
THE ROLE OF RELIGIOUS AND ETHNIC MINORITIES IN DISINTEGRATION OF THE STATE STRUCTURE OF WEST BALKAN

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FORCES INFLUENCING THE STATE TERRITORY

State is a formation on the terra-surface, which has three basic peculiarities (*in geographic sense*), such as territoriality, presence of society of citizens and the entity of so called sovereign executive power that is acknowledged internationally. Series of social sciences deal with different aspects of term state. Political geography treats it as territorial phenomenon. According to wide, well known system of aspects, it studies and assesses the latitude, demarcation, the territorial structure of the population, the territorial concentration of power and the economic and electoral activity of the state, and the territorial and inter-settlement relations of these. If considering the territorial categories in longer period of time, certain regularities, models appear. However, state system is not stable, and it undergoes transformations during shorter or longer period of time.

The American geographer, Richard Hartshorne, had begun to develop a political geographic world map before the Second World War, and then he improved it (HARTSHORNE, R. 1954). His way of thinking and the model hallmarked with his name were highly influenced by the processes and circumstances of the wars and the decolonisation. By the recent times, the factors influencing the state territory have modified and changed.

The fundamental structure of the model is still in force, although more factors need to be considered among the centripetal and centrifugal forces compared to the previous models, while the role of other factors has eliminated. During the last decades, the role of economic factors increased in this context. At the time of the development of the model, the world economy was determined by the national economies in the model that was basically determined by the industrialisation. By these days, supranational tendencies have appeared, while localities, local communities and regions have strengthened bottom-up wise. The revaluation of localities has also improved the self-organising opportunities of national, religious minorities.

Also, the socio-economic model has changed, especially in the last two decades. The earlier industrialisation based factors have lost their role, and the factors of innovation and knowledge based economy become more important, at least in the world's most developed, central regions. Transformation was always accompanied with geo-political restructuring. Certain states, communities or settlements achieved higher success, while others did poorer results in the process of the adaptation. Certain regions (such as those from the third world, with reclusive political and social system) can likely miss modernisation waves and lose their importance even in longer period of time. Approximately a decade ago, a global restructuring started, which resulted in a highly modified power balance of certain parts of the world.

Transformation affects numerous elements of the social and state structure, among these the inner structure and functions of the states, as well. The restructuring of the state can be slow and based on slighter reforms or drastic, within real social cataclysms; however, the new challenges call the necessity of structuring new formations.

The bureaucracy or the narrow political class socialised to the requirements of the earlier bipolar world order has lost its abilities to control the processes exclusively. Numerous new actors appeared or strengthened in political fights: the balance of forces fundamentally restructured.

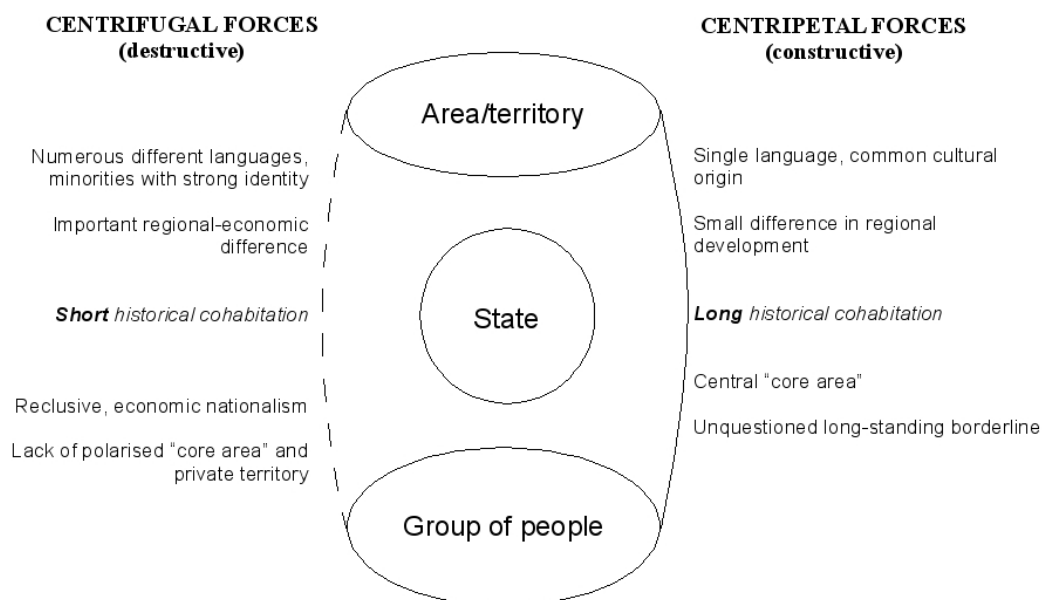


Figure 1
Forces influencing the state territory in Southern Europe, in the millennium.
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National and religious minorities, local identities can destroy the unity of a state or can change it as the examples of Italy, Turkey, the former Yugoslavia or Cyprus showed. These secessionist intentions can become stronger if the development of the regions of the state is very different. All these have led to that the national and the European common regional policies become such factors that control the unity of the state. In Europe, in order to maintain the operation and activity of the EU institutions, a particular stability of the state structure is essential. This is in relation with significant resources and inter-state cooperation. The spreading of democracy, strengthening local communities, development of territorial and local cultural autonomies are both the reasons and the causes of that. The new forms and the tools of information communication resulted in arising opportunities for the development of new communities.

The role of the core-territories has not decreased; even these have appeared more statuesquely than ever. Large part of these core-territories has built in the global controlling network of the “metropolises”. Pluralization of communication and the end of the communicational monopoles of the states and the political elite have led to that smaller social groups were given more resources for their identity forming. Thus, both these have become more important in the state structure and their influence and representation of interest improved. Among many others, the Italian crisis of the ‘90ies or the independency problem of Kosovo recently, reflect on the previous.

The conflicts regarding the borderlines are issues in international relations even today. The tendencies of the integration mean both the softening of the borders between the newly-formed internal areas and the hardening of the external borders. Many times, the demarking role of the borders outside the European Union has strengthened due to military and/or political conflicts.

The European Union intends to solve the border problems by the development of frontier regions and supporting the euroregional developments. The euroregions of South-Tyrol or the Is- tria region can be examples or the new initiatives among the new state borders of the Balkans, the INTERREG projects of the region; and also the neighbour policy of the EU supports it in the Southern and Eastern Mediterranean.

INTEGRATION AND DISINTEGRATION IN THE MEDITERRANEAN

The state structure of the Mediterranean region is one of the world’s oldest group of states. Looking at the state structures of the three peninsulas of Southern Europe, the Mediterranean is- lands, Asia Minor and the African and near East coast side in longer period of time, it developed very uniquely.

In case of the three peninsulas, a particular model of integration-disintegration can be observed. On the Apennine peninsula, the end of the small state structure was in the 19th century, and the formation and strengthening of an integration was seen during the 20th century. The success of the integration is shown by the most successful modernisation process of the Southern European region. The former disintegrated Italy became well integrated and member of the G8, the fourth largest economy of the EU and the strongest state of the Mediterranean region.

On the Iberian Peninsula, also an integration has led to that Spain affiliated of its largest part. Besides, Portugal remained autonomous. The success of the Spanish integration was manifested in the economic expansion of the '90ies. Both Spain and Portugal could well exploit the economic opportunities provided by their former colonial empires.

On the opposite coast, in case of Asia Minor, the territorial integration became reality in the last 500 years. It was Kemál Atatürk who improved this integration under the aegis of the Turkish nationalism, which successfully changed the Ottoman millet system. In the beginning of the 20th century, the question of the Armenians (at the end of the Ottoman era), and later on, the independency of the curds were challenges but not threats for the kemalist policy. Although the ottomans

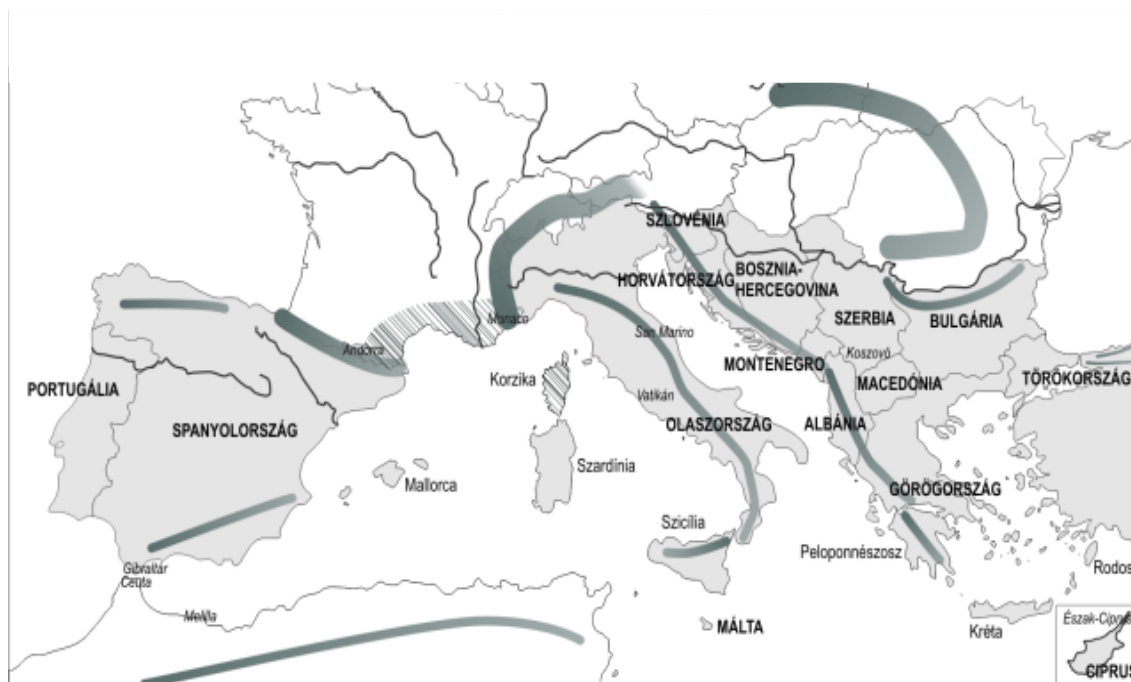


Figure 2
South-Europe in the political geography

lost World War I, the kemalist policy been supported by the Turkish nationalism achieved the only possible correction among the frames of the Peace Treaty of Versailles. In the 20th century and even today, a successful modernisation can be observed in Turkey.

Each of the larger islands (Cyprus, Rhodes, Malta, Sicily, Corsica, and Sardinia) was autonomous in its history for longer or shorter period of time. Although, individually they have small importance, due to the high strategic role of the islands, they always stood in the focus of the great powers of the region. Their history and political structure are basically following. In case of Sicily, Corsica and Sardinia, stronger or weaker separatist power can be counted on. Cyprus is divided by the Turkey-Greek conflict, regarding its territory as well from 1974.

On the African and Western Asian areas, the state structures formed during the second half of the 20th century are oriented to the former colonial empires and international mandate territories. With the exception of Israel and Lebanon, these territories belong to the Islam world. Not states with national borders but specific political structures were formed, which are even in conflict with each other; from political and economic-geographic aspect, the former colonial relations can still be found (head-link towns, cultural dependency, political dependence, raw material export, etc.).

The highly fragmented area together with the archaic social structures in the West Balkans resulted in specific types of territorial relations. In this area, the local relations are strong, identities belong not to territories but networks in many cases. Such transitional types can be seen as for example the Aromun population.

It is too late to form national states, compared to not only Western but Central Europe as well. It caused significant problem that the idea of national state was represented by the intellectuals and bourgeoisie with Western civilisation who partly lived in Western Europe. The role of the external borders was also important (e.g. the role of dynasties of Western European origin, and great powers in the formation of the state organisation, etc.). In almost all cases, the relation with the past is ambivalent (genesis-myths, questions of the genesis, see Macedon and Bulgarian ethno-genesis etc.)

The way of the Balkan Peninsula in integration and disintegration was different. In case of the other two peninsulas, the geographic environment and the cultural pattern of the society were favourable for the integrating intentions, and certainly reclusivity played important role in that. The Iberian peninsula is bounded by the Pyrenees, the Apennine peninsula by the Alps, therefore the ways across the mountains leading to Africa influence the life of the population less than the Asian relations do in case of the Balkans. The geographic structure of the Balkans is more complex, which is not favourable for the integrating intentions. Also the cultural pattern is the most complicated here, out of the three areas. Not only the ethnic and cultural but the religious and life style dif-

ference is larger. Due to several strategic ways (Danube-valley, the ways of Via-Egnetia, Beograd-Thessalonica, the Bosphorus-Dardanelles waterway, etc.), its role is more important. The control of the peninsula was always more important for the “foreigners” than the two other cases, therefore, integrating intentions emerged basically externally. The Romans (who integrated the whole of the peninsula at first time), the Byzantines and the Ottomans were determining actors of the integrations. From time to time, the demand for internal affiliation also appeared (Bulgarians, Serbians), although without bigger success. Also, the interests of the great powers acted against the integration of the peninsula; all these resulted in fragmented state structure that remained till these days (*balkanisation*).

	Area (km ²)	Population (head)	Density (head/km ²)	Majority of the population and its percentage (%)	GDP/capita	Major safety risks
Croatia (2001)	56 594	4 437 460	78.4	Croatian (89.5)	7724 \$	Return of the Serbian minority, special relation with the Bosnian Croats
Bosnia-Herzegovina (2003)	51 209	3 832 301	74.8	Bosnian (48)	1915 €	Weak, over-bureaucratic state separatist intentions, ethnic-religious duality
Out of which:						
<i>FBiH</i>	26 352	2 323 339	88.1	<i>Bosnian (72.9)</i>	2068 €	<i>Croatian-Bosnian conflict, effective state territory, weak economy</i>
<i>RS</i>	24 857	1 463 465	58.8	<i>Serbian (88)</i>	1594 €	<i>In-viable on its own, but rejects the centralised BiH</i>
Montenegro (2003)	13 812	620 145	44.9	Montenegrin (43.16)	2244.5 €	Albanian and Muslim population, question of liveability, relative majority of the Montenegrins
Serbia (2002)	77 474	7 498 001	96.7	Serbian (82.8)	2642.8 € (2004)	“Lost” of Kosovo, situation of the other minorities, political radicalisation
Kosovo (1991)	10 877	1 956 000	175	Albanian (88), 2003-as esteem: 94–95	1265 € (2004)	Independency, Serbian minority, borders
Albania (2003)	28 748	3 111 163	108.2	Albanian (97)	1800 \$	Weak state, effective state territory, organised crime, transborder Albanians

Table 1
Security issues and main features of the West-Balkan states.
 Source: Pap – Reményi 2007.

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