Europe, particularly Germany, and Russia, which came to be known as Intermarium, emerged from the period in which the Austro-Hungarian Empire was being dismembered in line with the Treaty of Versailles that brought an end to First World War (Laruelle & Rivera, 2019: 4). 2) Some researchers of the policies of Central European countries in 1930-1940<sup>th</sup> indicate “Central European unity between collaboration with the Nazis and support from the Allies” that means these countries were “collaborated with the Germans until the Nazi invasion of the Soviet Union on 22 June 1941, then looked for British and French support” (Laruelle & Rivera, 2019: 6-7). 3) The understanding of “Central Europe as the anti-communist front” reflects the political direction of the US “toward the liberation of Central and Eastern European nations from Soviet domination and the whole of Europe from Communist influence” (Laruelle & Rivera, 2019: 10). 4) The approach to Intermarium as an American project for “Central Europe as the pro-U.S. “New Europe” means that “the concept of Intermarium once again began to make the rounds in some Western strategic circles in the late 2000s” (Laruelle & Rivera, 2019: 13). 5) “Central Europe unity revived through regional economic cooperation,” based on the Giedroyc’s view of economic unity between Poland, Lithuania, Belorussia, and Ukraine, where “Poland should adopt a ULB (Ukraine-Lithuania-Belorussia) doctrine, i.e., fight for the independence and rapprochement with the West of a trio of its eastern neighbor” (Laruelle & Rivera, 2019: 17). 6) “Central Europe as dreamed by the Ukrainian far-right” (Laruelle & Rivera, 2019: 20). According to the last version, Ukrainian far-right “re-appropriated the concept by capitalizing on solid ideological and personal continuity between actors of the Ukrainian far-right in the interwar and Cold War periods and their heirs today” (Laruelle & Rivera, 2019: 20). The role of Ukraine in the present version of Intermarium is indeed crucial. Still, Intermarium for Ukrainians is not only a “far-right” project, instead it is the position of the greater part of Ukrainian citizens. Moreover present Intermarium project represents the values of a large part of citizens of all countries-potential members of Intermarium. And every possible future project of Intermarium should take into account the experience and better achievements of all previous Intermarium projects.

At the same time, in the course of long-term development in close political, religious, and economic conditions, there was an objective closeness of these countries, which were on the border between several empires — Russian and Austro-Hungarian, in proximity to the Ottoman and Holy Roman empires. Most of the countries of the Intermarium were fully or partially at different times part of an empire, some moved from one empire to another, some — several times. The formation of their statehood in these countries was mainly related to the liberation from colonial oppression, and now some of them are still partially in post-colonial status, and some are part of supranational entities in which they do not play a leading role. All this poses significant risks to the preservation of the future state sovereignty of these countries. Such a common threat creates the preconditions for the formation of a new association, in which all the countries of the intermarriage will be in approximately equal status, without the threat of new subordination to a strong neighbor. At the same time, the unification of Intermarium countries will create additional arguments to protect their own national interests and strengthen each country’s position in international relations.

The Intermarium project for both Ukraine and other participants in this project is not a substitute for their participation in the EU. Still, a compliment and, in many ways, should be an increase in such participation. The Case of Brexit shows that the transformation of the EU in new, more international, but the less supranational organization is quite probable. In

this prospect, Ukrainian state, Ukrainian political establishment, and main economic players are trying to make their forecasts and some first steps to receive their own place in this new European order. To be successful in this intent, Ukrainians should take a more explicit course on integration with European countries: revise the structure of the Ukrainian economy, renew the national system of law and enforce the European vector of Ukrainian foreign policy. For the first time, it will be enough to implement the existing projects thoroughly with the EU and with individual European countries. But the main task is to check out how Ukraine could be useful for European countries — first of all, European neighbors of Ukraine.

### **Value and symbolic grounds of Intermarium**

Territorial Neighborhood only creates certain prerequisites that can be used, and may or may not be used to create a neighborhood of value, that is, to form a common life world. This can happen and be maintained just if it will be provided, properly, and successfully implemented all components of the territorial neighborhood, such as geographical proximity, similarity of climatic conditions, use of common natural resources, creation of favorable conditions for cross-border cooperation, etc.

There may be value factors that will hinder rather than facilitate the formation of interstate associations — from unsolved territorial disputes and conflicts of economic interests and up to the different religious orientations, the different degrees of cultural liberalization, etc. However, a balanced interstate dialogue and its completion — the creation of an interstate integration — are just intended to overcome misunderstandings and lack of mutual respect, and instead create the necessary basis for cooperative efforts, the joint and prudent use of common resources and the joint protection of shared values.

From the outset, it is worth being aware of a clear alternative: one could build interstate relations, either on the basis of win-win or on the basis of mutual loss strategy. Of course, there is a possible strategy in which mutual loss will be unequal, and the neighboring country will lose more. But to compete with the loser is unlikely to be rational, because winning here is very relative (more psychological), and in absolute terms, such a competition will result in a consistent setback for all opponents. The further humanity develops, the greater the example of such a loss is the war: war inflicts such damage on all its members that it becomes impossible to compensate damage at the expense of the defeated country. Instead, the win-win strategy gives benefits to all participants who choose it, and even if one tactically wins less at some stage, in the long run, the winnings are more or less offset by the constant exchange of values and an increase in overall cultural exchange.

Relations between the EU and other forms of European integration should not be developed on the principle of destructive competition and mutual loss, but on the principle of complementarity and synergy of efforts, since the ultimate goal for all interstate associations is the welfare, protection, and development of each member of such state associations. This common final goal must outweigh all the specific goals of individual interstate associations that serve as a means to that final goal. Obviously, the principle of Europe of the Fatherland, as proposed by Charles de Gaulle, still prevails here, and the principle of Europe-Motherland proclaimed basic to the EU, must still be subordinated to the values and interests of each European country in particular. The only exceptions should be security — military, economic (including financial), and some of the cultural ones close to them. Some of these issues need to be addressed on an ongoing basis — and in this case, only EU-like superstates are

needed. However, since there are many such issues, some of them, which are mostly of local importance, should be delegated to more local, territorial associations — from local and up to regional ones, similar to the Intermarium.

The instruments for implementation of the political arguments for the Intermarium are represented by Dr. Jonathan Levy, professor of Norwich University. For him, Intermarium is an “alternative governance structure for East-Central Europe” (Levy, 2007: 12). Dr. Levy argues that Intermarium could be a real alternative for the EU. For the countries of Central and Eastern Europe, it would be better to create a regional federal governance structure.

What are the common regional values and meanings for the Intermarium? That is, what should be protected by a joint effort — so that in any other format, larger or smaller than the Intermarium, it will not be possible to implement such protection more successfully, but only less? Of course, to some extent, this is a common cultural heritage (Chodakiewicz, 2012). There is no doubt that these are also common modern achievements — both economic (reasonably high levels of economic development) and political (above all — democracy) and some cultural (liberal social practices not less than some traditional). However, as a basis for the future inter-state integration of countries within the Intermarium, values, and meanings for the future should prevail.

Individual cases of threats to such shared values have recently become: the threat of external hostile political and economic expansion, as well as the increasingly real military threat from the Russian Federation; migration problems (primarily related to refugees from the East); the threat of EU collapse. In all these cases, state sovereignty and its protection and consolidation of the population appear to be the obvious means of protecting against these threats. Together with state sovereignty, other traditional values can be restored as fundamental values. More precisely, they may well regain some of their recently lost significance. At the same time, looking ahead will inevitably raise the issue of new challenges that can take on both the nature of the threats and the remedies against other threats. Such new challenges for all countries of the world are the roboticization of all, or almost all spheres of public life, directly linked to a rapid increase in precariat numbers, the aggravation of the question of the meaning of life and the need to overcome the feeling of needlessness for a person of a new society. For the Intermarium countries, these challenges will not be particularly large or smaller, but they may, and therefore must be, addressed in a specific way.

## **Conclusions. The future of Intermarium**

Based on these values and meanings, we can now revise some of the visions of the future Intermarium — from specific positions and in specific dimensions.

In the future, territorial neighborhood seems in any case not to remain the main argument for the maintenance of commonwealth of the Intermarium countries. The main arguments are: economic, political, security, cultural common values.

Common economic values are closely enough connected with ecological values even now and will be much more closely connected in the future—these values based on common natural resources — especially non-renewable. The vivid example is the common freshwater supply — rivers like the Danube, the Dniester, or the Dnieper that flow through the territory of several Central or Eastern European countries. Their clearness and safety, the integrity of the river ecological system, are the important precondition of the health of the population of



these countries, maintaining the health of forests and fields and many other consequences — economic first of all. To prevent the river ecosystem destruction, it should be provided the coordinated ecological and economic policy of all countries of the region. The common use of a unique natural gas storage facility could be the next example of a common policy of Intermarium countries. Such storage is located in the territory of Western Ukraine, and it could store the gas volumes needed for several nearby countries in the region, not only for current purposes but also as a strategic emergency reserve.

Common political values are the development of democratic institutes and the maintenance of democratic practices first of all. The federal governance structure of Intermarium should be flexible and light enough to enable the participation for every country, both free conduct of one's own state domestic policy and unobstructed participation in other interstate and even in some cases intergovernmental projects.

Common security values could have economic and political, but also military dimensions. It could be the common migration policy, universal border protection, and defense against a common enemy — current or potential. The aggression of paramilitary pro-Russian illegal armed groups in Transnistria in the Donbas region is real and current; similar threats to state sovereignty could emerge in the near future in almost every country of Intermarium.

At least common cultural values could be both traditional and innovative. Most of the population of Intermarium has related ethnic, religious, and linguistic origin and present state. These common cultural characters could be the basis for a future commonwealth. But still it could be continual cultural innovations that could complement them in the future. Such complements could be created together and, therefore, be shared.

So in value and symbolic, functional, and institutional dimensions, Intermarium could be a single system that could be conditionally divided by state borders. Ukraine has unique and deep natural, political, economic military and cultural potential. Ukraine could and therefore, should be one of the central element of this Future European image.

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