

THE END OF HEGEMONY AND DOMINANCE IN SOUTHEASTERN EUROPE

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UDC: 911.3:32(4-12)

Review
Pregledni članak

Primljeno: 2004-07-12

Received:

At the end of the 20th century the SE European region was surviving one of the most difficult periods of changing hegemony and dominance circumstances. The disintegration of the communist world and the collapse of former Yugoslavia, as part of the process, could be considered as the result of the new relations among big powers' hegemonic systems. The NATO spreads to the European east (Hungary, Czech Republic, Poland etc.), which has direct influence on SE Europe. After new countries (Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Macedonia) had been internationally recognised in 1992, and the loyal Slovenian and Croatian partnership with NATO in the Kosovo action in 1999 was proved, it is obvious that regional hegemony of the Serbia core region does not exist any more. Also Russian (former Soviet) attempts to play the role of the dominant leader in this region have been suppressed to a minimum. The author discusses European Union interests in this zone, and the way European countries include themselves in the process of pacifying and developing the region. After Slovenia joined the European Union in 2004, Bulgaria, Romania, and Croatia are expected to satisfy the conditions for entering EU in next 3 to five years. In the same time Serbia and Montenegro enters a new, more democratic phase of its development.

Key words: SE Europe, hegemony, centrality, war actions in SE Europe

Krajem 20. stoljeća prostor jugoistočne Europe preživljavao je jedno od najtežih razdoblja smjene regionalnih odnosa hegemonije i dominacije. Raspad komunističkog svijeta i kolaps bivše Jugoslavije, kao dio tog procesa, može se smatrati rezultatom novih odnosa među sustavima prevlasti velikih sila. NATO se širi prema europskom istoku (Mađarska, Češka, Poljska i dr.), što se razumljivo, odražava na izravne utjecaje u JI Europi. Nakon što su nove države bile međunarodno priznate 1992. (Slovenija, Hrvatska, Bosna i Hercegovina, Bivša Republika Makedonija), a Slovenija i Hrvatska iskazale lojalnost kao partneri NATO-a u akciji na Kosovu, jasno je da regionalna hegemonija srpskog središnjeg prostora više ne postoji. Ujedno, ruska (nekadašnja sovjetska) nastojanja da igraju ulogu vodećeg lidera u ovoj regiji, smanjena su na najmanju mjeru. Autor razmatra interese Europske Unije u ovoj zoni i način na koji se europske zemlje uključuju u proces pacificiranja i razvoja regije. Nakon što je Slovenija pristupila u Europsku uniju 2004., očekuje se da i Rumunjska, Bugarska i Hrvatska zadovolje uvjete ulaska u EU u sljedećih 3-5 godina. Istodobno Srbija i Crna Gora ulaze u novu, demokratskiju fazu razvoja.

Ključne riječi: JI Europa, hegemonija, centralitet, ratne akcije u JI Europi

Introduction

The geo-strategic situation in the SE European region, which at the end of the 20th century survived one of the most difficult periods of geopolitical changes, has not been adequately presented in the scientific literature as yet. Some recent interpretations of the strategic situation in the Mediterranean and Adriatic area appeared in the eighties and nineties (BERTINI, 1985, AMIN, 1992, COUTAU-BEGARIE, LABAULT, 1995, ROGIĆ 1993-1994, SANGUIN, 1997, MAGAŠ, 2000), some works discussed aggression in Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina (CRKVENČIĆ, 1993-1994, FOUCHER, 1993-1994, JORDAN, 1993-1994, KLEMENČIĆ, 1993, 1993-1994), or the complex geopolitical frame of SE Europe/Balkans (PREVELAKIS, 1994), as well as Central Europe (RUPPERT, 1994) lately influenced by widening of NATO (MAGAŠ, 2003). The new geopolitical circumstances in the region, after wars in Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina finished and the Kosovo crisis pacified, enabled the end of traditional hegemony in SE Europe manifested by the central role of Serbia in the frame of former Yugoslavia. The new era dominated by NATO and economic and political role of European Union in this part of Europe, already started showing all possibilities of more democratised multilateral rise as well as economic coexistence and development. The disintegration of the communist world and the collapse of former Yugoslavia, as part of the process, could be considered as the result of the new relations among big powers' hegemonic systems. The NATO spreads to the east (Hungary, Czech Republic, Poland etc.), and of course it has concrete influences on SE Europe. After new countries had been recognised in 1992 (KLEMENČIĆ, 1993, 1993-1994) and the loyal Slovenian and Croatian and Bosnian and Herzegovinian partnership with NATO in the Kosovo action in 1999 was proved, it is obvious that regional hegemony of Serbia does not exist any more. Also the Russian (former Soviet) attempts to play the role of the dominant leader in this region have been suppressed to a minimum.



Fig. 1 South-east European countries in relation to the European Union in 2004
 Sl. 1. Zemlje jugoistočne Europe u odnosu na status prema Europskoj uniji, 2004.

The disintegration of the communist world and the crisis in SE Europe after 1990.

The first signs of crisis at the end of the 20th century when the SE European region survived one of the most difficult periods of changing the polarity and hegemonic circumstances showed in Romania in 1989, when the president Ceaucescu's communist dictatorship ended as a consequence of street riots and conflicts, which fortunately did not take a long time. Also the political changes in Albania from 1990, manifested through instability and insecurity as the results of the collapse of communist government, the fall of new government and plenty of other internal events. The disintegration of former Yugoslavia (1991-1992), the constitution of new countries in the war circumstances (the short war in Slovenia in July 1991, in Croatia: August 1991 - August 1995, in Bosnia and Herzegovina 1992-1995, the Kosovo crisis 1988-1999 with the final war actions in 1999, NATO actions in Kosovo and Serbia 1999, Montenegro crisis 1999-2000 and Albania 1998-1999) show that the last decade of the 20th century was generally one of the most difficult periods of the region. The hegemony circumstances, which stabilised in the region after the fifties (Romania, Hungary and Bulgaria - members of the communist block dominated by USSR, Greece in the NATO block dominated by USA, Albania as the communist country connected mostly with China, Yugoslavia, non-aligned communist country standing as the buffer zone between West and East blocks), changed step by step (PREVELAKIS, 1994). After ten years of crises and wars, NATO became the dominant power in the zone (MAGAŠ, 2003).

The disintegration of the communist world and the collapse of former Yugoslavia, as part of the process (CRKVENČIĆ, 1993-1994, FOUCHER, 1993-1994, KLEMENČIĆ, 1993, 1993-1994), could be considered as the result of the new relations among big powers' hegemonic systems. Especially, the collapse of former Yugoslavia shows how complex and delicate the geopolitical situation in SE Europe has been, and how catastrophic the consequences could have been (DOMAZET, 2002). Which were the main causes of that collapse?

Regional and supraregional causes:

1) The fall of the communism and the Warsaw Pact, as the result of the conflict between "East" and "West" in which the NATO block became more prestigious thanks to new technologies, more effective economy and geopolitical superiority.

2) The disintegration of multiethnic federations (Soviet Union, Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia), which were based on more hegemony of the dominant nations (PEPEONIK, 1991) than it was the case on the West.

3) The interest of the NATO, the strongest dominant power, as well as that of western economic groups in spreading towards East (soon integrating Hungary, Poland and Czech Republic into NATO and constitution of Partnership for Peace group of nations)

4) The interests of Russia to pact with (or to protect) Serbia, in order to insure the approach to the Adriatic Sea zone, as the last attempt to preserve as strongest possible influence in the SE European countries.

Local causes:

1) The hegemonic position and the attempt of the Serbian regime (ROGIĆ 1993-1994) to establish a new communist Yugoslavia or "Greater Serbia", conquering neighbouring lands.

2) The communist regime which neglected or tolerated the strongest nationalism (Serbian) in former Yugoslavia ("Serboslavia") using the force (Yugoslav National Army, YNA) against other federal republics (Croatia, Slovenia, Bosnia and Herzegovina) and the autonomous province of Kosovo as well, kicking against the democratic changes.

3) Activities of smaller nationalist and separatist groups (Slovenia, Croatia, Macedonia, Kosovo),

4) More declarative but not really effective treatment of ethnic diversity problems connected with economic underdevelopment and intolerance during the Kingdom and the Socialist Yugoslavia periods, etc.

Quite expectedly, Greece, Turkey and Italy, as the members of the NATO pact, played a role of secure and stable zones and were not involved in the crisis. It is obvious that also Bulgaria and Macedonia avoided more serious conflicts. Slovenia, as the most western periphery of the crisis zone, escaped more serious events, too. Very effective engagement of the USA forces enabled Macedonia, former part of SFR Yugoslavia, to be recognised by the international community in spite of the problems with Greece, and to keep independence. The most brutal and cruel wars happened in Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina, and later in Kosovo (DOMAZET, 2002). Many facts show that dominant powers of the world, especially USA, had a good opportunity and possibility of stopping the war in time. Why was it effectively done in Kosovo later (1999), and was not in Croatia in 1991 or in Bosnia and Herzegovina in 1992? Obviously it was not possible as long as Serbia was not military and economically exhausted.

NATO spreads to the east (Hungary, Czech Republic, Poland, etc.), and of course it has concrete influence on SE Europe. After fifteen years of cruelties and terrorisation in Kosovo, when Serbia started ethnic cleansing of Albanians in Kosovo in 1999, NATO started one of the greatest actions in Europe after WW II. New members of NATO, especially neighbouring Hungary, as well as the air bases in Italy (Aviano, etc.) were included in the action. Because of the geopolitical position, the airspace of Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Slovenia was also used for the air actions and air transport towards Serbia. Namely, after these three new countries had been recognised in 1992, the loyal Slovenian and Croatian partnership as well as the loyalty of Bosnia and Herzegovina were freely and voluntarily manifested in helping the NATO action (MAGAŠ, 2003). That was the result of the general international decision to stop Serbian violence in Kosovo, but also the expression of the need to punish the regime that started the war ravages and destruction in the three countries.

The other neighbouring countries, especially Macedonia and Albania suffered a lot during NATO actions, because of hundreds and hundreds thousand of refugees who were evacuated to their territories. The SE wing of NATO forces in Greece and Turkey was practically not involved in the action. A good cooperation was set up with Romania and Bulgaria, who also expect much closer relations with NATO in the near future.

After the success of the NATO action in Kosovo in 1999, it is obvious that regional hegemony of the Serbian core region does not exist any more. It seems that Slovenia, being included in Partnership for Peace since 1995, will become very soon the member of NATO. Croatia, after having consolidated its borders and proved loyalty to NATO, entered Partnership for Peace in 2001. Also Bosnia and Herzegovina, which is now within the international protection, is expected to enter the organisation in the near future. Benevolence and inclination of Romania, Bulgaria (in Partnership for Peace from

1994), Albania and Macedonia (in Partnership for Peace from 1995) show that all these countries also tend to be a part of NATO. Finally it seems that at the end of the 20th century the whole SE Europe, as well as all Balkanic countries, except Serbia, show an interest to be included in the NATO membership. The older territorial division between Warsaw and NATO pacts (PREVELAKIS, 1994) with the former Yugoslav buffer zone, have disappeared. There is a chance that, after the processes of democratisation and recognition finish and borders stabilise, the entire region, as a part of NATO enters a new geopolitical future.

Russian (former Soviet) attempts to play the role of the dominant leader in this region have been suppressed to a minimum. Up to 2000, Russia lost its positions in Romania and Bulgaria, the former members of Eastern block. In the same time Russia explicitly expressed connections with Serbia. "Russia was sympathetic toward the Serbs, a traditional ally, and there was considerable Russian opposition to such policies as NATO's bombing of Serb positions, especially in 1999." (COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY PRESS., 2003, *U.S. LIBRARY OF CONGRESS*,) The intention to stop Serbian aggression in Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, or in Kosovo was almost not shown. On the contrary, in many occasions Russia showed direct sympathy and loyalty to the Serbian interests. In spite of being so, the engagement of Russian forces in Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and in Kosovo, finally was synchronised with the international actions (UNO, UNPROFOR, IFOR, NATO). Under such conditions, Russia could not engage deeper in the region. The situation in Russia (Chechen Republic, etc.), and some former Soviet countries suppressed any concrete action in SE Europe.

How did European Union interests appear in this zone, and how did European countries include themselves in the process of pacifying and developing the region? First big changes in local situation occurred in Romania. During the collapse of Ceausescu's regime, which was accompanied by bloody and tragic events, Europe showed a great interest in the peaceful solution of the crisis. Internal "revolution" finished with introducing a more liberal and democratic rule. Changes in Bulgaria and in Hungary, after the fall of Berlin Wall, were more democratic and under control. Europe supported new governments (RUPPERT, 1994).

In former Yugoslavia, changes started with bloody and tragic events. In the eighties, Serbian nationalist leaders (Milošević and others) started preparing for big changes (KLEMENČIĆ, 1993, 1993-1994). First they ensured military core to be more Serbian than federal, and then they started provoking problems in Kosovo. Thousands of Albanians were imprisoned and many of them killed. As it was not possible to stop Serbian nationalistic movement, which was spreading towards Kosovo, Montenegro, Vojvodina, and later in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and when Serbian communist leaders did not accept new democratic chances, the most developed republics, Slovenia and Croatia, organized democratic elections. After Croatia had elected new government, Serbian minority in Croatia and even Serbs in Bosnia and Herzegovina started fights against Croatian people. Europe did not show much interest in the problem of ethnic cleansing and mass murders of Croats in 1990 and in the first part of 1991, until military and paramilitary actions reached catastrophic dimensions in autumn 1991. Croatia and Slovenia were practically forced to proclaim independence in spring 1991. Yugoslav National Army started war actions in Slovenia, which lasted only a few days (July 1991). The Army soon moved to Croatia. European and American governments gave some free time (by September 1991) to the leaders of the region to settle down the crisis

(CRKVENČIĆ, 1993-1994, FOUCHER, 1993-1994, KLEMENČIĆ, 1993, 1993-1994). "Russian hard-liners, meanwhile, urged that Russia give priority to defying what they called a "Western drive for hegemony" over the former Yugoslavia and to otherwise protecting Russian and Serbian geopolitical interests. Hard-liners in Russia and Serbia espoused a so-called pan-Slavic solidarity that emphasizes ethnic, religious, and historical ties. Its adherents shared a frustration at diminished geopolitical dominance (in Serbia's case, the loss of influence over other parts of the former Yugoslavia, and in Russia's case the loss of control over the near abroad)." (U.S. LIBRARY OF CONGRESS, 2003).

But, in summer 1991 war actions against Croatia started. Serbs supported by Yugoslav army occupied 26% of the territory of the Republic of Croatia by January 3, 1992 (Sarajevo Peace Agreement). Many massacres happened, and 300.000 Croats had to leave their homes. Osijek, Karlovac, Vinkovci, Dubrovnik, Zadar, Šibenik, Gospić and many other cities were under artillery and air attacks. Vukovar was almost totally destroyed (more than 10.000 killed), and even Zagreb, the capital of Croatia was attacked. The international community did not stop these events in time, as it was done in Macedonia where Serbian aggression was stopped in 1991 with the presence of 400 USA soldiers in Skopje. Besides, the embargo was introduced for the former Yugoslavia countries, so Croatian nation was condemned to capitulate in the aggression. But, helped by more than 3 million people in emigration (in Croatia there were 4,8 million people in 1991), and finally, with the international engagement, the aggression was stopped at the beginning of 1992, after Croatia had been recognised as an independent country. By 1995 Croatia succeeded in liberating all occupied territories. The last legitimate military actions "Flash" and "Storm" in 1995 were not supported by the international community, but it was the only way for Croatia to stop the incredible occupation and traffic disruption of the territory (DOMAZET, 2002). Now, almost fifteen years later, only few persons are accused by The Hague International Penal Court for the crimes they did in Croatia. Yet more than 10.000 people live out of their homes.

In Bosnia and Herzegovina, whose constitutive nations are Bosnians (Moslems), Croats and Serbs, Serbian war actions against Croatian people, as mentioned before, started in 1991 (Kupres zone in Western Bosnia, Ravno in Eastern Herzegovina etc.), but, as it was widely accepted by the World, the "real war" started in May 1992 when Bosnians were attacked by Serbs and Yugoslav Army. Serbs occupied 65% of the territory militarily attacking and often massacring people in many villages and cities. Many areas inhabited by Bosnians and Croats were cleansed (entire Eastern Bosnia, Eastern Herzegovina, part of Posavina etc.). Europe and USA could not suppress the Serb actions. Even conflicts between Croats and Bosnians started, and massacres were done on both sides (SANGUIN, 2001). The biggest front actions were undertaken by Serbs during the visit of the French president Mitterand to Belgrade in 1992, and the most merciless massacres were made in Srebrenica, Goražde and Žepa in 1994/5 in spite of the presence of the International Peace Forces. The action of Bosnian Croats in 1995, as well as Bosnian Army and US air force support, made possible the rebirth of Bosnia and Herzegovina, because some occupied regions were liberated, which affected Serbian strategic position. It enabled the Dayton Peace Accord meeting in 1995. Bosnia and Herzegovina was finally founded as the federation of two entities: "Republika Srpska", as Serbian republic with 49% of territory (!) and Bosnian Federation as the territory of the Bosnians and the Croats covering only 51% of the country. Three constitutive nationalities Serbs, Bosnians and Croats were recognised. The successful end of the

crisis was enabled thanks to the neighbouring territory of Croatia, which was used for the international forces' traffic. International forces entered the country, but five years later there were estimated only 78% of pre war Croatian people in Bosnia (many emigrated to Croatia or other countries), 112% of Bosnians (although some emigrated, many were killed, some immigrated from Sandjak and Serbia), and 102% Serbs (some emigrated to Serbia or other countries, some immigrated from Croatia organized by the Serbs defensive military action in 1995) (see: CIA WORLD FACTBOOK, 2003).

In Kosovo, after fifteen years of terrorising, the crisis reached its climax in spring 1999. After almost one million people had emigrated to Albania, Macedonia and other countries, NATO started military actions against Serbia. It enabled Albanians to return back to Kosovo after Serbian forces retired leaving thousands of Albanians killed. At the end of 1999, and beginning of 2000 local fights between Serbs and Albanians started in the northern part of Kosovo (Kosovska Mitrovica). Strong American, British, French, German and other NATO countries' forces, as well as Russian forces keep the peace at present. In spite of that, radical nationalists provoke realising local terrorist actions from time to time. At the moment Serbia, after Milošević's regime fell, still shows an expressed, long lasting resistance to international influence and actions. Serbia for a long time did not recognise the competence of the International War Crimes Tribunal in The Hague, and started to arrest persons accused for genocide and other crimes against humanity only after the collapse of Milošević's regime. Finally he was sent to The Hague after more democratic government in Serbia appeared in 2001. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, more and more crimes of war have been recognised and prosecuted by law in The Hague or in the country.

A kind of disappointment arose among Croatians in Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and all over the world in 1999 and 2000, after processes against some Croatians, which lasted for three or four years, and sentences up to forty five years, although some of them have been lately repealed. Because of being the first object of aggression, the first obliged to emigrate and to show extreme resistance not to be cleansed and destroyed, Croatians consider their actions of defence completely legal. International isolation of Serbia, as a logic consequence of all the crimes committed by Milošević's regime is to be compared with a practical isolation of Croatia, which lasted from 1995 to 2000. Was Croatia, the attacked side, the victim of the war, condemned to suffer the war consequences? In the first place it was attacked and partly occupied, but got no effective/legal military help from any country. On the contrary, weapon import embargo laid on the whole region almost led up to Serbian triumph. The main accusations against Croatia were explained by "cooperation in dividing Bosnia and Herzegovina", and by "no cooperation with The Hague Tribunal."

The events in 1999 and 2000 show that, after the NATO action in Kosovo and Serbia had successfully put an end to military and paramilitary actions, to cleansing and massacring, the new possibilities of strategic reorganisation in SE Europe were opened. The United Nations started administering Kosovo, and almost all refugees returned. Under the patronage of EU countries and NATO, in 1999 a new agreement, the Stability Pact, was established. It included countries of the region except Serbia and Montenegro, not only Balkans core countries, but Croatia, Slovenia, Hungary and Romania, too. In the same year Hungary, as well as Czech Republic and Poland entered NATO. Grouping the lands, which have recently been collaborating with NATO, the Stability Pact, as a quite

new regional organisation, seems to open new ways of security, economic, military and other cooperations and coordinations among the countries.

After the situation in Kosovo stabilised, and after Croatia changed its government in third free elections, the circumstances opened new chances. The social-democrats in Croatia managed in political fight to obtain the rule in the country, which was well accepted in Europe, USA and neighbouring countries, especially in Bosnia and Herzegovina. In the period 2000-2005 Croatia made a strong effort to be accepted as a partner in negotiations for approaching EU. Some smaller problems of defining borderlines with Slovenia (GOSAR, KLEMENČIĆ, 2000) and other neighbouring countries should not play a serious role in the process of satisfying EU criteria.

The main problem in the region, the Serbian non-democratic regime, which successfully persisted a whole decade in spite of economic and strategic embargo and isolation, seems finally to be disappearing. The main task of western countries to change the government in Yugoslavia (today Serbia and Montenegro) was successfully realised, but after last elections in 2005, there are signs that radical nationalists still are very strong. The strong nationalist program, which had united great deal of Serbs in former Yugoslavia (the idea of Greater Serbia, the thesis that all south Slaves except Slovenians and Bulgarians are Serbs or should be assimilated, proclaiming that Serbia must be everywhere some Serbs live etc.), although recently radically modified, unites even now many local forces of the country (some parties, many nationalists in government, army, police etc.).

In 1999, some new problems arose in Montenegro, too. The pressure and non-democratic rule of the new Yugoslav federal government initiated ideas of separation of this federal republic (once being independent kingdom). The question was whether this could result in a direct military action of Federal Army in Montenegro. Quite a serious engagement of Montenegro in Stability Pact as well as the interest of European Union, USA and NATO in the Montenegrin problems obstructed the possibility of Milošević's direct military action, and after his fall it was almost quite excluded. Although international community does not support Montenegro as another new independent Balkan state, there are still opened possibilities of dividing it from the Federation of Serbia and Montenegro.

Conclusion

The conclusion of discussing main strategic elements dealing with SE Europe and hegemony and dominance in the region could be synthesised in several theses:

- The disruption of Eastern Block caused political and economic changes in SE Europe, even the collapse of former Yugoslavia, with excessively cruel military engagements in Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo.

- After the consolidation of Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina (1995) and Kosovo (1999), and after the fall of Milošević's regime in 2001, situation is pacified, but there is still the problem of Kosovo that obviously results finally in the strong autonomy, as well as the question of Montenegro separation.

- The former "neutral" position of Tito's Yugoslavia (the leader of non-aligned countries), and the division of interests between two blocks (NATO with Greece and Turkey, Warsaw Pact with Hungary, Romania and Bulgaria), changed into the new

strategic relationship. NATO spread towards east (Hungary, Partnership for Peace: Romania, Bulgaria, Slovenia, Croatia, Macedonia, Albania), and became the most powerful force and the factor of the strongest influence in the region.

- This shows a new strategic relationship in centrality and hegemony in the region. All countries collaborate more or less with NATO and Western countries, except Serbia, which shows their interest in being accepted by more democratic and more developed world of the international community at the beginning of the 21st century.

- When expected process of democratic changes in Serbia, connected with the fall of its dictatorial regime, reach a needed level and pacification of the region completes, Stability Pact program, initiated by western countries and NATO, could give first results in stabilising economic and political situation of the region. There is a hope that no more military actions are to precede new process of multilateral cooperation and development, as well as multilateral coexistence, which will enable entering of all SE countries into European Union (MAGAŠ, 2002).

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THE COLUMBIA ELECTRONIC ENCYCLOPEDIA, SIXTH EDITION, 2003, COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY PRESS.

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SAŽETAK

D. Magaš: Kraj hegemonije i dominacije u Jugoistočnoj Europi

Jugoistočna Europa, posebice prostor bivše Jugoslavije, pokazala se nakon raspada Varšavskog pakta i komunističkog sustava krajem osamdesetih godina 20. st. najosjetljivijim i najranjivijim dijelom kontinenta. Naime u posljednjem desetljeću 20. stoljeća prostor jugoistočne Europe preživljavao je jedno od najtežih razdoblja smjene regionalnih odnosa hegemonije i dominacije koji su eskalirali do ratnih razmjera. Raspad komunističkog svijeta i kolaps bivše Jugoslavije, kao dio globalnog procesa definiranja nove geostrateške ravnoteže može se smatrati rezultatom novih odnosa među sustavima prevlasti velikih sila. NATO se širi prema europskom istoku novim stalnim članicama (Mađarska, Češka, Poljska) kao i stvaranjem posebne zajednice zemalja Partnerstva za mir, što se, razumljivo, odražava na izravne utjecaje u JI Europi. Nakon što su nove države bile međunarodno priznate 1992. (Slovenija, Hrvatska, Bosna i Hercegovina, Makedonija), a Slovenija i Hrvatska iskazale lojalnost kao partneri NATO-a u akciji na Kosovu, jasno je da regionalna hegemonija srpskog središnjeg prostora više ne postoji. Vojna srpska agresija u Hrvatskoj nije uspjela, u Bosni i Hercegovini rezultirala je jakom autonomijom Republike Srpske na oko polovici teritorija zemlje, a akcije na Kosovu provocirale su snažnu međunarodnu vojnu intervenciju protiv Srbije. Ujedno, ruska (nekadašnja sovjetska) nastojanja da igraju ulogu vodećeg lidera u ovoj regiji, bitno su smanjena, uz nastojanja da se sa svim zemljama zadrže što je moguće bolji bilateralni odnosi. Autor razmatra interese Europske Unije u ovoj zoni i način na koji su se europske zemlje uključile u proces pacificiranja i budućeg razvoja regije. Nakon što je Slovenija, poput susjedne Mađarske, s još 8 zemalja pristupila u Europsku uniju 2004., očekuje se da i Rumunjska, Bugarska i Hrvatska, nakon započetih intenzivnih razgovora kao prihvaćenih kandidata, zadovolje uvjete ulaska u EU u sljedećih 3-5 godina. Istodobno Srbija i Crna Gora ulaze u novu, demokratskiju fazu razvoja, ali ostaje otvoreno pitanje mogućeg osamostaljenja Crne Gore kao i jasnije definiranje prostora Kosova.