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The Future Geopolitical Patterns and the Balkan States. Prediction from the Perspective of Geopolitical Theory¹

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Abstract

This paper provides a prediction of future geopolitical patterns related to the Balkan states, on the basis of assumptions offered by the Geopolitical Theory. In general, on the long-term, it is shown that the Balkan states are excluded from the possibility of acquiring cumulative advantages as preconditions for further expansion. As a result, their position in the structure of geopolitical relations gives them the character of internal states, which, if not subordinated to the expansive power, are driven by empirically confirmed patterns of confrontation and fragmentation into smaller units. However, the analysis showed that the EU can be provisionally defined as the expansive force in a given geopolitical context. Therefore, the ratio of the Balkans and the European Union demonstrates the ongoing process of expansion, so in the medium term the decrease or freeze of antagonisms, and fragmentation into smaller units that are characterized by internal states can be expected. Certainly, this trend is conditioned by the assumption that the EU has a relatively coherent geopolitical interests.

Keywords: geopolitics, prediction, state, the Balkans, index of geopolitical position

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1. Introduction

Epistemological implications of the failure of predicting the collapse of socialism after more than 20 years appear as far-reaching and lead to the actualization of skeptical relativism in the social sciences (Kuljić, 2002), which additionally brings the neglect of one of the presumed goals of theoretical sciences, that is giving stable and sustainable prediction as part of a broader scientific explanation (Nagel, 1974). Testing and development of predictive potential of the social sciences appears, therefore, to have a double importance: first as an evaluation of the validity of given theory, in form of testing hypotheses, and then as a general identification of cognitive range, where the identification of "*the limits of our knowledge is not a declaration of failure*" (Kuran, 1995, 1534), but on the contrary, cognitive contribution.

Although not of a narrower interest for this paper, these notes are a relevant basis for the implementation of our goal. Specifically, our starting point is the Geopolitical Theory developed by Randall Collins, where the key cognitive limitations are based on its macrosociological character, which contribute to the perceiving of geopolitical processes on broad spatial plan and temporal scope from 30 to 50 years (Collins, 1986). Although these limitations provide for the construct of explanations in form of *trends* (Portes, 1995)², they appear suitable for achieving our goal, which consist in both testing the key assumptions of Collins' theory and methodologically expanding it in two ways. First, in order to predict the future geopolitical processes and patterns that may affect the Balkan states, it is necessary to consider positions of states in the relational fashion, where each position in the structure of geopolitical relations is interdependent on other positions in the given geographical and social space. On the other hand, position of each analytical unit in the structure of geopolitical relations is determined by specific factors (i.e. specific forms of institutionally and socio-spatially controlled capital)³, relevant in given geopolitical relations.

In order to outline processes that can potentially derive from these relations between positions in the geopolitical structure, in this paper we will construct an *index of geopolitical position* as a combination of both quantitative and qualitative approaches to the factors that determine these positions, and which should form a firm basis for the analysis of geopolitical space and processes occurring within it.

2. The Analytical Perspective of Geopolitical Theory

Studying of the geopolitical processes of spatial transformation and regional structuralisation has been, from the very beginning, characterized by ambivalent tendencies generated by the interaction of scientific and political aspirations (Atkinson and Dodds, 2003; Tuathail, 1996). Links with imperialism and militaristic nationalism have led to the neglect of interest in geopolitics, which was again revived in the light of the 1970s oil crisis, when geopolitics started being analytically modeled (Kearns, 2009; Collins, 1995). Some of the employed postulates in this theoretical (re)construction relied on the classical postulates of the geopolitical theory: Randall Collins, whose theoretical model will form the basis for our prediction, bases his premises on the conflicting approaches of state power developed in early 20th century Germany by placing them in a broader sociological framework. This author expands conflicting postulates of Ratzenhofer and Gumplowicz (Mann, 1984) about the military origin of the state and Ratzel's premise (Atkinson and Dodds,

² Portes outlines three main subjects of explanations: stable states, trends and events.

³ Unlike Mann (Mann, 1986), whose analytical focus is on different sources of power, here the specific forms of capital are taken as basis through which the relations in the structure of geopolitical relations are constantly being (re)produced. Simultaneously with redefining of sociospatial forms of capital by different actors, the generating of power appears as a historical dynamism, but without the eschatological necessity contained in the theory of action or inflexible structural determinism.

2003; Tuathail, 1996; Collins, 1995) on the large states aspirations to expand continentally with the Max Weber's definition of state (Weber, 2004; Collins, 1995). Namely, Collins (ibidem.) set the key points of this definition, according to which a state has a monopoly over the means of coercion in a given territory, in the form of geopolitical variables that define the conditions for the rise and fall of territorial power, or loss of control over the means of coercion. There are five key requirements in long-term historical process of expansion and contraction of states' territorial power:

Condition 1. Relative advantage in the territory size and possession of resources encourages territorial expansion at the expense of smaller countries. This assumption has a cumulative effect, because the resource-dominant, invading countries strengthen their own resources, especially after territorial conquest. However, expansion doesn't have to be military, as it may be based on peaceful or quasi-peaceful means, respectively, in the form of request to smaller states to fund alliances or by impact on both external and internal affairs of weaker states. By these mechanisms, the resource-dominant state may acquire *de facto* or even *de jure* military control over weaker territories. Also, historical evidence shows that the tendency towards subordinating the ideological patterns and movements to geopolitical patterns. Insofar, geopolitical antagonisms are often accompanied by ideological divisions, as it was the case during the Cold War.

Condition 2. Geopositional advantage favors the expansion - the state with less immediate enemies on borders tend to spread on countries that have more enemies on the borders. Generating this advantage is conditioned by geographical factors, where, on the one hand, natural barriers such as mountains or the sea surface act as a buffer zone and allow the military advantage by concentration of forces on other borders. On the other hand, the absence of these barriers can be compensated by the subordination of the multitude resource-rich, border states.

Condition 3. States in the center of the geographic regions tend to fragment into smaller units over the time. This condition is closely linked to the previous one, because the internal states, as Collins (Collins, 1986; 1995) calls them, are in the long run faced with a multitude of potential enemies and unstable coalitions, which in the long-term excludes them from the possibility of cumulative growth from their own resources. Because of immediate oppositions, resources are subordinated to the military needs, which in the long-term leads to their weakening and opens a space for the secessionist aspirations. This is particularly the case in the absence of the larger states conquests.

Condition 4. Cumulative result of these processes is periodic simplification, embodied in great war clashes. Namely, after the capture of internal state that had previously served as a buffer zone, conquering, resource-dominant states follow the empirically verified pattern of starting showdown wars. Although it is difficult to predict whether one of the opposing sides will manage to emerge as a dominant world empire or conflict will lead to stalemate and the disintegration of both opponents, certainly, this period generates the highest level of geopolitical tensions, which may end up in big war showdowns, characterized by cruelty, says Collins (ibidem.).

Condition 5. Finally, excessive expansion brings exhaustion of resources and consequent disintegration of the state. This principle makes reference to the effects of resource employment, where it is shown that as the distance from a hypothetical center increases, the risk of state collapse also increases. Limit of excessive expansion has certainly increased since the industrial age, but it essentially has had the same character as referenced to the pre-industrial state, which represented the empirical example for establishing this principle. The political consequence of overextension is that of encountering difficulties of maintaining control over the population of different ethnicity, where the activation of ethnic nationalism can be a strong counter-measure to excessive expansion (Collins, 1986, pp.187-191; Collins, 1995, pp.1552-1560). Therefore, according to this model, states are the key analytical units whose positions are

conditioned by the interconnected influence of several factors. The relations between these positions can be defined as the structure of geopolitical relations, which can be taken as the framework of dynamics of growth and fall of state power. However, the complexity of this theoretical model requests additional clarification.

First, the generality of Weber's definition and its sociospatial basis can lead to (theoretical) linking of the power relations to the totality of the state. Even though Weber based this definition on a broader concept of *Herrschaft*, which involves a historically established authority and relationship of domination, he has directly linked this relation to the territoriality (Weber, 2004).⁴ Here the problem isn't in the spatial aspect of this relationship, as every relationship of domination substantially includes the attribution of place (*topos*), constituted on the basis of dispersion of power within the geographic and social space. Far more problematic is the direct reduction of relations of power and domination to the totality of state, embodied in the form of (potential) physical coercion. By introducing the physicality of coercion as the essence of the structure of power relations, an implicit assumption is also introduced, according to which only the (contingent) immediacy, like interaction, opens up the possibility for a substantive establishing of an authority.

However, the objectification of power relations, as well as the establishment of structures that precede the establishment of legitimacy, require recognition of multifaceted mechanisms, which may not necessarily be linked to the state apparatus of coercion.⁵ Still, Collins was aware (though not explicitly expressing it) of the risks lying in linear binding of territoriality with geopolitical power and in analysis, he was looking in the first place at this form of power through its historical genesis in geographic and social space, that is, through the ability to control territorially associated resources. Precisely the multi-mediated control mechanisms appear to be relevant for the establishment of relations of power: from the ideological mechanisms (Mann, 1984) or, for example, economic and bureaucratic conditioning related to the international institutions, these mechanisms together can perform structural pressure, established in a given relationship. Regarding the spatial manifestation of power relations, these mechanisms function through subordination of territorially associated forms of coercion (state apparatus) to the power relations, that is, through the exploitation of infrastructural power of state (*ibidem.*) for the (re)affirmation of an external source of power. In this light, the social space, which also subsumes a geographic, physical one as its constituent part, appears as basis for the establishment of power relations, primarily through its occupation and control by the competing social organizations and structures (Mann, 1986).

These considerations, on the other side, open a question concerning the role of actors in the construction of geopolitical relations and production of space, especially by having in mind the potentially strong holistic character of Collins' approach. In general, this model takes into account the importance of actors potential in shaping the position of the state: for instance, type of state organization emerges as a relevant factor in resource subordination to expansion (Tilly, 1990; Collins, 1995). Therefore, the expansion and military effectiveness are conditioned by other factors, from "*the geography and the national morale to generalship and tactical skills*" (Kennedy, 1987: 439), and internal legitimacy of rulers (Collins, 1986). Although the impact of these factors is by no means ephemeral, it doesn't occur as deterministic on long-term geopolitical processes. Collins believes that the character of these processes is primarily stochastic (Collins, 1986), giving the epistemological primacy to their objective (i.e. material) side. Thus, this author

⁴ Weber distinguished three types of authority – *traditional*, *charismatic* and *legal*, where, in a relationship to the state, each of them is closely related to the legitimate use of force on given territory, respectively, the use of force that is perceived as legitimate and where "this idea of "territory" is an essential defining feature" (Weber, 2004, p.33).

⁵ Agnew correctly observes that "*spatiality or geographical organization of power is not necessarily tied for all time and all places to the territoriality of states*" (Agnew, 2003, p.51).

just partially breaks apart from the positivist epistemology, as he retains on the explanation of general cases (Antonić, 1995), but without giving them deterministic necessity. Although this solution leaves one part of reality unexplained (Kuran, 1995) and Collins is aware of those limitations (Collins, 1995), specifically, the phenomenological side of geopolitics and symbolic construction of space,⁶ the goal of abstracting actors influence in the genesis of state power is to highlight the factors that occur as structural constraints (or opportunities) of action.

From these settings, it is thus apparent that there are three key factors that determine the position of a given state in the structure of geopolitical relations: geographic, economic and military factor. However, there is a problem with the operationalization of theory principles and the interpretation of their relationship in the geopolitical processes. Namely, application of geopolitical theory principles had a different results, as Collins prediction of Russian Empire collapse was successful (though not temporarily precise), while the claims of Paul Kennedy (Kennedy, 1987) and Victor Nee about the imminent collapse of the U.S. and China, proved inaccurate (Portes, 1995). This indicates not so much on operationalization itself (although it is very important), but on the "background" postulate of geopolitical theory that introduces a kind of teleological necessity of outcome of geopolitical processes (state collapse). For these reasons, there is an open threat to deduce assumed outcome from the currently specified relationship between the positions of states, defined by the values of selected indicators. The solution is not to introduce transhistorical thresholds through which we could explicitly define the fulfillment of certain principles; on the contrary, Tilly seems to be correct by calling to the necessary variability of sociological models (Tilly, 1995). Therefore, only from the historical relation between positions it would be correct to assume the possible outcomes of these relationships.

Methodologically, we believe that the solution is in the contingent monitoring of taken indicators variability, for what we propose the construction of a composite *Index of geopolitical position* (IGP), in order to monitor the variation of quantitatively measurable indicators in relational sense. Together with qualitative data, this index would function with the aim of delineation of the structure of geopolitical relations and further geopolitical processes, which are both constituted and constitute social space.⁷

Conceptual grounding for introduction and construction of IGP can be found in both contemporary methodological and theoretical improvements that rely on the advantages of geometric representation and interpretation of data, originating from the work of French mathematician Benzecri (Le Roux, Rouanet, 2004) and recent developments by Le Roux and Rouanet (*ibidem.*)⁸ Geometric data analysis that these authors offer provides a firm deductive basis for the construction of IGP and analysis of the delineation of

⁶ As Tuathail writes, the symbolic construction of space had a historically important role in the imperialist agenda, specifically through the emergence of geopolitics as academic discipline, where the imperial relations were justified from Cartesian perspective as having autonomous and natural logic (Tuathail, 1996).

⁷ This analytical orientation has another aim: namely, as Bourdieu and Wacquant correctly observe, "*the array of methods used must fit the problem at hand*" (Bourdieu, Wacquant, 1992: 30). Therefore, the studying of processes of geopolitical structuring through the construction of IGP model incorporates necessary variability of sociological models, following the assumed stochastic nature of social phenomena.

⁸ Application and development of principles proposed by Benzecri, which in the strict sense present a critique of conventional statistical methods such as regression analysis, principal component analysis etc., direct the analytical method towards the geometric representation of data. The immediate results are interpretation of data not exclusively as quantitative values derived from the pre-defined sample, but as the manifested reaches of relationships that constitute social phenomena in their multidimensionality. Historically, the application of these principles in the social sciences has been small in scale; however, the most profound example of their application can be found in Bourdieu's "Distinctions", where the establishment of taste among different social groups is placed in mutual relationship and where the advantages of this approach are clearly showed (Le Roux, Rouanet, 2004).

structure of geopolitical relations, as it is based on a series of interrelated principles that enable relational understanding of construction of the social space. First, except the descriptive function as a necessary analytical step, the primary objective of the geometric analysis is also an identification of complexity and multidimensionality of social phenomena, which stem from the interrelations between the analyzed objects. Le Roux and Rouanet exactly bind this relational logic to the geometric projection of these objects in the form of points in space, or through their geometrical representation that is generated at the intersection of multiple dimensions. The spatial dispersion is thus determined by multidimensionality, and as such, allows the identification of different forms of structuring (through their interrelations), then of grouping in form of "Euclidean clouds", and finally those of distancing as a result of the of positioning by assumed dimensions. As a result, geometrical representation, through formality of mathematical structure, enables procedures of proving and concluding to be in terms of given relations, instead of the probability that conventional models rely on (*ibidem.*).

IGP precisely incorporates these principles, seeking to take generating of geopolitical positions and relationships, their structuring and processes that can be potentially derived from these formations, as a geometrical projection in space. Therefore, the IGP formula reflects these principles by deriving this geometrical projection for each entity from the intersection of dimensions, i.e. factors relevant for the geopolitical positioning, and their relational values. The *Index of geopolitical position* (IGP) thus represents a geometric mean of indices of three factors – geographic (G_f), economic (E_f) and military factor (M_f), derived from Collins' theory and taken as key in determining the geopolitical position of a state in given context:

$$IGP = \sqrt[3]{G_f \cdot E_f \cdot M_f} \quad (1)$$

Introduction of this index has methodological points that require additional clarification. First, the main goal is to determine the objective distribution of power that emerges from territorially concentrated capital and resources (or factors), that show as relevant in geopolitical relations. This distribution of power is historically set as the structure of geopolitical relations, constituted by interrelations between the states and other geopolitical entities, i.e. through the positions they occupy. Likewise, these structural relations are historically generated with regard to the geographic space; however, they do not present a linear manifestation of spatial proximity or certain geographic features. For these reasons, introduction of the geometric mean of three key factors and the geometric representation of this structure has apparent advantages. Namely, the idea is that the given structure ought to be perceived in a three-dimensional space that sets up from the objective distribution of power among the states, which, even though includes geographical space, is not reducible to a contingency arising from the (empiricist) identification of spatial proximity. Except multidimensionality of this structure and potential processes that may occur from the structural relations, its geometric representation also goes beyond the opposition between qualitative and quantitative approach, by synthesizing them (Le Roux, Rouanet, 2004). Thus, through the prior definition of the geopolitical context of structuring, in our case Eurasia, with all the geographical (physical) characteristics that appear as potential of creating the geopotential advantages, these qualitative features of the space intersect with the quantitative aspects of the relationship, embodied through the measure of territorially related resources.

Therefore, these improvements contribute to more accurate explanation of the theoretically assumed processes of territorial power structuration, that arise from interrelations between geopolitical entities. The geometric representation of these relationships, in turn, provides another important

improvement: through the positioning of geopolitical entities in geometric space, the potential of creating cumulative and geopotential advantages (Conditions 1 and 2) appears as far more visible. In addition, grouping of entities positions in the "Euclidean cloud" (*ibidem.*), implying both physical proximity and similar position in the social space, opens the possibility of anticipation of fragmentation process, that is, the possibility of subordinating the given entities to the expansive force (Condition 3). **Figure 1** illustrates this idea and gives a hypothetical example of how the positions of geopolitical entities (A, B, C) are being constituted, according to the objective distribution of power, which is determined by the three key factors (Gf, Ef, Mf), i.e. geometric mean of their indices.

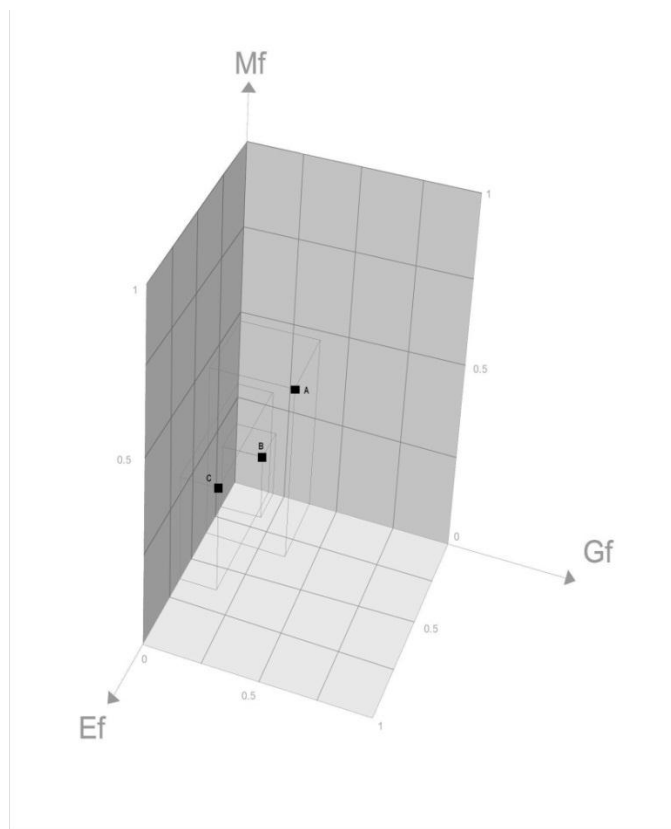


Figure 1.

Hypothetical model of structure of geopolitical positions, where the geopolitical entities (A, B, C) take positions derived from the geometrical mean of three indices of key factors (Gf, Ef, Mf), presented as coordinates.

These indices for each of these three factors (**Gf, Mf, Ef**) actually present the relational essence of **IGP**. Thus, in their calculation, the value of index for factor (**Factor**) is also a geometric mean of indicators, whose values are relationally taken, with aim of perceiving those values of territorially related resources not as absolute, but as those that stem from the interrelations. Therefore, **a(1,2,3...)** represents a value of indicator for a given state, while the value of **b(1,2,3...)** is taken as the one that in the given context indicates highest value:

$$Factor = \sqrt[3]{\frac{a_1}{b_1} \cdot \frac{a_2}{b_2} \cdot \frac{a_3}{b_3}} \quad (2)$$

For example, if one of the indicators of economic factor is proved "oil reserves", then from the pre-defined geopolitical context, where the cumulative and geositional advantages can be generated, the value of **b** is taken as the amount of oil barrels from the country that shows highest values for a given indicator (in our case, Russia), while **a** presents a quantity of oil reserves of state, for which the value of given indicator is measured. By applying this principle, where for the given indicator the state with the highest value is taken as the denominator and where numerator presents the indicator value of a considered state, objective is to determine the relative proportion of given resources, that is, relation in which it is possible to obtain an initial cumulative advantage based on territorially associated resources. Geometric mean of indicators values, in turn, provides to each factor necessary precision and multidimensionality, especially emodied in possibility to observe relevant changes in geopolitical relations and possible geopolitical processes through changes in their values.

For the purposes of our analysis, economic factor will be determined through GDP (PPP), reserves of foreign currency and gold and proved oil and natural gas resources, while the key indicators of military will be consisted of the rate of budget spending on military needs and the available manpower for military operations.⁹ The geographical factor, however, except quantitatively measurable indicators, including the size of territory and population, should be the basis for identifying the space in which the assumed geopolitical processes can take place. In other words, we assume that the establishment of the structure of geopolitical relations, regarding accumulation of the initial advantages (Conditions 1 and 2 in the Section 2 of this paper) and further geopolitical processes (Conditions 3, 4 and 5 in Section 2), is based on the historically double-generated geographic relationship - the physical characteristics of space and its political traits. Therefore, Russia and Turkey, together with the European states should constitute referent geopolitical context in which the Balkans states acquire positions. On the basis of historical findings (Collins, 1995; Stavrijanos, 2005) we can derive the *null hypothesis* according to which none of the Balkan states can't generate the position to create the initial resource and geopositional advantage for expansion, due to which they remain in long-drawn processes of conflict and unstable coalitions. If this assumption proves correct, then we should consider the possibility of taking the Balkan states as clients of an expansionist force. *Alternative hypotheses*, however, implies the opposite, where analysis should be established on expansive potential of given Balkan state(s).

Analysis directed in this way, therefore, aims to examine the assumed geopolitical processes through the variation of interrelations between geopolitical entities, in this case those of the Eurasian space, which are both historically established and form the dynamical basis for the future processes. Because of this, it is important to emphasize that the IGP in an indirect way should perform the function of delineation and explication of historically established geopolitical relationships through variations of key factors. Consequently, this model and the values it provides does not operate as a direct test of the hypothesis validity in the narrower sense, through the establishment "thresholds" and the like. More specifically, the IGP has an indirect role in testing the validity of geopolitical theory assumptions by (their) geometric representation, for which Le Roux and Rouanet convincingly demonstrate as more advanced method of

⁹ Unfortunately, lack of available data precludes us from the introduction of additional indicators in analysis. However, even the available data, mostly based on the CIA World Factbook (The World Factbook, 2011), constitute a firm basis for analysis and tentative application of IGP.

interpreting the data that relies primarily on the interplay between entities (Le Roux, Rouanet, 2004). This effect is precisely subsumed under the logic of IGP as a methodological tool designed in order to assess variations in relationships between the entities positions in the structure, which is the dynamical basis for the (re)composition of territorially associated power. In continuation, the IGP will find its tentative application in the analysis of the structure of geopolitical relations between Balkan states and potential processes that may affect them.

3. The Positions of Balkans States in the Structure of Geopolitical Relations

The geographic determination of spatial areas, along with historically generated political relationships in space, certainly represents one of the key components in explaining the genesis of the geopolitical processes. Therefore it is not surprising that many historians, especially those related to the research tradition of *Annales School*, in analysis of long-term historical processes dedicate considerable attention to geographical factors. However, these factors do not appear as given and immutable in generating of the structure of geopolitical positions, but rather as a historically variable due to the relatively active actions of actors towards their change or overcoming, so the caution in the evaluation of their impact on the geopolitical positions is necessary. However, the relative contingency of geography is still important (Collins, 1986), as a constitutive part of the long-term cumulative social and political development.

In terms relevant to geopolitical theory assumptions, the Balkan peninsula shows the historical dependence of geopolitical processes through geographical "middleness" and the openness, due to which it was for centuries divided by geopolitical partitions. The geographic factor here operates in two ways. First, unlike the Apennine and Pyrenees, the Balkan peninsula is not separated from the rest of the continent by mountain range, but rather is connected through Danube with Central Europe. On the sea side, similarly, the narrow passages of the Aegean and Marmara Sea make Asia are very close. Configuration of the terrain, on the other hand, is characterized by complexity and diversity (Stavrijanos, 2005), but its primary feature is the dominance of intersected mountain chains, which together with the plains comprise 70% of the Balkans territory (Gallagher, 2005). Therefore, while the lack of natural barriers gave rise to relative mobility from both northeast and south, facilitating the passage for the conquerors, simultaneously the intersected mountainous terrain and valleys have made the movement and communication within the Peninsula difficult. Some of the key consequences of this constellation of geographic features on the social processes occurred in the inability to generate political centralization, (Stavrijanos, 2005; Mazower, 2003), and in inexorable local and regional perspectives (Gallagher, 2005).

The beginning of the modern Balkan states establishment follows not only geopolitical processes of Ottoman and Austro-Hungarian Empire decline, which caused internal fragmentation of states (Collins, 1995), but is also based on the complex relation of population growth, sociogenesis of nations and renewed interests of great powers (Stavrijanos, 2005). Specifically, at the beginning of the 19th century, the Balkans reach again a similar population size as it had in the 16th century, and according to the Ottoman census from 1831 it numbered about ten million people and some ten more in the occupied parts of Serbia, in Croatia under the Habsburgs, and in Romania under the Russian occupation. One century later, the populations of the Balkan countries are four times more numerous, inducing demographic pressure due to overcrowding (Mazower, 2005). Such circumstances were joined by political conflicts based on ethnic nationalism, generated partially through local geographical isolation (Gallagher, 2005), which put them into mid-term oppositions and coalitions, as it was the case during the Balkan Wars and the First World War, when the significant territorial and ethnic reconfiguration occurred (Mazower, 2005).

The historical alternation between periods of stability and periods of antagonisms between internal states according to the assumptions of Geopolitical Theory is followed by periods of expansion by the forces with the cumulated advantages or in their absence. After the Second World War until the end of the 20th century, demographic pressure generally decreases, while the relative postwar stability was guaranteed by placing the Balkan states under both the Soviet and the West spheres of influence, by so called, "Percentages Agreement" between Stalin and Churchill (Stojanović, 1997). The collapse of the Russian Empire (Collins, 1995), or the collapse of socialism transforms the entire Eurasian space (Trenin, 2001), in light of broader geopolitical changes, determine the activation of previously established oppositions. This lack of direct impact from expansive force contributes to the process of re-fragmentation, as it was the case with the dissolution of Yugoslavia. Even from these findings it can be shown that the complex historical genesis has made geopolitical positions of the Balkan states somewhat similar, and that the potential of acquiring the initial geositional advantages in the early 21st century is relatively low. However, this assumption should be examined by including of *Index of Geopolitical Position (IGP)* in analysis. The majority of employed indicators have a medium-term character, so values of this index can be taken for drawing certain conclusions about the potential geopolitical trends.

First, the derived values of this index are provided in **Table 1**. For the Balkan states, these values prove low when compared with the values obtained for the entire context, which includes Russia, the European states and Turkey. Thus, the index value of 0.891 for Russia is the highest. As for the European states, Turkey leads with an index value from 0.279, and it is followed by Germany with the value of 0.180. In the Balkans, Romania has the highest index value, which separates her from other states with a value of 0.056. Given table gives indicative grouping of Greece, Bulgaria, Serbia, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Macedonia into a single cluster with the relatively similar values, which requires explanation of their geopolitical positions from their relationship.

Table 1. Values of Index of geopolitical position for Balkan states.¹⁰

State/Index	Geographic Factor Index (Gf)	Economic Factor Index (Ef)	Military factor index (Mf)	Index of Geopolitical Position(IGP)
Romania	0,045	0,017	0,2	0,056
Greece	0,023	0,006	0,2	0,032
Bulgaria	0,017	0,008	0,1	0,027
Serbia	0,015	0,005	0,1	0,022
Croatia	0,010	0,005	0,1	0,017
Bosnia & Herzegovina	0,008	0,008	0,0	0,018
Albania	0,005	0,001	0,0	0,007
Macedonia	0,004	0,006	0,1	0,014
Montenegro	0,002	0,001	0,0	0,001
Kosovo ¹²	0,003	0,004	0,0	0,005

¹⁰ All indices are based on processed data in The CIA World Factbook (2011), unless otherwise indicated. Valuation of geographic and economic factors are based on data from 2009 and 2010, depending on the country, while data on allocations from GDP for military purposes from 2005.

¹¹ Data are based on the official estimate derived from the Law on Budget of the Republic of Serbia:

<http://mfp.gov.rs/UserFiles/File/zakoni/Zakon%20o%20budzetu%20RS%20za%202012.pdf>, accessed on March 24th, 2013;

¹² Kosovo is the most recent example of fragmentation process, which involved even direct (military and bureaucratic) engagement of expansive forces so that local structures could establish control and monopoly over its territory and resources.

Data source: *The World Factbook 2011.*

First, such relation among the index values is largely the result of historical processes, as the dissolution of Yugoslavia is. Fragmentation of states into smaller population-territorial units (Condition 3) improves the relative position of Romania and places four former Yugoslav republics into a similar position with the positions Greece and Bulgaria, respectively have. If considering, for a moment, the imaginary situation that Romania is removed from the analysis, it is generally observed that the index values for the remaining countries are relatively low, indicating a small territorial area, small population size, reduced military capabilities and the relative scarcity of resources, important for the military needs. In this sense, these values show that capacity of these states is insufficient for territorial expansion (Condition 1), especially due to their similarities in the positions they occupy, which further complicates the expansive opportunity for each country individually. In other words, the similarity of the structurally given positions groups them into a “Euclidean cloud” (Le Roux, Rouanet, 2004), as presented on **Figure 2**, generally precluding them from the possibility of creating individual comparative advantages, and possibly leading to either conflict or subjugation to expansive force, due to proximity in both social and geographic space.

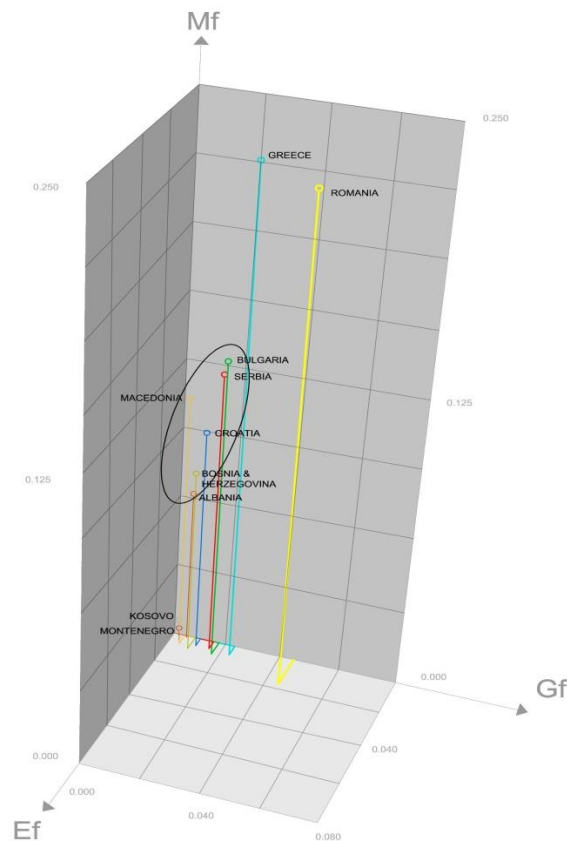


Figure 2.

Precisely because it can be seen in a form of a protectorate (Cohen, Lampe, 2011) of an expansive force, Kosovo entered our analysis, as it fulfills the basic assumption concerning the (in)direct control over the means of coercion, which *de facto* excludes Serbia. Therefore, KSF are taken as the official army.

Structure of Balkan states geopolitical positions, derived from the geometric mean of indices of three key factors (Gf, Ef, Mf), i.e. IGP, that determines their positions. A grouping, except for Romania and Greece, in the form of "Euclidean cloud", framed in black is indicative, and shows both historical process of fragmentation that created internal states and suggests on either its continuation or possible involvement of an expansive force.

This figure illustratively shows deprivation of an expansive potential for Balkan states, except for Romania, that comes from the similar positions in the structure of geopolitical relations and also implies on its possible transformation (Condition 3).

Examining now the structure in the geositional sense, these claims get further confirmation, as structuration of their positions also includes a physical traits of space. Geography again enters the back door, as the immediate position of states is characterized by either negligible impact or lack of geographic barriers, as is the case with the states on the edge of the peninsula, which may be faced with an external enemy.¹³ On the other hand, the complexity of borders and the number of potential enemies with similar geopolitical position is the result of "centrality", which together with the absence of accumulated advantages generally withholds these states from the ability to expand (Condition 2).

While the index values and geographical positions of the Balkan states are substantially unfavourable for expansion, the *Index of Geopolitical Position (IGP)* gave Romania the highest value in the considered examples. By territory and resources, in comparative relation to other Balkan states Romania undoubtedly acquires an initial expansive advantages (Condition 1), and even when the two Balkan countries with which it borders, Serbia and Bulgaria, are took aggregately. However, Romania on its Northern and North-Western shares the borders with some of the Central and Eastern European states, among others with Ukraine, whose index of geopolitical position is 0.068. Therefore, it can be concluded that the Romanian potential for acquiring the geositional advantages (condition 2) are relatively limited, since a necessary prerequisite for its expansion is the mutual opposition and the potential weakness of enemies at its borders.

These arguments generally favor our hypothesis according to which the states of the Balkans are characterised by long-term exclusion from the possibility of acquiring a cumulative advantages and subsequent expansive potential, embodied through low value of IGP and mutual oppositions. Historically, the Balkan region herewith shows the results of fragmentation process by creation of internal states (Condition 3). The mentioned dissolution of Yugoslavia proves these claims, while grouping of positions in the structure of geopolitical relations it caused (**Figure 2**), opens threat of (further) conflicts.

To remind, this process involves confrontations among the internal states in the absence of expansive force conquest and also leads to subjugation of resources to military needs. However, as data on the declining trend or the medium or small variations in budget allocations for military purposes (**Table 2**) indicate the relative decline in direct confrontations, there is good reason to claim that the process of subordination of the Balkan states to the expansive force is in progress.

As the current analysis has focused on examining the structural features of the Balkan countries, we have deliberately abstracted long-term process of EU enlargement and the current membership of Greece, Bulgaria and Romania, as well as the future inclusion of other Balkan countries (Schneider, 2009). Since our *null hypothesis* is largely confirmed with conditional generalizations regarding the expansive potential of Romania, the following analysis should focus on the genesis of wider geopolitical processes in

¹³ Here, Greece presents an evident example: though it has relatively high value of IGP for the Balkans (0,032), that value is mostly result of high Military factor Index, which implies on active adaptation to the potential conflict. As it is faced with Turkey, with whom it has a history of conflict, this trend isn't surprising and refers to a rather limited expansive potential of Greece.

the light of EU enlargement in order to predict the future geopolitical patterns concerning internal, Balkan states.

Table 2. Dynamics of the military expenditures as % of GDP (from 1995 to 2010).

State/Year	1990	1995	2000	2005	2010
Romania	4,5	2,8	2,5	2	1,4
Greece	3,4	3,2	3,6	2,9	3,1
Bulgaria	3,7	2,9	2,7	2,4	1,4
Serbia	*	*	5,5	2,5	2,2
Croatia	*	*	*	1,6	1,7
Bosnia and Herzegovina	*	9,3	3,1	1,6	1,4
Albania	5,9	2,1	1,2	1,3	1,6
Macedonia	*	*	1,9	2,1	1,5
Montenegro	*	*	*	*	1,3
Kosovo	no data	no data	no data	no data	no data

Data source: UN Data.¹⁴

4. Further Processes Concerning Balkan States

Since this analysis is assuming a fix moment, it is necessary to put the identified characteristics of the internal states and of the trends related to them in the broader framework of geopolitical processes. We have seen that the Balkan region was historically marked by the alternation of two trends: first period was characterized by the absence of oppositions due to an active involvement of expansive force(s), and which lasted until the collapse of socialism. This period was (again) followed by the initiation of conflict and fragmentation in the absence of (in)direct conquest of an expansive force. Thereafter, an identified trend of conflict decreasing followed a broader reconfiguration of structure of geopolitical relations in Eurasia. Namely, this reconfiguration was caused by the collapse of socialism,¹⁵ which brought relative weakening of Russia's geopolitical position and general improvement in the position of the European Union, whose strengthening occurred in the form of expansion on the former Soviet geopolitical zone (Trenin, 2001; Lašas, 2010). This trend is particularly noticeable through reconfiguration in the structure of geopolitical relations, where Russia, despite retaining primacy, also faces significant weakening of its own position. Thus, Russia's position, measured by IGP, still appears as dominant, both in relation to the Eurasian states taken individually or the European Union as a whole. However, the index of Russia's geopolitical position significantly reduces in this respect when the EU is considered as an geopolitical entity: in that case, Russia's IGP drops from 0.891 to 0.481, while the index value for the Union amounts to a value of 0.299 (Table 3). As a new geopolitical entity in the Eurasian space, European Union historically sets itself as an expansive force towards the Balkans, by meeting two primary conditions: it is able to acquire the 1)

¹⁴ http://data.un.org/Data.aspx?q=GDP&d=WDI&f=Indicator_Code%3aMS.MIL.XPND.GD.ZS, accessed on March 24th, 2013;

¹⁵ Collapse of socialism, by the Collins' interpretation, is a consequence of an long-term excessive expansion of Russian Empire, which was faced with the difficulties to maintain the control both over the "buffer zone" (i.e. Eastern Europe), as well as the structures of Soviet republics. Collins interprets that Soviet withdrawal from this space was a sort of structural adjustment, as any (military) intervention would possibly open a series of new conflicts, which would be very difficult to control (Collins, 1995).

cumulative benefits that correspond with the 2) geopolitical advantages it holds. However, we should consider the character of its expansiveness beyond these general references.

Table 3. *Indicator and coefficient values comparison for Russia and European Union.*

State(Entity)/Indicator	Indicator Value	Indicator Coefficient	Indicator Value	Indicator Coefficient
	Russia		European Union	
Area (km ²)	17098242	1	4324782	0,2
Population	138082178	0,2	503824373	1
Proved oil reserves in	60,000000000	1	5544000000	0,0
Proved natural gas	44800000000000	1	2211000000000	0,0
GDP (ppp) in \$	2380000000000	0,1	15650000000000	1
Foreign currency and gold	812100000000	1	513000000000	0,6
Military Expenditures as %	3,9	1	No	No
Manpower available for	69117271	0,2	233328531	1
IGP	0,481		0,299	

Data source: *The World Factbook 2011.*

Namely, this direction of analysis requires consideration of the European Union as a contingent unit, composed of sovereign states, which may contradict the basic assumption of geopolitical theory and its key study unit - the sovereign state. However, there are valid arguments on which the Union can be seen as an expansive geopolitical entity. Thus, Jan Zielonka criticizes the authors who tend to seek features of so-called Westphalian state on the European Union example, in the form of centralism and homogeneity. This author makes a parallel through the diachronic historical comparison with the decentralized medieval empires, whose structure is characterized by multiple rings of authority (Zielonka, 2007). In contrast to the classical concept of the state, where the mechanisms of coercion and control are primarily military-political, such decentralized entities rely on the economic and bureaucratic mechanisms of control. Exclusion of the militant character of the expansion in the form of direct conquest, however, doesn't preclude itself from being expansive, because geopolitical theory recognizes the possibility of peaceful or quasi-peaceful expansion. Although temporal matching of two phenomena, which in this case is the halting of internal fragmentation process of the Balkan states with the EU's increased institutional engagement, not necessarily constitute a causal relationship, there is an evidence that such a connection exists and that it is connected with an opening of membership perspective for all Balkan states since 1999 (Cohen and Lampe, 2011). Therefore, the principles which European Union employs in the process of expansion are in the form

¹⁶ As EU does not have centralised budget, especially not for military purposes, most member-states have relatively low allocations for military, so in average, 1,8 % of GDP goes for military expenditures. However, it is noticeable that two member states with highest military expenditures are Greece and Cyprus, both geographically located on the Union's edge and both facing Turkey.

of conditional and (in)direct application of institutional solutions and imposition of normative set (Zielonka, 2007; Schneider, 2009).¹⁷

What opens as an issue in the assessment of the substantive character of EU expansiveness¹⁸ is the theoretical concept suitable for both diachronic and synchronic historical comparison (i.e.: establishment of transhistorical generalization). Although these issues are historically conditioned and therefore more at risk of ethnocentrism, it seems that on this plane, Anderson provides a useful explanation. Namely, this author favors the term empire, which appears as the most flexible, as it can cover both "*external as well as internal relations, the contemporary blurring of the inside/outside dichotomy, and the graded heterogeneity from core to periphery*" (Anderson, 2007, p.26). Although the EU's potential singularity is conditioned by a network of socio-spatial power relations among the member states and their relation to the other relevant geopolitical rivals, it stands in relation to the internalization and externalization, where the latter is very relevant to its singularity (ibidem). This is why the long-term aspect of the expansion requires recognition of specific historic function of geopolitical processes. Namely, even though the process of joining is complex and past experiences show that Member States have looked mainly on the expansion through the economic costs that they have to invest in the future member and the possible benefits they can obtain in that way (Schneider, 2009), this process is irreducible to the regulatory acceptance of normative sets (Zielonka, 2007). Therefore, the interpretations of European Union expansion that focuses on institutional issues (ibidem.), such as the process of adoption of standards and identity or understanding the expansion from the perspective of interests (Lašas, 2010; Schneider, 2009) are insufficient. Namely, the wider global environment, embodied in the global forces requires further enlargement and integration processes of European states (Armstrong and Anderson, 2007). Similarly, the instability of the immediate environment was already concerned for several times and it is clear why the historic expansion of the European Union is moving towards post-Soviet space with the aim of controlling the instability made by the process of fragmentation. Therefore, immediate geopolitical environment of the European Union gives its extension a strategic character, as "*the Union has no other equally effective foreign policy tool to shape its own unstable environment*" (Zielonka, 2007, p.173).

In this context, the expansion of the European Union shows as a long-term necessity, although this does not mean simplification of the complex process of accession, which will further be burdened by the questions of political arrangement and organization, i.e. the degree of centralization in the mosaic of economic and cultural differences (ibidem.). Inasmuch Collins' insistence (Collins, 1986) on stochastic character of these processes proves correct, as it is based on implicit assumption about the practical adaptation of actors and institutions to structural relations, without the teleological prejudicing of ahistorically taken interests that can be linearly extracted from structural determinism. Speaking of practical adaptation to structural relations, it should not be forgotten that the expansion is of a double character, as for the Member States it has the tendency of confirming and maintaining power and control, while the aspiring members pursuit to join the Union in order to gain access to the cumulated resources (Zielonka, 2007), and geopolitical stability. The latter is very important for the Balkan states, because not only that

¹⁷ Certainly, this process is complex in nature, but it is directly linked to the combination of military and diplomatic intervention of NATO in the Balkans, which was successively inherited with institutionalized mechanisms embodied in the form of the concept of Stabilization and Association Process (SAP) (Cohen and Lampe, 2011).

¹⁸ Anderson well summarizes ambivalence concerning the substantive character of EU and its historical conditionality: "The empire metaphor points towards the possibility of empowering Europe to compete globally with other major powers, but it also signals internal differentiation, and if the latter tendency were to predominate it will be no more than a metaphor, and perhaps not a very good one" (Anderson, 2007, p.25).

they can't cumulate initial expansive advantages, but they are also in imminent danger of having their geopolitical position threaten due to similarities in geopolitical positions.¹⁹

Concerning the positions in the structure of geopolitical relations we assume that further processes in the Balkans will depend on the expansion of the European Union, which can absorb much of the oppositions that accompany internal states. However, a necessary precondition for this expansion and thus prevention of conflict and fragmentation processes is that the EU retain the relative coherence in expansive tendencies, or a minimum of common geopolitical interests. At the same time, it involves the transformation of the internal structure, which should be able to absorb the growing differences between countries, caused by European Union's expansion. If the process is viewed from the perspective of the Member States themselves, further EU's expansion, despite the introduction of contradictions and diversity, generally means a confirmation and extension of the old members power by putting new ones under their control and also a general strengthening of the geopolitical position as a result of expansion to the new territorial and population units and their resources. The question of resources and their scarcity (Tekin, Williams, 2010) may be particularly important for further establishment of geopolitical relationships in the Eurasian space and thus indirectly on the Balkans.

5. Conclusions

In this paper, we have tried to shed a new light on Collins' Geopolitical Theory while simultaneously giving a prediction and further elaborating methodology that included the reliance on historical-relational approach and construction of the *index of geopolitical position* of the state, which sought to outline the structure and processuality of their relationships. Considered assumptions have shown that the geopolitical processes in the Balkans have been historically conditioned by unstable positions and relationships that characterize the internal states. The long term exclusion from the possibility of acquiring cumulative advantages as a prerequisites for expansion, are the key features of the Balkan states positions in the structure of geopolitical relations, which further opens up opportunities for expansive forces. Our analysis has shown that the EU appears as an expanding, but not as a military force that is characterized by narrow territorial sovereignty. On the contrary, the bureaucratic nature of its expansion opens up further questions of its internal structure. Although we have concluded that its long-term geopolitical interest in further expansion and control of external space, a complex process of further enlargement to the Balkans largely depends on its internal relations. However, in general, on the foundations of epistemic priority of structural

¹⁹ For these reasons, it becomes clearer why these states, as well as the majority of Eastern European states are in a long-term excluded from the possibilities of acquiring the initial advantages, necessary for expansion. First, the positions of these states have historically been internal and that situation, in terms of geopolitical relations, has not changed substantially, regardless they have established what is colloquially called democratic regimes. Moreover, the establishment of these regimes can be interpreted as structural adaptation to the altered circumstances, which occurred with the fall of power of one of geopolitical entity - Soviet Union, and its ideological apparatus and system of classification and perception. As none of these internal states did not have the autonomous cultural production, especially not in the field of political organization, they have accepted (more or less voluntarily) the patterns of other major geopolitical entity - West. Namely, this brings us to a second point, where each of these states lacked the space for possible extension of their power. In other words, none of these states, regardless of their current political organization cannot acquire any kind of initial advantage against each other, when they are faced with the larger geopolitical entity. Another substantial problem that emerges from the theories that insist on perceiving the geopolitical processes through the forms of political organization (as theory of democratic regimes does), is that definition of those regimes and organizations is historically conditioned, and therefore, particular. The case of former Yugoslavia dissolution (again) shows that introducing of certain form of political organization, as the multi-party system is, has not stopped the process of fragmentation, because this process followed the historical recomposition of geopolitical relations and the withdrawal of expansive forces.

factors, we can conclude that further relations in the Balkans will take the form of more or less differentiated subordination to the requirements of EU accession. The nature of the EU itself opened some questions that can be the basis of a future analysis, related to the establishment of mechanisms of power in the social space - from the relationship of economic dependency to the symbolic construction of space.

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