Processes of democratization in the East Central European and Balkan states: sovereignty-related conflicts in the context of Europeanization

Attila Ágh*

Department of Political Science, Budapest University of Economic Sciences, Fővám tér 8, H-1093 Budapest, Hungary

Abstract

This paper discusses the Central and East European democratic transitions as parts of the global democratization process, including their both external and domestic aspects. The analysis covers six East Central European (ECE) and six Balkan states. It provides a systematic overview of these twelve states with a classification of their external and internal developments. The paper classifies these states according to the three stages of systemic change and according to their EU (association and accession) and NATO ( PfP and membership) relationships. In the New World Order, the sovereignty-related conflicts appear in this systematic overview through the analysis of the bilateral and multilateral relations between and among these states as restructuring follows the requirements of the EU and NATO. These multinational organizations actually rearrange both regional structures and neighbourhood relationships. The ECE and Balkan states, based on the parallel criteria of external and internal developments, form four groupings: (1) new entrants—the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland and Slovenia; (2) late-comers to democratization—Slovakia, Croatia, Romania and Bulgaria; (3) “semi-protectorates” of great powers and international organizations (Bosnia and Macedonia); (4) unsettled countries or conflict-seeking states—Serbia and Albania. © 1999 The Regents of the University of California. Published by Elsevier Science Ltd. All rights reserved.

Keywords: Democratic transition and consolidation; External and internal sovereignty

* Tel/fax: +361-218-8049; e-mail: polt_agh@pegasus.bke.hu.
The internal and external aspects of sovereignty

The overused label “post-communist states” blurs the many differences among the new democracies in Central and Eastern Europe. In fact, the two regions—East Central Europe (ECE) and the Balkans—are so diverse that even their interregional comparison and the intraregional classification of the emerging democracies seems almost hopeless. Moreover, the developments in the Balkan region in the nineties have been so varied that the differences among the countries within this region have been increasing, while in ECE some convergence is evident. As it happens, the most marked structural political difference between these regions is that ECE countries usually have a parliamentary system, while most Balkan states have a presidential one. At least in this region, then, it appears that the more presidential a state, the less democratic it is, that is the closer it comes to personal rule. The economic distance between the ECE and the Balkans regions is as great as the political one. In 1996 the six ECE states had per capita GDP’s of about US 3500 while the six Balkan states had GDP’s less than US 1000 per capita (see Ágh, 1998a: 82–83).

The lessons of my comparative studies (Ágh, 1998a; Ágh, 1998b) indicate that a classification or typology of the emerging democracies is both possible and necessary, although any classification probably hurts some national sensitivities. There is a rather large body of literature in international political science, however, which allows us to establish a rather clear differentiation between the ECE and Balkan states. Thus, the vigorous discussions triggered by any typology may serve both to dissipate misunderstandings and to correct the possible flaws of classification. Of course, the present classificatory endeavour concerns not so much the situation of democracy but the progress of democratization as a process in individual countries. No doubt, it is sometimes very difficult to assess the tendencies and the big turning points in this process, especially since the new start for democratization was only begun in late 1996 in the Balkans. Even so, one can definitely classify the developments in these two regions: first, in terms of democratization as an internal event, and, second, in terms of the Euro-Atlantic integration as an external process. Together, these dimensions create the base for a typology of the states in ECE and the Balkans.

The typology developed herein focuses upon the concept of sovereignty. This paper analyzes linkage politics, that is the interrelationships and interdependencies between external and internal developments in the ECE and the Balkan regions. In these regions external dependence as an environmental factor has always been more important than internal dynamics, since these small and weak semi-peripheral countries have always had a so called “path dependent” development or “forced-course development”. These are “penetrated societies” whose external environments decisively effect their political characters (Ágh, 1995).

The concept of sovereignty is particularly suitable for the analysis of linkage politics and for the classification of these two regions. Both the external and internal aspects of sovereignty must be taken into account if an adequate understanding is to be secured. The concept of sovereignty has usually been applied only in its external or international aspect, but the internal one is equally important, since the state
is to be investigated as the indisputable, highest legal authority inside the country. The concept of sovereignty emerged originally in the 16th and 17th centuries in the works of Jean Bodin and Thomas Hobbes as a reaction to the prevailing political instability and chaos, and from the search for an ultimate authority that could be generally accepted by the society. In this sense, then, it can be said that the early concern for securing sovereignty was focused on its external and internal dimension concurrently. When the concept of sovereignty was looked at from its internal side, it led directly to Max Weber’s thesis that the state served as a unique bearer of legitimate violence. During the 16th and 17th centuries the whole European international system came under stress and the concept of external sovereignty was established by the Peace of Westphalia. Under the Westphalian scheme, the recognition of the sovereignty of the state brought a full membership in the international community as well as an internal sovereignty that gave the state absolute authority in the domestic political arena. With their parallel emergence, the two aspects of sovereignty became interwoven and mutually reinforced each other, although for many centuries the international aspect of sovereignty remained the dominant concern in scholarly literature.

With the collapse of the bipolar Old World Order, we are again in a period of both international and internal “chaos”—it is an unsettled time confronting profound transformations in general. These changes are still more acute in the ECE and Balkan regions. As a result of the collapse of the state socialist regimes and the ensuing chaos, the internal sovereignty of these states was challenged. The national reactions to this threatening chaos have differed considerably, and, accordingly both stronger and weaker states have emerged inside the ECE and Balkans. Some effective and efficient states have managed to control their whole territory, maintaining political unity and directing socio-economic development (Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovenia and Hungary). Some other states, however, have not established effective control over their whole territory (for example, Bosnia) or have only achieved a loose one (Albania, Serbia). Again, some others have full political control over the whole country but they have not been able to manage their socio-economic development successfully (Bulgaria, Romania). For present purposes, the concept of the sovereign state is to be thought of as requiring a democratically legitimate state, that is, a democratically elected, popularly accepted and widely supported government, which exercises actual control over its full territory and manages to direct the crucial aspects of socio-economic development.

It has often been said that the Westphalia paradigm brought about an anarchical international system in which each state strove to practice power politics in order to achieve its vital national interests. No doubt, it is true that in the international arena there was no ultimate higher authority, unlike that inside the countries. Nevertheless it was not an “anarchical” system, since the Peace of Westphalia created an organized international political market with well-known rules—amended by international treaties, again and again. However, the Westphalia paradigm, according to which recognition of external sovereignty also meant possession of internal sovereignty, as the legitimacy of the internal supreme authority, came to an end by the middle of the 20th century. Earlier, this *junctim* was positive and necessary in order
to give space for the “pluralism” of modern states in the West without a higher international authority threatening them with permanent intervention from outside.

After World War II, however, a kind of higher or supreme authority appeared in the international arena in the form of the United Nations, and by the dual institutional system in the bipolar world. The postwar developments were characterized in the West by the strengthening position of the largest international organizations as strong power centres determining the states’ behaviour, particularly in Europe, for example, the Council of Europe. Furthermore, the collapse of the bipolar world has brought about, in this respect, the biggest change in Europe by creating a new kind of supreme authority through an organic web of all-European institutions: it has produced a European political architecture in the form of the CSCE-OSCE and, along with these, a series of all-European arrangements like the Paris Charter. The basic regulations of these institutions have become mandatory for all European states, and their provisions, vital for democratization, have actually been “forced upon” the ECE and Balkan states as preconditions for their own “Europeanization”. The historical events of the nineties have witnessed the increasing—and to some extent controversial—activity of all-European institutions as quasi supreme authorities in the two regions under consideration.

The international practices associated with the recognition of sovereignty in the newly emerging independent states have changed nowadays in important ways, especially when compared to the peace settlements after World Wars I and II. At that time the victorious powers rearranged the map of the Eastern half of Europe unilaterally, that is, following only their narrow and short-sighted national interests. After 1989, in the New World Order, however, it was the international community that masterminded the changes and accomplished them, not voluntaristically, but in the framework of the international treaties and principles. The international arrangements have become a balanced and negotiated process, much more consciously allocating than simply legally recognizing sovereignty, even if not completely devoid of the conflicting national interests of the great powers, as, for example, in the post-Yugoslav settlements (Luif, 1995: 265–272). The external and internal recognition of the new European states in the nineties has not been unilaterally and exclusively determined by one great power, drawing up borders and creating countries according to its own national interests or historical mythology.

This new approach to recognizing sovereignty is important and nothing makes it more apparent than a remembrance of the past. After World War I some artificially created states appeared in Central Europe and the Balkans, states like Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia which were ethnically very heterogenous. These artificially created countries were recognized as sovereign states, but their internal sovereignty was more than doubtful. Indeed, they were extremely fragile. Certainly, Yugoslavia was the most artificial creature; in fact, it turned out to be a Serbian empire. But in many other states as well, large parts of the population did not accept the state and its government as a higher ultimate authority either. It is not by chance that these artificially created countries without strong internal sovereignty disintegrated when the international system which had created them, collapsed from above. The development of internal sovereignty by the domestic political community was a difficult and
long process in all countries concerned after WWI and to some extent even after WWII. Certainly, it was an unfinished process in Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia when the fall of dictatorship took place and the dissolution of the Old World Order accelerated. The fast international transformation of the last decade has finally accomplished what the gradual process of internal disintegration had already begun.

These ECE and Balkan developments regarding sovereignty can be conceptualized as an inorganic model versus the organic one in Western Europe. Whereas in the West the internal struggle for political authority was a long process and proceeded in tandem with the recognition of external sovereignty, in the Eastern half of Europe external sovereignty was awarded to many countries after WWI and WWII only by the victorious powers. Their struggle for internal sovereignty began only later, and in some cases never ended successfully. The resistance of large parts of the population in the interwar period to the new power centres manifested itself in political breakdowns and chaotic conditions, in several cases even in civil wars, provoking dictatorships on the part of the dominant ethnic group of the nationalizing and centralizing states. In the postwar period, the state socialist regimes put all of these problems of minority recognition into a “deep freezer” and, because of the missing legitimacy, the centrifugal tendencies came back with a vengeance after 1989.

As a consequence, the creation of internal sovereignty was easier for the young states, using and abusing simple repression, prior to 1989 than after, since in the interwar period and under state socialism the democratic order was not seen as a precondition for the internal sovereignty. This standard was not yet on the international agenda. In the Third Wave of global democratization, however, consensual democracy has become an elementary precondition for all European states, with minority rights for all citizens and communities within the ECE and Balkan states. The latent and long oppressed demands of the different kinds of minorities for a “recognition” of their specific existences came immediately to the surface in the democratizing states. States have had to democratize themselves under pressure from the new highest international authorities, such as Council of Europe, OSCE, the EU and NATO and the likes, or risk losing recognition of both their sovereignty and legitimacy. The ethnically homogenous states in ECE and the Balkans have accepted these converging internal and external demands more easily than in the ethnically fragmented and/or socio-economically less developed states, with both the negative features finding their greatest expression in Yugoslavia.

In general, the post-communist states of ECE and the Balkans were confronted in the early nineties with two major paradoxes:

1. The first paradox—the limited sovereignty formulated by the Brezhnev Doctrine for the former members of the Soviet “external empire” had to be transformed into a new kind of limited sovereignty. This was forced upon them by the network of all-European organizations as a mandatory adaptation to the New World Order and as an “entrance-fee” to these organizations. Thus, the countries concerned regained their sovereignty only in the early nineties and they were expected to give it up immediately again, so to say, right after the pull-out of the Soviet troops.
2. The second paradox—with the formation of the new European supreme authority through the CSCE-OSCE process, the relationships between the internal and external aspects of sovereignty have been drastically altered. Internal affairs have turned out to be less and less “untouchable” by outsiders and were penetrated more and more by the all-European regulations with requirements for consensual democracy, press freedom, human rights, free migration, minority rights, and others. That is, the internal sovereignty has been increasingly limited by the provisions of the large European organizations modelled upon the Helsinki Final Act.

Collective enforcement of the international norms governing state behaviour has also appeared, even in violent forms (Bosnia and Kosovo) through NATO. NATO has acted at the request of the Security Council, or upon its own initiative, as the enforcer of legitimate international norms, almost as if the countries concerned were within the same “transnational” state. This forceful international intervention has consolidated the situation in the Balkans to a great extent, but the old dangers of artificial sovereignty have again re-appeared. With NATO as a guarantor of peace in the New World Order, not only have the security issues become internationalized but some vital domestic issues as well, such as those bearing on minority problems. Thus, external support has been internalized in and for the countries lacking effective internal sovereignty in order to establish, and protect internally, their newly recognized external sovereignty (for example, Bosnia and Macedonia).

Furthermore, the EU as a “would be polity” has acted in a similar way. The EU has behaved as a higher domestic authority in ECE concerning even the most basic economic and legal matters. EU membership also involves limited sovereignty because the _acquis communautaire_ are above the national law. These limitations appear most dramatically for the small and weak states, like the late comer ECE states in their pre-accession stage. No doubt, however, small countries benefit considerably from joining the European Union, even if they have to give up large parts of their sovereignty. In short, then, joining the EU means both an extension and a limitation of sovereignty for the ECE small states. As Kenneth Hanf and Ben Soetendorp point out, many observers argue that “small states in particular can reap advantages from membership of the EU. Here they can exert more influence and achieve more of what they seek than if they were forced to compete on their own in the ‘international political market’ with the large powers. (...) Within the EU small states have to be taken seriously” (Hanf and Soetendorp, 1998: 193). Thus, EU membership is not a limitation but an extension of sovereignty if we take into account the fact that sovereignty involves, in the end, a nation’s practical capacity to maximize its influence in the world.

In the last decade, much has been said about the globalization of sovereignty issues. Actually, what we see in the ECE and the Balkan regions has been the Europeanization and not the globalization of the problem. Better to say, the effects of globalization have appeared in these two regions in a very particular and very direct way through Europeanization—that is through their structural accommodation to the European architecture.
Progress in democratization

In democratization theory there are already standard criteria by which to measure progress in a given country. First, one can start from the well-known periodisation of systemic change outlined by Dankwart Rustow which distinguishes the three consecutive stages:

1. pre-transition crisis with a breakthrough towards democratization,
2. democratic transition with the elements of both systems, old and new,
3. democratic consolidation as an emergence of the new system in a coherent way.

These stages suggest that

1. some Balkan states are still in the stage of the pre-transition crisis since democratization has hardly begun in Serbia, Bosnia and Albania,
2. other Balkan states have arrived at the earliest period of democratic transition (Bulgaria, Romania and Macedonia),
3. some ECE states have begun the democratization process, but in a very distorted way, with tyrannical majorities prevailing still in Croatia and prevailing for many years in Slovakia,
4. most ECE states in the late nineties have entered the stage of early consolidation with its characteristic patterns of virtuous circle in economic growth and political stabilization as evidenced in Poland, Hungary, Slovenia and the Czech Republic.

This periodization already hints at a basic difference between the ECE and Balkan states which may be conceptualized in the terms of re-democratization and democratization.

1. Historical legacy—This basic difference appears historically in the fact that the ECE states have always been in a recurring cycle of re-democratization, and, as a result, most of them have a considerable democratic legacy and experience. The various Balkan states, in contrast, usually have had much less in the way of a democratic legacy and experience; therefore, they began the democratization process seriously only in the early nineties.

2. Actor’s approach—The ECE populations with their democratic experience had developed an active resistance against state socialism (1956, 1968, 1980) and the organized masses became much more active in the late eighties, when they empowered the counter-elites through the “movement parties” to negotiate a transition. Unlike in the ECE where the masses were the prime-movers in the pre-transition crisis, in the Balkans the ruling elites acted first under the pressure of external changes and tried to avoid the snowball effects of democratization. The passive and unorganized masses only reacted, rather belatedly, to the manipulations of the ruling elite. By responding with small changes, the incumbent Balkan elites attempted to keep their power, granting only minor concessions to the opposition.

3. Character of transformations—In the ECE states there were radical economic
and political transformations. These took place peacefully and in an evolutionary way. In the Balkans, however, the transformations have been both less profound and more violent, or “anomical”. In many cases these changes involved, or bordered on, civil war. Thus, the Balkan states can be classified, too, according to their degree of violence, with Yugoslavia as the most and Bulgaria as the least violent case.

In any case, all of this suggests that an even deeper understanding of the details of transformation can be gained by exploring the individual specifics of the various ECE and Balkan countries. Schmitter’s model argues that the “mode of transition” determines to a significant extent which “type of democracy” will emerge. Isolating the possibilities on each of the two axes—actors (elites or masses) and strategy (compromise or force)—Schmitter distinguishes four modes of transition: (1) pact (elites—compromise); (2) reform (masses—compromise); (3) imposition (elites—force); and (4) revolution (masses—force). The ensuing types of democracy are corporative, consociational, elitist and electoralist. (Schmitter and Karl, 1992) That is, in this “square model”

1. **pact** leads to a **corporative** democracy where the state is strong and very active in interest concertation;
2. **reform** leads to **consociational** (consensual) democracy where the state is relatively weaker, and various minority groups have autonomy and take part in the decision-making process;
3. **imposition** leads to **elitist** (or “populist”) democracy where the state is strong but elite competition is high for state power and the population is hardly involved in politics;
4. **revolution** leads to **electoralist** democracy where the state is not too strong and the masses keep some basic activity, reduced mostly to participation in elections.

This conceptual framework is helpful in classifying the process of democratization. Of course, these categories are only “ideal-types”: the real world polities are only approximations of these ideal-types. Moreover, during their democratic transition the various ECE and Balkan countries have changed their locations in this square—two and two matrix—model, in that some states have moved closer from one cell to another. The forms of democracy can also be classified either as in process, that is, emerging (new, young), or as **consolidated** (advanced) democracies. According to their level of democratization, they may be **procedural** (with more or less free and fair elections only) or **substantive** (with deep domestic transformations affecting all facets of life). Pursuing this perspective, Andreas Schedler argues that the progress from “electoral” to “liberal” democracy is, in fact, a “second transition” (Schedler, 1998: 94). In addition, procedural democracy may represent only a **facade** or **formal** democracy, in which the thin facade of democratic practices covers the authoritarian regime or a deeper democratization which allows also for the victory of the opposition in free elections. The latter can be grouped into liberal, “national” and “social” types (Comisso, 1997). **Liberal democracy** presupposes a free market economy and free individuals; the “**national**” democracy an organized political community with
consensual arrangements; and the “social” democracy (egalitarian in Comisso’s term) which extends social and economic rights. These forms can also be taken as degrees of democratization in emerging democracies as well as different kinds of consolidated democracies.

A substantial literature about democratization in Poland, Hungary, Slovenia and the Czech Republic already exists (Ágh and Ilonszki, 1996) but only in the second half of the nineties have some more detailed analyses about the Balkan states emerged as well. Based on existing scholarship and according to the above mentioned criteria, the countries of the ECE and the Balkans can be characterized as follows:

Poland was the classic case of pact transition and became the original model of negotiated transition, leading to a corporative structure of democracy; it has reached the early stage of “social” democracy.

Hungary combined the pact and reform cases and appeared as the classical case of negotiated transition, meaning that corporative democracy was also mixed with some consensual features. Hungary has also entered the early stage of “social” democracy.

Slovenia joined later, had a brief violent start, but its reform movement resulted in a negotiated transition, which produced the strongest corporative structure in ECE. It has the most developed “social” democracy in ECE.

The Czech Republic had an easy start with the capitulation of the former elite; democratization was continued as an elite imposition since the mass movements were missing during the last decade of state socialism. Therefore, umbrella organizations survived for a long time, and corporatist features dominated without any signs of consensual democracy. The Czech Republic has an overdeveloped and premature “social” democracy, but the crisis management of the new government should reduce it (see Leff, 1997).

Slovakia also had an elite imposition and the strong nationalist movement excluded consensual democracy and led to a power concentration with a personal rule, that is to an electoralist democracy. Hence it still has serious problems with both liberal democracy and “national” democracy, meaning that the internal sovereignty is faulty (Musil, 1995; Szomolányi and Gould, 1997). However, Slovakia may get a new start on democratization with the new government after the September 1998 elections.

Croatia had no pact, only an elite imposition by the leader of the nationalist mass movement and created a war damaged democracy, with some corporatist elements, but without any consensual features. In this elitist democracy the ECE character exists mostly as potential; the establishment of a liberal democracy is very high on the national agenda. The “national” democracy and internal sovereignty are still not complete (Carter and Norris, 1996).

Romania developed from a revolution followed by elite imposition with no pact at all. The belated start of democratization in 1996 has generated neither corporative nor consensual features in this electoralist democracy. The first steps have been taken to establish liberal democracy but its more advanced forms are clearly missing (IDEA, 1997).

Bulgaria had a weak pact but strong efforts for a gentle transition, yet this was accompanied by waves of anomical violence. Bulgaria had a good start and a weak
follow-up. There is an electoralist democracy in Bulgaria with some corporative but no consensual features. Even the first stage of liberal democracy has been threatened by a deep economic crisis. Both “national” and “social” forms of democracy are rather long-term possibilities (Melone, 1998).

Macedonia had a kind of a pact with some signs of a negotiated transition and some consensual features, in the framework of a very fragile balance of national-cultural-religious minorities. Procedural or electoral democracy exists in Macedonia and the first signs of a liberal democracy are visible, but it retains some features of “national” democracy (Bugajski, 1995).

Albania, a quasi pact was followed by waves of anomical violence culminating in civil war, since both sides represented—at least until 1997—totalitarian traditions. In 1997 there was a new start for an electoralist democracy. A procedural or electoral democracy would be a great achievement which could open the way for liberal democracy (Vickers and Pettifer, 1997).

Bosnia experienced a “revolutionary” war of minorities and had an unsettled peace, forced upon it by the great powers. Because of not-yet-performing consensual features, Bosnia fights for procedural democracy at the “national” level (Carter and Norris, 1996; Dyker and Vejvoda, 1996).

Yugoslavia is a dual case, since Montenegro’s development is more and more diverging from that of Serbia. In the latter there has been no systemic change so far, just a thin democratic facade. A procedural democracy, that is free and fair elections—without the intimidation of opposition and with free access to media would be a great achievement (Brubaker, 1997; Goati, 1998).

Progress in Euro-Atlantic integration

The basic tenets of European democratic states were formulated in the CSCE-OSCE summits. In the Bonn summit in April 1990 all states accepted the principles of the free market economy and at the Paris summit in November 1990 the norms of behaviour for democratic states were formulated in the Paris Charter. With these decisions, the Bonn and Paris summits also laid the foundations for the structural accommodation or Europeanization of the ECE and Balkan states. On a closer view, however, only those states have made progress in the European integration in its widest meaning that have also accepted the more specific goals of the Euro-Atlantic integration, that is the combined EU and NATO perspectives. There has been a large variety of national responses to this challenge: Poland, for example, as an ambitious new member of the European system, while Serbia as a defiant non-member.

The Council of Europe and the OSCE, as “higher authorities”, have been the most active promoters of Europeanization in its comprehensive sense. Actually, all ECE and Balkan states are OSCE members—the only reluctant state, Albania also joined in June 1991—although this all-European organization has been much more successful in elaborating the principles of the new European architecture than in demanding and monitoring their implementation. The Council of Europe has played a much bigger role in homogenizing and extending the criteria for human and minority rights
to all European states and it has also a stronger institutional mechanism to monitor their implementation. As the latest event, the Federal Union of European Nationalities (FUEN) as an NGO issued a *Declaration on the role of national minorities in international relations* suggesting that the protection of ethnic minorities should be included into the future *Charter on the European Security* (Devetak, 1998: 312). Yugoslavia is still a non-member and Croatia proved to be a very troubling case. In 1996 Croatia was accepted as a member, then its membership was suspended, and restored again in November 1996, in the hope of its future democratization. Both cases—that is the membership in OSCE and in the Council of Europe; more markedly in the latter—show the end of the Westphalian world when international recognition automatically meant also that of internal supreme authority. International recognition in the New World Order, as being accepted as a member of the world community of nations (UN) and more particularly that of the all-European organizations, has been rather separated from the recognition of the supreme internal authority. For the recognition of their internal sovereignty, the ECE and the Balkan states have to pass a test of democratization. Only those states are to be accepted as sovereign and legitimate which have performed well on this test, having accepted a consensual version of democratic rule that empowers and integrates minorities.

**NATO integration and security matters**

The security integration has proceeded in several stages. It began with the disintegration of the Warsaw Pact in February and July 1991 when the Warsaw Pact was dissolved both as a military and political organization. In December 1991 at the Rome NATO summit nine countries from the two regions (five ECE countries without Croatia and four Balkan countries without Bosnia and Yugoslavia), including some former members of the Warsaw Pact, were invited to join the North Atlantic Cooperation Council (NACC, now with 38 members). In January 1994 the Partnership for Peace (PfP) program was launched and until the end of 1995 the same nine ECE and Balkan countries joined (that is with the exception of Croatia, Bosnia and Serbia). In late May 1997 at the Sintra (Portugal) summit, the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council was created in place of the NACC as a step toward closer cooperation. The EAPC has 44 members, including 16 NATO members and the nine partner countries from ECE and the Balkans. From among the group of nine, in July 1997 at the Madrid summit, NATO extended its invitation for full membership to Poland, the Czech Republic and Hungary, but the case of Slovenia and Romania was considered as well. The full membership of the three ECE countries is to be accomplished in April 1999.

Obviously, this security cooperation has both dynamic and structural features. The states concerned have progressed through various stages of the NATO integration, and established structurally different positions. These are evidenced in the official NATO reviews of the three new entrants and the four closely cooperating partners (Slovenia, Romania, Macedonia and Albania), as well as the two reluctant partners (Slovakia and Bulgaria). At the same time, parallel with the NATO integration and cooperation, multilayered structures have emerged. Many countries of the regions
have bilateral military cooperation agreements, and, in addition, they have participated in the PfP framework in some IFOR-SFOR peace-keeping multilateral operations. The OSCE adds considerably to this multilateral dimension, first of all with its plan to create a *Charter on the European Security* in the next few years for the 21st century. N. H. Petersen discusses this problem in his declaration as Chairman-in-Office of the OSCE (Petersen, 1997: 7).

The sovereignty-related conflicts appear in a special way with respect to Macedonia and Albania which are *de facto* semi-protectorates of NATO (and the EU combined), and in Bosnia which may be considered as a full protectorate, with Kosovo as an open, ongoing issue. This situation is not a severe limitation on the sovereignty of the above mentioned states. To the contrary, it is the most effective support for their sovereignty. Actually, it was only the peace-keeping troops that preserved the formally recognized international sovereignty of Macedonia. After the civil war in Spring 1997, resulting from the “anarchocapitalism” (Vickers and Pettifer, 1997: 289), only the EU, mostly Italian, troops saved the unity of Albania. That is, the semiprotectorate status has been a transitory vehicle offered by the international community in order to contribute to the creation of internal sovereignty and to the eventual consolidation of these states. Both external and internal problems have manifested themselves in an extreme form in Bosnia where the establishment of a supreme internal authority, accepted by all three nationalities, has become possible only with the assistance of the international organizations, since in some ways two of its neighbours, Yugoslavia and Croatia, questioned both the external and internal sovereignty of Bosnia.

Theoretically, the NATO membership does not limit sovereignty, since NATO has a collective decision-making procedure with the possibility for individual members to opt out. Nonetheless, the expectations within NATO are very high for cooperation in defence and security matters, especially with its new members. The US hegemony has increased within this security alliance system in the New World Order, and the US government applied this pressure to the new members. However, the ECE small states have gained more sovereignty by entering NATO than they have lost by the ensuing limitations. They will certainly have much more influence in the ECE and Balkan regions from inside the NATO than from the outside. No doubt, the Balkan region is full of sovereignty related conflicts; therefore, there was some reluctance on the part of the older members to accept the new members by extending NATO eastwards: the older members wished to avoid involvement in these unstable areas. The NATO, however, has had to play a role in the Balkan crisis management anyway, and this role has been facilitated by the partnership of the new ECE entrants from the very beginning. It is important to note that the populations of Poland, the Czech Republic and Hungary have overwhelmingly supported the NATO membership. Hungary was the only country to arrange for a NATO referendum, and its entry received more than 80 percent voter support in November 1997. Probably the status of new members will be similar to that of Norway or Denmark, that is, no nuclear weapons and no foreign troops on their soil, but a somewhat expanded military infrastructure with an integrated command network.
**EU integration and socio-economic dimensions**

EU accession presupposes serious limits of sovereignty, since the EU has common institutions and decision-making mechanisms. Certainly, one has to distinguish the debates around sovereignty within the EU among the present member states from those issues emerging between the EU and the new entrants during and after the accession negotiations. The EU has recently softened its position in the latest summits from Amsterdam to Cardiff concerning the further restrictions on sovereignty for the present members, while it has hardened its position towards the new entrants. This is the case, for instance, with the Schengen accord which has not been accepted by some present members. The Schengen Protocol stipulates, however, that the agreement “must be accepted in full by all States candidates for admission”. Geoffrey Edwards and Eric Philippart summarize this situation this way: “In other words, candidate Member States are not eligible for (a number of, if not all) existing optouts—even if they might be able to negotiate long transition periods for implementing the *acquis*, which may, *de facto*, turn to be quasi permanent. The refusal of opt out is, in any case, a clear indication that existing Members are determined to curb exceptionalism” (Edwards and Philippart, 1998: 39). Consequently, sharply separating the “in-s” and “pre-in-s”, the EU stresses only the necessity of growing pressure upon the new entrants in order to reduce the opt outs in the longer term. There are many sovereignty related conflicts between the EU and the new members, but these conflicts do not stem from the usual disagreements which emerge out of necessity during the bargaining process. The special sovereignty related conflicts have been generated by the saturation of the EU with internal problems, because of the missing or always postponed institutional reforms, which have forced the EU to narrow the options for the new entrants in choosing policy alternatives (Monar, 1997).

This controversial situation has also been beneficial for the new entrants. The Copenhagen criteria issued in June 1993 state first that “stability of institutions guaranteeing democracy, the rule of law and human rights” may be a general principle of democratization. However, as a second precondition, they emphasize the importance of the “respect for and protection of minorities” (Sigma, 1998: 43). This precondition pushes the new entrants towards a consensual democracy, that is more or less towards the acceptance of collective minority rights. This criterion could create many problems even for some present member states which have already established a consolidated democracy, though without special constitutional devices for consensual democracy, that is, having a majoritarian democracy. Consensual democracy has become a must for the new entrants, since in the new international situation of global democratization with their large national minorities - as the Spanish case demonstrates—they cannot reach the stage of consolidated democracy without consensual constitutional features.

The constant pressure from the West has also served to promote regional cooperation, since the accession process may be facilitated by the joint efforts of the new entrants. The EU supports regional organizations like the Visegrád Group (VG) or CEFTA which have been very useful for the regional cooperation, although
the Czech Republic was a very reluctant partner during the Klaus government, and meaningful political cooperation began only with the new Zeman government. The prime ministers of Hungary, Poland and the Czech Republic met in Budapest on 22 October 1998 and they issued a declaration about the revitalization of the VG cooperation. In short, the VG is a success story, unlike its predecessor ECE-related organization, the Pentagone-Hexagonale which was transformed into the Central European Initiative (CEI) in July 1992. The history of the CEI is very instructive, since it lost all of its actual functions by overextending its membership beyond ECE to 16 states by November 1996. This over inclusiveness which drew in countries from Bosnia to Belarus created an institution whose members had too many unique problems and too few resources to solve them. Hence, regional organizations overstretched geographically are, in fact, shrinking functionally. CEFTA, in contrast, has so far been an organization of optimal size with a narrow focus on liberalizing foreign trade. In this way, it has been able to fulfil its function of fostering the structural accomodation of its members states’ economies to the European Union. Similarly, the micro-regions crossing the borders of states and integrating these adjacent territories have also played an important role in enhancing the everyday cooperation in basic functions between ECE and its neighbours those both in and out of the EU (Hyde-Price, 1996).

Conceptually as well as practically, the two stages of systemic change or democratization have been closely connected with those of European integration. Democratic transition has coincided with the association to the EU, and not only chronologically. There is a deeper connection between them as the two sides of the same coin: they are the internal and external dimension of the same process in ECE. The same applies to democratic consolidation and the accession to the EU. These connections or parallels between the internal and external sides of democratization were made apparent in the Spanish and Portuguese cases—cases which proved their essential linkage. At present, some ECE states like Poland, the Czech Republic, Hungary and Slovenia have reached the stage of early consolidation and have also entered the period of “pre-accession” to EU integration. This indicates again that a parallelism exists between the internal and external processes of democratization even in the case of an “interface” between the two stages. The internal dimension as an early consolidation can be seen in the move from democratic transition to consolidation, while the external dimension reveals itself in a pre-accession process that moves from association to accession (Mayhew, 1998).

The twelve ECE and Balkan states form some groups according to the criteria of the participation in the EU integration and regional organizations:

**Vanguard:** Poland, the Czech Republic, Hungary and Slovenia have been identified by the EU as the best candidates among the associated members. Indeed, these countries have shown the best economic performance and the most advanced democratization in the ECE and Balkan regions. Among the first 50 most competitive countries of the world only the Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland have been mentioned. These three countries have received the following rankings, based on the 1996 data, according to the IMD (the International Institute for Development Management), the WEF (by World Economic Forum) and the HDI (Human Development Index).

Reluctant modernizers: Slovakia and Croatia have presented the case of a serious contradiction between the relatively good economic performance and the belated nation-building process. They are still reluctant democratizers, first of all in accepting consensual devices for minorities, but if they get through this transitory stage of national adolescence, they will catch-up quickly with the vanguard countries. Slovakia was a defiant member of both CEFTA and VG but with the new government in the late 1998 it could reactivate its membership. Croatia after a devastating war has a long road ahead toward the regional integration.

Latecomers: Historically as well as in the present situation, all Balkan states are latecomers in both nation-building and democratization. Among them, Romania and Bulgaria are still frontrunners in the Balkans which has been expressed by the fact that they have become associated members of the EU. Both have tried to cooperate actively with the NATO in the hope of the future membership.

Laggards: Albania, Bosnia and Macedonia have emerged belatedly as independent nations and they have also lagged behind as democratizing countries. The missing democratic tradition and economic backwardness, as the lowest per capita income countries in Europe, have pushed them in the vicious circle of negative feedbacks between economy and politics, although Macedonia has achieved a measure of stability. They have also made some efforts to become involved in European cooperation, but this is still in its initial stage.

Non-member: Yugoslavia as a defiant non-member of the European system has been the greatest loser in the New World Order and it has been unable so far to accept the new realities. Yugoslavia has no internal sovereignty which can be attained only by free and fair elections and by the general acceptance of the higher authority on the part of the whole population. Thus, due to its internal tensions, Yugoslavia is a conflict-seeking state with all of its neighbours and with all international organizations. In the late nineties it is still very difficult to foresee the final arrangement concerning Yugoslavia and to predict when it might embrace the cooperation course.

This typology confirms the conclusion that the ECE and the Balkan regions have had different kinds of historical development in general and with respect to European integration in particular. The analysis of the regional specificities, however, reinforces the significance of the nation-building process which produces the major dividing line not only between but also within the regions. The progress of the nation-building process presupposes and necessitates the acceptance of consensual democracy. The “redefinition of state” or the national identity (White et al., 1998: 85) strengthens the supreme authority within the country and facilitates socio-economic development.

Most states in the ECE region have already reached the stage of the “virtuous circle”, the positively re-inforcing processes of national-political and socio-economic developments. The others (Slovakia and Croatia) still suffer from the vicious circle of a tension between the economic and political factors. All ECE states, however, have a good chance in the next decade to get out of this crisis typical of the initial period of systemic change. The Balkan countries have engaged in this crisis manage-
ment later and will finish the initial crisis later. Both historical legacy and global pressure matter in this respect (Crawford and Lijphart, 1997) but having a meagre historical legacy of democratic experience, the Balkan countries can meet the requirements of democratic states only belatedly and with great difficulty.

Finally, in the triple transition that results in an emergence of democratic state, the rise of a free market economy and the securing of an independent national state, further intraregional convergence can be expected in the ECE region, as it has also been shown by the latest events in Slovakia. There will be, however, an increasing divergence within the Balkan region, with some states (Romania, Bulgaria, and somewhat later Macedonia) getting closer to ECE developments, while other states (Albania, Bosnia and Serbia) will still struggle for a long time to create a sense of statehood and nationhood, to stabilize their internal sovereignty, and to satisfy those preconditions for acceptance into the community of democratic countries.

References


