

Sławomir Łukasiewicz

(The John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin)

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2724-545X>

On Deformation of Ideas. Or Why it is Worth Studying the History of Thinking About Central and Eastern Europe*

O deformacji idei, czyli dlaczego warto studiować historię myślenia o Europie Środkowo-Wschodniej

ABSTRACT

One of the important elements of disputes in the public space are signs, concepts or ideas referring to concepts developed earlier by scientists, thinkers, philosophers, but also practitioners. Often, there are many parallel meanings around the same concept, which is not only the reason for the dispute between professionals, but also leads to significant political argument. An example of such concept are regional integration projects in Central and Eastern Europe discussed in Poland and the region practically throughout the whole 20th century. Discussions took place in the countries as well as in exile. This example explicitly shows how disputes over fundamental issues like democracy, coexistence of nations, good neighbourhood, political integration, etc. have been discussed in the past. But it can also show how divergent narratives can accompany different traditions of thinking about these categories and how it is absorbed in contemporary public discourse.

The main issue discussed in this article is the situation when scholars ignore the fact of diversity of concepts, and try to change the meaning of existing notions and ideas. The current discussion around old integration concepts illustrates this phenomenon perfectly. One of the examples, analysed in detail in this article, is the book by Marek Jan Chodakiewicz titled 'Międzymorze'. The author used the old and worked-out idea trying to make it devoid of the old contexts, giving the idea a completely new meaning.

The aim of the study is to reconstruct the basic conceptual grid of Chodakiewicz, thanks to which the fundamental differences between the historical meanings of Międzymorze (Intermarium) and the new proposal become visible. We also investigate the purpose of this deformation. The effect of the article is the indication of the research problem,

* The original, abridged Polish version of this text was published as S. Łukasiewicz, *Wojny koncepcyjne historyków. Na marginesie książki Marka Jana Chodakiewicza o „Międzymorzu”*, ohistorie.eu, 20 VII 2018 (access: 24 XII 2018).

and warning against manipulation of historical facts and ideas to achieve other aims than scientific ones.

Key words: history of ideas, federalism, Międzymorze (Intermarium), Central and Eastern Europe

One of the significant elements of disputes held in the public space are signs, concepts and ideas referring to the concepts developed earlier by scientists, thinkers, philosophers, but also practitioners. Often enough, many parallel meanings arise around the same concept, which is not only the reason for the dispute between professionals, but also leads to significant political differences. An example of such concept are regional integration projects in Central and Eastern Europe discussed in the recent years. It should be mentioned that this matter was discussed in Poland as well as in the region practically throughout the whole 20th century, both domestically and in exile. Nowadays, they are coming back to life again. On the one hand, this concept adopts new meanings, on the other, it follows a certain tradition of thinking, which is not obvious to many of its supporters. This can be an excellent example to show how disputes over fundamental issues like democracy, coexistence of nations, good neighbourhood, political integration, etc. were discussed in the past. But it can also be used to show how divergent narratives can accompany different traditions of thinking about these concepts and how it is absorbed in contemporary public discourse.

The discussed concept appears nowadays in the words of politicians, writers and publicists. Over many recent years, it was rather a domain of academics, who were satisfied with studying its roots, recollecting authors, listing the possible regional configurations, reconstructing justifications for these concepts. This is how the subject was approached in exile by Piotr Wandycz¹, Oskar Halecki², and after 1989 in Poland by Józef Łaptos³,

¹ References to his works on the subject can be found in the book by P. Wandycz, *O federalizmie i emigracji. Reminiscencje o rzeczach istotnych i błahych. Rozmowy przeprowadził Sławomir Łukasiewicz*, Lublin 2003.

² More on the federalism of Oskar Halecki cf. S. Łukasiewicz, *Oskar Halecki jako federalista*, in: *Oskar Halecki i jego wizja Europy*, ed. M. Dąbrowska, vol. 1, Warszawa–Łódź 2012, pp. 184–195 (includes a translation of a text by O. Halecki from English, *Odpowiedzią jest federalizm*). Cf. S. Łukasiewicz, *Trzecia Europa. Polska myśl federalistyczna 1940–1971*, Lublin–Warszawa 2010.

³ For the purposes of this text, let us focus only on his selected works, i.e. J. Łaptos, *Europa jedna czy dwie? Projekty i koncepcje integracji europejskiej w latach 1944–1950*, Kraków 1994; idem, *Na drodze do federacji środkowoeuropejskiej. Projekty udziału uchodźców politycznych w armii europejskiej (1950–1953)*, in: *Pamięć zbiorowa w procesie integracji Europy*, ed. J. Łaptos,

Marian Stanisław Wolański⁴, or the author of these words⁵. An idea of such reorganisation of the Central Europe that would ensure stability and prosperity (as in the European Union), stimulated the imagination, especially when taking into account war hecatombs and millions of exiles crossing the region in search for shelter in the mid-20th century. However, regardless of this fascination, the listed authors attempted to maintain certain standards of practice in history, considering it a great subject for reflection.

These rules do not have to be followed by writers. And the vision of a region, even in the form of 'Intermarium' (*Międzymorze*), appears in Polish literature. Somewhat misleading can therefore be the very same title of a short story by Stefan Żeromski, which has got nothing in common with the geographical 'Intermarium', and de facto focuses on Pomerania. However, with the passage of time, it became clear which geographical region is described by the term 'Intermarium'. This title is used by Ziemowit Szczerek when describing travels in the countries in the region. For him this presents an opportunity to deal with some stereotypes, suggesting other ones in their place, e.g. that the Hungarians are not actually advocates for the saying 'Pole and Hungarian, two good friends', and that Romania is a kind of southern Poland⁶. Besides, such literature refers to the texts by Claudio Magris⁷, Andrzej Stasiuk and Yurii Andrukhovych⁸, who thought that the truly interesting world for travel is precisely the Central Europe. In their case it is clear that we are dealing with a literary structure,

Kraków 1996, pp. 117–130; idem, *Koncepcje integracji Europy Środkowo-Wschodniej w świetle publikacji 'Intermarium'*, in: *Ku zjednoczonej Europie. Studia nad Europą środkową i południowo-wschodnią w XIX i XX wieku*, ed. I. Stawowy-Kawka, W. Rojek, 'Zeszyty Naukowe Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego. Prace Historyczne' 1997, 124, pp. 125–140; idem, *L'apport des exilés d'au-delà du rideau de fer à la construction européenne* in: *Intégration ou représentation? Les exilés polonais en Belgique et la construction européenne*, ed. M. Dumoulin, I. Goddeeris, Louvain-la-Neuve 2005, pp. 187–211.

⁴ Primarily M. Wolański, *Europa Środkowo-Wschodnia w myśli politycznej emigracji polskiej 1945–1975*, Wrocław 1996.

⁵ Particularly S. Łukasiewicz, *Trzecia Europa*; idem, *Partia w warunkach emigracji. Dylematy „Polskiego Ruchu Wolnościowego »Niepodległość i Demokracja«” 1945–1994*, Lublin–Warszawa 2014.

⁶ Z. Szczerek, *Międzymorze. Podróże przez prawdziwą i wyobrażoną Europę Środkową*, Czarne 2016. Fragments can be read on the website of 'Gazeta Wyborcza' <http://wyborcza.pl/7,75517,21802613,miedzymorze-przeczytaj-fragment-nowej-ksiazki-ziemowita-szczerka.html>, [access: 22 VI 2017].

⁷ His book about the Danube was published in 1986 in Italian and was then translated to other languages, including Polish: C. Magris, *Dunaj*, transl. by Joanna Ugniewska and Anna Osmólska-Mętrak, Warszawa 2004.

⁸ A. Stasiuk, Y. Andrukhovych, *Moja Europa. Dwa eseje o Europie zwanej Środkową*, Wołowiec 2000.

impression, personal experience, belief and evaluation. These books are read as pieces of good literature.

The trouble starts, however, when 'Intermarium' ceases to be an object of observation and inspiration, and it becomes a construct built for a specific political goal. It is hard to expect that politicians who realise the political advantage of using the formula of history will abstain from reaching for such a tool. However, even in this case one should expect at least the elementary honesty and having taken into consideration the context of how this concept functioned in the past. First of all, let us have a look at the statement of Krzysztof Szczerski, a political scientist and head of the chancellery of the President of Poland, Andrzej Duda (earlier an advisor for international affairs), that the European Union – and specifically the idea of European integration itself – is a utopia, whereas the regional cooperation of the sovereign nations of the Central and Eastern Europe is not. Moreover, Poland has a significant role to play in this latter project⁹. However, the most notable element is the façade used to describe this initiative: Trimarium (org. *Trójmorze*). Doubtlessly, this is a political project and there can be no doubt that it concerns the area located between three seas: the Baltic, Adriatic and Black Seas. 'Trimarium' is discussed in the context of other great project: the new silk road, the regional economic cooperation (but also cooperation of the region with the USA), a common stance towards the decision-making processes of the European Union, etc.¹⁰ To emphasise these new objectives of the region, the new term 'Trimarium' started to be used consciously, in order to – as an expert of the *Polish Institute of International Affairs explained* – 'abandon the reference to that concept [*Intermarium*], associated with the name of Józef Piłsudski] and avoid a geopolitical association'¹¹. This was explained to a greater extent by Minister Szczerski himself: 'As far as Trimarium is concerned, this is indeed a term replacing ABC, as ABC is not universal in the linguistic sense. In different countries these seas (in Polish: Adriatyk, Bałtyk, Morze Czarne – editorial

⁹ K. Szczerski, *Utopia europejska. Kryzys integracji i polska inicjatywa naprawy*, Kraków 2017.

¹⁰ 'Trimarium' is the main subject of one of the chapters in a book by K. Szczerski (*op. cit.*, pp. 186ff). The aspects of economic cooperation within the framework of the Polish and Croatian Trimarium initiative are addressed for example in a brochure published by the Eastern Europe Institute Foundation, authored by Przemysław Żurawski vel Grajewski and Andreana Baeva Motusic, *Adriatic-Baltic-Black Sea*, ed. Kinga Redłowska, Warszawa 2017. Also Bartosz Bieliszczuk, *Trójmorze: współpraca na rzecz unijnego i regionalnego rynku gazu*, 'Biuletyn PISM' 2017, 63.

¹¹ Quote from the article *Dlaczego Trójmorze nie jest Międzymorzem? I czego może chcieć od Trumpa?*, 'Dziennik.pl' 5 VII 2017, <http://wiadomosci.dziennik.pl/swiat/artykuly/553504,trojmorze-co-to-jest-jak-dziala.html>, [access: 27 XII 2017].

note) have different names, although I admit that the term ABC was received very well in Poland. 'Intermarium', in turn, has strong geopolitical and historical connotations. We are intent on cooperating more closely with the states of the region, primarily within the scope of development of economy and infrastructure, but also in the dimension of security. As far as security is concerned, the partnership of Warsaw and Bucharest is essential in the Trimarium. As far as the development, communication and energy projects are concerned, the cooperation of Warsaw and Zagreb is essential. President Duda encouraged Ukraine to Euro-Atlantic integration by means of the Trimarium region¹². The conclusion is clear – a new name started to be used to designate the same geographical region as 'Intermarium', including an attempt to give it new political meaning. One can definitely discuss the effectiveness of such an endeavour, which on one hand is developed in an analogy to a historical project, on the other – with the aid of a new name – is supposed to bring about new quality and severing ties with the past? Is such a disconnect definitely possible? Anyway, this attempt to clearly differentiate from historical ideas caused the appearance of general difficulty with determining what both 'Intermarium' and 'Trimarium' is. These issues were addressed by the website eastbook.eu, which even suggested 'a dictionary of concepts in the Polish eastern policy' attempting to differentiate its phases and the meanings of different terms¹³. In this case one can also ponder why 'eastern policy' and not 'regional policy', or why there is no reference in the dictionary to the federal clubs created in the time of the World War II with their periodical under the very title 'Intermarium'¹⁴. However, it should be recognised that in relation to what we presently observe in the Polish foreign policy, the presented concept can be definitely considered an interesting attempt.

Can a reference to history simply be avoided, especially since we are still discussing the same region, and the origins of the term 'Trimarium' are confusingly similar to the origins of the 'Intermarium'. What do we

¹² Już nie Międzymorze i nie ABC. Szczerski o Trójmorzu i współpracy regionalnej. A conversation of Zbigniew Parafianowicz and Michał Potocki with Krzysztof Szczerski, 'Dziennik.pl' 6 IX 2016, <http://wiadomosci.dziennik.pl/opinie/artykuly/530239,trojmorze-rośnie-dzieki-wspolpracy-z-rumunia-i-chorwacja.html>, [access: 27 XII 2017].

¹³ Maciej Zaniewicz, *Międzymorze czy trójmorze? Słownik koncepcji polskiej polityki wschodniej*, 'eastbook.eu', <http://www.eastbook.eu/2017/10/11/miedzymorze-czy-trojmorze-slownik-koncepcji-polskiej-polityki-wschodniej/> [access: 27 XII 2017].

¹⁴ Vide J. Łaptos, *Koncepcje integracji*. Cf. idem, *Działalność federalnych klubów Europy Środkowej 1942–1952*, in: *Z dziejów prób integracji europejskiej od średniowiecza do współczesności*, ed. M. Pułaski, Kraków 1995, pp. 125–135; M. Wolański, *Kluby federalne na emigracji, ich geneza i programy*, 'Śląski Kwartalnik Historyczny Sobótka' 1996, 1/3 pp. 303–309.

owe the renaissance of the discussion about this historical concept to? When in the history the nations of Central and Eastern Europe cooperated with each other effectively, how did this cooperation look and what arises from this for us today? Among various authors who ask themselves such questions, I would like to devote particular attention to a book by Marek Jan Chodakiewicz, titled 'Międzymorze'¹⁵.

Let us start with its origins. The book is actually a translation of the English version, published in 2013 as *Intermarium: the land between the Black and Baltic Seas*¹⁶. The quality of this translation undermines the validity of the Polish publication of the book. It contains many incoherent and incomprehensible fragments, which are at the same time difficult to separate from the author's thoughts¹⁷. Unfortunately, the name of the translator is not specified, so it should be assumed that the author translated it himself. When we investigate the English version thoroughly, it turns out that we are dealing with two different books. The author himself (even in the Polish version) emphasises many times that the book was written with the American reader in mind and the reviewers interpreted it as such. For example, Dovid Katz stated that 'Chodakiewicz is frank about his politics' and that he is a forceful advocate of a Republican Party-type platform, with ample specific references to the Reagan years¹⁸. This thread will be recurring, but it is worth mentioning at this point. Nevertheless, the remarks in this text are going to refer first of all to the Polish version, directed to the Polish reader, though the citations derive from original English text, what can cause certain inconsistencies. We will try to overcome them, though a detailed collation of the Polish version with the English one is not the aim of this article.

What traditions of thinking about 'Intermarium' and what source literature did the author himself refer to? Paradoxically, he refers to American authors, e.g. Jonathan Levy¹⁹, or 'a liberal Timothy Snyder',

¹⁵ M. J. Chodakiewicz, *Międzymorze*, Biblioteka Wolności, Warszawa 2017.

¹⁶ Idem, *Intermarium: the Land between the Black and Baltic Seas*, New Brunswick, London 2013.

¹⁷ For example, on page 31 of the English version we can read the expression of gratitude to 'foster father Zdzisław Zakrzewski'. However, the term used in the Polish translation is 'wice-ojciec' (in English could mean: vice-father), which does not appear in the Polish language at all. Other examples could be given.

¹⁸ The review is available online: <http://defendinghistory.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/Dovid-Katz-review-of-Intermarium-in-Israel-Journal-of-Foreign-Affairs-7-2-2013.pdf> [access: 27 XII 2017].

¹⁹ J. Levy, *The Intermarium: Wilson, Madison, & East Central European Federalism*, Boca Raton 2006.

or 'a post-Soviet Jewish voice [sic] of Alexander V. Prusin'²⁰. However, the author makes practically no references to the fundamental Polish literature or the literature written by the Polish historians on this subject. He ignores the output of Polish science within this scope in its entirety. And it is not, for example, about the book by Piotr Okulewicz²¹, but about such fundamental names as Oskar Halecki, which merely appears in an annotation. After all, this historian was the first to make an attempt to take a comprehensive look at the history of Central and Eastern Europe, which he did in two fundamental books²². The fact that a half of a century has passed since that time does not mean that this literature is unworthy of attention. Moreover, it was partly recollected in Poland in the 1990s, which is an achievement of a group of historians from Lublin, namely Prof. Jerzy Kłoczowski and the Institute of East-Central Europe. Perhaps Chodakiewicz does not know this legacy, or perhaps he recognised it as insignificant from the point of view of his deliberations. Similarly, he does not quote other historians, who dealt with this space, probably for the abovementioned reasons. Nevertheless, owing to this book he is a laureate of a prestigious award of 'Przegląd Wschodni', thereby he joined the group of such eminent historians as Daniel Beauvois, Andrzej Nowak, Natalia Lebediewa, Jarosław Hrycak, Norman Davies, Andrzej Grajewski, Jerzy Kłoczowski, Grzegorz Motyka, Jan Jacek Bruski, Tymothy Synder, Robert Conquest, Anne Applebaum, Richard Pipes, and Roman Szporluk. The list presents only a selection of names, but it shows how different authors were awarded. Therefore, this book by Chodakiewicz cannot be ignored, even if only for this reason. He was recognised in a group of important authorities, precisely for the book on 'Intermarium'.

The lack of the abovementioned quotations no longer surprises when we go deeply into – let us add not-so-easy – reading of the book. For the historical term of 'Intermarium' is used by Chodakiewicz to designate the area between the Baltic Sea and the Black Sea, the geography of which he outlines in the following way: 'in the north the boundaries follow the Baltic

²⁰ M.J. Chodakiewicz, *Intermarium*, 20 (cf. *Międzymorze*, p. 32).

²¹ P. Okulewicz, *Koncepcja 'międzymorza' w myśli i praktyce politycznej obozu Józefa Piłsudskiego w latach 1918–1926*, Poznań 2001. Cf. also A. Skrzypek, *W kręgu koncepcji Międzymorza i taktyki balansowania, 1935–1938*, in: *Historia dyplomacji polskiej*, vol. 4: 1918–1939, ed. M. Leczyk et al., Warszawa 1995, p. 493 et seq.

²² O. Halecki, *The Limits and Divisions of European History*, London–New York 1950; idem, *Borderlands of Western Civilisation. A History of East Central Europe*, New York 1952. Therefore, the reference to Halecki is (nota bene with a mistakenly listed date of publication for *Limits* – 1962) of Karl A. Roider in a review of the book by Chodakiewicz for 'Sarmatian Review', September 2013, <http://www.ruf.rice.edu/~sarmatia/913/913roider.pdf> [access: 27 XII 2017].

coast from the estuary of the Vistula and, then, the Neman until the Gulf of Finland, where they slope south through Lake Peipus into Velikaya River. They proceed toward the general area where the Western Dvina bends, the Svir originates, and the Berezina, Sozh, and Desna, in turn, meet the Dnieper as it flows into the Black Sea. The boundaries follow its coast until the delta of the Danube to move sharply north from there following the Prut toward the Dniester and the Bug as it veers west to meet the Vistula and complete the cycle in its estuary at the Baltic²³.

What is the purpose of this type of description? If the purpose is supposed to be academic, this endeavour is misguided, as by ignoring the output of other academics, the author ignores a significant part of the research, and ignorance has got nothing to do with science. Then perhaps the purpose is more modest – to record some form of memory about ‘Intermarium’, to bring it back to the contemporary debate. If so, this is not the ‘Intermarium’ discussed in the Polish tradition from the interwar period. This is a different ‘Intermarium’ and geographically this is an area that is conceptually closer to the Polish Borderlands, with dominant Lithuanian, Belarusian and Ukrainian populations. But if these are ‘Borderlands’, why doesn’t the author use this term, but rather replaces it with the historically conditioned ‘Intermarium’? Again, is it ignorance, or rather eclipsing the uncomfortable narration? Or is it an endeavour consciously amputating the western part of the ‘Intermarium’ from the political and social imagination? What would be the purpose of such a conscious reversion of concepts? Well, in my opinion this is indeed a battle for the shape of this particular concept and its social reception. A diagnosis should be proved, which in the case of a political thought is particularly difficult. Let us start with what ‘Intermarium’ is in the tradition of Polish thinking, to understand the essence of the performed procedure.

First of all, let us emphasise that ‘Intermarium’ is a historical definition of a geographical area between three seas: the Baltic, Black and Adriatic seas. Chodakiewicz as the first one ‘amputates’ the Adriatic Sea, suggesting ‘two-dimensionality’ of the area. He does it regardless of the awareness of existence of other concepts of cooperation for the region, but he sees them as a pretext to expansion from the German side (Mitteleuropa), or the Russian side (by means of the ‘Slavonic’ idea). He states: ‘In distinction to inimical imperial projects, most locally generated geopolitical ideas draw directly on the indigenous legacy of the *Intermarium*. For example, in the interwar period the ‘ABC’ seas: (Adriatyk – Bałtyk – [Morze] Czarne/ Adriatic – Baltic – Black) solution for the *Intermarium* was touted. This was

²³ M.J. Chodakiewicz, *Intermarium*, p. 35, (cf. *Międzymorze*, p. 49).

a maximalist approach that included everything between the pre-1939 Soviet and German borders to be organized in a loose confederation.' Even the use of a phrase 'inimical imperial projects' clearly reminds of the language of the age of the Polish People's Republic and emphasises the imminent animosity between the concepts; meanwhile, Chodakiewicz solely 'praises' other 'solution' for 'Intermarium' and in detachment from the 'locally generated' ideas, and locates them freely between the two seas. The text proves that the author is aware of the historical context in which the concept of 'Intermarium' was considered, but simultaneously thinks that 'later, the project was reduced to the Polish-Czechoslovak Federation, as unveiled in London during the war years. The Visegrád Triangle/ Four (or Group) of Poland, Hungary, Slovakia, and the Czech Republic is the modern-day extension of this idea'²⁴. One cannot question the right of a scientist to shortening, i.e. to synthesising our knowledge. However, since 'Intermarium' was supposed to be loose in nature, it cannot have anything to do with the idea of a federation, or at least the Polish-Czechoslovak Federation, in other words with an idea for a close relationship of two states. The federation for which the group headed by Gen. Kazimierz Sosnkowski was preparing a constitution act in the time of war. The Visegrád Group, on the other hand, is a yet another formula of cooperation, primarily covering the 'soft' areas, such as culture and science, though its purpose is also to reach agreements on the issue of international cooperation within the scope of politics and economy. How this works within the European Union is another matter. For Chodakiewicz these concepts merge and the one thing one could agree with him on is the fact that they all apply a certain form of regional organisation. However, not all of them can be referred to as 'Intermarium'. A question arises here from the current public debate, to which I will not respond here – if we have the 'Intermarium' of two seas, then maybe this is why the concept of the 'Trimarium' was created, pushed for, i.e. by the President's Minister Krzysztof Szczerski, in real terms as of today based on the cooperation between Poland and Croatia? We do not know that.

Secondly, 'Intermarium' develops in the Polish political tradition from the rationales of the security analyses of the interwar period. This was justified by a simple fact that Poland isolated in the region is an easy prey to the neighbours who are growing in strength. The experience of the Polish-Bolshevik war and Hitler's coming to power only served to reinforce this belief. Attempts were made at military alliances in the region, even though they were ineffective. This was the basis for the concepts of 'Intermarium'

²⁴ M.J. Chodakiewicz, *Intermarium*, p. 3 (cf. *Międzymorze*, p. 13).

(Piłsudski's adherents – see the book by Piotr Okulewicz²⁵), or the 'Third Europe' (Józef Beck and Piłsudski's adherents). The period of war was when 'Intermarium' clubs were created, a journal was published under this name and ties were nurtured with the other refugees from our part of Europe. As a side note, it can be added that this activity was related both to Prometheism (the concept of blowing up the Soviet Russia owing to the awakening of the pursuit of self-determination by the nations living in this country), but also to the activity of the British intelligence, which treated it as a great information tool. Coming back to our analysis, the 'mutilation' of 'Intermarium', depriving it of its western part and reducing it to a strip separating Russia from the rest of Europe does not reckon with any of the geo-strategic dimensions taken into account by the earlier thinkers. These dimensions are easy to reconstruct: the total population (100–110 million inhabitants before the war), borders facilitating defence, strategic lines of communication, combined economic potential (particularly with regard to the military industry, but also the supply base allowing long-term and efficient war activities). Thirdly, a significant element of all the regional projects was to seek the community of experience and cultural similarities between particular countries and the nations residing in them. This, as a rule, was most difficult. Oskar Halecki, in a polemic with Arnold Toynbee, applied a very useful measure, which seems to be better justified and much more convincing than the suggestion of M. Chodakiewicz. He indicated significant elements of the religious tradition and political culture (for examples the traditions of democracy), which differentiated the Eastern Europe from its central part. At the same time, the central part was divided into two subparts: the east and west of this centre. The states of 'Intermarium' found themselves in the eastern part of the centre of Europe. They gravitated in this concept, however, towards the western part of Europe and they had a moral right to do so. Halecki tackled the map and therefore should be recognised as an experienced and demanding champion. The duel with Toynbee, if we consider the volume of their books, was not fought on equal terms. Moreover, not to diminish the reliability of the methodology of historical research of Halecki, the aim of his work was political: to find the historical justification for the European nature of Poland and the countries of central Europe.

What role does the cultural factor play in the book by M. Chodakiewicz? 'The knowledge of the *Intermarium* – as he claims – entails the fluency with its component parts'. We already know how M. Chodakiewicz defined these parts. His further explanations are important: 'most focus on ethnic

²⁵ P. Okulewicz, *Koncepcja „międzymorza”*.

differences, indeed »ancient hatreds«'. It should be noted here that the researchers do not focus at all on these 'ethnic differences', which are clear and studied as such.²⁶ Such researchers as Halecki and Wandycz indicated the specific nature of this region, not at all due to the ethnic and national mosaic. Especially in a political discourse on 'Intermarium' the idea was to find a plane on which the ethnic differences would not be playing a significant role. Meanwhile, Marek Chodakiewicz's opinion on the said differences cannot justify the following quote: 'While considering ethnic differences, we shall underscore cultural affinities and other positive features (e.g. in economy) which tend to unite, rather than divide the nations of the region. We shall dwell on particularities and peculiarities of each of the nation-states and suggest ways to address them to facilitate overcoming of their differences, or at least downplaying them for the sake of regional cooperation'. While the reduction of significance of national differences in relationships between humans seems to be a commendable and understandable goal, we do not find the explanation of what the 'overcoming of [national] differences' postulated by the author would be based on. In the further part we will also try to search for these 'ways' suggested by the author. Meanwhile, what arises from these assumptions? Well, it arises that 'we also shall differentiate between usually constructive cultural nationalism and potentially pernicious ethno(folk)-nationalism'²⁷. Unfortunately, the author does not suggest a definition of 'cultural nationalism' or 'ethno(folk)-nationalism' to us. We don't know either what exactly he has in mind when using the expressions 'usually constructive' (about the former) and 'potentially pernicious' (about the latter). However, we can sense, and this is probably the intent of the author that 'cultural nationalism' is pleasant (although it occasionally has problems with constructivism), and 'ethno(folk)-nationalism' is not as pleasant, although it is only potentially, not actually, pernicious.

Well, both types of nationalism in the depiction of the author have a significant role to play. 'The former is indispensable to reconstruct each nation's identity following the pestilence of Communism'. Therefore, 'cultural nationalism' is not only pleasant, it is also indispensable to each self-respecting nation in this part of Europe. Meanwhile 'the latter threatens to turn the reconstruction endeavour into a conflict of the local ethnicities, thus seriously jeopardizing the *Intermarium* project of cooperative nationalism'. This is a very significant fragment. First of all,

²⁶ Cf. the book by Timothy Snyder, *Bloodlands. Europe between Hitler and Stalin*, New York 2010.

²⁷ M.J. Chodakiewicz, *Intermarium*, p. 3, (cf. *Międzymorze*, p. 14).

we learn that the pernicious nature of 'ethno(folk)-nationalism' is in other words a threat to the endeavours for reconstruction. The arising question is: what reconstruction, or reconstruction of what? Rather not Communism, because this we already know: pestilence. Maybe it is about the reconstruction of 'Intermarium'? And this is where a certain trouble arises, since 'Intermarium' has always been an intellectual construct, it has never gone outside the design frameworks. Moreover, the creation of the European Union and incorporation of the majority of states in the region in some sense invalidated this project. But, since we want to reconstruct 'Intermarium', does it apply to a return to the discussion, or do we want a return to the geopolitical configuration known from the interwar period? Perhaps the answer lies in the final part of this sentence, which defines the Intermarium as a 'project of cooperative nationalisms'. Therefore, aside from cultural nationalism and ethno(folk)-nationalism, a concept of cooperative nationalisms appears. And it may not be most significant here, but there can also be uncooperative nationalisms, meaning ones which kindly tolerate each other, or – as it happens with nationalisms – try to get rid of the other nationalisms. It is important that 'Intermarium' is defined as a cooperation of nationalisms. Moreover, this is a perspective, in which regardless of the shape of 'Intermarium', the essence of any construction in the region is nationalism. Accompanied by an epithet, but still nationalism. The author therefore detaches the entire project from the discussion on the development of cooperation, but a method to overcome nationalisms, democratisation, or securing the integrity of this space.

In a historical debate, in which Piotr Wandycz participated, for example, there was a differentiation between a 'union of states' and a 'union of nations'. This had its practical consequences, and in this sense, somewhat generalising, General Władysław Sikorski was closer to the former concept, whereas Piłsudski's adherents were the supporters of the latter. In political practice both political formations were eager to play, e.g. the Slovaks against the Czechs. Is the 'cooperation of nationalisms' postulated by Chodakiewicz a 'union of the nations'? Probably not, because the author does not say anything about a union, just about some indefinite cooperation. He does not use the term 'union of nations'. Moreover, a nation within the meaning from the first half of the 20th century and the nation today after the experiences of the World War II are two different concepts. The case is similar with nationalism. We are not able to reconstruct precisely, neither the imagination nor the vocabulary used by the author. But the development of typology of nationalisms and their estimation is a clear persuasive measure used by the author. He aims to ennoble nationalism, since there are even such of types

of nationalism that open the way to cooperation. This rehabilitative measure is continued by the author a number of pages later, this time by means of an expression 'national movements'. Since we do not find a clear differentiation between nationalism and national movement, it can be assumed that according to him these concepts are convergent and that nationalism is a dominant component of the so-called national movement. Meanwhile, the author introduces further terms, without specifying them. He accuses the West in the period of the Cold War of 'Moscow-centrism'. Then he discovers that this very West, dominated by the left wing²⁸, developed a specific group of anti-Communists, who 'liked to dismiss the people of the Intermarium, including the émigrés in the United States²⁹, as inveterate 'reactionaries', 'fascists', and, since the 1960s, increasingly as 'anti-Semites'. Moreover, 'the Soviets, for their part, chimed in [with the leftist West] with eerily identical propaganda. Anyone who opposed the Communists was a »fascist« and a »reactionary«'. Even worse so, 'the Communist secret police staged numerous provocations to smear nationalism with a brush of »Nazism«. It infiltrated nationalist underground and dissident circles. It set up false nationalist organizations, which spewed hatred, racism, and anti-Semitism'. The basic conclusion from this fragment is that the national movement was a dismissed victim to propaganda and provocation, and it definitely was not anti-Semitic, nor did it hate, nor was it racist. Here, similarly as in the case of the eponymous 'Intermarium', we are facing a serious semiotic problem – the Author performs another surgical procedure, this time on the designate of the terms of 'nationalism' and 'national movement'. Since both concepts have been understood by us 'incorrectly', let us look for their correct interpretation.

Some more light is shed by another fragment, in which the author states that 'the question of national identity in the *Intermarium* is truly

²⁸ M.J. Chodakiewicz, *Intermarium*, p. 18-19 (cf. *Międzymorze*, pp. 29–30).

²⁹ The protagonist in one of the early books by Marek Jan Chodakiewicz (M.J. Chodakiewicz, *Narodowe Siły Zbrojne. 'Ząb' przeciw dwóm wrogom*, Warszawa 1999) is Leonard Zub-Zdanowicz, after the World War II a Polish émigré in the USA, in the time of war a 'cichociemny' [elite special-operations paratrooper], who after parachuting in Poland initiated cooperation with the National Armed Forces, i.e. as a Chief of Staff of the Holy Cross Mountains Brigade (*Brygada Świętokrzyska*), with which he evacuated to the West in 1945. This activity of Zub-Zdanowicz is also nowadays a matter of controversy between historians, which is proved by heated online discussions. For example: S. Białach, *Historyk przedstawił krytyczne dokumenty o jednym z żołnierzy wyklętych. Teraz IPN chce go zwolnić* [A historian presented documents criticising one of the cursed soldiers. Now the Institute of National Remembrance wants to fire him], onet.pl, 22 III 2017, [access: 24 XII 2018]; mba, *Leonard Zub-Zdanowicz – list w obronie oficera Brygady Świętokrzyskiej* [Leonard Zub-Zdanowicz – a letter in defence of an officer of the Holy Cross Mountains Brigade], 'DoRzeczy. Tygodnik Lisickiego', 6 IV 2017, dorzeczy.pl, [access: 24 XII 2018].

tricky. Roughly until the mid-nineteenth century most people there had a »local« identity. They were simply peasants (usually of unconscious Ruthenian ethnicity) and their most important frame of reference was their religion (usually Eastern Orthodoxy), their village, and their lord³⁰. Disregarding the geographical identification of 'Intermarium' described earlier, we are dealing with another amputation, the scale of which is even difficult to assess at first sight – if we are discussing the area from Tallinn to Odessa, bringing the identification of the residents of this region to 'unconscious Ruthenian ethnicity' is clearly false. The question therefore is what does it arise from and what does it serve? It is hard to suspect the author of ignorance, so maybe, after all, it is a conscious measure, which prevents the proper reconstruction of the ethnic structure of the region. Or maybe we are dealing with another stage of narrowing of the region and the concept of 'Intermarium' itself solely to the area where the 'local Ruthenians' resided?

Therefore, we already have a preliminary recognition of what knowledge the author has on the studied area, how he defines this area, and what is significant in this definition. Now let us have a look at how he defines the purposes set for his study. As the first purpose he mentions the fact that 'it ['Intermarium' – SŁ] is culturally and ideologically most compatible with American national interests and political culture as the inheritor of the freedom and rights stemming from the legacy of the Polish-Lithuanian/Ruthenian Commonwealth'³¹. So the author is dealing with 'Intermarium' because it is 'most compatible with American national interest and political culture'. Therefore, we learn that the text is intended for the American reader. It may be potentially suitable also for the Polish reader, who learns which elements of Polish history can speak to the Americans. "Second – as we read – it is the regional pivot and a gateway to both East and West"³². It is interesting insofar as a paragraph later the very same author refers critically to Germany's concept of the *Mitteleuropa* as 'a German dominion and a passageway to the Middle East'. The regional axis East-West, for which 'Intermarium' is supposed to be a gateway, does not present a threat any more. A fundamental and justified question, is it because it is convergent with the American interest? 'Third – as we read – since the Intermarium [sic] is the most stable part of the post-Soviet area (and most free and democratic)³³. It is difficult to dispute with a book

³⁰ M.J. Chodakiewicz, *Intermarium*, p. 25 (cf. *Międzymorze*, p. 37).

³¹ *Ibidem*, p. 2 (12).

³² *Ibidem*.

³³ *Ibidem*.

published in 2013/2017, even if we adopt the geographic interpretation of the author and refer to the war in Ukraine or the 'democratic' regime in Belarus. But this is not the end of the third cause to deal with 'Intermarium', due to this stabilisation and democracy ruling here 'the United States should focus on solidifying its influence there to use it as a springboard to handling the rest of the successor states, including in the Caucasus, Central Asia, and the Russian federation itself'³⁴. In the Polish tradition of political thought this is pure Prometheism. The question is: what type of springboard is referred to? We should definitely treat this as a call of a Polish-American historian publicist for the USA to become actively involved in politics in the post-Soviet area. The question is what type of politics does he call for? The fourth reason for study is the fact that 'the ongoing political and economic success of the Intermarium states under American sponsorship undermines the enemies of freedom not only in the post-Soviet sphere but also all over the world'³⁵. Let me leave this bold statement without a comment. 'Fifth – we read further – the Intermarium is the most inclusive political concept that successfully operated in practice for several centuries within the framework of the Commonwealth and as such constitutes a direct challenge to any form of modern totalitarianism of xenophobic uniformity'³⁶. Worth to remember: it is uniformity (whatever this is supposed to mean in the history of political thought) that is xenophobic, not, for example, nationalism. And 'Intermarium' – as understood by the author, i.e. cooperating nationalisms – operated within the framework of the Commonwealth for centuries. Sixth – 'in its zenith, the »Intermarium« projected its might well beyond its borders, influencing events as far afield as Scandinavia and the Balkans, and it can do so again in congruence with the America's objectives and its own interests'³⁷. Anyone who studies general history or international relations knows that the author wrote the truth both about the mutual relations between the states and about the potential of advancing American interest in our region. But there is also 'last but not least, seventh, by reintroducing the concept of the Intermarium into the intellectual discourse, we would like to stress the autonomous and independent nature of the area (rather than either its nonexistence or submersion into conquering empires)³⁸. And this, unfortunately, is where the author is incorrect, his book does not reintroduce the concept of 'Intermarium' into the intellectual discourse.

³⁴ *Ibidem*.

³⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 2 (12-13).

³⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 2 (13).

³⁷ *Ibidem*.

³⁸ *Ibidem*.

His book deforms the concept of 'Intermarium' and tells the American reader about it in an arbitrary manner. Owing to the publication in Polish, the Polish reader can also learn about the scale of this deformation.

Now, the question is: where did such a vision come from, described with this specific language? Why does the author perform the abovementioned operations on the language and symbolic imagination? The fact is that the author disregards the previous traditions and meanings of the ideas that he is writing about; he instrumentalises the history of thinking; he does not have appropriate methodology for the conducted study (this is a clear weakness of this book, but there is no place for its separate analysis in this text); he uses his imprecise language to persuade another understanding of 'Intermarium' than we know and he attaches disproportional importance to the nationalisms existing in it. He also suggests their cooperation, convergent with the American interest. The author at the same time recommends that these false historical grounds should be used as a basis for the American politics towards the region. And he shares this reflection with the Polish reader.

It is a privilege of the reader to expect a conclusion at this point, a response to the question what arises from the fact that in books such as the one by M.J. Chodakiewicz's ideas are subjected to deformation in order for them to be used for the purposes of the current political dispute. The book which became a point of reference for the remarks presented above is exceptional as far as the scale of the implemented deformation is concerned. But it is not entirely exceptional in contemporary historiography. Discussion with other similar works seems to be a necessity on the one hand. On the other, commenting the entirety of such reasoning seems physically non-feasible. I conclude this text with a feeling that I have not managed to comment on many statements in this single book. It is similar in the case of methodology applied by the author. In these several pages of the article I managed to analyse just 3-4 pages of this book, which adds up to just several of its paragraphs. Meanwhile, each of these thoughts demands a comment, each of them carries a particular charge, behind each of them there is an image, the purpose of which is to reorient our thinking about the region. And the entire book is 600-pages long! Commenting on it would require a volume of no less than one thousand pages. Perhaps such a volume should be created with time. And perhaps this should be the procedure in other similar cases.

Therefore, the nature of this article is signalic. The paper is a warning against the bad practice utilised by the authors of historical books, including the awarded ones. And although to a large extent it is a dispute with a single book, at the same time it raises an issue – how to deal with instances of such practice, how to react to attempts at such deformations?

Even a very preliminary list of quotes from M.J. Chodakiewicz, enlightens on how vast the persuasive potential of this work is, capable of affecting our thinking about the world, the thinking of young people, for whom, for example, nationalism is also a significant point of reference. The potential is, however, based on statements that are difficult or simply impossible to verify. Their accumulation causes that the very thought about the amounts of work that awaits the reader, we give up on the reading. Meanwhile, we cannot give up on this reading. Even if it is to arm the potential reader with the knowledge about the treatment that he was subjected to. And there is a need to study the history of thinking, which is not easy, but without it we will not understand our thoughts of today. Otherwise we will allow others to deform our image of the world.

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STRESZCZENIE

Jednym z ważniejszych elementów debaty publicznej są znaki, koncepcje i idee, pozostające w związku z koncepcjami dyskutowanymi w przeszłości przez naukowców, myślicieli, filozofów i praktyków. Często, wokół pojedynczej koncepcji narasta wiele znaczeń, co wywołuje nie tylko dyskusje między profesjonalistami, ale powadzi również do istotnych sporów politycznych. Przykładem takiej koncepcji są projekty integracji regionalnej w Europie Środkowo-Wschodniej dyskutowane w Polsce i regionie praktycznie przez cały XX w. Dyskutowano je zarówno w krajach regionu jak i na emigracji. Ten przykład pokazuje dobitnie jak w przeszłości wyglądały dysputy na tematy fundamentalne, jak demokracja, współistnienie narodów, dobre sąsiedztwo, integracja polityczna itp. Ale to pokazuje również jak rozbieżne narracje mogą towarzyszyć różnym tradycjom myślenia o tych kategoriach i jak to jest przyjmowane przez współczesny dyskurs publiczny.

Główną kwestią dyskutowaną w tym artykule jest sytuacja w której naukowcy ignorują fakt różnorodności koncepcji i próbują do prowadzić zmiany znaczeń istniejących pojęć i idei. Aktualna dyskusja wokół starych koncepcji integracyjnych pokazuje to znakomicie. Jednym z przykładów, analizowanym szczegółowo w tym artykule, jest książka Marka J. Chodakiewicza pt. ‘Międzymorze’. Autor użył w niej starej i wypracowanej idei, w taki sposób, aby pozbawić ją historycznego kontekstu i nadać zupełnie nowe znaczenie.

Celem tego artykułu jest zrekonstruowanie podstawowej siatki pojęciowej M.J. Chodakiewicza dzięki czemu stają się widoczne różnice pomiędzy starym rozumieniem pojęcia 'Międzymorze', a nowym, które próbuje mu nadać autor. Stawiam również pytanie o cel dokonywanej deformacji. W efekcie artykuł stawia istotny problem badawczy oraz stanowi przestrożę przed manipulacją historycznymi faktami i ideami, dokonywaną dla celów innych niż naukowe.

Słowa kluczowe: historia idei, federalizm, Międzymorze (Intermarium), Europa Środkowo-Wschodnia

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Sławomir Łukasiewicz – historian, Europeanist. In Fall/Winter 2019/20 Fulbright Scholar and visiting scholar at Davis Center for Russian and Eurasian Studies, Harvard University. 2015-2019 Director of the Institute of European Studies at John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin, where he is University Professor. A historian at the Branch Office of Historical Research of the Institute of National Remembrance in Lublin, in the years 2012–2015 coordinator of a scientific programme of the Institute of National Remembrance devoted to the history of the Polish political emigration in the years 1939–1990. With research interests encompassing the history of Polish and Central European political emigration in the 20th century, the history of European integration and the functioning of civil intelligence of the Polish People's Republic, he is widely published, including most recently *Poland*, in: *East Central European Migrations during the Cold War. A Handbook*, red. Anna Mazurkiewicz (Münich: The Gruyter Oldenbourg 2019); *Trzecia Europa. Polska myśl federalistyczna w Stanach Zjednoczonych, 1940–1971* (2010, English edition: *Third Europe. Polish Federalist Thought in the USA, 1940–1970's*, Helena History Press 2016); *Partia w warunkach emigracji. Dylematy Polskiego Ruchu Wolnościowego „Niepodległość i Demokracja”* (2014). Editor of such publications as *Christian Democracy across the Iron Curtain – Europe Redefined* (in cooperation with P. Kosicki, Palgrave Macmillan 2018); *Polska emigracja polityczna 1939–1990* (Warszawa 2016); *Tajny oręż czy ofiary zimnej wojny? Emigracje polityczne z Europy Środkowej i Wschodniej* (2010). He received several grants – i.e. from the Kościuszko Foundation, PAFT, Jan and Suzanne Brzękowski Fund, Natolin European Centre and the European University Institute in Florence, Foundation for Polish Science, Fondation de France Fonds Karol Sienkiewicz. A member of ASEES, PAHA, Józef Piłsudski Institute of America, PTSE and the Lublin branch of Towarzystwo Historiograficzne [Historiography Society]. E-mail: lukaslaw@kul.pl.

