

DECOMPOSITION OF THE EUROPEAN REGIONAL SECURITY COMPLEX: THE NEW IRON CURTAIN

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Abstract: The theory of regional security complexes was developed by the Copenhagen School of Security from the end of the last century and the beginning of this century. Although this theory was partially abandoned by its creators, it has received considerable attention in modern security studies to this day. The European security complex was the focus of the Copenhagen School, and it occupies a significant place in the theories created in the later period.

This paper is an attempt to analyze the European security complex in the conditions of new geopolitical turmoil in the world and Europe after Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2022, especially on the example of the Western Balkan security sub-complex. The basic hypothesis from which the paper was based is that after Russia's invasion of Ukraine, a new world order is being created, which will especially affect the European security complex and the Western Balkan regional security sub-complex, as part of it. The key claims and unique conclusion of the work is that a new „iron curtain” is being created in Europe from the Atlantic to the Baltic and the Black Sea, which will primarily determine the position of the Western Balkan regional security sub-complex.

Keywords: *New World Order; European security complex; Western Balkan regional security sub-complex; The Iron Curtain.*

INTRODUCTION

The European regional security complex within the Theory of Regional Security Complexes (RSC) had a central place, especially after the collapse of the bipolar order and the end of the Cold War in the last decade of the 20th century. According to Western viewpoints, at the end of the Cold War, the „Iron Curtain” that, according to them, was established by the former USSR (and the Warsaw Pact) from the Urals to the Adriatic Sea was torn down. The Balkans, as a part (sub-complex) of the European RSC lost its relevance in the creation of a new world order and was artificially substituted into the Western Balkans or the Western Balkan regional security sub-complex.

With the military intervention of Russia in Ukraine in February 2022, the issue of creating the latest world order, especially in the area of the European RBK, became actualized. The United States of America, which after the Cold War tried to estab-

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lish a unipolar world order, placed itself at the head of the „collective West” in a new conflict with the East (Russia). Given that they have preserved NATO as a lever of power, the USA is establishing dominance over the European RBK, pushing Russia out of Europe in all aspects and creating a new „iron curtain” from the Atlantic to the Baltic and the Black Sea.

In the newly created conditions, the so-called issue is especially sensitive. Western Balkan regional security sub-complex, especially from the aspect of the position of Serbia and Republika Srpska, as an entity of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

CONCEPT, TYPOLOGY AND ESSENTIAL STRUCTURE OF REGIONAL SECURITY COMPLEXES

In theory, there is agreement that the creator of the Theory of Regional Complexes is Professor Barry Buzan, who was one of the leading researchers of the Copenhagen School of Security and his initial work *People, States and Fear: The National Security Problem in International Relations* (Buzan, 1983). Later, in cooperation with the researchers of the Copenhagen School, Buzan will innovate that theory, especially in the work *Regions and Powers: The Structure of International Security*, which he wrote together with Ole Wæver (Buzan, Wæver, 2003). Given that there are different approaches in theory about how Buzan and Wæver defined the regional security complex, Milan Lipovac (Lipovac, 2016) in his doctoral dissertation outlined the genesis of the development of that phrase (Table 1).

Table 1. Genesis of the development of the term regional security complex

FOUNDER	(R)SC	DETERMINATION OF (REGIONAL) SECURITY COMPLEX
Buzan, 1983.	The first determination of the Security Complex (SC)	A security complex constitutes – „a group of states whose primary security concerns are so closely related that their national security cannot reasonably be considered in isolation from other (states)”.
Buzan, Wæver, De Wilde, 1998.	Classic determination of RSC	The regional security complex represents – „a set of states whose main security perceptions and primary concerns are so interconnected that their national security problems cannot be reasonably analyzed and solved separately from other (states)”.
Buzan and Wæver, 2003.	Revised definition of RSC	The regional security complex represents – „a set of units whose main processes of securitization and/or desecuritization are so connected that their security problems cannot be logically analyzed or solved separately from other (units)”.

Source: Lipovac V. Milan (2016, p.124).

In the RSC *typology*, we distinguish: *subcomplex*, *proto-complex*, *supercomplex* and *insulator*.

The *subcomplex* essentially has the same definition and characteristics as the RSC, the only difference being that the subcomplex is firmly embedded in the larger RSC. The sub-complex has different patterns of security interaction, which are nevertheless encompassed by the broader patterns that determine the RSC as a whole. Thus, Buzan and Wæver cite the Levant (Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Syria) and the Gulf, i.e. the subcomplex of the Persian Gulf (Iraq, Iran) within the Middle East-

ern RBK as the best example of a subcomplex. When it comes to the European RSC, as a subcomplex, according to Buzan and Wæver, the Balkan stands out (Buzan, Wæver, 2003, p. 152). A *proto-complex* represents a region that has the potential to develop into a RSC (for example: East African and West African proto-complex). A *supercomplex* represents the possibility of merging several RSCs into one large one (for example: Eurasian or Asian supercomplex). The term insulator was introduced into the RSC Theory by Buzan and Wæver. Glušac, L. claims that his intellectual history certainly has something to do with the older and more frequently used concept of buffer-state. „However, there is a fundamental difference between the two terms. The buffer maintains is located in the center of strong securitization, unlike the insulator located on its border). The buffer state is located within the RSC and separates the main actors in the region, while the insulator is positioned between the different RSCs and separates their security dynamics”. Thus, Buzan and Wæver identified as insulators: Turkey, between the Middle East, Europe and the Post-Soviet complex, and Afghanistan, between South Asia and the Middle East. According to them, the insulator is traditionally a passive player, which absorbs energy from the RSC between which it is located. Accordingly, the Map of Regional Security Complexes as seen by Buzan and Wæver at the beginning of the 21st century is shown in Figure 1.

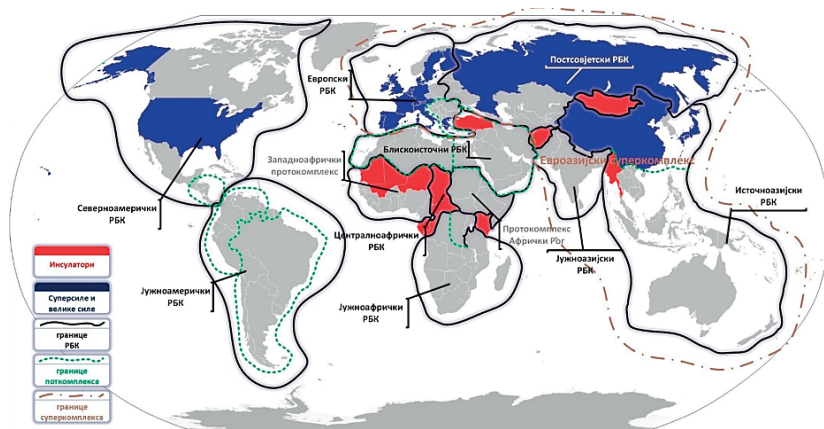


Figure 1. Map of regional security complexes at the beginning of the 21st century
Source: Buzan, Wæver 2003 in: (Lipovac, 2016).

Buzan and Wæver name the four variables of the essential structure of RSC as: *Boundaries of RSC, Anarchic structure (structure), Polarity and Social construction - form* (Buzan, Wæver, 2003, p.53). *The borders of RSC are shown in Figure 1. In this sense, when it comes to borders, the essence is that they are not constant, that is, that RSC is a dynamic category* (Ejdus, 2012, p.119).

The structure of RSC, in principle, is viewed from the aspect of hierarchy or anarchy within it. We can say that two views prevail regarding the structure of RSC. The first, with a realistic approach, views the global world, including the structure of the RBK, as anarchy, i.e. the absence of a „ruling” entity. On the other hand, starting from Wendt’s position „that the world is what states make of it” (Wendt, 1992), constructivists are of the opinion that a certain hierarchy can exist in RSC. For such an approach, when it comes to RSC constructivists most often cite the European

Union. When it comes to the structure of RSC, the terms „overlay” and „penetration” are also important. These terms are directly related to the external influence on the concrete RSC. Thus, a „covering” is considered a great power that has such an influence on a certain RSC, which disturbs the internal dynamics between the actors of the region. For example, the „cover” in the European RSC during the Cold War was the USA and the USSR. On the other hand, „penetration” implies that there is an influence of major forces on a certain RSC, but which is not so dominant that it can completely disrupt its internal dynamics. For example, „penetration” refers to the influence of the USA and the USSR on the Middle East during the Cold War (Ejdus, 2012, p.119).

Polarity is a characteristic of RSC that is viewed from the aspect of unipolarity, multipolarity or apolarity. In principle, the polarity is mapped from the global aspect to each RSC, although there may be differences from region to region.

In the end, a significant characteristic of RSC is its *social construction*, that is, its *form*. That form, most often, is understood from the aspects: *conflict, security regime and security community*. The conflict situation, in itself, is understood as a prevailing hostile relationship within the RSC, accompanied by a constant fear of war. Buzan and Weaver viewed the Middle East as a typical conflicting RSC, but also most of Africa and South Asia. „The security regime represents a pattern of security dynamics, which still defines the possibility of the outbreak of war, with the fact that it is limited by mutually accepted rules, as well as expectations that these rules will be respected” (Buzan, Wæver, 2003). In accordance with the previously understood definition of the security regime, Buzan and Wæver included South America and Southeast Asia in that group. Finally, the security community is a phrase coined before Buzan and Wæver by Carl Wolfgang Deutsch, who distinguished between its two types: 1) pluralistic, in which states retain a certain form of independence, and 2) amalgamated, in which states surrender their sovereignty on behalf of someone common identity. In modern conditions, the EU is understood as a pluralistic community, while NATO is a typical representative of an amalgamated community (Deutsch, 1957).

EUROPEAN REGIONAL SECURITY COMPLEX

Buzan and Wæver analyzed Europe in a broader sense - as a supercomplex (Figure 2), which consists of: 1. Western European security complex - one great power, the European Union, around which other members of the CSTO are gathered. „The dominant role in the European Union is played by the regional great powers Germany, Great Britain and France. The Balkans is singled out as a subcomplex; 2. The post-Soviet security complex - Russia on the one hand and the so-called GUAM cooperation (Georgia, Ukraine, Uzbekistan, Azerbaijan and Moldova), on the other hand. The Central Asian sub-complex stands out with its specifics in this security complex; 3. Turkey stands out as an insulator, with the ambition to become a regional power and 4. The Caucasus as a mini-complex” (Figure 2) (Buzan, Wæver, 2003, p.344).

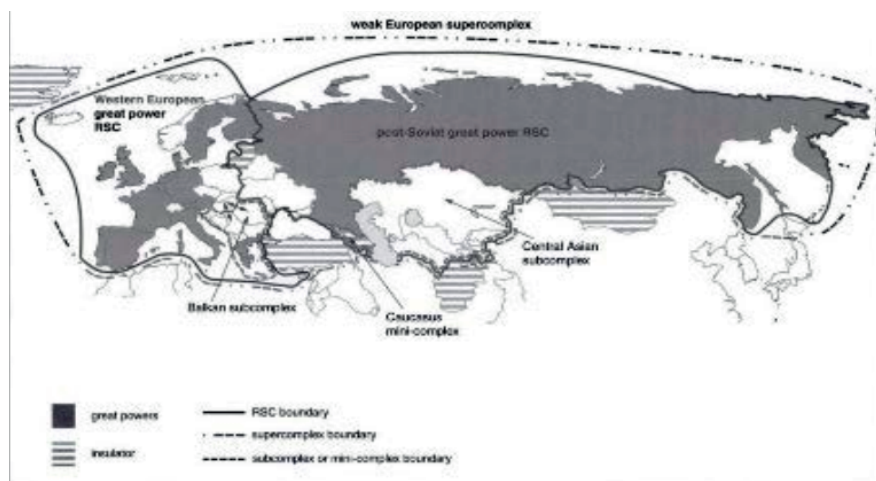


Figure 2. European supercomplex
 Source: (Buzan and Wæver, 2003, p. 350)

After the Cold War, the borders of the European RSC become a variable category, as is the case for the borders of any RSC in general. According to Figures 1 and 2 the borders of the European RSC (unjustifiably named as Western European) are debatable only on the eastern border. Obviously, the European RSC does not include some countries that geographically belong to Europe, such as Russia, Belarus, Ukraine, Georgia, Armenia and Turkey. That is, the eastern border of the European RSC is established on the western borders of the newly created states on the territory of the former USSR. But, „geopolitics constantly changes geography”. Thus, the idea of „Europe for Europeans”, which is realized through the European Union project, practically excluding Russia, is aimed at unifying Europe into a supranational entity.

More significant changes in the structure, that is, the dynamics of the European RSC, occurred at the end of the Cold War. The eastern border of RSC moves to the border of the newly formed states created on the territory of the former USSR - Belarus, Ukraine and Moldova. The Baltic countries since 2004, as well as Romania and Bulgaria, since 2007, are also considered part of the European RSC. Thus, the geopolitics of the great powers creates a “new geography”. The largest country in the world (Russia) is pushed out of the European RSC and forms a new RSC - Post-Soviet. Thus, from a security point of view, Russia was pushed out of the European RSC, which achieved one of the goals of the formation of NATO, as stated by its first Secretary General, Lord Ismay (Forca, 2020). In the beginning, Ukraine was included in the Post-Soviet RSC. However, according to some views, Ukraine is an insulator country, because in the first period after the dissolution of the USSR, it opted for neutrality, and it is located on the border of the European and Post-Soviet RSC. After Russia annexed Crimea (2014), Ukraine essentially turned to Euro-Atlantic integration and sought membership in both the EU and NATO. The EU avoids these efforts of Ukraine, but NATO „fuels” one of the lines of fire, with constant calls for Ukraine to join the Alliance. Essentially, the main power covering the European RSC is the USA, because the unipolar world order has been established, and only apparently the so-called emerging power - EU. Thus, America remained in Europe, which

was also one of the goals of the formation of NATO, as Lord Ismay saw it. Penetration within the European RSC occurs in the economic sphere, primarily by China (the „Belt and Road” initiative), but also by Russia. After Russia militarily attacked Ukraine in 2022, the EU, under pressure from the US, clearly and publicly expressed its intention to admit that country into its membership, giving it candidate status. Also, NATO, at the summit in Madrid (June 28 to 30, 2022), again invites Ukraine to join the Alliance (Forca, 2022).

The form of the European RSC is difficult to determine. According to Buzan and Wæver, it is understood as a hierarchy, and not as anarchy, primarily due to the existence of the EU, which is constantly expanding and establishing its own principles for regulating relations between member states. *The polarity* in the European RSC is also difficult to determine. Namely, despite the existence and expansion of the EU, it is unequivocal that the extremely strong influence of the USA (NATO) is still felt in Europe, in which sense that country can be understood as a cover force for the European RSC. Thus, in the European RSC one can speak of a kind of bipolarity model, taking into account the influences of the USA and the EU. However, the influence of Russia is still felt in the European RSC, especially in Belarus, Serbia and part of B&H (Republika Srpska), Armenia and Moldova, as well as the economic influence of China, and the European RBC can, conditionally, be understood as multipolar.

Balkan regional security sub-complex

The Balkan Peninsula, in a general sense, is determined by a number of geographical, demographic, historical, political, economic, traffic, religious, cultural and other factors. It is located in the southern part of Europe. The total area of the peninsula is about 520,000 km², and with the neighboring islands and the Romanian province of Dobruja, it covers an area of 566,567 km², which is about 6% of the total area of Europe, and is the largest after the Scandinavian and Iberian peninsulas. Marija Todorova in her widely read book *Imagining the Balkans* points out how the German geographer August Zeune, in his book from 1808, called it the Balkan Peninsula (Balkanhalbeiland). Zeune, admittedly wrongly, considered that this peninsula in the north was separated from the rest of Europe by the „Balkan” mountains, so it is analogous to the Apennine or Pyrenean peninsula, and he named this peninsula after, as he considered, the dominant mountain range (Todorova, 2009, p. 45). Although there are minor differences, most analysts, from a political point of view, count 11 countries in the area of the Balkan Peninsula, which partly or entirely belong to the region: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Greece, North Macedonia, Serbia, Croatia, Slovenia, Romania and Turkey (Sekulović, 2018, pp. 32-33).

In the geopolitical discourse, the term *Balkan* is used instead of *the Balkan Peninsula*. The connotation of the term „Balkans” is mostly negative, implying the constant conflict between the peoples and states of that region, on the one hand, as well as the interference of world and regional powers, on the other. In this sense, the catchphrase about „the Balkans with too much history” is often mentioned (Luketić, 2013, p. 70). The most significant term derived from the word *Balkan* is „balkanization”. The term „Balkanization” appeared after World War I in the *New York Times* on December 20, 1918. Under the title „*Rathenau, the great industrialist, predicts the Balkanization of Europe*”². In university circles, this term was used by holders

² Walter Rathenau, the famous director of the German company AEG (Allgemeine Elektrizitäts-Gesellschaft),

of different and often conflicting political viewpoints: some equated multiculturalism with bacchanalization, some used the term to denote excessive specialization, some, again, as a metaphor for postmodernism and postcommunism (Sekulović, 2021, pp. 292-293).

Western Balkan regional security sub-complex

The Western Balkans Security Subcomplex is not mentioned in the RSC Theory, although the term „Western Balkans” was launched before 2003. However, in numerous scientific works after 2003, the term „Western Balkans” is used in all aspects (political, economic, social and other), and analyzed as a security sub-complex. Therefore, one of the goals of this work is to confirm the thesis: The Western Balkans is a coin for the subcomplex of the European RSC, which has no foundation in science, but is used in geopolitics.

There are disputes about the precise date when the term Western Balkans came into official use. Therefore, the thinking of Milan Lipovac, who says: “The Western Balkans region in this way („former SFRY minus Slovenia plus Albania”) was formally determined in 2003 in Thessaloniki at the EU Summit by adopting the so-called The Thessaloniki agenda for the countries of the Western Balkans, in which all previous EU decisions and positions were sublimated, and which at the same time confirmed the „European perspective” of the region, and determined further steps towards EU membership. Also, it is important to note that the Thessaloniki Agenda is not the first official EU document that mentions the term Western Balkans. Previously, the term was also used in the accompanying document of the Vienna European Summit (December 11-12, 1998), which talks about the „preparation of the first joint strategy for Russia, Ukraine, the Mediterranean region and the Western Balkans” (European Council, 1998), as well as in the decision of the Council of the European Union from December 5, 2000, where it is specified in Article 17 that „the activities regulated by this rulebook are part of the Western Balkans policy and are necessary for the implementation of the goals” (European Council, 2000), (Lipovac, 2016) :165).

Prominent Serbian geopolitician Milomir Stepić believes that the term Western Balkans is an artificial geopolitical coin coined by the EU, and that it has no support in science and points out: „The EU intended the Western Balkans to stabilize the conflict area and harmonize it with the standards prescribed for accession. In the first years after the establishment of the Western Balkans, the EU tested the so-called regional concept – collective treatment of all countries in the region. It gave up that concept with the admission of Croatia in 2013” (<https://dokumen.tips/documents/milomir-stepic-zapadni-balkan-ili-primer-geografskog-raspojmljivanja-i-geopolitickog.html>, 10.07.2022).

Also, Gigović and Sekulović deny the correctness of the term Western Balkans from a geographical point of view, especially that Serbia belongs to the Western Balkans, because in its geographical division it would form the central part (Gigović, Sekulović. 2017:90).

Denying the justification of the term Western Balkans, in the geographical sense, Sveta Jokić writes: Albania, which geographically lies entirely in the south of the Balkans, in this case was moved far to the west. „The same applies to its neighbor

was assassinated in 1922.

Macedonia, which would therefore be more suited to the name Western than North Macedonia. And one more thing: if we have the Western Balkans, it is logical that there should also be Southern and Eastern Balkans with appropriate areas and peoples, and it would be especially interesting to know in what way and from which territories and countries the European Union would form according to its „recipe” a region that would be called the northern Balkans”³.

Proceeding from the position that the term Western Balkans is disputed in a geographical sense, in her doctoral dissertation Veličkovski Stojanovski Ivana writes: „If you look at the map of the Balkans, with the borders described by Jovan Cvijić, the Western Balkans would consist of Slovenia, Croatia and B&H, possibly Montenegro Mountain. Serbia is certainly located in the center of the Balkans, while the southern Balkans would consist of Albania and Greece, and the eastern part of Romania, Bulgaria and Turkey. However, never in its history, under any conditions, has the area of the Balkans been divided in this way, nor has it been recorded anywhere. What’s more, geographically it has not been completely defined exactly which area of the European continent the Balkans occupies. Therefore, the Western Balkans is first and foremost an area with specific political and security characteristics” (Veličkovski-Stojanovski, 2019, pp. 77-78).

Referring to the term Western Balkans, in her doctoral dissertation, Mirjana Milenković also claims that it is a geopolitical, not a geographical term that Western countries devised after the Kumanovo Agreement (1999). According to Milenković, this space according to Western countries is characterized by two key elements: „transitivity marked by the presence of the interests of great powers and heterogeneity which is a consequence of political-territorial fragmentation” (Milenković, 2020, p. 32).

Therefore, from a scientific point of view, the term Western Balkans is unfounded and represents a typical geopolitical coin. However, from a geopolitical point of view, the term Western Balkans is incorrect, as we will show by referring to the TRSC.

The borders of the Western Balkan regional security complex are undefined. In this sense, there are at least three points of view. First, he defined the Western Balkans as six countries (Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Serbia, Albania and North Macedonia). Another understanding of the Western Balkans, also under the designation WB6 (or WB5+1), understands that area without Croatia, but with Kosovo as a part. According to the third point of view, that is, the geopolitical approach of Turkey, the Western Balkans includes the area made up of the states of Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, North Macedonia and Albania. Therefore, neither Croatia nor Kosovo are mentioned (Jevtić-Šarčević, 2010:694).

The polarity in the Western Balkan RSSC is impossible to determine precisely, because: 1) NATO (USA) has the primary influence, even though the EU is committed to becoming the only covering power, 2) in some countries (Serbia and Republika Srpska), a strong influence of Russia is felt, 3) even though it is not primarily security, the strong economic influence of China is felt in the Western Balkan RSSC, which also has a political connotation when it comes to Serbia and Republika Srpska, and 4) the influence of Turkey is not negligible, especially in certain countries (in the Federation of BiH, Kosovo and Albania).

³ <https://www.politika.rs/scc/clanak/475604/Balkan-na-zapadu>, accessed 10.07.2022

The social construction or form of the Western Balkan RSSC is impossible to determine precisely because it is simultaneously a conflict situation (mutual conflicts between the states of the region) and attempts to establish a hierarchy (the European Union) and evidently existing security regimes established by acts of the United Nations and the European Union in certain parts of the region, primarily in Serbia (in Kosovo and Metohija) and in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

NEW IRON CURTAIN

During the Cold War, according to Western viewpoints, the USSR lowered the “iron curtain” in the area from the Urals to the Adriatic Sea, including the countries of Eastern and Central Europe and the Balkans, including the former SFRY, although for most of that period it was a member of the Movement of Aligned Countries. Thus, on the European RSC there were two superpowers - the USSR (with the Warsaw Pact) and the USA (with NATO).

With the collapse of bipolarism (the end of the Cold War), the leader of the „collective West” - the USA, establishes a unipolar world order. Given that it is clear to US strategists that ruling the world from one center (state) is impossible, they manage to maintain NATO, as a lever of power, even though the Warsaw Pact fell apart. Using the prevailing influence on the official UN, the US legally wraps the preservation of NATO under the provisions of Chapter VII of the UN Charter, primarily articles 52 and 53. According to these articles, the Security Council could engage international organizations, certainly officially registered with UN (UN Charter, 1945). In this sense, NATO engagement began around the world, first with and later without the mandate of the UN Security Council, starting with the civil war in the former SFR Yugoslavia. In this way, NATO left the North Atlantic area and ceased to be a defense alliance formed in accordance with Article 51 of the UN Charter, that is, it turned into a security forum and a lever of US power (Forca, 2021).

That the goal of the USA after the Cold War was to rule the world is also indicated by the official document - the National Security Strategy of the USA from 1991. In the Introduction of that document, the then US President George Bush (senior) said: „The New World Order is not a fact; it is an aspiration and an opportunity. We have an extraordinary opportunity, enjoyed for several generations, to build a new international system in accordance with our values and ideals, while old patterns and certainties crumble around us. We must work with others, but we must also be leaders” (National Security Strategy of the USA, 1991). From President Bush Sr. (1991) to Donald Trump (2017), 16 documents called National Security Strategy have been adopted in the USA. In those documents, the basic content is the vital national interests of the USA, and among them the key one remains - for the USA to be a world leader (Forca, 2022).

Given the fact that NATO is a lever of US power, the US national security strategies were the direction for the adoption of the Alliance’s strategic concepts. From its formation until 2022, NATO adopted 8 strategic concepts, the last one at the summit in Madrid (Spain) from June 28 to 30, 2022. years. After the Cold War, the Strategic Concept of NATO from 1999 stands out. Namely, the consolidation of US and NATO dominance in the world was demonstrated in a drastic example - the Alliance’s aggression against FR Yugoslavia in 1999. It was the 50th anniversary of the formation of NATO. In April 1999, the Strategic Concept of NATO was adopted, in

which two goals are very important: 1) expanding NATO to the east and 2) engaging NATO outside the North Atlantic area, with and without the mandate of the UN Security Council (NATO Strategic Concept, 1999).

When it comes to Europe, after the collapse of the USSR and the dissolution of the Warsaw Pact (1991), NATO began to absorb the so-called buffer zone with Russia. These were the countries of Central and Eastern Europe, the newly created countries in the territory of the former USSR and the newly created countries in the territory of the former SFR Yugoslavia. After the activation of the Partnership for Peace program (1994), the publication of the Study on NATO Enlargement (Study on NATO Enlargement, 3 September 1995), it was the turn of the practical reception of the states. The first European countries to join NATO after the Cold War (1999) were Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic. Since then, NATO expansion has taken place in 2004, 2009, 2017 and 2020. Thus, with 16 member states, as many as NATO counted at the end of the Cold War, by 2020 that number has grown to 30. In 2004, with the admission of the Baltic States to its membership, NATO broke out on the borders with Russia. In 2022, the admission of Finland and Sweden to NATO began. Thus, with the admission of Finland, the border between NATO and Russia will be expanded by an additional 1300 kilometers.

Parallel to the expansion of NATO, the European Union also expanded. The fact is that the first countries after the Cold War were admitted to the EU (1995) - Austria, Sweden and Finland, as militarily neutral states. However, since then, an unwritten rule has been introduced - first in NATO, then in the EU. That principle (rule) was applied to all former socialist states that became members of the EU until 2013, since when the „enlargement fatigue” has been going on in the Union. In the area of the Western Balkans, all countries except Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina became members of NATO, and Croatia was accepted into the European Union.

US and NATO strategists were not completely satisfied with the expansion to the east and the extent of pushing Russia out of Europe. In this sense, the focus is on Ukraine and Georgia, which since 2008 (NATO summit in Bucharest) have been constantly invited to join the Alliance. Russia reacted violently to the invitation to Georgia to join NATO and with a short-term military attack on that country (2008), practically, two disputed (quasi) states were created on the territory of Georgia - Abkhazia and South Ossetia, which Russia recognized as independent states. Since then, relations between NATO and Russia have become more strained.

The additional cooling of NATO-Russia relations occurred in 2014, when Russia returned Crimea, which had been part of Ukraine since 1954, to its composition. That move by Russia was assessed by the USA and the West as an illegitimate annexation of part of Ukraine, which is why economic sanctions were imposed on Russia. Also, all ties between Russia and NATO have been severed. In the same year, in 2014, fierce clashes began in Lugansk and Donetsk, which are parts of Ukraine where the majority of the population identifies as Russian. Until the beginning of 2022, fierce clashes between the Ukrainian security forces and the militias of Luhansk and Donetsk continued. It is estimated that several tens of thousands of people died in those conflicts, while over two million people fled, mostly to Russia (<https://valenteshop.ru/hr/poteri-uchastvuyushchih-storon-v-voine-na-donbasse/>, 15.09.2022).

The culmination of the NATO-Russia conflict, with a hard-to-estimate further course, will come on February 22, 2022, when Russia militarily attacked Ukraine.

Russia named that act as a „special military operation”, while the UN General Assembly assessed it as aggression (Resolution GAUN, A/RES/ES-11/2, 2022). The resolution on the war in Ukraine was not adopted by the UN Security Council, because there was a danger of a veto by Russia and China. Therefore, an extraordinary session of the UN General Assembly was held at which the Resolution condemning the Russian aggression against Ukraine was adopted. That resolution, according to UN rules, is non-binding and has a more political character.

As the war in Ukraine flared up, so did the homogenization of the „collective West”, led by the USA, which condemns Russia and calls for all-out support for Ukraine. Therefore, numerous analysts of international relations are of the opinion that, in essence, the armed conflict in Ukraine is a conflict of wider proportions led by the „collective West” led by the USA with Russia, but also China. So, the creation of the newest world order is on the horizon.

Essentially, the USA has undertaken an all-out campaign against Russia characterized by several key aspects: 1) Homogenization of the Group of Seven Most Developed Countries (G7) in condemning Russia, undertaking sanctions against that country and all-out support for Ukraine; 2) Instructing leading EU countries to impose sanctions on Russia, increase defense spending, as a contribution to strengthening NATO and supporting Ukraine through financial aid, arming and speeding up that country’s path to the Union; 3) Consolidation of US partners on the ground, primarily Japan, Singapore, South Korea and Australia in a kind of economic blockade of China in the Indo-Pacific region, and 4) At the NATO summit in Madrid (June 28-30, 2022) 8 Strategic Concepts were adopted in order Alliance (NATO 2022 Strategic Concept) in which Russia is explicitly named as an enemy, and China is designated as a threatening country. Also, the invitation to Ukraine and Georgia to join NATO was repeated.

In accordance with the subject of this paper, the processes in Europe and the position of the USA and Russia are characteristic. It is evident that the EU’s attitude towards the war in Ukraine is taking place according to the instructions of the USA, where it is particularly highlighted: 1) the EU has introduced 7 packages of unprecedented sanctions against Russia, which cover all aspects of relations between states and peoples, from economic and financial, suspension of trade, bans on flights and all forms of traffic, sanctions in sports and culture, up to attempts to collectively ban Russian citizens from entering the Union⁴; 2) The EU, and especially its leading countries, increased defense expenditures and began military homogenization. crisis situations; 3) EU member states, with a minor exception, along with the USA, became the largest financial donor to Ukraine, but also the largest exporter of weapons and military equipment to that country. The onward delivery plan was approved at the aforementioned NATO summit in Madrid⁵ 4) The EU made a decision on the accelerated path of Ukraine to the Union, which caused the indignation of the countries that are „waiting in line”, such as, for example, the countries of the Western Balkans⁶; 5) Under the influence of the USA, Finland and Sweden started the process of joining NATO, which will increase the Alliance to 32 countries, compared to the 27 in the EU.

4 <https://www.slobodnaevropa.org/a/eu-sankcije-rusija/31952457.html>, accessed 20.07.2022.

5 <https://www.glasamerike.net/a/6641536.html>, accessed 20.07.2022.

6 <https://www.dw.com/sr/ukrajina-postaje-eu-candidate-by-accelerated-procedure/a-62140280>, accessed 15.9.2022.

America remained in Europe, Russia was driven out of Europe, and Germany was brought under control (by the US). Therefore, all the objectives of the formation of NATO in 1949, as described by the first Secretary General of NATO, Lord Ismay, as long ago as 1952, were realized. America and NATO are becoming the main „covering power” in the European regional security complex, as the RSC Theory understands it. Therefore, NATO is establishing a new „Iron Curtain” over Europe, from the Atlantic to the Baltic and the Black Sea. It is unclear where the eastern border of that curtain will be, because it cannot be reliably estimated what status Ukraine will remain in.

International relations in the conditions of globalization are shown to be united courts. Thus, the creation of a new „iron curtain” erected by the USA and NATO in Europe will especially affect the processes in the Western Balkans (Western Balkan regional security sub-complex). Considering that all the countries of the Western Balkans, except Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina, are members of NATO, Serbia and Republika Srpska, as one of the entities of Bosnia and Herzegovina, will find themselves in a particularly difficult situation. Pressures on Serbia to recognize independent Kosovo and impose sanctions on Russia, if it wants to join the EU, are intensifying and accelerating. On the other hand, support for the unitization of B&H, provided by the so-called of the collective West is intensifying, to the detriment of the position of Republika Srpska.

CONCLUSION

The European RSC during the Cold War practically coincided with the geographical concept of Europe. In the geopolitical sense, during the Cold War, the superpowers in the European RSC were the USA and the USSR. The organizational forms of the integration of European states, which would later grow into the European Union, did not have a significant impact on the European RSC for two basic reasons: 1) in part of the European RSC, the USSR had primacy and 2) in the other part of the European RSC, NATO ruled, led by foreign countries of America.

Within the European RSC, the Balkan RSSC stood out, which is more a geopolitical coin than has its origin in geographical sciences. That sub-complex was, first of all, determined by the conflict situation („powder keg”), from a historical point of view, of the states that make it up. Therefore, the influence in the Balkans during the Cold War was also different under the influence of Russia and NATO. The end of the Cold War led to the dissolution of the Warsaw Pact, the collapse of the USSR, the breakup of the SFR Yugoslavia, the unification of Germany, the formation of the European Union and the survival and expansion of NATO. Russia was pushed to the east.

The European Union, through the Common Security and Defense Policy, as a unique form of introducing hierarchy in the RBK, tried, but failed, to become the sole power covering the European RSC. The Union itself contributed to this, because NATO (USA) survived as one of the main levers of the EU’s defense. The clause on common defense, which was established in the Lisbon Treaty of the EU, was practically canceled by Russia’s military intervention in Ukraine on February 24, 2022. Namely, the „old” adversary (Russia) returned, which homogenized not the EU, but NATO. The determination of the neutral EU member states is also on „wobbly legs”, as their membership in NATO is being advocated more and more, with Finland and

Sweden being the closest. A NATO (American) Europe („natoization of Europe”) is being created, in which the EU has lost both its identity and its compass. The cover force of the European RSC (USA) assigned the EU only one task - to „dig a trench” towards Russia, although it is not clear where - on or outside the territory of Ukraine (with or without Ukraine).

There are countless scientific and professional works that prove that the term Western Balkans is not a geographical (scientific) but a geopolitical term. However, research has proven that the Western Balkans is not a correct phrase even in a geopolitical sense, especially not as a regional security sub-complex, which is supported by the following evidence: 1) The borders of the Western Balkan RSC are not clear, that is, there are several views of the countries that comprise the region; 2) The polarity in the WBRSSC is impossible to determine precisely, because: (1) NATO (the USA) has the primary influence, although the EU is committed to becoming the only covering power, (2) in some countries (Serbia and Republika Srpska), a strong influence of Russia is felt, (3) although it is not primarily security-related, China's strong economic influence is felt on the WBRSSC, which also has political connotations when it comes to Serbia and Republika Srpska, and (4) Turkey's influence is not negligible, especially in certain states (in the Federation of BiH, on Kosovo and Albania) and 3) The social construction or form of the WBRSSC is impossible to determine precisely because it is simultaneously a conflict situation and attempts to establish a hierarchy and evidently existing security regimes in certain parts of the region.

The war between Russia and Ukraine, which many analysts see as a conflict between Russia and NATO (USA), will largely change the geopolitical picture of the world, as well as the status of the European RBK, and especially the Western Balkan RSC. In the “iron curtain” that NATO is creating in the European RSC from the Atlantic to the Baltic and the Black Sea, it is evident that Russia will be “expelled” from Europe for a long time. The question is where the eastern border of the European RSC will be determined: 1) with Ukraine (difficult), 2) without Ukraine (possible) or 3) somewhere on the territory of Ukraine (most likely). In this sense, special changes will also take place in the Western Balkan RSC, in which a possible scenario: with the accession of the countries of the region to NATO and the EU, the borders of that sub-complex will gradually change, until only Serbia remains on it, with a similar problem as Ukraine (border redrawing). and Bosnia and Herzegovina.

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