

# The Ex-communist European Space and the New Balance

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## ABSTRACT

*The Central and Eastern Europe is just like a "buffer space" between the "Western Bloc" and "The Russian Bloc". The fall of the "Iron curtain" in this part of Europe had as its result the state of unbalance and insecurity. Regaining the state of balance through Euro-Atlantic integration which happens in a discriminating way would increase the state of insecurity and cause, once again, the bipolar tendency to hegemony. This integration would open the way towards a new civilization of the North, well prepared to deal on with the crisis, which, nowadays and in the future, the mankind will be confronted with. An important role in this direction will have the cooperation between ex-communist countries in the common frontal sectors.*

*This paper follows an example of cooperation – the South Pannonic three-part cooperation– Yugoslavia, Hungary and Romania.*

**Key words:** Central and Eastern Europe, integration and regional cooperation.

The Communist Europe had – before "The Iron Curtain" fell down – eight states with an area of 23.677.287 km<sup>2</sup> and a population of 415,8 mill. inhabitants. It was a very diverse world which was under the political hegemonies of Moscow and under most states which were involved in the Pact of Warsaw. The political movement "Solidarność" from Poland, having the center in Gdańsk, was, in fact the beginning of a democratic life in Poland. The "Gulyás Communism" of Imre Nagy in Hungary, the massive presence of the Red Army in ex-DDR and Czechoslovakia, a more competitive economy and a higher living standard, the nationalism in Romania which was at the edge after 1968 when Ceausescu ruled the country, the dependence of Bulgarian economy toward USSR, the ideological opposite belief from ex-Yugoslavia and Albania in the communist European system, were the control factors against the social discontent. The psychology of isolation of two worlds through "Iron Curtain" was a catalyst element which filled up "the glass of discontents" in the East.

## The Big Unweaving

The "Glasnost" policy which M. Gorbachev was promoted seemed to be the beginning for the unweaving of the communist system in Europe. After the "velvet revolution" from Czechoslovakia, followed by territorial separation, it was Romania's turn to breakdown. In Romania there was a bloody revolution as well as was in Yugoslavia where the war was dominated by spatial tendencies. In a very short time, the result was "a hyper-space" more divided, which entered a new stage of evolution with many social discontents and lots of economical changes. Since 1993 the ex-communist European space has been dominated by a profound structural unbalance. The beginning of a new balance in this political space takes with it the ability of whole states and it's getting in the first place, the new

dimension of "influence/spheres". Nowadays, all the states want an Euro-Atlantic integration in economy as well as in military field.

## Diversity

The newly created spaces and tendencies have underlined the big difference between European ex-communist states. This difference is not only in their dimension (as areas), but also in their way of living. We have a "Slav World" from Baltic Sea to Adriatic Sea which is separated on its median axis by Hungarian people with a Finno-Ugric origin and on the other side are Romanian people of Latin origin. Speaking from religious point of view, this space is an example of religious discontents, there is a struggle between Catholicism, Orthodoxy and Islamism. On the background of general economic regress there are spaces of prosperity which are opposed to those in poverty. The difference in incomes in US \$ (GNP/inhabitant) at national levels seems to be very suggestive (from 740 US dollars/inhabitant in Albania, to 6470 US dollar/inhabitant in Latvia). The total power expressed in billions of US \$ outs Russia on the first place as a superpower (863 billions US \$), followed by Ukraine (244,7 billions US \$) (Table 1)

The unweaving of Warsaw Pact swept the hopes of security of all the states. It is a kind of "incertitude wall" which spread through the ex-communist space from east to west, from Ural Mountains to Oder and farther to Adriatic Sea coast. Two main spaces of civilization are trying harder to find a new identity.

Through its characteristics and in its original way of existence, the European ex-communist space, is a classical model of a "buffer space" between two worlds with tendencies of hegemony: "The Western Bloc" and "The Russian Bloc". (Figure 1.)

But for the leaders, and not only for them but for people as well psychological obstacles regarding the frontiers are not so easy to overcome. Except Russia in this part of the world, it isn't possible to have a "heartland" of a regional hegemony, neither through size, nor through economical and military potential. The diversity is too obvious, so that we can't speak of a hegemony leader among the states unweaved from the ex-communist bloc. It isn't possible to have one center of power with complete character. Equality for all was only a word which has been erased, since Moscow wasn't been the main power in this part of Europe. With coming of the liberty and prosperity, everybody wants their old "spatial pattern" back.

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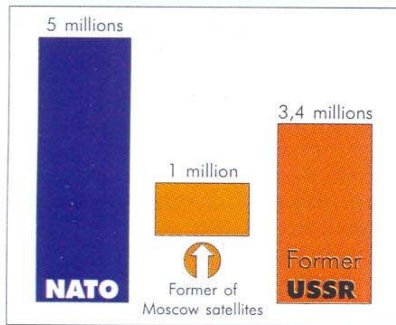


Figure 1. The military potential (millions of soldiers) of NATO and ex- Warsaw's Pact (estimated after L'etat du monde, 1993)

### Dividing and Total Integration

In nowadays geopolitical context it is possible to have a new re-dimensioning of the influence spheres in Europe.

We have a Russian hegemony in the East based on a continental heartland which substituted the maritime heartland on the west of Europe, once with the construction of trans-Siberian and the defeat of Japan.

Due to the economical dependence of the ex-union republics to Russia, the ethnical division of the Russian element in the area of all these republics, it was possible to smooth the way on a Russian hegemony through reestablishing the old western frontiers.

The American maritime and continental hegemony from the West underlines an integration of the western ex-communist countries which specially connected (Slovene, Croat, Hungary, Slovak, Czech and Poland).

So, we have the primary condition for spatial neighboring, because the religious background is common- the Catholicism- although the way of living is very different.

Meanwhile, for other countries such as: Romania, Yugoslavia, Bulgaria, Macedonia, Albania, Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia - the situation isn't certain, they could become new "buffer spaces". A transfer of the American hegemony in the western parts of Russia could remove the presence of "buffer space" and generate regional tensions in reconstituting this kind of space. The total integration in Euro-Atlantic structures supposes the acceptance of Russia as well, resulting in a mega-space, the Euro-American-Asian belt from Pacific to Pacific. This would be the first and the biggest economic bloc and also a collectively secure one. The history will know it as the first step toward the new North civilization.

### "Too Small for Such a Big War"

For reaching the prosperity levels toward the states which want to be integrated in the European Comm-

Table 1. The diversity of the Ex-communist European space

Country	GDP Capital \$	GDP Total mill. \$	Density of population (p./km <sup>2</sup> )	Dominate religion			Ethnical origine		
				Orthodox	Catholic	Muslim	Slave	Roman	Finno-Ugric
Albania	740	2.4	116	x		x			x
Belarus	5960	61.0	49	x			x		
Bos.&Hertz.	1600	7.2	87	x	x	x	x		
Bulgaria	2250	20.2	76	x			x		
Croatia	7110	33.8	85		x		x		
Czech R.	3140	32.3	131		x		x		
Estonia	6240	9.8	34		x			x	
Hungary	2330	24.2	110		x			x	
Latvia	6740	17.8	40		x				x
Lithuania	5880	22.0	57		x				x
Macedonia	1400	2.8	80	x			x		
Moldova	3830	16.7	129	x				x	
Poland	1600	61.0	123		x		x		
Romania	1640	37.3	95	x				x	
Rusia	5810	863.0	9	x			x		
Slovakia	3140	16.6	108		x		x		
Slovenia	5500	10.8	98		x		x		
Ukraine	4700	244.7	110	x			x		
Yugoslavia	2000	20.6	103	x			x		

The dates about income/inhabitants are taken after "L'etat du monde", Annuaire economique et geopolitique mondial, 1993.

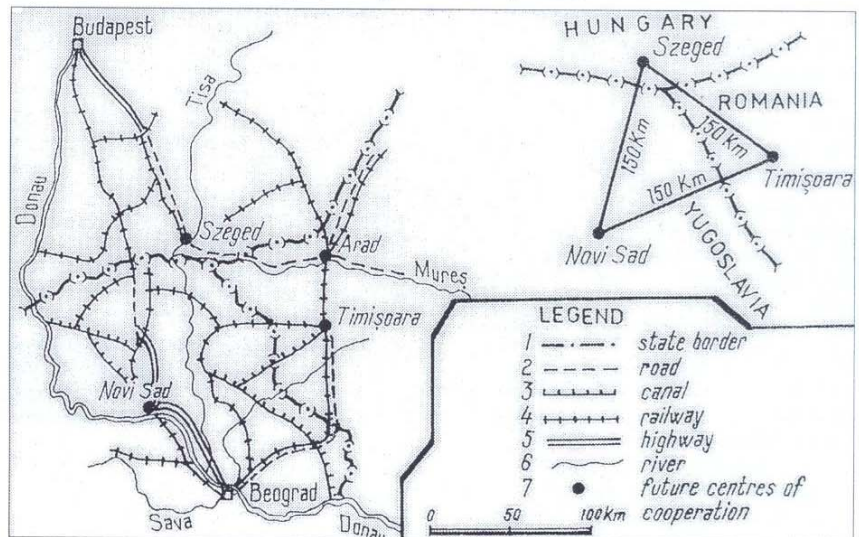


Figure 2. The South-Pannonian space of cooperation (proposal)

unity and intend to do so, it is regional cooperation is very important, especially for the ex-communist European countries. At the same time with the so called "policy of big steps" promoted at bloc levels, there is the possibility of a large inter-regional cooperation, defined by the common frontal fields "the policy of small steps". An example for this is the model of three-party South-Pannonian cooperation. It is well known that the frontiers "turn their backs" toward neighbors and the states focus their attention and energy inside. This anachronic way on the realizing special reality of our times, leads to creation of some "vacuums of development" on the frontal fields by blocking the normal transfer of goods, information and energy in the geographical systems we are talking about.

As a result of all these, we have spatial models which are out of shape

due to lack of communication or of casual links.

The three-party South-Pannonic model would be in the influence area of three big cities: Novi Sad for Yugoslavia, Szeged for Hungary and Timisoara for Romania (Figure 2.)

Each of these cities have two essential characteristics which are common:

1. they are on the second place in their national hierarchy of urban settlements;
2. they have a peripheral position in their countries area.

Due to their physical homogenous space those three cities have an extra regional complementary supports which are not very alike:

Novi Sad - the hillock and mountain space on the right side of The Danube; Szeged an agricultural hinterland on the Tisza uniform flow; Timisoara the Carpathian south-west mountain area.

Each of these three cities has a very important role as centres of road traffic and railway traffic as well as facilities of river navigation development

Very important is –at this moment– the river navigation activity from Bega's canal as well as from the Tisza and the lower Mures course which could be a way for linking the infrastructure of air navigation with road and railway communication.

The cooperation spectrum includes many fields such as: free trade, tourism, environmental protection and last, but not least, the reciprocal relations of production activities.

This cooperation could be enlarged by including the higher education institutes from all these cities.

All these premises cannot be realised by the three counties getting in isolation must take some common measures to support their cities and try harder to extend the welfare services.

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