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Transformation of the Countries of Central and Eastern Europe – an Attempt at Comparing Croatia and Slovenia

Abstract: For over a dozen years changes have been taking place in Central and Eastern Europe which are explained in the categories of systemic transformation. “Systemic transformation” is the term most widely used to describe the social change that began in that part of Europe after 1989. A term close, albeit narrower, in meaning is the “political transformation” which describes the phase of radical change of social order in the formal and legal aspect. Analysing the transformation of Central and East European countries one should not disregard the Balkan states. Those states have new constitutions, laws concerning political parties and new electoral statutes. They have opened the road to a competitive party system and the political system based on democratic principles.

Key words: transformation, Central and Eastern Europe, Croatia, Slovenia

The onset of political system transitions in Central and Eastern Europe dates back to the turn of the 1990’s. However, no single, universal model of such transitions in the region can be identified. The diversity of political systems in the countries of the region was the result of many factors, such as different historical backgrounds, political culture, economic situation, degree of civic awareness, length of the communist regime in particular countries and its nature, and so on.

The changes initiated in the years 1989–1991, symbolised by the ‘round table’ talks and the resulting partly free parliamentary elections of 4 June 1989 in Poland, the fall of the Berlin Wall and the collapse of the Soviet Union, signified the end of the bipolar world and the victory of liberal democracy.

The transformation process in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe consisted of:

- shaping of a new political system;
- emergence of rivalling parties allowing for personal and programme alternatives;
- development of a socio-economic system based on free market mechanisms;
- joining new political and military alliances and western international structures (Sokół, Żmigrodzki, 2005, p. 17).

New constitutions, acts on political parties and electoral statutes were adopted in post-communist states. All those actions opened the way to the development of a competitive party system and a political system based on democratic rules.

In periods when the state order of a given country undergoes transformation, the political culture of the people, their value system and ways of thinking always play a crucial role. The long years of one-party rule turned out to be a major obstacle in the development

of new patterns of behaviour and shaping the political elites to suit modern times. One of the results of introducing a new socio-political order was the idealisation of the previous system – a view shared by a considerable part of the society expressing their nostalgia for the model of the socialist welfare state (Rose, 1995, pp. 3–22).

The period of political and economic changes also proved the importance of ties with western democratic countries, both in the period when the previous system was still operating and during the time of transformation. After 1990, both the economic and political transformation was determined to a considerable degree by integration with West-European structures.

Analysing the systemic transformation in Central and East-European countries, W. Sokolewicz lists three levels of choice of legal solutions (Sokolewicz, 1992, p. 5):

- 1) on the macro-scale, lawmakers choose between political systems (e.g. democracy, authoritarianism);
- 2) on the medium-scale, politicians decide on the adoption of the form of a given system (e.g. parliamentarism, presidentialism);
- 3) on the micro-scale, lawmakers choose from among numerous variants of political institutions (such as a unicameral or bicameral parliament, etc.).

The transformations that took place in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe in the political and legal context were reflected in new legislative solutions.

Politicians in post-communist countries reached for systemic solutions deriving from various sources:

- a) structures and procedures traditionally existing in stable Western democracies;
- b) systemic traditions existing in particular countries (particularly Central European ones) prior to 1945;
- c) experience and institutions functioning in the previous [communist] system (e.g. parliamentary procedures) (Sokół, Żmigrodzki, 2005, p. 29).

The authors of these new systems faced the choice of the proper form of rule. Possible variants oscillated between parliamentarism and presidentialism (Antoszewski, Herbut, 2001, pp. 312–330).

When deciding on the structure of parliament, lawmakers adopted both the unicameral model (one-chamber parliament) and the bicameral one (two-chamber parliament). Bicamerality, characteristic of federalism, was adopted by many unitary countries, including Croatia (until 2001) and Slovenia. Strong parliaments are parliaments which have a monopoly of legislative power, appoint and control (dismiss) the cabinet and are not too fragmented.

The executive power in the analysed countries is dual, and is vested in the president and the government in the entirety of matters connected with internal and foreign policy (Słomka, 2003, pp. 108–129). In Slovenia and Croatia, the presidents do not have the presidential power of veto.

Elections are one of the most important mechanisms determining the manner of functioning of modern political systems. Free elections were a major milestone along the way of post-communist countries towards full democratisation (Żukowski, 2003, pp. 11–18). The basic principles of electoral law of post-communist countries are contained in their constitutions, while detailed issues are regulated by the electoral statutes (ordinances).

1. Political and systemic determinants (Lubik-Reczek, 2011)

The constitutions of all countries which once formed part of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRY) are modern legislative acts drawing from the well-established patterns of European democracy. Adoption of a constitution in the analysed cases often marked the completion of the process of the emergence of independent states from the 'ruins' of the Yugoslav federation. S. Gebethner emphasises the fact that the new, basic laws adopted soon after proclaiming independence became an indispensable element of the fight for freedom, and thus an integral part of the state-building process. The key provisions in each of the constitutions are those related to state sovereignty and independence (Gebethner, 1998, p. 11).

According to the analysed constitutions, the people are sovereign, holding power through their elected representatives or directly expressing their will in referendums or through civic initiatives.

The Croatian constitution describes Croatia as a "unitary and indivisible democratic and social state" (Garliccy, 1996, Art. 1).

The constitution of the Republic of Slovenia declares that Slovenia is a democratic republic governed by the rule of law and a social state. Some political, economic and social rights are reserved only for nationals, while other rights are also vested in foreigners, on a reciprocal basis; an example here is the right to own real estate (*The Constitution of Slovenia*, 1994, Art. 68).

In both constitutions, much attention is attached to economic, social and cultural rights (Sokolewicz, 2000, p. 21 et seq.).

All the constitutions guarantee citizens the right to work and impose on the state the obligation to help the unemployed by introducing unemployment benefits, proper remuneration for work and health care financed from public funds.

Each of the discussed legislative acts separates the state from the church, although not all of them contain a clear declaration of state secularity.

All the constitutions include declarations that the internal laws of the republic must remain compliant with the universally binding principles of international law and with treaties by which it is bound.

1.1. Republic of Croatia (Republika Hrvatska)

Tito's death in May 1980 marked a new era in the functioning of the Federation. The introduction of the rotation mechanism weakened federal government institutions. The situation in Yugoslavia was further complicated by the mounting economic crisis. Lack of clear management impeded the development of a programme of social and economic reforms.

In May and June 1989, after the announcement of the intended introduction of the principle of political pluralism in Yugoslavia, the inhabitants of Croatia began forming new political parties, which were legalised with retro-active legal force by the Sabor.

A multi-party system was introduced on 14 February 1990 by means of the constitution amendment act. The parliamentary elections that took place in all the republics of

Yugoslavia in 1990 showed how strongly those republics (apart from Serbia) were striving for independence.

The key moment on Croatia's path to independence was the elections held in April and May 1990, which brought the outright victory of the Croatian Democratic Union – HDZ (approx. 40% of votes).

The newly set up Parliament adopted a new constitution on 22 December 1990 (Sokół, Żmigrodzki, 2005, pp. 189–190). In a referendum on 15 May 1991 the majority of Croats (83% “for” with a turnout of 93%) voted for the sovereignty of Croatia. On 25 June 1991 the Croatian Parliament adopted the “Declaration on the Proclamation of the Sovereign and Independent Republic of Croatia”.

The outbreak of war (Kuczyński, 1994, p. 43) and the mediation of European Communities led to another decision of the Parliament. On 8 June 1991 the Parliament proclaimed the independence of Croatia. The state of Croatia was recognised by the international community in 1992. In May that year Croatia became a member of the UN.

The first Croatian President was Franjo Tuđman. After his death, Stjepan Mesić became the head of state (since 8 February 2000); currently, the Croatian President is Ivo Josipović (since 2010).

According to the 1990 Constitution, the Sabor was a bicameral body consisting of:

- the Chamber of Deputies (Zastupnički Dom) – the lower house and
- the Chamber of Counties (Županijski Dom) – the upper house with advisory role, also with the right of veto.

From every county, three deputies were elected to the Chamber of Counties by popular vote. The composition of the Chamber could be supplemented by the President of the Republic, who had the right to appoint up to five deputies from among citizens particularly distinguished in service to the country.

The Constitution also gave the President lifetime membership in the second chamber of the Parliament, unless he himself renounced that privilege.

The constitutional changes of 2000 transformed the Croatian semi-presidential system into a parliamentary-cabinet system.

In 2001, the Constitution was amended again; as a result, the upper house of the Parliament (Chamber of Counties) was abolished and the powers of the President were limited.

According to the Constitution of 22 December 1990, in its latest modification dated 15 June 2001, the head of state is the President elected in a general election for a five-year term. The President is not politically accountable to any organ of state power, yet bears constitutional responsibility for breach of the provisions of the Constitution.

The powers of the President of Croatia are regulated by Article 93 of the Constitution, according to which the President:

- represents the Republic of Croatia,
- makes sure the Constitution is observed,
- ensures the existence and unity of the Republic and
- the regular functioning of state authorities.

The representative function is carried out in both domestic and international relations.

Under Article 138, the President concludes agreements with other countries on behalf of the Republic of Croatia.

The Croatian President does not have the right of legislative initiative. His role in the legislative process boils down to the regulation contained in Article 88, which states that the President promulgates laws submitted to him by the Sabor within 8 days from the date of submission.

The head of state has no right of veto, but may only, prior to signing, initiate proceedings to review the constitutionality of a law before the Constitutional Court.

The body of legislative power is a one-chamber parliament – the Croatian Sabor, consisting of 150 to 160 deputies elected in a general election for a four-year term of office (Garlicy, 1996).

The current Parliament has 151 mandatories, of which 140 are elected proportionally according to the d'Hondt method, in ten electoral districts.

A certain quota system has also been agreed, according to which five MPs are elected by ethnic minorities and six by the Croatian emigration.

According to Sabor Regulations, deputies have the right to establish parliamentary clubs based on political or ethnic criteria. A parliamentary club may be established by a political party having at least three deputies; at least three representatives who are non-attached members; deputies elected as representatives of ethnic minorities; two or more political parties which have at least three deputies in the parliament.

Executive power is held by the government, headed by the Prime Minister, appointed by the Parliament. The legal basis for the functioning of Croatia's party system – the establishment and activities of parties – is regulated by the Croatian Constitution and the Political Parties Act. In the Constitution, Article 43 is important in that respect, as it guarantees citizens the right to freedom of association. They may form political parties in order to protect their interests and also exercise their social, economic or political rights. It is, however, prohibited to form political parties whose programme or operations may pose a threat to the constitutional order or independence. The parties are territorially organised and supervised by the Constitutional Tribunal of the Republic of Croatia which may suspend their activities (Garlicy, 1996).

The Political Parties Act adopted in 1993 forms the basis for the establishment and functioning of political parties. According to that Act, the free establishment of parties is an expression of the democratic multiparty system, which is treated as the highest value of the constitutional order of Croatia. Article 2 of the Act states that political parties have legal personality and operate in accordance with the objectives approved in their programmes and charters. The Act bans the operation of political parties in central government bodies, local and regional governmental bodies, as well as in the armed forces and the police.

The collection of one hundred signatures of adult Croatian citizens is required for the establishment of a political party. Each party must be entered into a special register, thus gaining legal personality. No party can operate unless registered in that way. The entry is made by the Ministry of Administration. Parties may be financed from membership fees, donations, publishing activity, sale of promotional materials. Parties which have at least one representative in the Parliament are also granted funds from the state budget. However, they must account for their spending, otherwise losing their right to be subsidised.

Administratively, the country is divided into 20 counties (*županije*) and the capital city as a separate administrative unit:

1. Zagreb county	12. Brod-Posavina county
2. Krapina-Zagorje county	13. Zadar county
3. Sisak-Moslavina county	14. Osijek-Baranja county
4. Karlovac county	15. Šibenik-Knin county
5. Varaždin county	16. Vukovar-Syrmia county
6. Koprivnica-Križevci county	17. Split-Dalmatia county
7. Bjelovar-Bilogora county	18. Istria county
8. Primorje-Gorski Kotar county	19. Dubrovnik-Neretva county
9. Lika-Senj county	20. Međimurje county
10. Virovitica-Podravina county	21. Zagreb (separate city)
11. Požega-Slavonia county	

The Croatian political scene is dominated by the following parties:

- Croatian Democratic Union (HDZ),
- Social Democratic Party of Croatia (SDP),
- Croatian People's Party Liberal Democrats (HNS-LD),
- Croatian Peasant Party (HSS), Istrian Democratic Assembly,
- Independent Democratic Serb Party,
- Croatian Social Liberal Party (HSLs) and
- Croatian Party of Rights (HSP).

The multi-party system has been present in Croatia since the moment of initiating socio-economic reforms by the reformatory fraction of the League of Communists of Croatia. As a result, the Croatian parliament adopted amendments related to multi-partyism. Passing of the law on the registration of new political parties and new electoral ordinance completed the above-described initiatives (Grdešić, 1991, p. 230 et seq.).

To conclude, it should be stated that, generally speaking, Croatia has succeeded in meeting the formal requirements posed to democratic countries.

1.2. The Republic of Slovenia (Republika Slovenija)

After Tito's death in 1980 Yugoslavia was struck by economic crisis and ethnic tensions. Slobodan Milošević, who came forward as a leading political figure at the end of the 1980's, strove for the preservation of Yugoslavia, maintaining the dominant role of Serbia. However, in 1989 the Skupstina in Ljubljana adopted an amendment to the republican constitution, thus giving grounds for claiming full independence by Slovenia.

On 8 April 1990, the first free elections took place in Slovenia, giving victory to the opposition gathered in the "Demos" formation (Democratic Slovenian Opposition – 55%). Thus, the post-communists – represented mainly by the Social Democratic Renewal Party – lost the parliamentary majority. Lojze Peterle, leader of Christian democrats, became Prime Minister. In a referendum of December 1990 the majority of Slovenes (93% "for", turnout 94%) (Sokół, Żmigrodzki, 2005, p. 509) voted for independence of the Republic. That decision was followed by the adoption, on 25 June 1991, of the Basic Constitutional Charter on the Sovereignty and Independence of Slovenia. In October 1991 Slovenia became a sovereign state, and Germany was the first to acknowledge its independence on 19 December 1991. On 23 December 1991, the Slovenian parliament adopted the new Constitution.

According to the Constitution, the head of state is the President, elected in a general election for a five-year term. The first President of Slovenia was Milan Kucan (re-elected in 1992 and 1997), followed by Janez Drnovsek (2002–2007) and Dr. Danilo Turk.

The catalogue of basic principles of the Slovenian political system (*The Constitution of the Republic of Slovenia*, 1994) states that Slovenia is:

- a democratic republic (Art. 1),
- a state governed by the rule of law and a social state (Art. 2),
- the governing system is based on the principle of separation of powers (Art. 3), principle of territorial self-government (Art. 9), principle of freedom of economic activity (Art. 74), and the principle of protection of private property and inheritance (Art. 33).

In Article 1 the Constitution describes Slovenia as a “democratic republic”, establishing the republican form of rule. The power is vested in the people – Article 3. Under this article, the sovereign may exercise power directly or through representative bodies. The political system of Slovenia contains important elements of direct democracy.

On the basis of constitutional regulations the sovereign (i.e. the people) has two main instruments at its disposal:

- legislative referendum, and
- popular initiative (according to Article 88 – at least 5,000 people) – to participate in decision-making processes concerning vital issues of state policy.

The Constitution introduced an elaborate referendum structure, contained in articles 3, 44, 90 and 170. The right to participate in a referendum has been vested in citizens holding electoral rights. According to the Slovenian constitution, there are two types of referendum: legislative and constitutional.

A legislative referendum takes place in the situation described in Article 90, which states that Parliament may (on its own initiative) or is obliged to (on the initiative of the deputies or 40,000 voters) call a referendum on issues connected with current legislation. Such a referendum is facultative, and shall be considered valid if a majority of those voting cast their votes in favour of the proposal.

A constitutional referendum is carried out upon the request of deputies in order to introduce changes to the Constitution. The introduction of such changes takes place if a majority of votes is in favour, and if the majority of those eligible to vote participate in the referendum (Zieliński et al., 2003, p. 62).

The legislative power belongs to a bicameral Parliament consisting of:

- the National Assembly – the lower house of the Slovenian parliament with a four-year term of office (Bilski, 1998, p. 180). The National Assembly consists of 90 deputies (of which two are representatives of the Italian and Hungarian ethnic minorities) elected in general election;
- the National Council – the upper house with advisory functions, consisting of 40 members who are representatives of professional and social groups (four of them representing employers, four representing employees, four representing farmers, small businesses and independent professional persons, six representing non-profit making organisations and twenty-two representing local interests) appointed in indirect elections. The term of office of the National Council is five years.

The Assembly has the power to:

- adopt laws,
- consent to the ratification of international treaties,
- call a referendum in matters subject to statutory regulation – and be bound by its outcome.

The National Assembly appoints: the Prime Minister, other ministers, members of the Court of Audit (the highest body for supervising state accounts, the state budget and all public spending), judges of common courts, judges of the Constitutional Court, the Governor of the Central Bank, the Ombudsman for a six-year term with the right to a single re-election.

The scope of powers of the National Council is limited:

- Firstly, it has the right of legislative initiative and, despite its special political nature (as a “self-government chamber”) it may propose bills concerning various matters.
- Secondly, it may present to the Assembly its opinions, which makes it more similar in nature to a social and economic council than to a chamber of parliament.
- Thirdly, it is entitled to demand that the National Assembly re-examine an act that has already been passed. However, it is not entitled to introduce amendments to an enacted law (Sarnecki, 1999, no. 152).

Executive power in Slovenia rests in the hands of the government headed by the Prime Minister. The government is appointed by the President and is accountable to Parliament (Winczorek, 1994, Art. 111).

As compared to the General Assembly, the head of the Slovenian state has relatively limited powers. The President orders elections to the Assembly, convenes the first parliamentary session and requires an extraordinary session to be convened. The President is not accountable to Parliament, although the Slovenian constitution does not foresee the institution of counter-signing of the President’s official acts.

If the head of state violates the Constitution or the law, he bears constitutional responsibility (Art. 109). Analysing the position of the President in the governmental system of Slovenia, we may conclude that he is rather perceived as a symbol and guarantee of national and state identity and an integrating factor for the citizens of the Republic.

One of the most important axioms of political science is the assertion that no political system can operate without certain political forces, and particularly without political parties, which play a major role in it. Functioning as a powerbase, particularly during parliamentary elections, they form a crucial element of every political system. From the moment of the emergence of first parties competitive to the League of Yugoslav Communists, there emerged the possibility to create a multi-party system in Slovenia (Bibić, 1993, pp. 367–386).

At present, the main political parties of Slovenia are:

- Slovenian Democratic Party (SDS),¹
- Liberal Democracy of Slovenia (LDS),²

¹ Founded in February 1989, it is a right-wing nationalist party. Prior to 19 September 2003 it operated under the name of the Social-Democratic Party of Slovenia (Socialdemokratska Stranka Slovenije – SDS).

² Founded on 12 March 1994 as a result of a merger between the Liberal Democratic Party (Liberalnodemokratska Stranka – LDS), the Democratic Party of Slovenia (Demokratska Stranka Slovenije

- Social Democrats (SD),³
- New Slovenia – Christian People’s Party (Nsi),
- Slovenian People’s Party (SLS),
- Slovenian National Party (SNS) and
- Democratic Party of Pensioners of Slovenia (DeSUS).

Although Slovenia has a multitude of parties, this has not resulted in sharp differences in their programmes. The exception is the radical, right-wing Slovenian National Party. Slovenian society, small in number, has turned out to be quite homogenous in its declared political views and political behaviour. The large number of political parties is therefore a sign of the active involvement of citizens in public life.

Another fact worth stressing is that Slovenia is a leader in the systemic and political transformations in the region. Here the changes are the furthest advanced and cover various aspects (Bibić, 1993, pp. 367–386; Fink-Hafnem, 1992).

The country is divided into 8 regions:

- 1 – Slovenian Littoral (*Primorska*);
- 2 – Carniola (*Kranjska*), comprising:
 - 2a – Upper Carniola (*Gorenjska*),
 - 2b – Inner Carniola (*Notranjska*),
 - 2c – Lower Carniola (*Dolenjska*);
- 3 – Slovenian Carinthia (*Koroška*);
- 4 – Styria (*Štajerska*);
- 5 – Prekmurje (*Prekmurje*).

2. Economic and social aspects (Lubik-Reczek, 2011)

Analysing the changes in the investigated region one should also pay attention to economic and social factors. This process is closely connected with, among other things, the disproportions that had existed already in the period of the SFRY, with war damage and with the so-called negative outcomes of the transformation.

The departure from a centrally planned economy towards free market forms resulted in the emergence of problems which had either been previously unknown, or artificially mitigated (e.g. unemployment).

Among the most important socio-economic reasons for dissatisfaction and tension were the collapse of numerous industrial plants and the resulting reduction in employment. This led to the emergence of the phenomenon of unemployment, so far unknown in that part of Europe.

– DSS), the Greens – Ecological-Social Party (in 1994 it broke away from the Greens of Slovenia) and the Socialist Party of Slovenia (Socialistična Stranka Slovenije – SSS).

³ Founded in June 1993 as a result of transformation into a single political party of the parties that had already run in a coalition in the 1992 elections: the Social-Democratic Renewal of Slovenia, the Worker’s Party and the Social-Democratic Union. Before 5 April 2005 called the United List of Social Democrats (Združena Lista Socialnih Demokratov – ZLSD).

Production slumped. The recession covered all branches of economic life, being particularly visible in industry and agriculture. Lack of market stability resulted in a situation in which the countries which had initiated the systemic transformation processes and freed up prices began coping with a rapid growth in inflation. For instance, in 1993, inflation in Croatia was about 1,600%, and in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia 240,000% (Wojciechowski, 1999, p. 96).

It was predominantly the result of:

- excessive burdening of the budget with subsidies,
- budget difficulties resulting from restructuring the economy,
- cheap credit,
- prohibitive customs duties and compensation fees,
- supply shortages,
- a slump in production, and
- purchases of large quantities of weapons.

Croatia is a post-socialist country. Prior to the collapse of Yugoslavia, Croatia was the second (after Slovenia) best developed republic as regards the economy and living standards of its inhabitants. The late 1980's witnessed the onset of an economic transformation, switching the Croatian economy from a centrally planned to a free market one. At the beginning, the position of the Croatian economy was privileged, due to its high level compared to other post-communist countries. However, it suffered some major blows due to the liquidation of heavy industry and considerable war damage; a grave problem was also the loss of access to the markets of the countries of former Yugoslavia.

In the countries which emerged as a result of the collapse of the SFRY the systemic transformation on the one hand brought a sharp rise in prices and on the other hand slowed down rises in wages and pensions. This has led to a considerable drop in living standards. Bureaucracy, legal chaos, lack of funds for basic social benefits, weakness of economic infrastructure, a drop in investments and mass bankruptcies made the dissatisfaction of society even greater.

The authorities, through their economic and ethnic policy, strove to level out those differences, and the investment policy that they applied caused a constant rise of dissatisfaction in the best-developed republics, i.e. Croatia and Slovenia. One of the reasons behind that dissatisfaction was their contribution (much higher than that of the remaining republics) to a special fund aimed at supporting the backward regions of the state. For instance Slovenia, with its population constituting a mere 8.42% of the total number of inhabitants of Yugoslavia contributed as much as 18% of the funds in the years 1971–1975. It should also be stressed that, despite that burden, the amount of investment in Slovenia was relatively high – in the years 1970–1976 it oscillated between 15% and 20.5% of total domestic investment. A similar situation occurred in Croatia, where the percentage of investment was only slightly higher than the percentage of its population. At present, Slovenia has the highest GDP per capita from among the ten countries which joined the EU in May 2004 (18,400 USD in 2005). The inflation rate (3.5% in 2004) dropped to 2.5% in 2005 and is approaching the average rate for EU countries. Since the year 2000, privatisation has been progressing in such areas as banking, telecommunications, and the public utilities sector. Gradually, the curbs on foreign investment are being lifted. Slovenia is considered the fastest developing country among the ten new EU members

and one of the fastest growing members of that organisation. On 1 January 2007, the euro became the official currency of Slovenia, replacing the Slovenian tolar, which had been in use as the national currency in the years 1991–2006.

The differences in GDP between the most backward region (Kosovo) and the best developed republics increased sharply. The reasons could be identified when we look at investment, infrastructure or disproportional population growth and the demographic “explosion” in, for example, Kosovo (Waldenberg, 2000, p. 440).

3. Other factors determining the changes in the countries of former Yugoslavia

Among other factors that have a bearing on the transformations in the former Yugoslavian countries, questions related to history, culture, ideology, psychology or migration (Lubik-Reczek, 2011) should be mentioned. The historical and cultural background is of major importance. Contemporary cultural relations in the Balkans are characterised by their ethnocentric approach. Such a state of affairs determines the nature of those relations, and at the same time has a bearing on the potential for their development. The emergence of national states created a specific situation in which a tendency to stress one’s separate identity, also in the sphere of culture, is strongly visible.

The emergence of new cultural ‘spaces’ was often accompanied with the process of escalating nationalism (Zięba, 2004, pp. 79–87), manifesting itself in various forms, and leading to rivalry and antagonisms among Balkan states and nations. The ethnocentric factor became the basis for building new cultural spaces in the Balkans. It was connected with two opposing processes – integration and autonomy. One example of that is the Yugoslavian state. Its federal character after World War II helped preserve different cultural areas. The process of developing a common Yugoslavian culture as a synthesis of particular components characteristic for particular cultural areas proved impossible. The integration processes that were taking place there led naturally to the gradual elimination of local traditions. The process was slow and had not been completed in all the Balkan states. A characteristic phenomenon occurred of the slow loss of significance of geographical areas in favour of the national state.

As part of the ideology of nationalism numerous demands were made, in particular of Balkan states for the integration of neighbouring geographical regions into a given state, which usually gave grounds for conflict. The nationalist ideology (Jelavitch, 1966; Sugar, 1969) advocated predominantly the strengthening of a new type of loyalty to the national state. National loyalty is mainly measured by one’s attitude towards the national state. It is the state that becomes the main exponent of patriotic and nationalist attitudes, which in their extreme form turn into chauvinism.

The boundaries of cultural spaces ‘superimposed’ themselves to a greater and greater degree onto the state boundaries, delimiting the value areas in the spatial sense. As this phenomenon had the nature of a process which was connected with forming new state structures, many events were taking place that related directly to the shaping of a ‘new division’ in the political sense. The cultural factor often backed up national, political or ideological arguments.

Cultural contacts between new Balkan states were therefore the function of political and social deals. They no longer played the role of a natural connecting factor, but rather served the purpose of preserving separate identities. However, as the relations between the Balkan states were becoming more co-operative – which differed in various periods and with relation to various countries – a network of formal and legal ties regulating the co-operation developed. This was also true for cultural contacts. A characteristic trait of this new stage in cultural relations in the Balkans was that they found themselves under the protection of the states, and that treaties and agreements concluded between particular states contained also regulations of cultural co-operation as well.

This facilitated the strengthening of new cultural areas in particular Balkan states. The states began to carry out a conscious cultural policy aimed at maintaining the primacy of the national element as a basis for the development of a national ideology (Stavrianos, 1963). Foreign influences that could prevent the strengthening of patriotic attitudes were consciously curtailed. There began a slow but systematic process of consolidation of the national identity; it grew also among those ethnic groups that had been deprived of it for whole periods in history.

In external relations, too, the cultural factor played a crucial role in backing up political and territorial arguments. Considering that the process of building state structures was gradual, the importance of the role of that factor in stirring up national arguments is obvious, also outside the boundaries of the given state where the representatives of the nation lived, often in populous groups.

The cultural factor played a supportive role in the foreign policy of particular Balkan states, aiding national aspirations and political objectives. As time went by, the existing political and territorial divisions strengthened, and new conditions for cultural co-operation arose, such co-operation was treated as one of the instruments serving the development of mutual contacts. The cultural policy of particular states was perceived as an extension of their diplomatic contacts, and with time has become one of the instruments of safeguarding the national interest. Thus, an entirely new, different model of cultural relations emerged. Losing its 'spontaneous' nature, those relations have become one of the spheres of co-operation or confrontation regulated by state authorities.

Among conflict-generating cultural factors, there are not only cultural differences but also fears that those differences might be lost. Cultural tensions may also stem from, for example, claims to a well-known historical figure or specific cultural heritage.

Such disputes concerning the 'proprietary rights' often involve whole nations and are passed from generation to generation. And the situation becomes even more complicated when the object of the dispute is not an individual but an entire ethnic group.

Psychological determinants also have a considerable impact on the presence of tensions, both between countries and between individuals. The process of shaping the above-described phenomena is largely based on mental factors. It is also closely connected with the question of antipathy towards aliens and the resulting sense of threat and concern for the well-being of one's own nation. The problem of alienation and ostracism is universal and exterritorial in nature. It is also closely connected with the question of ethnic myths, such as the enemy myth or the origin myth. Those elements may be observed nowadays in all post-Yugoslavian states.

An important factor present in the analysed region is the question of refugees.⁴ It has its roots in political, ethnic, religious or economic factors. That phenomenon occurred on a large scale, for example, during the conflict in Croatia,⁵ Bosnia and Herzegovina or in Kosovo.⁶ It also sometimes happened that a majority or a considerable part of a community or nation left their homes under duress, or because of being ordered to, or fear.

To sum up, it should be emphasised that the factors listed above have been and still are present in particular states with varying frequency and intensity. For instance, economic or social sources had a weaker impact in such countries as Croatia or Slovenia, but a stronger one in areas such as Macedonia, Kosovo or Bosnia and Herzegovina. It should also be taken into account that the reasons, while classified into separate groups (e.g. cultural, psychological or migration-related), are often interconnected and overlapping.

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⁴ There are approx. 7,200 refugees in the territory of former Yugoslavia (end of 2008). For more information see: Protecting Refugees and the Role of UNHCR 2007/08, www.unhcr.org, 12.11.2009.

⁵ As a result of the war in Croatia approx. 300,000–350,000 Serbs fled from Croatia to Serbia and the Serbian Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina. According to UNHCR estimates, only 125,000 Serbs had returned to Croatia by 2007.

⁶ After the end of the conflict in Kosovo, over 14,000 Kosovan refugees living in Germany were waiting to be sent back home. Almost 10,000 of them are Roma. The agreement foresees that Kosovo will admit all persons who hold documents of the former Yugoslav province or whose residence there can be proved. The German authorities undertook to issue no more than 2,500 readmission applications per year.

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Transformacja w państwach Europy Środkowej i Wschodniej – próba porównania Chorwacji i Słowenii

Streszczenie

W Europie Środkowej i Wschodniej od kilkunastu lat zachodzą zmiany, które wyjaśniane są w kategoriach transformacji systemowej czy ustrojowej. Transformacja systemowa jest najczęściej używanym pojęciem do opisu zmiany społecznej, która rozpoczęła się w tym rejonie Europy po 1989 r. Zbliżonym pojęciem, choć węższym jest transformacja ustrojowa, która opisuje fazę radykalnej zmiany ładu społecznego w aspekcie formalno-prawnym. Analizując transformację państw Europy Środkowej i Wschodniej, zwrócić należy również uwagę na państwa bałkańskie. Zostały w nich uchwalone nowe konstytucje, ustawy o partiach politycznych i ordynacje wyborcze. Otworzyły one drogę do konkurencyjnego systemu partyjnego oraz systemu politycznego opartego na zasadach demokracji.

Słowa kluczowe: transformacja, Europa Środkowa i Wschodnia, Chorwacja, Słowenia