

State-forming processes after 1990 in the Balkans

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1. Introduction

The external environment of the systemic changes taking place in the Balkan-peninsula and of the transformation of the national-territorial structures was the transition of different value systems: global, inter-systemic (socialist – capitalism), super powers (American – Soviet) and European value systems (NATO, Warsaw Pact, European Union). Parallel to the collapse of the socialist world system and the elimination of the bipolar system of the world, fundamental transitions started in the state systems of all ex-socialist countries. The integration of the GDR into the FRG, the state structural crisis of the Soviet Union and then its disintegration at the Christmas of 1991, the peaceful partition of Czechoslovakia on 1 January 1993 demonstrated these fundamental rearrangements.

The initial positions were of course very much different for the further development processes in the respective countries. The internal structures created and experienced formerly, and the way of the transition had a considerable impact on the progress of the processes later. The internal process of the transition determined to a large extent how the respective countries were able to integrate into the new international and European order. The inner structures of the individual states were significantly influenced by the system of relations built to the European Union (preparation, and then accession of some countries in 2004). The need for the harmonisation of the different structures naturally emerged.

The systemic changes of the socialist states of the Balkan-peninsula actually fit into the principal tendencies. Rearrangements in 1989-1991 took place in at least three different ways (negotiations; smaller or bigger oppositions, social conflicts; and finally in the framework of tragic civil war).

The countries of the Balkan-peninsula (the “decent” socialist countries, the non-aligned socialist Yugoslavia, the socialist Albania with its own way and the two capitalist countries) experienced historical development processes that were similar in several respects but also very complicated and very much different and in some other ways. By the end of the cold war period it was rather heterogeneity than homogeneity that became a typical development characteristic and result in the countries of the Balkans. The respective countries of the region arrived at the start line of the “new world order” with various historical heritage, and specific economic, social and political experiences.

The large-scale rearrangement of the national territories taking place in the region was thus not a “Balkans feature”, not a peculiar and unique phenomenon in this period, but in civil war circumstances it had individual and unique characteristics as well.

The social, economic and political systemic changes occurring in the Balkans Peninsula necessarily and basically concerned the issue of Yugoslavia, and related to Yugoslavia, almost all neighbour countries in some way. The crisis of Yugoslavia, a country with large territory and population, a country that was actually a regional power with a leading role among the non-aligned countries, generated spillover effects.

There were considerable differences across the respective states also as regards whether radical transformation took place within the “old national frameworks” (Albania, Bulgaria, Romania), or new states were born. In the newly created states (which make the majority in the region in question) the issues coming from the disintegration of the old state structures and

the problems of the new arrangements of the state had to be handled simultaneously. During the state foundations, new nation and state concepts were made, new capital cities were designated and the relation of the new elites to the territory of the state also changed.

The historical, political etc. literature on the transition of the respective countries is huge and diverse. Researches carried out within national frameworks explored almost all aspects of the processes of the given states. In addition to national surveys, transition processes were also analysed in a comparative way. The issues of the development of the macro-region were monitored by a large number of internal and external institutions and networks. The correlations of state-building and administrative systemic changes, democratisation, decentralisation and regionalisation, among other things, continuously appeared in the analyses.

The categories “post-Communist”, “post-socialist”, “transition countries” and “post-Yugoslav” by and large described the essence of the transition process. The circumstances formerly considered as socialist ceased to exist, the transition to some form of constitutional state, democratic political institutional system, privatisation and market economy started. The economic, social and political transformation brought to the surface problems of new type as well, but the basic issue was the breaking down of the former socialist structures.

In the Yugoslav area systemic change coincided with the strengthening of nationalism, as both the old and the new political elite expected to find their “real” roots in this, nationalism became a political “call” for a while. The handling of the issue of multi-ethnicity appeared during the working out of the new constitutional arrangement, and also on the creation of the new administrative system and spatial division. The new state majority was usually unwilling to offer territorial autonomy to the ethnic minority areas. The approach to the ethnic minority areas became a significant and peculiar issue of decentralisation and regionalisation.

The internal processes were influenced by the deepening of the economic difficulties, and then by the social movements and rearrangements following the unfurling and omnipresent economic crisis. The Yugoslav State Presidency created by Tito, consisting of eight persons (representatives of the six member republics and the two autonomous provinces of Serbia), and the rotation process worked in a transparent way in the beginning, but continuous debates emerged on the further development path to be followed.

The comprehensive analysis of the Serb Academy of Sciences called “Memorandum”, issued in 1986 would have remained an academic national policy statement in itself, if the Serb political elite had not discovered the opportunities that they were able to use in the document. The Memorandum became an excuse of the reviving Serb nationalism and the efforts for the creation of Greater Serbia, a “historical” ground of these efforts – but basically not the cause of and not the direct reason for them.

The debate that emerged by the late 1980s within the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia can be considered as a debate on centralisation vs. decentralisation. The processes first appeared in the constitutional secession of the member states and then the “rebellion” of Kosovo.

2. Dominant external factors and internal characteristics of the territorial transformation in the Balkans

State-founding processes in the Balkans are complicated historically, but they have never been isolated from the European processes. The basic processes can be grabbed as the contradiction of the change of empire and the birth of smaller “nation states”. Over the last nearly four hundred year (since 1648), the state territories and state borders were often and radically rearranged not just within the Balkan-peninsula, but as well in Europe too (Figure 1.).

2.1. Dominant external structural changes

From 1985 on new types of political reform processes unfurled in the Soviet Union. The objective was the modernisation of the socialist system and the increase of its competitiveness; however, “glasnost” and “perestroika” first led to the awareness of the crisis of the country, then to the deepening of the crisis and finally to the collapse of the Soviet imperial structure.

The relationships between the two world systems first became more peaceful, and then the cold war opposition actually ceased to exist. Within the new circumstances, new opportunities appeared for the smaller countries of the “in-between space” as well (PÁNDI, L. ed. 1991). For the smaller states, a new possibility for the assertion of their national interests showed up again.

It was not only the Soviet Union that disappeared from the political map of the region; so did Czechoslovakia and the German Democratic Republic. The annexation of the GDR basically altered the situation of the Federal Republic of Germany. The newly created Czech Republic and Slovakia parted from each other in an absolutely peaceful way. The separation processes of the post-Soviet states were occasionally burdened by serious conflicts. The successor states inherited the inner structures of the former states, and both common features and differences could be seen in their transition processes.

The previous characteristics of the socialist conditions, the way of the systemic change, the transitions of the nation states, the situation of the former political, economic, social elite etc. shows some similarities on the whole across the countries of the region, but we can also see individual features in the political systems of a new countries – or even in countries with unchanged territory (KARDOS, J. – SIMÁNDI, I. eds. 2002).

The constitutional definition of the political systemic changes took place in most of the countries at the beginning of the systemic change, and it was often followed by amendments of the constitutions after the internal changes and rearrangements (TÓTH K. ed. 1997). The written constitutions of the states in the region meet the expectations of the European constitutionality, but national features also appear in the state systems and the regulations.

Another, mostly common feature of the transition processes is the demand that appeared in each and every country and their territorial reform processes, although not at the same time: the demand for the accession to the Euro-Atlantic allied system, the “EU adaptation” process, i.e. the preparation for the EU membership (GORZELAK, G. – EHRLICH, E. – FALTAN, L. – ILLNER, M. eds. 2001). Accordingly, the following of the European values can be seen in the details of almost all segments in these countries. We have to see, however, that the states of the core area of Europe also bear unique historical features in their own structures.

The problem of decentralisation and regionalism raises specific issues in the macro-region, because in multi-ethnic areas both decentralisation and regionalism seem – for the majority – to be an issue and danger of disintegration. In these countries we will only see after the EU accession if the integrative and autonomist, or the disintegrative processes of regionalism become dominant.

In the case of the different countries, the dominant content and the process of the change can be best defined in a comparison to the past. Functional, financial and territorial decentralisation has gradually gained ground from the second half of the 1990s, although not free from conflicts, in Central-East Europe (ILLNER, M. 1998).

In 1990–1991 both the Soviet Union and the USA seemed to be interested in the peaceful management of the Yugoslav crisis and the maintenance of the unity of the country. Baker, the minister of foreign affairs of the USA clearly supported in his public speech in Beograd on 21 June 1991 the maintenance of the unity of Yugoslavia and the democratisation of the country. (Within just a few days, different interest showed up in the foreign policy of America and Europe.) The Soviet Union made constant declarations supporting the maintenance of the

unity of the country, but in its weakened position it was actually unable to have a real impact on the processes.

2.2. Inner transition processes

The volatile spatial, political and geographical content of the region is already mentioned in the previous chapter. In this place we are only summarising the state-building processes in Albania and the former Yugoslavia, because these are the most organically related.

2.2.1 Albania: from an international quarantine to the NATO

In the cold war years Albania pursued a conscious isolation policy, apart from the more extended relationships made with the favoured allies of the times (the Soviet Union and China). The brutally oppressive Communist political system, pursuing an autarchic economic policy, first became less rigid after 1985 (the death of Enver Hoxha), and finally, as a result of the processes starting in November 1989 (demonstrations, mass emigration, famine rebellion), it failed by April 1991. The collapse of the system was achieved by the broad popular movements, but a factor also contributing to the fall was the impact of the tensions and diverse efforts within the Communist party.

The territory of Albania remained unchanged, but its neighbourhood environment fundamentally changed. During the transition period the issues of the Albans living outside the state borders and the relationship to the whole Alban ethnic area became issues of elementary importance.

At the free multi-party elections held in Albania in March 1991, under international control, the Albanian Workers' Party won with over 60% of the votes, but the internal relationships came undone.

In April 1991, a temporary constitution came into force to replace the socialist constitution made in 1976. The working out and approval of the constitution was not free from difficulties. In 1994 a referendum rejected the constitutional recommendation for a stronger presidential power.

Before the systemic change, Albania was the poorest country in Europe with approximately 340 USD GDP per capita in 1993, taking many factors of uncertainty into consideration.

In January 1997 a serious internal conflict emerged in Albania, which could only be managed, gradually calmed down by approximately 7,000 international troops. The serious conflict of civil war was avoided (nevertheless some 2 thousand people died in the fights), the international troops could leave the territory of the country in August.

A new constitution was approved in 1998 (although the bourgeois forces boycotted the participation in the referendum on the constitution), which, in the spirit of the European civil constitutions, defined the institutional system of the parliamentary republic.

The country stated its Euro-Atlantic integration efforts; it wishes to become member of both the NATO and the EU. The NATO membership, due to the unequivocal American support, became a reality in 2009.

Albania is a relatively homogeneous country of the region ethnically; approximately 95% of the population is Alban by ethnicity. The individual and partially the collective rights of the small population minorities (Greek, Serb, Vlach, Roma, Bulgarian) are secured by a separate paragraph of the constitution.

The most important element in the transition, fundamental for the Albanian transformation and nation development and concerning all neighbour countries, was the foreign policy relation to the Albanians living outside the state borders (especially in the Serbian province Kosovo).

The Albanian political elite did not openly demonstrate the demand of creating a nation state identical with the Albanian ethnic territories, but there were political forces both at home and in emigration who stated such a will.

The approval of the deed of foundation of the NATO and the membership in the organisation meant that the Albanian political elite clearly abandoned the idea of “Greater Albania”, but it tries its best to establish strong ties to the newly independent Kosovo and other regions where Albanians live.

2.2.2 Yugoslavia: a bloody collapse and separate development paths of the successor states

The Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia was a state with federal system after the approval of the constitution of 1974, even showing marks of confederation in some elements. Yugoslavia was divided into six federal republics, Serbia within that into two more provinces (Kosovo and Voivodina). The system of balance created by Tito started to rapidly vanish after his death (in 1980). An essential element of this system was the acknowledgement of the Muslims as an independent nation, which was of vital importance especially for Bosnia and Herzegovina.

In the late 1980s the basic issues of the inner political development of Yugoslavia were the handling of the economic crisis, the development of centralisation or decentralisation, in the state system the issue of federation or confederation, the fragmentation of the national-ethnic territories and the debate on the transformation of the internal spatial division of the country (member states, boundaries of the provinces, possible establishment of the system of territorial autonomies).

In 1987, Slobodan Milošević became the leader of the Serb communists, who, besides keeping the communist ideology on the surface, basically became a representative of the Great Serb nationalism. The national communists gradually gained strong positions in the other federal republics too, and after the multi-party democratic elections held in 1990 the openly and clearly nationalist forces also strengthened.

The discussions on the systemic change and on the state system and constitution were done simultaneously on the level of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia (LCY) and the federal state level, within the communist parties and the political elites of the member states and among the inhabitants of the different, partly separate ethnic areas (especially by the Albans and the Serbs). The issue of stability or transformation created basically new conflicts of interests not only at the level of the political elites but practically also at the level of the individuals. The political message of the discussions actually was that each community considered themselves as “losers” regarding their positions in the state system created by Tito.

The Serb political leadership tried to limit the autonomy of the provinces within Serbia, while on 12 February 1988 several members of the Serb Academy of Sciences urged, in fact, demanded the setting up of autonomous oblasts for the Serbs in the territory of Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH hereinafter, according the established international abbreviation) and Croatia. They thought that only the system of such autonomies was suitable for the defence of the interests of the Serbs in the other member republics. (The leaders of both republics rejected the demand.) Perhaps also as a response to this, the Serb leadership considerably limited the autonomy of the two provinces in Serbia on 28 March 1989.

The primary objective of the Serb political elite within the frameworks of the starting and long-lasting crisis was the increase of centralisation both at federal level and within Serbia. In January 1989, mass demonstrations started in the capital city of Montenegro, with the participation of hundreds of thousands, and finally the political allies of the Serb president, Milošević grabbed power. In the State Presidency of Yugoslavia the Serb political leadership actually had four votes now after this change.

In his speech held at Kosovo Polje on 28 June 1989, in front of 2 million Serbs, Milošević, the Serb president already talked about potential armed conflicts within the country. It had already been present, but it became clear now for everybody that the specific interpretations of historical processes, the issue of real or alleged national and ethnic grievances became a dominant and organic element in the political struggles at different (local, regional, member state and federal) levels.

In January 1990, at the extraordinary congress of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia, the political tension within the party state strengthened. The Slovenes proposed the deepening of democracy; the Croats were in favour of the fundamental transformation of the state, they demanded the development towards confederation. The congress actually started the preparation of the shift to the multi-party system.

The congress failed to complete its activity with success, it was postponed after the Slovenes and the Croats left the building. The re-started congress actually meant the elimination of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia. The state party thus ceased to exist sooner than the federal state itself did. The disintegration of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia killed the party myth in Yugoslavia, and one element of Tito's heritage disappeared from the political arena.

On 8 August 1990, the federal parliament introduced multi-party system by an amendment of the constitution, and from that time on the internal political rearrangements and the changes of the state system were in the crossfire of different political forces and efforts. Parties were organised partly on political and value system grounds, but more typically on ethnic bases.

In January 1991, the basic question at federal level was still whether the strengthening of the federation was the common objective, or only a move towards confederation was an issue where agreement could be achieved (MESIC, S 2003). The majority of the federal republics would have accepted the confederation solution, but Croatia and Slovenia became interested in the gaining of independence within a short while. The Serbs, with the most heterogeneous ethnic area reaching into the territories of several member republics, and partly also the Bosnians were more dedicated to keeping the country together. In the debate on confederation, the issue of regionality gained an extreme importance.

The decision of the Parliament of Europe made in March 1991 already said that "... the member republics and autonomous provinces making Yugoslavia should be given the right to freely decide on their future, in a peaceful and democratic manner, within recognised international and internal boundaries". This also meant that the possibility for internal transformation was open, but with an effort to exclude the possibility of changing the external boundaries.

The disintegration of Yugoslavia must be analysed in several steps:

- the independence of Slovenia and Croatia,
- the secession of Macedonia, and Bosnia and Herzegovina,
- forming Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, after Union of Serbia and Montenegro,
- the secession of Montenegro from the Union of Serbia and Montenegro,
- the declaration of independence of Kosovo and its consequences.

The first two phases were directly about the elimination of Tito's Yugoslavia. Croatia and Slovenia declared their sovereignty on 25 June 1991. Macedonia organised a referendum on the issue of sovereignty on 8 September 1991, and a week after this successful referendum they declared their independence. The Parliament of Bosnia and Herzegovina decided on the declaration of the sovereignty of the country on 15 October 1991. On 4 April 1992 BiH reinforced the declaration of their sovereignty, which was gradually recognised by the international community.

Stipe Mesić himself considered the end of his state president function on 3 December 1991 as "the end of the country" ('Yugoslavia is no more'), but the task of completing the of-

ficial, legal disintegration of the country was left to Branko Kostić. On 27-28 April 1992, Tito's Yugoslavia ceased to exist formerly as well. All that remained was the liquidation of the federal institutions of the former state.

The last three phases are actually about the further disintegration of the successor state structure, but partly under the name Yugoslavia, due to the succession of the state. The Serbs made efforts to maintain the continuity of the name "Yugoslavia" with some content, basically in order to manage the issues of the succession of the state. Between 27-28 February 1992 and February 2003 the "remaining territory" or "Little Yugoslavia" functioned under the name Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. In February 2003 a new constitution was approved, which increased the authority of Montenegro and allowed a referendum on sovereignty. On 23 May 2006, 55% of the votes on the referendum were for sovereignty. On 3 June, the sovereignty of Montenegro was proclaimed.

In February 2008 Kosovo made a unilateral declaration of its sovereignty, which started new processes not only in Serbia, not only in the West Balkans and in the Balkans Peninsula, but, as we can see from the diplomatic recognition of the new state structure, also in Europe and globally. The sovereignty of Kosovo divided the international community.

As a result of the accelerated internal rearrangements, the federal member republics proclaimed their sovereignty, one after the other, which had partially diverse consequences:

- Croatia declared its sovereignty on 25 June 1991. On 14 September a bloody civil war started in the Serb-inhabited parts of the country. The "Serb National Council" declared the territories inhabited by Serbs as an autonomous region.
- Slovenia declared its sovereignty on 25 June 1991, and defended it in the "ten-day war".
- The Parliament of Bosnia and Herzegovina declared the sovereignty of the country on 15 October 1991, which was followed by the birth of complicated internal relations leading to the violent civil war.
- On 8 September 1991 Macedonia reinforced with a referendum its declaration of sovereignty. Macedonia proclaimed its sovereignty on 20 November 1991. The tensions between the Macedon and the Alban minority sharpened as an effect of the processes in Kosovo.

On 25 September 1991 the United Nations Security Council ordered an obligatory arms embargo concerning the region. The international community actually wished to fix the status quo until the peaceful solutions were found.

In military power Serbs were in better position in October 1991. We can say that practically the major part of the Serb ethnic areas was under the control of the Yugoslav People's Army, and in Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina Serb territorial autonomies, the own little "republics" of Serbia were established. It could actually be interpreted as the birth of Greater Serbia within Yugoslavia that was still an existing country for many.

Lord Carrington's plan, created with the cooperation of the European Communities (which would actually have maintained the Yugoslav community but would also have allowed the establishment of territorial autonomies), was approved by the presidents of five of the six republics (although the Croatians were reluctant), but the Serb president, Milošević rejected the plan in the last minute.

The European Community scheduled the international recognition of the sovereignty of Croatia and Slovenia for 15 January 1992, but Germany unilaterally declared the recognition of the two states on 23 December 1991, already. This event clearly indicated that there was no consensus in the foreign political approach of European Community on the post-Yugoslav processes.

The disintegration of the federation was primarily caused by the lack of the solution of the ethnic issues, in a different approach we can say that "regionalism gained a victory over federalism".

In February 1992 the United Nations Security Council made its decision No. 743, which ordered the mission of peace-keeping forces. UNPROFOR sent some 14 thousand soldiers to Croatia, and its mission was extended to the territory of Bosnia and Herzegovina in June. From this time on the international community was present with military forces in the region.

In the Western political geography the disintegration process of Yugoslavia was called the “new balkanisation”. The Yugoslav war in 1991-1995 had approximately 240-280 thousand victims – and these figures are still far from being final. (Approximately four-fifths of the victims were killed in BiH where the war was the most violent.) Financial damages on the whole are estimated to be around 60-100 billion USD, calculated with 1990 prices. The estimations of the number of refugees (both abroad and within the country) are extremely diverse.

The inner systemic changes were quite different in the respective ex member states. It was the most rapid in Slovenia, in Croatia it had difficulties and was prolonged by a violent civil war, in Bosnia and Herzegovina it was the most brutal and produced the most complicated result, if we look at the processes from political and administrative aspects. Perhaps it was Serbia where the systemic change was the most problematic. In May 1999 the USA and the NATO forced Serbia to evacuate its troops from Kosovo, and then the post-communist regime of Milošević failed. Actually the real systemic change started in Serbia in 2000.

2.2.2.1 Slovenia

Slovenia was the ethnically most homogeneous formation within Yugoslavia, 91% of the inhabitants declared themselves as Slovene. The biggest ethnic minority are Croats (3% of the population), followed by Serbs (2%). The proportion of Muslims is around 1%. The indigenous Italian and Hungarian minorities, although they are small in number and proportion, enjoy a constitutional protection.

On 23 December 1990 a referendum was held in the Republic, and 88.5% of those eligible to vote voted for the proclamation of the sovereignty. The political elite of the republic followed its negotiations with the central power on this ground. On 25 June 1991 Slovenia declared its independence, and taking the institutional system of the former republic as an example it started the establishment of its sovereign state existence. Slovenia controlled international border crossing stations on its own. The Yugoslav People’s Army started to recapture the border crossing stations on 27 June, which was the start of the ten-day war, ending on 7 July.

In the short war, which did not take many victims, the Slovenes managed to defend their sovereignty. The European Communities achieved the ceasefire on 7 July, in which they argued for a political solution. A three-month moratorium was passed, and the different international negotiation processes started. The Serb leadership was not particularly interested in blocking the secession of Slovenia. After the expiry of the moratorium Slovenia enacted its decision on the sovereignty. Until 26 October the troops of the Yugoslav People’s Army left the territory of the new country without problems (via Koper).

The new constitution of Slovenia was approved on 23 December 1991, in which the standards of parliamentary democracy were laid down. The indigenous Italian and Hungarian minorities were granted parliamentary representation. In 1993 the constitution was considerably amended.

The consolidation of Slovenia was fast both economically and in the political sense. The United Nations accepted Slovenia as a member practically without debates, and Slovenia was the first country from the South Slav region to integrate into the Euro-Atlantic allied system: first it became a member in the NATO, and then it gained the membership in the European Union in May 2004.

As president of the European Union, it made considerable efforts in 2009 to handle the problems in the West Balkans, but it was unable to achieve massive success. A reason for this is that Slovenia has several bilateral issues to be settled with the respective countries.

2.1.2.3 Croatia

The historically formed federal member state territory of Croatia is a very specific one in many respects; also, it was a multi-ethnic country at the time of its secession from the federation. The conflicts between the Serbs living in Croatia (they made approximately 12.1% of the population, their number was just over 581 thousand in 1991) and the majority became more serious after 1988. From 1988 on, Serbian nationalism had a strong influence on the Serbs living in Croatia. After the victory of the Croatian Democratic Community led by Franjo Tuđman (HDZ) in 1990, the opposition between the two communities reached a new level. The biggest Serb party that had positions in the Parliament interrupted all relations with the Croatian legislation. Already in July the Serb National Council was established, which had the opinion that if Croatia was allowed to leave Yugoslavia, then the Serbs living in Croatia had the right to autonomy just like the Croats did and thus they were allowed to leave Croatia.

In August 1990 the Serb minority in Croatia organised a referendum on the issue of sovereignty and autonomy of the Serbs within Croatia, and 99.7% of them said yes to this question. It can be said that the Serbs living in Croatia, a country formally still existing within the frameworks of Yugoslavia, would have been satisfied with territorial autonomy. The Croatian leadership considered both the referendum and its outcome as illegal. From the August of 1990 the Serbs started to establish their own forces in the area of Knin.

On 21 December 1990 the Serbs formally created the Serbian Autonomous Oblast of Krajina. On 16 March 1991 a referendum was held on the question whether the province should join the Republic of Serbia and remain part of the transforming Yugoslavia. From the total population, 99.8% voted yes.

The national assembly of the province, on the basis of the referendum, declared on 1 April 1991 its wish to secede from Croatia. On 19 December 1991 the Serbian Province of Krajina was proclaimed as an independent state. (This political formation has stated its accession to Serbia, the state of the Serbs, several times.)

Croatia then officially and clearly rejected the provision of any kind of territorial autonomy for the Serbs living in territorial majority in some areas within the internationally acknowledged borders of Croatia.

On 19 May 1991 a referendum was held in Croatia on the issue of sovereignty, on which 94.2% of the voters decided on the proclamation of the independence (the majority of the Serbs refrained from voting). Croatia proclaimed its sovereignty on 25 June 1991, but also suspended the implementation of sovereignty in the framework of the Brioni Agreement under the political sponsorship of the European Community. In Croatia – unlike in Slovenia – there were armed conflicts even in the time of the ceasefire.

In January 1992, the American ex-minister of foreign affairs, Vance achieved an agreement and ceasefire in Croatia. As a result of this, the territories owned by the Serbs were put under the supervision of the UNO forces (UNPROFOR). This situation meant that approximately one-third of the territory of Croatia was under international control.

On the whole, the basic question the transformation in Croatia was whether Croatia would start on its independent development path as a centralised nation state or as the system of territorial autonomies. This makes it worth summarising the autonomy movements and the spatial formations of the Serbs.

The constitution of Croatia passed in December 1990 did not allow the Serbs to have territorial autonomies, they were entitled to the same minority rights as the other ethnic groups.

The Serbs believed that in the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (which formally still existed and Croatia was a member of it, both as regarded international and internal law) they faced negative discrimination.

On 12 August 1991, the Serbs living in West Slavonia created their autonomous province covering the area of Okučani and Daruvar. The borders frequently changed during the continuous local conflicts, the Croatian forces occupied Daruvar too in December. The Serb authority shrank to a small area and at the time of the announcement of the ceasefire it only covered the territory of four villages. It integrated into the Serbian Province of Krajina, making one part of that. The majority of the indigenous Serbs would have been willing to make some agreement with the Croats, the secret “Daruvar Agreement” was made on this (18 February 1993), but the Serb nationalists arrested those Serbs who signed the agreement. In 1995, the Croats eliminated the autonomy of the area in a few days, in the framework of the military operation called “Storm”. The majority of the Serb population fled.

The Serb National Council of Croatia decided on the establishment of the autonomous Province of East Slavonia, Baranja and West Sylvania (25 June 1991), at the same time as the proclamation of the sovereignty of Croatia. The population of this region was more heterogeneous than in other parts of Krajina. The majority of the population was Croatian by ethnicity, Serbs made the second largest minority. The majority of the Hungarians in Croatia also had to live in this political formation for years. The centre of the autonomy was Vukovar, a city that suffered a lot; the larger part of the city was destroyed. (During the “Storm” military operation, the Croatian forces were unable to liberate this area. It was put under the temporary governance of the UNO, and its peaceful reintegration took place in 1998.)

In the new situation that emerged in 1993, the Croatian political leadership was willing to provide autonomy to the areas that had a Serb majority before the war, especially for the regions of Knin and Glina. The Serbs now were no longer satisfied with autonomy. The territory of the spatial formation that was actually functioning but was not recognised by anybody covered approximately 17 thousand km² in 1993 (the territory continuously changed along the borders), the number of its population was estimated to be around 440 thousand. It was almost one-third of the territory of Croatia and more than 10% of its population, and the majority of the Serbs in Croatia lived in this region. The region built out its own, almost complete state administration, it had an army, operated institutions and introduced its own currency.

In 1994, Croatia eliminated the larger part of this Serb state formation in a few days in the military operation “Storm”, the only areas that were still controlled by the Serbs until January 1998 were West Slavonia and the Baranja Triangle. From the recaptured areas, the major part of the Serb population fled to Serbia, a smaller part of them to BiH.

The inner political development of Croatia is more complex than in Slovenia. The Croatian systemic change and transition took place within difficult internal and external conditions. The long-term political instability (and then the civil war) almost required, the personality of President Tudjman and his experiences gained in the communist movement reinforced centralism. Until the death of Tudjman, the founder of the state (1999), centralist structures – in fact, often totalitarian structures – were dominant elements in the operation of the Croatian state.

Croatia became NATO member in 2009, and the EU accession negotiations are coming to their end. Croatia may become a member of the European Union in 2011, although the crisis unfolding after 2008 may impact the enlargement process as well.

2.2.3 Bosnia and Herzegovina

Bosnia and Herzegovina (hereinafter: BiH, using the internationally accepted abbreviation) was the most multi-ethnic member republic in Yugoslavia, where the cooperation of the three

dominant nations (Bosnians, Serbs and Croats) was not always free from conflicts in the Tito era, either.

According to the data of the census in 1991, approximately 48% of the population was Bosniak, 34% of them Serb and 17% were Croat, although the correctness of the figures was continuously debated. BiH was a real multi-ethnic, multi-religious, multi-cultural federal member republic and partly it remained such a country even after the bloody transformations.

The attitude to the transformation of Yugoslavia or the possibility of disintegration divided both the elite and the population of BiH. The Croats had their own mother country after Croatia gained its sovereignty, and the situation was the same for the Serbs. For the Bosniaks, however, a vested interest was the preservation of the unity of BiH and the maintenance of their own positions and of their national and state existence in some form.

The composition of the political elite of BiH slightly differed at the highest level from that of the other ex member republics. Alija Izetbegovic was the only newly elected president in the post-Yugoslav region who had never been a member in the League of Communists of Yugoslavia.

On 15 October 1991 the Parliament of Bosnia and Herzegovina proclaimed the sovereignty of the country. The three political elites and the three ethnic communities had different attitudes towards the declaration of sovereignty. The majority of the Serbs disagreed with the decision, while the Croats were actually sitting on the fence.

The different communities created spatial political formations in a smaller or larger part of their ethnic areas after the proclamation of the sovereignty of BiH, formations that were independent in many respects.

On 18 November 1991, the Croatian political elite in Bosnia and Herzegovina founded the Croatian Community of Herzeg-Bosnia on the basis of the right to national autonomy in their own interpretation (which became the Croatian Republic of Herzeg-Bosnia on 28 August 1993), which defined itself as a conscious political, cultural, economic and territorial entity. The territory under actual control and the demands did not perfectly match, the demand was considerably bigger. The official capital city of the political spatial formation was Mostar (the western part of the city inhabited by Croats was the strong local basis), but because of the war raging there, the major part of the politic institutions and the leadership of the community worked in Grude.

The creation of this formation was a kind of minimum objective for the Croatian political elite, as the further and ultimate objective was the political union with Croatia. The political spatial formation used Croatia kuna as currency, the official language was exclusively Croatian and the territory enjoyed the support of Croatia in all respects.

Mate Boban, the president of the Community, had considerable regional and international political role. The Croatian Defence Council organised the military force of the political spatial formation, and had an important role in expelling the Bosnian population living in the territory, for which a few leaders had to appear, much later, before The Hague Court investigating Yugoslav war crimes.

The Constitutional Court of BiH, after a lengthy session, on 14 September 1992 declared the Croatian political spatial formation anti-constitutional and illegal. The political spatial formation was not officially recognised by one state in the world, but the international actors nevertheless negotiated with its leaders. During the peace talks in Geneva in 1993, the Croats proposed the division of BiH into three ethnic republics, the granting of a special status to Sarajevo and the international recognition of these structures; however, it failed due to the resistance of the Bosniaks.

The Serbs in Bosnia thought they too had the right to autonomy, and so they proclaimed the Serbian Republic of Bosnia on 10 January 1992, from whose name the specification "of Bosnia" was later omitted. The Serbs of Bosnia created their own institutions in the territory of the

country under their control. The central state institutions were located in Pale, later in Banja Luka.

From 29 February to 1 March 1992 a referendum was held in Bosnia on the reinforcement of the sovereignty. The Serbs boycotted the referendum; still it was supported by the majority (by 64%). Sovereignty was declared without immediate secession. On 6 April the European Union, later the USA recognised the sovereignty of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and simultaneously the civil war broke out. The inner civil war from the spring of 1992 to the autumn of 1995 was more violent than anywhere else in the former Yugoslav territories.

BiH became member of the UNO in May 1992, together with Croatia and Slovenia. From that time on these states were clearly sovereign entities and subjects of the international law also in their relations to one another.

By the autumn of 1992 the Serbs occupied approximately 70% of the territory of BiH, and they seemed to be able to keep the occupied lands. The authority of the government in Sarajevo was practically limited to just 10% of the territory of the country; the remaining 20% was ruled by the Croats in late 1992. BiH was completely divided in military and political sense; the central government only existed in the eyes of the international community, actually.

The conflicts of interests between the Croats and the Muslims and the diverse scenarios of the future of the country led to another war (especially in the city of Mostar and in its vicinity), which lasted until the spring of 1994, with varied intensity. The relations between the two communities were not better than their relations to the Serbs.

A special, unique historical and political feature is the activity of Fikret Abdic, entrepreneur and politician, who is Bosnian by ethnicity and Muslim by religion. This politician, who has been sentenced to prison several times for economic offences, was very popular with the Bosniaks in 1990 and became a strong internal rival of Alija Izetbegovic.

Abdic built out a real regional power in Western Bosnia, he created the “Autonomous Province of Western Bosnia”, which he considered as a state (Republic of Western Bosnia). On 14 September 1993 he made an agreement with the local Croats and Croatia, and an agreement with the Serbs on 22 October. All three parties were interested in weakening the central power.

In August 1995 the Bosnian central army marched to Bihać, and eliminated the “sovereign state”. Abdic fled to Croatia where Franjo Tudjman gave him refugee status and Croatian citizenship.

From 1992 to 1994 the international community tried to create different constitutional and territorial structures: in 1992 the “Lisbon Proposal” – a single state with ethnic cantons; in 1993 the Vance-Owen plan – a single state with 9 “ethnic majority areas”; in 1993 – three ethnic states with a formal unity; in 1994 – Bosniak-Croat Federation (on 51% of the state territory), Bosnian Serb Republic (on 49% of the state territory) – different entities within the frameworks of the formally single country.

In March 1994 the USA managed to persuade the Bosnian central government and the Croatian government in Zagreb that the Bosniaks of and Croats living in Bosnia should abandon open hostility to each other, and the Bosniak-Croat Federation was established.

In August and September 1995 the Croat and Muslim forces recaptured one-quarter of the country from the Serbs, which made the Serbs more permissive for political solutions.

In Dayton the peace treaty concluding the war in Bosnia was worked out, and it was signed in Paris on 14 December 1995. The agreements brought an end to war events, but resulted in a very complicated constitutional structure. The almost omnipotent representative of the international community was a keen advocate of the unity of the country during the whole transition period.

Below the “central level”, the Bosniak-Croat Federation and the Bosnian Serb Republic made the primary regional structure, then the “Brčko district” was created in accordance with

the special strategic interests; the latter is one of the most peculiar administrative-political formations on the whole of Europe.

The Bosniak-Croat Federation is divided into (10) cantons on ethnic ground; the cantons are further divided into municipalities. Of the ten cantons, five have Bosnian and three have Croat majority, two are so-called “mixed cantons”. The Bosnian Serb Republic is not divided into cantons: its local governmental system consists of (7) regions and several municipalities.

The Croatian-inhabited areas of the Bosniak-Croat Federation demand a strong decentralisation of the Federation, but actually they would like to transform into a sovereign political, legal and administrative entity. For them, only the total secession from the Bosnians would be “decentralisation”, “regionalisation” and “democratisation”.

In the territory of the Federation, the smallest conflict may have far-reaching consequences. In the spring of 2001, the international high commissioner fired dismissed the Croatian leader of a regional bank, which led to street demonstrations and then constitutional crisis.

Consolidation after the war was set back to a large extent by the brutal character of the war. All three respective parties, but to the largest extent the Serbs applied the method of ethnic cleansing. The belligerents expelled, in the worse case killed the other ethnic population from the occupied territories.

The leaders of the Bosnian Serb Republic mentioned the possibility of secession also in 2008-2009. Milorad Dodik prime minister frequently talked about holding a referendum on secession. The international community always had a strong reaction to this and they always rejected the possibility of the referendum.

Cathrine Ashton, the new chief representative of foreign and security policy of the Union, made it clear in February 2010 both in Banja Luka and Sarajevo that the EU will do its best to keep BiH as a single state and prevent its disintegration, because that would bear the threat of new war conflicts. The chief representative offered the single BiH a perspective to join the Union, depending on the settling of the internal relations and the elimination of the protectorate.

Nevertheless we have to be aware that BiH struggles with permanent internal ethnic, political and economic crisis. The interest of the three communities are basically different, the settlement of the constitutional structures and the strengthening of the central power is the interests of the Bosniaks in the first place.

2.2.2.4 Macedonia

In Macedonia, the referendum on sovereignty was held on 8 September 1991. The Serbs and the Albans boycotted the referendum (for different considerations), but 95.1% of those who actually did vote were for independence. Macedonia proclaimed its sovereignty on 20 November 1991. The EU recognised the sovereignty of the country on 15 January 1992, and Bulgaria was also of this opinion. Greece, on the other hand, introduced sanctions against the new state.

The birth of Macedonia raised a lot of issues for the neighbours (Albania, Greece, Serbia). In February 1999, a mass influx of Albans from Kosovo started, the number of immigrants reached almost 300 thousand by the end of the year (in 2000 the government calculated with 660 thousand refugees, already). Internal ethnic, economic, political, social etc. tensions, hard to handle, emerged in the country. In November 2001, with the amendment of the constitution, the autonomy rights of the Albans were recognised. Macedonia is a multi-ethnic country, the proportion of Macedons is approximately 66% in the country's population, and Albans make about 23%. Smaller ethnic minority groups are the Turks, Romas and Serbs.

Local public administration consists of 123 municipalities, local councils (elected for four years), with dominant role in the administration of local affairs. Where the proportion of ethnic

minorities reaches 20%, the language of the respective minority is also an official language besides Macedon.

Skopje, a city of about half a million population, dominates the settlement structure of the country. Compared to Skopje, all other towns and cities are of much lesser importance. The basis of decentralisation and regionalisation is more of ethnic character. The centre of the western regions inhabited by Albans is Tetovo.

The relationship between Macedonia and Greece has been continuously tense since the sovereignty. Formally it is only a debate about the name of the country, but the real issue is historical legitimacy and identity.

Macedonia has constantly stated its will of Euro-Atlantic accession since its birth. The accession talks with the EU are underway; the country is an official candidate country. Its NATO membership was prevented by Greece. The question is whether Greece, weakened a lot in 2010 economically, becomes more permissive concerning its small northern neighbour.

2.2.2.5 Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, after Union of Serbia and Montenegro

The majority of the population of Montenegro decided on staying within the frameworks of Yugoslavia on the referendum on 1 May 1992, and with Serbia they formed the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia on 27 April. Formally Montenegro was a member with equal rights, but in reality it had a rather subordinate role in the new state union.

The unity of the new state could be maintained, given the problematic conditions of the successor states and war conflicts, as long as the Montenegrin political elite saw that this was the best arena for the assertion of their interests.

The constitution of 2003 rearranged the relationship between the two countries, created the State Union of Serbia and Montenegro and allowed Montenegro to decide on its sovereignty by referendum, after a three-year moratorium. In May 2006, the majority of the population of Montenegro decided on secession, and Montenegro left the state union in a peaceful way.

2.2.2.6 The sovereign Montenegro

The referendum on 21 May 2006 was held with the participation of 86.3% of those eligible to vote; 55.5% of them voted for the proclamation of the independence. On 3 July, the Parliament approved the proclamation of independence, so the State Union of Serbia and Montenegro ceased to exist in a peaceful manner. On 5 June, Serbia declared the approval of the sovereignty of Montenegro.

According to the data of the census of 2003, in the country of approximately 620 thousand population the proportion of those who declared themselves as Montenegrin was approximately 43%, Serbs made 32%, and the proportion of Bosniaks and Albans also exceeds 5 % (7.8% and 5.03%, respectively).

Montenegro has established a special relationship to the EU; with the consent of the Union, Montenegro started to use euro within the country as soon as the currency was introduced, and has been a special part of the eurozone since then. The basic objective of the country is accession to the NATO and the EU.

2.2.2.7 The sovereign Serbia

Serbia started its fundamental internal transformation after the war defeat in 1999, the removal of Milošević from power and his transfer to The Hague. This transformation is still going on, within serious inner political and economic conditions.

According to the decision No. 1244 of the UNO Security Council, Kosovo is part of Serbia, but the province is under the administration of the United Nations Organisation (UNMIK), and its internal public administration has almost completely been built out. The real issue after 1999 was how fast and in what form the province, formally part of Serbia, is getting independent and how the international community relates to this process, and also what impacts this process will have on the whole world, the Balkans and Serbia itself.

The autonomy of Voivodina was formally restored in 2010, but the new processes are nevertheless very slowly and problematically unfurling, for economic reasons. The competency of the province formally covers economic and financial developments, agriculture, health care, public education and culture.

Voivodina is entitled to create its own international relations. Within the frameworks of the Danube-Körös-Maros-Tisza Euroregion, Voivodina has been very active; it is actually the engine of the EU accession of Serbia.

In December 2009 the EU abolished the visa regime against Serbia. On 22 December 2009 Serbia submitted its request for accession to the EU. The president of Serbia did not participate in the West Balkans summit organised on 20 March 2010, because Kosovo was invited as a sovereign state.

2.1.2.8 Kosovo

The territory of Kosovo province is 10,908 km², its population has been uncertain since 1981 (ranging from 1.9 to 2.1 million), because the Albanians did not participate in either the Yugoslav or Serb censuses. Slightly over 90% of the population are Albanians, their share has been continuously increasing, according to estimations.

In accordance with the constitution of 1974, Kosovo and Voivodina were granted provincial status within Serbia. This legal status allowed a relatively broad internal competency, but the Albanian community was not very satisfied with it, for them the member republic status would have been the most acceptable solution already in 1974.

From 11 March to 3 April 1981, there were mass demonstrations in the province for the acquisition of the member republic status. Actually Kosovo has had a permanent inner political crisis since then. The State Presidency even ordered public emergency for a short time, in order to restore tranquillity in the province. The relationship between the Albanian majority and the Serb minority gradually became extremely tense in the province. (The demonstrations had at least nine casualties and hundreds were injured.)

In April 1983, several lead persons of the Serbian Orthodox Church issued a declaration of protest against the expelling and murder of Serbs from Kosovo.

The League of Communists of Yugoslavia, under the leadership of Slobodan Milošević, decided on centralisation, with the slogan of “anti-bureaucratic revolution”. On 28 March 1989, the Serbian constitution was revised and Kosovo was put under the strict control of Beograd.

From 1996, the conflict previously held back gradually became sharp, and simultaneously with the internal collapse of Albania in 1997 a huge amount of weapons were shipped to Kosovo, to the Kosovo Liberation Army (Ushtria Çlirimtare e Kosovës, UÇK). A broad armed fight started in the province between the Serb police and military forces and the UÇK that was taken as a terrorist and then as a liberator.

On 24 March 1999, NATO started (and continued until 10 June), with the authorisation of the United Nations Security Council, the bombing of military and partially civil targets in Serbia, in order to force the withdrawal of Serb troops from Kosovo.

On 10 June the United Nations Security Council approved its decision No. 1244, in which it was stated that “Kosovo can enjoy a substantial autonomy within the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia”. From 12 June Kosovo was under the control and administration of the KFOR.

The circumstances fundamentally changed for the approximately 200 thousand Serbs living in Kosovo, their situation became hopeless in the enclave. Serb refugees left Kosovo in numbers not seen since 1995.

On 17 February 2008, the sovereignty of Kosovo was proclaimed in Pristina. The diplomatic recognition of sovereignty has been a rather complicated process to date:

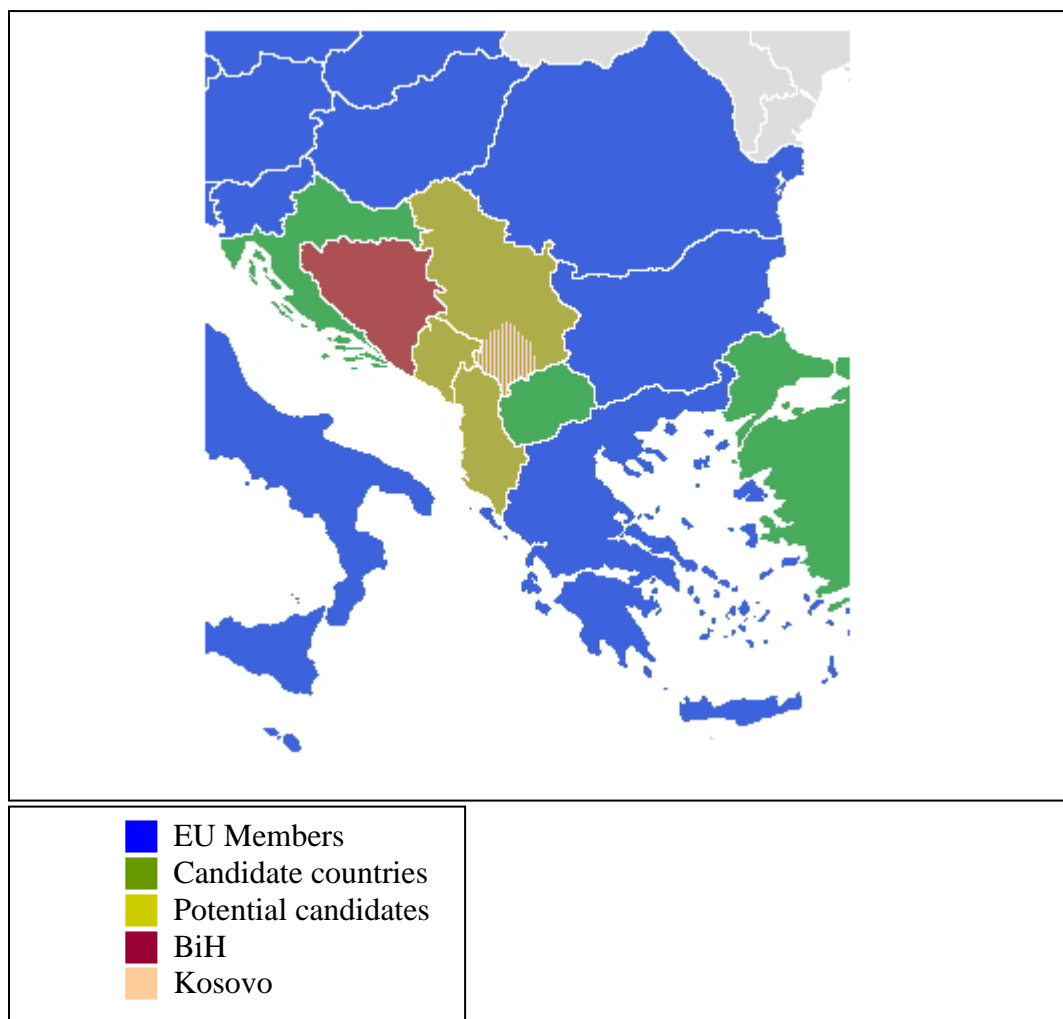
- The UNO as an organisation does not recognise the sovereignty of the country, it still sees Decision No.1244 of the UNO Security Council as valid and standard. Until 1 January 2010, a total of 65 countries recognised the sovereignty of Kosovo (approximately one-fourth of all sovereign states); three members of the United Nations Security Council (England, France and USA) recognise the entity as an independent country, but two members of the council do not (China and Russia). Kosovo is not recognised by large states like India either, who are worried about their own internal stability if the precedent is applied elsewhere. The international organisation, at the same time, has a considerable presence in the province, by maintaining a KFOR mission. The General Assembly of the UNO asked the International Court for a statement as regards the legality of the unilateral proclamation of sovereignty, and so did Serbia.
- On 18 February 2008 the European Union acknowledged, but did not institutionally recognise the unilaterally proclaimed sovereignty of Kosovo. (For the time being, 22 member states recognise the sovereignty of Kosovo and 5 states do not.) The European Union, despite the non-recognition of Kosovo, is a dominant actor in the country by the European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo (EULEX).
- The NATO does not recognise the sovereignty of Kosovo institutionally, but operates the KFOR mission on the basis of the Decision No. 1244 of the United Nations Security Council.

The internal uncertainties, the contradictions of the international environment and interests will probably cause Kosovo to have a very long, uncertain status. Should the internal uncertainty increase, tensions may also grow.

Figure 1
New independent states within Western Balkans



Figure 2
Status of Western Balkans states in EU enlargement process



3. State borders and disputed areas

The new state borders born in the 1991 – 2008 period basically followed the former member republic boundaries, or the province boundaries in the case of Kosovo, but a few open or hidden disputes have remained among the new states. The areas concerned are not extended, but they concern the recognition of the new state borders. These problematic issues are as follows:

- The issue of Kosovo is basically not a question of state borders but an issue of state structure and sovereignty. North Kosovo is formally under the temporary administration of the UNO. It practically can be taken as an independent administrative and political entity, and in fact it enjoys the significant support of Serbia. Different plans for division have appeared and it is unclear as yet what international forces there are behind the concepts concerning the new arrangement of the province.
- Kosovo has a hardly disguised demand for the Albanians-inhabited territory of the Presevo valley in Serbia, perhaps by means of a territory exchange.
- The conflict of Serbia and Croatia in the Danubian areas (Sombor region) is of local character, but as any other dispute on the state borders, it has an impact on the development of relations as a whole. The municipal boundaries never followed the channel line of the Danube River; they crossed the river in several places. The Hungarian–Croat–Serb triple border is on the left bank of the river, too. The issue of Sarengradska Ada is another source of conflict in the border dispute of the two states.
- Between Croatia and Slovenia there are border disputes concerning the Piran Bay and the sea access, and also disputes of local character concerning the land borders (Sveta Gera). The border disputes of the two countries are a delicate issue for both the NATO and the European Union, so they did their best to make the two countries sign an agreement.
- Between Croatia and Montenegro, the issue of the Prevlaka Peninsula was the dominant source of conflict, but the acceptance of the common sea border was also problematic.
- Between Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina there is a problem in the region of Neum (Veliki Skolj, Mali Skolj). It is not indifferent for the Bosniaks how the traffic route bypassing Neum is built. The issue and belonging of Neum – which was a painful issue for the Croats since 1945 – can now be taken for granted.

The disputes over the state borders are dangerous not because of the size of the disputed areas but in themselves, they have prestige significance for all parties. The majority of the communities now existing in the Balkans area already had states of larger size in history, in fact, some had empires. Even if the demand for “greater states” does not appear at the level of everyday politics, it does appear in the thinking of the societies and in the efforts of extremist political groups. It is especially problematic in a region where there are many historical greater states concepts (Greater Albania, Greater Bosnia, Greater Bulgaria, Greater Greece, Greater Croatia, Greater Macedonia, Greater Serbia). The open and even more so the hidden territorial demands can be obstacles to co-existence and cooperation (as they clearly are between Greece and Macedonia), and they bear the danger of new conflicts.

- The concept and demand of Greater Albania is not based on historical grounds but on the size of the ethnic territories. The number of Albanians presently living in the area is estimated to be just over 6 million, but only a half of them live in Albania; if we consider Kosovo as an Alban state, over 5 million inhabitants live within Alban national boundaries. In addition to these two entities, Albanians live in Macedonia, Serbia, Montenegro and even Greece (although they are not recognised by the Greek state).
- Greater Bosnia is a historical concept in which the short-lived Kingdom of Bosnia of the medieval times appears as a historical preliminary – and as a promised future for some.

- Greater Bulgaria has historical foundations (1st and 2nd Bulgarian Empire) and partly is also an idea coming from modern times (1878, Treaty of San Stefano). The territorial vision of the Greater Bulgarian State, living in both approaches, deeply penetrates into the territories of the present West Balkans.
- The Greeks are the carriers of several greater state concepts, from the ancient empire to the smaller-scale Megali idea. Greater Greece is more of a historical nostalgia than an actual political programme.
- Greater Croatia was born as a historical and territorial concept in the first place and only had ethnic content to a limited extent. This territorial concept covers the present Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and the edges of the Croat ethnic territories. The “smallest Greater Croatia” is the Sovereign Croatian State born in 1941.
- The concept of Greater Slovenia was only rarely mentioned, basically as a concept for the unification of the Slovene ethnic territories. No real political movement was built on this concept.

4. Summary

In the period of the socialist systemic changes, the expressions most frequently used both in politics and in the everyday discourse were democratisation, regionalisation, privatisation, constitutional state and decentralisation. Because of the complicated nature and diverse character of economic, social and political transformations, the central powers (and partly also the whole of the society) were inevitably interested in centralisation.

Important issues are in almost all transition countries, both at local and regional level, the duality of state administration and self-governance, and their relation to each other. There are differences, on the other hand, across the countries as regards the division of labour between the two subsystems, but an almost universal feature in these countries is that the clear coexistence of the two tiers can only be seen at regional level or levels. In this case the self-governments usually have broader responsibilities.

A common feature of the development of public administration, present in almost all states of the region, is the “anti-hierarchy feeling” within the self-governance system. It means the lack of hierarchical relations among the self-governments elected at the different tiers, they are responsible for their own tasks in accordance with the legal regulations and are only subordinate to law during their operation. (The system of control over the respect for the law shows considerable disparities across the countries.)

Parallel to the increase of the importance of regional development and the European Union accession processes, new structural and territorial elements appeared, or old ones were transformed. Regional development partly adapted to the general territorial division, but separate spatial elements were also created during this activity.

As a result of the accession to the European Union, the system of territorial statistics was also transformed; the post-socialist countries too introduced the NUTS division. The basis of the NUTS division is not the size of the territory but the number of population.

The different functional and territorial subsystems of the processes have not necessarily become systems overlapping one another in each country. The territorial divisions of state administration, local governmental system, regional development and statistics have differences in several countries. Among the different divisions, competition has appeared, and even manipulation in some states.

The issue of decentralisation and regionalisation has appeared as an economic, social and political issue in Europe since the period of modernisation, and it is connected to the spatial issues of public administration as well. Federalisation, decentralisation and regionalisation were

given different content by historical times and by countries and have become especially interesting issues in multi-ethnic countries, including the states of Central and Eastern Europe.

The disintegration of the larger federal states and the birth of smaller or definitely small states (e.g. Slovenia or Macedonia) basically altered a few territorial processes, but did not question the necessity of regionalisation.

The administrative structure of the area in question, including territorial division and its regional level, shows a heterogeneous picture also in the early 21st century. In the countries acceded to the European Union an adaptation process has occurred also in statistics and regional development, while this adaptation is far from being that universal in the sector of public administration.

The constitutional and administrative regulation of the regional (sub-national) level in the area in question is not only an issue of the size of the respective countries (although it undeniably plays a role as well, as the territorial dimensions of e.g. Macedonia, Slovenia or Poland and the Ukraine are very much different); it is much more connected to the problems of the state concept accepted by the ethnic majority of the individual countries.

In the macro-region we cannot avoid the issue of multi-ethnicity – either historically or looking at the processes taking place after 1990 –; now it is not only a dominant feature of this region but also a major problem of the European Union as a whole. The issue is more and more how the ethnic majorities, the majorities within the national boundaries and the minorities within of the Union (because in the European Union each nation is a minority compared to the whole, the majority) relate to each other.

For Hungary, both the direct neighbourhood (Austria, Slovakia, the Ukraine, Romania, Serbia, Croatia and Slovenia) and the broader “indirect neighbourhood” are to be treated as objective factors. The relations of Hungary to the countries in the surveyed macro-region – partly due to the EU membership – show and will also show in the future considerable differences, but the necessity of co-existence is a fact and the possibilities of cooperation are given both at inter-state and regional levels.

By the new neighbourhood policy of the EU Hungary can even involve external resources for the development of cross-border relations, and the better permeability of the state border may result in a better position of the so often mentioned Hungarian ethnic minorities living in the neighbour countries.

Hungary can create new sub-structures in the continuously redefined macro-regional cooperation programmes of the EU. These continuously changing macro-regional, planning and cooperation sub-structures mean new challenges, and at the same time offer new possibilities for Hungary.

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