

CROATIA - A REVIVED GEOGRAPHIC FACT ON THE ADRIATIC

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In the paper the author discusses some new facts about the Republic of Croatia, which appeared again as an independent state on the international scene after more than eight hundred years. It caused some new relations on the Adriatic Sea as well as in the Mediterranean zone. Occupying a great deal of long East Adriatic Sea coast with plenty of virgin but strategically important islands, Croatia, after the war events (1991-1995), can develop relevant economic activity. Tourism, shipbuilding, mariculture, fishery and shipping, enable Croatia to incorporate more and more into well developed countries of West European and Mediterranean. Some sea border defining problems, should obviously be solved by the strict application of international sea law orders as soon as possible.

Key words: Croatia, Adriatic, maritime borders

U radu se razmatraju neki novi pokazatelji o Republici Hrvatskoj, koja se nakon više od osam stoljeća ponovno pojavila kao nezavisna država na međunarodnoj pozornici. To je uvjetovalo nove odnose na Jadranskom moru kao i u cijeloj sredozemnoj zoni. Zauzimajući veći dio istočnojadranske obale s mnogo djevičanskih i strateški važnih otoka, Hrvatska nakon ratnih zbivanja 1991.-1995. ponovno razvija značajnu gospodarsku aktivnost. Turizam, brodogradnja, marikultura, ribarstvo i pomorstvo omogućuju Hrvatskoj da se više približi razvijenim zemljama Zapadne Europe i Sredozemlja. Neki problemi u određivanju granica na moru trebali bi biti razriješeni uz strogu primjenu međunarodnog prava što je prije moguće.

Ključne riječi: Hrvatska, Jadran, pomorske granice

Introduction

The collapse of communism in 1990 started a new process of disintegration of ex SFR Yugoslavia, an artificial state, integrated in 1918 from very heterogeneous states and lands. Now, new independent states: Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Macedonia and FR Yugoslavia have been constituted. Among them Croatia is most of all oriented towards the Adriatic Sea and Mediterranean. It is not a surprising fact, as the greatest part of the ex Yugoslavia sea coast, almost all islands and largest ports, has belonged to Croatia. With an area of 56.538 km² and 4,8 million inhabitants, Croatia plays a new geopolitical role in the contact zone, which connects middle Europe with Southeastern one. Croatian territorial and internal sea waters cover 31.421 km² what makes a significant part of the surface of the Adriatic which total area covers 135 418 km².

Croatia claims to be a part of Mediterranean and Middle Europe, trying to stress

traditional economic and geopolitical connections. But all the events and changes that take place in SE Europe or Balkan Region influence however the situation in Croatia, owing to the fact that Croats in Bosnia and Herzegovina and in FR Yugoslavia have been a relevant ethnic entity.

The story of constitution of ex Yugoslavia included primarily the realisation of the dream of creating "Great Serbia". On the West, especially in France, the indoctrinated theses of the greatest Serbian geographer, Jovan Cvijić, were accepted, which caused an absurd theory that Serbia was Yugoslav Piedmont, and that Serbian nation, lead by the Serbian orthodox church had to be a dominating one. In practice it was like this: the Serbian king became the king of all southern Slaves (excluding Bulgarians), the Serbian currency became the official currency, the Serbian artillery remained the only one in the country and the Serbian law became the exclusive one. The dream of other southern Slaves: Croats, Slovenes, Macedonians, Montenegrins and others to live in democracy and brotherhood never realised. The only pretended "truth" and predominant political explanations were Serbian product, so other nations, predominantly Roman Catholic Croats as well as Macedonians and Montenegrins with their own national orthodox churches and others were abandoned and suppressed. The concordat with Roman Catholic Church was never ratified, the Montenegrin and Macedonian churches were forbidden, Montenegrin king was obliged to leave the country, and the internal administrative organisation of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia did not recognise historical and traditional borders.

With such a heritage the World War II opened a very cruel page of history in this part of Europe. The Quisling states were established in Croatia and Serbia, influenced by the tripartite pact signed by Germany, Italy and Japan, as it happened in Norway, France, Hungary, Romania, under the German or Italian nazi/fascist occupation. The Serbian king ran away to England. Tito's resistance movement, connected with Soviet communist ideology, using partisan war strategy, and promising democracy, federalism, liberty, equality and brotherhood, succeeded. It must be stressed that Croatian citizens were the dominant component of the anti fascist movement and that Croatia, like France, played an important role in the European anti fascist resistance war.

Old and new Croatia

Croatians came into their land at the beginning of the 7th century. Trying to establish politically their own state they were obliged to recognise the supremacy of Bizant or Frank Empires. The first international recognition of early Croatian state happened in 879 when the pope recognised Duke Branimir as the ruler of Croatia. In 925 the first king of Croatia was crowned, also being recognised by the pope. The period from the 9 to the 12th century was characterised by the Croatian supremacy on the Adriatic. In 1102 the Kingdom of Croatia joined into the personal union with the Hungary creating the Hungarian-Croatian Kingdom. Venice, the strongest power on the western side of the Adriatic tried many times, from the 9th to the 15th century, to conquer its eastern coast, which belonged to Croatia, and the narrow strip of more or less independent Dalmatian communes. Only Dubrovnik and some northern Adriatic Croatian cities resisted. Finally, many Croatian and Dalmatian cities were obliged to recognise the Venetian rule and administration after 1409, which lasted until 1797 when Venice was

defeated by Napoleon.

Not only Venice, but also the Ottoman Empire, after conquering kingdoms of Bulgaria, Serbia and Bosnia in the 14th and the 15th century, tried to conquer Croatian and Hungarian Kingdom. Hungary was pressed back very hard, and Ottoman troops surrounded Austrian Vienna. Only the Croatian Kingdom ("Reliquae reliquiarum olim incliciti regnum Croatiae") resisted to the very strong attacks for more than three centuries. The three hundred years of being a kind of so called "antemurale christianitatum" and of Europe, cost the Croatian Kingdom many lives, many sufferings. Such a bad geopolitical position ended with introducing the Habsbourg dynasty on the throne of Croatia as well as on the throne of Hungary. Included, as a part of Hungarian-Croatian Kingdom, into Austrian Habsbourg Monarchy, the main part of medieval Croatia continued formally some kind of independent development. But many parts of the medieval Croatia were left in the Ottoman Empire (so called Turkish Croatia, today in Bosnia and Herzegovina), or were included in so called Dalmatia and Albania under the rule of Venice. Dubrovnik played a role of an independent republic under the protectorate of the Ottoman Empire, which prevented Venice from conquering this ethnically Croatian territory.

What has been mentioned excluded any stronger Croatian influence on the Adriatic. The supremacy of Venice was obvious until its fall. After the short period of so called first Austrian rule on the whole Croatian ethnic territory, and also the period of Napoleon's French rule, Austria started to play a dominant role on the Adriatic. Thanks to Croatian people, who were good sailors and fighters on the sea, and were included into the Austrian Marine, Austria succeeded in keeping the dominant position even after the biggest battle that happened near the island Vis in 1868, when Italy tried to dominate the Croatian side of the Adriatic. Pula as the main military port, Rijeka as the main trade port, Zadar as the administrative centre of the territory of South Croatia (Dalmatia), and Split and Dubrovnik were the most important cities of the Croatian Adriatic zone of the A.-H. Monarchy. Pity that, inside the Austrian Monarchy (later Austro-Hungarian Monarchy), it was impossible to realise the concept of reunion of all ethnic Croatian territories (Croatia, Dalmatia with Dubrovnik and Boka Kotorska, Slavonia, parts of Voivodina). Formally, Croatia entered the World War I dismembered, but with high a degree of iuridic independence.

The fall of Austrian-Hungarian Monarchy stopped the process of reuniting of Croatian territories, which had been initiated at the beginning of the 20th century.

After ex Yugoslavia was established, some parts of Croatian littoral were occupied by Italy and, with Rapallo peace threat, Istria, Rijeka, some Croatian islands and Zadar fell under Italian administration. The navy, belonging to the A.-H. Monarchy, mostly came into Italian hands. Croatian ports were left without their significant fleet. It enabled the supremacy of Italy on the Adriatic Sea. In the period 1918 – 1941 ex Yugoslav geopolitical role on the Adriatic was the subordinate one. Split began to play an important political role among littoral cities, instead of Zadar. Dubrovnik became the centre of secondary importance, and Šibenik started to develop more and more.

Suffering Serbian dominance and political pressure which unabled any democratic initiative, only in 1939. Croatia managed to reunite most of its ethnic territories, even those in Bosnia and Herzegovina. So, all the littoral territory, except Boka Kotorska and above mentioned parts, which were under the Italian rule, was finally again included in Banovina Hrvatska (Viceroyalty of Croatia). But it was short lived. It

lasted only to the beginning of the World War II. As the main part of Croatian Adriatic littoral was occupied by fascist Italy, the Quisling Independent State of Croatia had no serious significance on the Sea.

After the W. W. II Croatian littoral played an important role inside the ex Yugoslav Adriatic zone. The supremacy of Italy, (the member of NATO Pact), continued, although the naval forces of ex Yugoslavia were significant, being the part of one of the strongest military forces in Europe. In Tito's Socialist Federative Republic of Yugoslavia, Croatia was one of the six federal states. With a coast of 5790,2 km length (4057,2 km islands) it was the main littoral republic, having 90 % of ex Yugoslav coast. Almost all Eastern Adriatic islands belong to Croatia.

The Croatian islands are situated in a range of some 450 km along the eastern coast of the Adriatic Sea. They make the main part of Adriatic islands and have an important strategic meaning. Besides 718 islands and islets there are 389 cliffs and 78 reefs. The total area covers 3300 km² (about 5,8 % of Croatian mainland territory) and the length of their coast is 4.057,2 km. Twenty of these islands occupy an area larger than 20 km² each, and other 57 ones have the surface from 1 km² to 20 km². The biggest islands are Krk (409,9 km²), Cres (404,3 km²), Brač (394,6 km²), Hvar (299,7 km²), Pag (284,6 km²), and Korčula (276,0 km²). The most populated in 1991 were: Korčula (17.038 inhabitants), Krk (16.402), Brač (13.824), Hvar (11.495), Rab (9.025) and Lošinj (8.134).

Thanks to the tradition Croatia has a well developed ship building industry, and stands among 10 strongest World ship producers. The biggest shipyards are situated in Rijeka, Pula, Split, Trogir and Kraljevica. In 1989 it 26 ships were produced and 499.000 GT delivered, which made 3,8 % of international shipbuilding industry, and which put Croatia in the third place of the world statistical table. Five years later (1994) Croatia got to the ninth place on the world scale with a production of 11 ships and 276.000 GT.

Along the Croatian coast there are approximately 250 ports. Seven of them are large ports for transoceanic ships (Rijeka, Ploče, Split, Zadar, Šibenik, Dubrovnik, Pula), with a total traffic of 29 million tons in 1990, and 10 million tons in 1994. The greatest ports are: Rijeka, opened to the Danube Basin and Alpine Region, and Ploče, which basic function is to accept the transit traffic from and to Bosnia and Herzegovina. All these ports, except Ploče, have a long and important tradition. The main passenger ports are Split and Zadar each of them with approximately 2 million passengers a year, and especially Dubrovnik with a significant international maritime tourist traffic.

Long and attractive coast is an optimal predisposition for developing tourism. There are a lot of tourist destinations in different parts of Croatian littoral and islands. Especially nautical tourism has been growing up lately. In optimal tourist years Croatia was visited by over 10 million tourists per year, who made almost 70 million overnight stays annually, which brought Croatia the fifth position on the European scale. The war in Croatia had a disastrous influence on the tourist traffic (only about 20 % of the pre war one). From 1994 tourism has been approaching, little by little, the old position in the national economy (35% in 1994, 70% in 1997 of the pre war tourist traffic). Until the liberation of Croatia, the islands Vis and Lastovo were forbidden for foreign tourists because being military areas of ex Yugoslavia. In free Croatia these islands too, find their place in the development of the international tourism on the Adriatic.

The Croatian trade navy is very important. As the result of the war situation (1991-1995), nowadays plenty of ships are registered under the so called "low taxes' flags" (Liberia, Malta, St. Vincent and Grenadine, Panama, etc.). It consists of 272 trade ships

with 3,6 million DWT (2,4 million GT) in 1994. The main trade shipping companies are situated in Zadar, Rijeka, Dubrovnik and Split. The main passenger shipping company ("Jadrolinija") is the one situated in Rijeka and covers domestic and international ship and ferry connections.

The oil and gas resources of the Adriatic could play an important role if exploitable quantities are found there. Coastal longitudinal traffic today depends on some coastal ship lines, and the road traffic. The old coastal road should be changed as soon as possible by a new highway connecting Trieste - Rijeka - Zadar - Split and Dubrovnik. The building started in 1997 near Zadar. Continuing towards Montenegro, Albania and Greece/Turkey, this highway could develop to an important additional traffic connection between West Europe and Asia. Using the attractive coastal zone of eastern Adriatic it starts developing of its tourist and other economical potentials. Similarly, a future project of littoral railway Rijeka - Zadar - Split - Dubrovnik could have the same important role.

Strategic features

Croatian littoral has been inhabited with Croatian inhabitants for more than 13 centuries. Only Italian minority in some regions has been significant during centuries (Istria, Rijeka). In the past, as the result of the aspiration of Venice to rule over the Croatian side of the Adriatic, some significant Italian and Croatian mixed speaking centres originated. The Italian language was the official language and its use was obligatory till the period of the Austrian rule.

The situation after the fall of Venice radically changed. In the 19th century Croatian language too was introduced as an official language. The national Croatian movement was born, but was suppressed by the violence and misunderstanding of big and strong neighbours. The biggest attempt of the young united Italy to dominate the Adriatic in 1869, finished near Croatian island Vis ("The battle of Vis") when Italian fleet was defeated. The crew of the A.-H. Navy were mostly Croats, although there were Austrians, Hungarians, Czechs, Slovaks etc. The "Yugoslav" idea diminished the realisation of Croatian national interests, too. Especially, strategic aspirations of Serbia and Montenegro, a kind of Russian satellites, were turned towards the Adriatic trying to open their territories out towards the Adriatic. After the fall of A. - H. Monarchy, the territory of Boka Kotorska was politically excluded from a long lasting administrative connection with other parts of Croatian littoral. Separated from the Dalmatian Croatia, it has become recently a part of Montenegro. Istria, Rijeka, Zadar and some islands were turned back to Croatia after W. W. II, being incorporated into the Socialist Republic of Croatia.

During the war in Croatia (autumn 1991), ex Yu navy that was predominantly trying to establish the new "Great Serbian state", attacked some cities (Zadar, Split) but without any result. Spontaneous resistant movement, using mostly small boats belonging to the local inhabitants, answered all Serbian attacks. Only a part of ex Yugoslav navy, situated mostly in Šibenik and Ploče, was left in Croatia. Almost all the fleet from Pula and Split was concentrated near the islands of Vis and Lastovo, making some kind of maritime blockade. They were supported by the ex Yu fleet situated in Boka Kotorska Bay (Montenegro). After the complete fiasco of this blockade, during the attacks on Zadar, Split and in the end, but most violently Dubrovnik, ex Yugoslav fleet finally left

Croatian waters and was ranked in Boka Kotorska Bay. Now it has been dying in this bay, or in southern part of Ulcinj, having no use or task, causing extreme expenses to new FR Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro). Some of the ships were included in the recent Albanian emigrant process (the events in 1997). The open aggression against Croatia finished in the beginning of 1992. The fact of the international recognition in January 15 1992, was "decorated" with the 30% of occupied land territory and 30 billion \$ of war damages.

The international maritime embargo was introduced in the Adriatic to prevent any weapon supplies reaching the sides in the war 1991-1995. The geopolitical fact that Adriatic Sea could be very easily controlled in zone of Otranto, made this embargo very effective. It enabled the continuation of war, and the attacked sides (first Croatia, then Bosnia and Herzegovina) were put in a very bad position especially if compared with aggressive Serbian and Montenegrin forces that were extremely well supplied with all kinds of weapons. In spite of such a situation, Croatia succeeded very quickly in stabilising its sovereignty over the belonging Adriatic. Today Croatia develops bilateral relations with more than 150 countries, having a close relations with more of 120 ones.

As the result of the occupation of the southern part of Croatia, near Dubrovnik, Prevlaka, the neuralgic point well known as a very interesting strategic location, stands even today under control of the international UN forces. Although it has always been a part of the old Dubrovnik territory, as well as the part of the territory of Republic of Croatia, it is still waiting to be completely returned under Croatian sovereignty.

In the last decade of the 20th century, Croatia is again a sovereign and independent state. Its role on the Adriatic cannot be compared with that of Italy, one of the biggest and strongest navy forces of the Mediterranean, or with the forces of others in this area (France, Greece, Spain, Russia, etc.). Today it is mostly the juridical and traditional international sea law that gives Croatia the possibility of ruling and making profit of its own part of the Adriatic Sea. But also strategic position with many little islands enables Croatia not to use a big fleet but plenty of small speed boats in order to keep its sovereignty over the Sea. Economic strategy, mostly in tourism (summer tourism, nautical tourism, "Robinson tourism", etc.), sea traffic, ship building, mariculture, salt pans, oil and gas

exploring, fishery, etc. are today the most interesting parts of developing this maritime region of Mediterranean. The stabilisation of the land and sea borders and the normalisation of the geopolitical situation will very soon open possibilities of realisation of some important European infrastructure investments. Primarily these could be new highway and railway connections on the strategic littoral line: Middle/West Europe - Eastern Adriatic littoral - Greece - Middle East. The maritime border between Croatia and Italy has been defined according to the International Sea Law orders, and so far there have been no problems with it.

There is no claim from either side to any sea or land territory. On the contrary, Slovenia claims the part of the Adriatic on the very short maritime border in Piran Bay. The bilateral commission has been trying to solve this local problem for almost five years. Probably the problem should be solved by some kind of an international arbitration. FR Yugoslavia also claims little Prevlaka peninsula and the belonging part of the Adriatic Sea on the southern border between Croatia and Montenegro. As it has been mentioned before, Prevlaka is an undivided part of the Croatian land, which can always be proved by catastatic or other archival documents. So there are no real reasons for such a Yugoslav

claim. This claim only serves to provoke and satisfy their well known imperialistic strategies. It is obvious that such a claim is the part, we hope the last one, of permanent attempt of the same imperialistic policy of Serbia and Montenegro, which was well expressed in the war 1991-1995.

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SAŽETAK

Damir Magaš: Hrvatska – oživljeni geopolitički faktor na Jadranu

U radu autor obrađuje neke nove činjenice o Republici Hrvatskoj koja se, kao nezavisna zemlja, pojavila ponovno na međunarodnoj sceni poslije više od osam stoljeća. To je prouzročilo nove geopolitičke odnose na Jadranskom moru kao i na Sredozemlju. Zauzimajući najveći dio obale Istočnog Jadrana, s mnoštvom djevičanskih i strateški važnih otoka, Hrvatska, poslije ratnih zbivanja u razdoblju 1991.- 1995., može razviti značajnu gospodarsku aktivnost. Turizam, brodogradnja, marikultura, ribarstvo i brodarstvo omogućuju Hrvatskoj da se sve više uključuje u red razvijenijih zemalja Sredozemlja. Neki problemi određivanja granica na moru, posebice prema Sloveniji u Piranskom zaljevu i Jugoslaviji, tj. Crnoj Gori kod ulaza u Boku kotorsku trebali bi očigledno biti riješeni uz striktnu primjenu pravila međunarodnog pomorskog prava, čim je prije moguće. To će pospješiti normalizaciju istočnojadranskog priobalja i ostvarenje velikih infrastrukturnih zahvata, autocestovnih i željezničkih, na pravcu Srednja Europa - Istočni Jadran - Grčka - Bliski istok.