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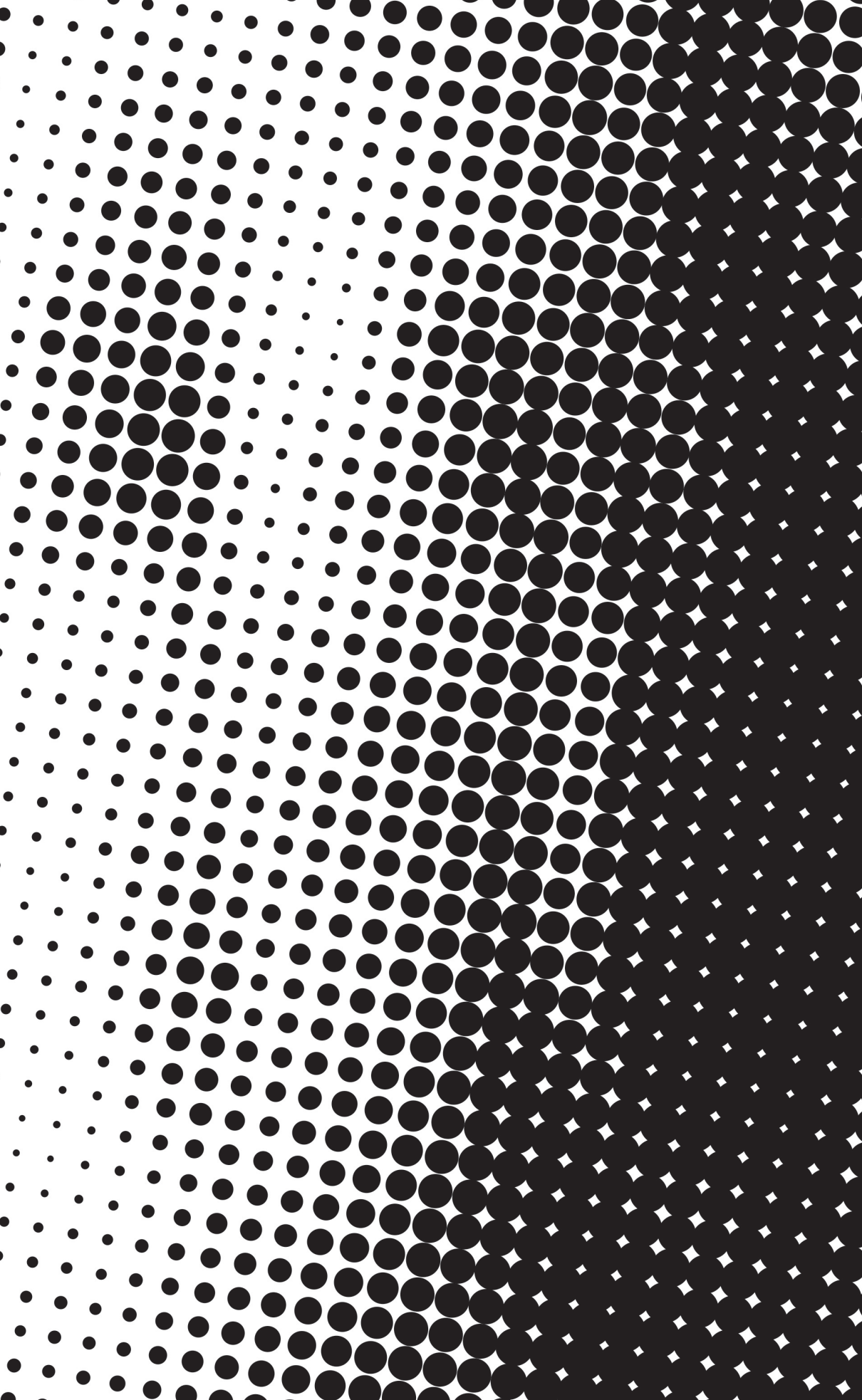
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Regional security complex as a chance for small states in the era of cross-border and hybrid challenges, risks and threats

The main goal of this paper is to present, from a theoretical perspective, the advantages of the regional security complex in contemporary international relations from the perspective of small and micro states. While, on the other hand, on the empirical example of the so-called Western Balkans, to show how the regional security complex in the case of weak states can in itself represent a challenge, risk and threat. In this context, the research question of the paper is to what extent small and micro states can effectively contribute to contemporary security flows from the perspective of a regional security complex? The main research hypothesis is that the regional security complex represents a chance for small and micro states to effectively confront contemporary cross-border and hybrid security phenomena.

Keywords: regional security complex, small and micro states, Western Balkans, hybrid and cross-border challenges, risks and threats

Introduction

Neoclassical realism and classical liberalism¹ would be a theoretical basement of this paper. In fact, both, mostly confronted theories would be used in the process of explanation the foreign policy maneuvering space of small states, thus contributing to the understanding of the benefits of regionalism, as a model of so-called micro international relations and, at the same time, contributing to the understanding of the benefits of the frame of regional security complex composed of small states in the process of efficient and effective management with ongoing cross-border and hybrid challenges, risks and threats. This is a study which from the academic perspective leads to opening threefold discussion: about the small states in contemporary international relations chapter, about the regionalism as an integrated part of the comprehensive

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¹ Mitko Arnaudov, *Male države u savremenim međunarodnim odnosima: između želja, kapaciteta i mogućnosti*, Institut za međunarodnu politiku i privredu, Beograd, 2025, str. 16.

international system, about the characteristics of modern challenges, risks and threats which do not „recognize” physical borders, military strength, economic development and resource capacities, but could be to a certain manner managed and resolved through wider and comprehensive coalition of endangered subjects. From the small and micro states perspectives, probably representatives of the positions of classical realists and those one which perception of the international relations is framed in the glasses of so-called big powers would criticize the findings of the paper, claiming that the foreign policy capacities of small actors within the international system is mostly marginalized. From the perspective of the regionalism, regional security complex, including the regional cooperation, coordination and synchronization, criticisms would be similarly based, in general to the thesis that big powers are „structuring” the comprehensive mosaic of international relations in line with their own interests and foreign policy goals, thus projecting their interests and goals in the micro-regions, as well. Finally, from the perspective of the contemporary and modern challenges, risks and threats with cross-border and hybrid characteristics, criticisms would be also backed-up with the limitation of the small and micro states, thus firming the thesis that by lacking the foreign policy capacities, these groups of states are also unable to deal with any kind of cross-border challenges.

But, both authors of the paper would challenge the so-called traditional perceptions about the small and micro states, providing three-fold explanation, thus answers to the question: why contemporary challenges, risks and threats require synchronized management approach which includes different types of states?; what are the required preconditions for small states to play effective role; and how and why without the essential understanding the benefits of the regional security complex, the global and international stability and sustainability would be unfinished process? By framing the paper in the empirical case of the Western Balkan, authors will use the contemporary security flows, domestic, regional and international, aiming to the promotion and explanation the following thesis: Synchronized approach within the regional security complex composed of small, but institutionally strong states, at the same time released with regional disputes and bilateral issues, could effectively contribute in the process of managing and resolving cross-border and hybrid security phenomena.

Regional security perspective in the context of small states

As Filip Ejodus explains, „international relations and security studies have long focused on the state and the international system, and regional security dynamics have been, at best, only partially and

indirectly affected by these reductionist or systemic approaches”². During the second half of the 20th century, apart from sporadic interest in the region, it was not treated as a separate level of analysis in international security studies in the same way as the levels of the individual, the state, and the international system.³ However, one gets the impression that the greatest contribution to understanding the regional role, respectively, the role of the certain region in the comprehensive international security concept, has been reached by Barry Buzan, who pointed out that patterns of security relations at the regional level often have their own dynamics that are not necessarily determined by the structure of the international system,⁴ and he called the aforementioned patterns of regional security regional security complexes, which he defined as „a group of states whose primary security concerns are sufficiently interconnected that their national security cannot realistically be considered separately”⁵. It was in line with the assumption that a tool was needed to identify the essence and specificity of international relations at the regional level.⁶ Ejodus builds on Buzan’s understanding of the region in a security context, emphasizing that „since security threats overcome shorter distances more easily and quickly, neighboring states have much more in common in terms of security than those located on different continents”⁷. Marjan Gjurovski, referring to Kegli Vitkof on the theory of the regional security complex⁸, emphasizes that it is a theoretical starting point that places regional subsystems as objects of security analysis, and offers an analytical framework for dealing with these systems. He emphasizes that it is a framework that emphasizes the relative autonomy of regional security bases, and positions itself on relations in a structure composed of

² Filip Ejodus, *Međunarodna bezbednost: teorije, sektori i nivoi*, Službeni glasnik i Beogradski centar za bezbednosnu politiku, Beograd, 2012, str. 249.

³ Neki od važnijih radova koji su se tokom hladnog rata fokusirali na regione su: Deutsch, et. al., 1957; Mitrany, 1966; Nay, 1971. op. cit. u: Filip Ejodus, *Međunarodna bezbednost: teorije, sektori i nivoi*, Službeni glasnik i Beogradski centar za bezbednosnu politiku, Beograd, 2012, str. 252.

⁴ Filip Ejodus, *Međunarodna bezbednost: teorije, sektori i nivoi*, Službeni glasnik i Beogradski centar za bezbednosnu politiku, Beograd, 2012, str. 253.

⁵ Barry Buzan, *People, States and Fear: The National Security Problem in International Relations*, Birghton, Wheatsheaf, 1983, str. 106. op. cit. u: Filip Ejodus, *Međunarodna bezbednost: teorije, sektori i nivoi*, Službeni glasnik i Beogradski centar za bezbednosnu politiku, Beograd, 2012, str. 253.

⁶ Leszek Sadurski, „Regional Security Complex Theory: Why is this concept still worth developing?”, *Athenaeum: Polish Political Science Studies*, vol. 75(3)/2022, pp. 138.

⁷ Filip Ejodus, *Međunarodna bezbednost: teorije, sektori i nivoi*, Službeni glasnik i Beogradski centar za bezbednosnu politiku, Beograd, 2012, str. 253.

⁸ Кегли, Ч. Виткоф, Ј., *Светска политикa, тренд и трансформација*, Прометей, Београд, 2006, стр. 774–775. op. cit. Marjan Gjurovski, *Osnovi na bezbednost: koncepciski bezbednosni pristapi*, Fondacija Konrad Adenauer vo Republika Severna Makedonija i Univerzitet „Sv. Kliment Ohridski” Bitola, Skopje, 2021, str. 153.

units (states).⁹ Then, as Lidija Georgieva explains, the subsystem level (in the context of the regional security complex) contributes to a more efficient analysis of security phenomena due to the consequences of the anarchic structure of international relations, and to a simpler explanation of the sources of threats, as well as the methods of their management, which ultimately contributes to valid projections of upcoming security challenges.¹⁰ Buzan has opened new and significant chapter in the process of understanding international security flows. Ejduš has logically framed the importance of the regional security complex, in the context of the geographical proximity. Gjurovski has pointed out the understanding of regional autonomy, referring that each region has its own and authentic challenges, risks and threats, while Georgieva has provided rational approach explaining that synchronized security activities within the regional basis contributes to effective management and efficient predictions.

Merging aforementioned regional approach from the security perspective with the small states, it seems that regional security complex represents basis for both, foreign policy positioning and creation sustainability for the group of states with limited national/state resources. In the context of foreign policy positioning, regional security complex to small states provides valuable „mounevering space” in foreign policy acting based exclusively on its own interests and the principle of the suoveregnity. In fact, regional challenges, risks and threats are de facto creating regional (foreign) policy goals of the small and micro states as an approach for management to the previously mentioned regional security phenomena, which allows the authorities of such group of states to perform foreign policy activities on micro (international) level, but with full range of political independence. From the security angle and the challenges of sustainability from the perspective of the contemporary dictionary of international relations, regional security complex represents a so-called platform to overcoming limitations that small and micro states are understanding as their own destiny. In fact, regional security complex could be understand as a cross-border mechanisms in the „hands” of small states for „consolidation” their limited capacities in the process of enabling national systems for management and resolving.

As it explains Sadurski, referring to Buzan, it is worth noting that this theory was meant to fill the gap between the two previously dominant perspectives of security studies, i. e., the plane of a single state and the global plane — the perspectives which limited the view of security issues by isolating the actors of the international relations

⁹ Marjan Gjurovski, *Osnovi na bezbednost: koncepciski bezbednosni pristapi*, Fondacija Konrad Adenauer vo Republika Severna Makedonija i Univerzitet „Sv. Kliment Ohridski” Bitola, Skopje, 2021, str. 153.

¹⁰ Marjan Gjurovski, *Osnovi na bezbednost: koncepciski bezbednosni pristapi*, Fondacija Konrad Adenauer vo Republika Severna Makedonija i Univerzitet „Sv. Kliment Ohridski” Bitola, Skopje, 2021, str. 154.

environment from the context of their nearest environment, i. e., the region and the relations which prevail in it between individual actors.¹¹ In recent years, regional systems have become imperative for understanding security dynamics at the global level. While the global level remains crucial to the dynamics of international security, scholars have distinguished the regional level from the systemic and state levels and used it as a separate level of analysis for examining contemporary security issues.¹² In fact, from the contemporary international relations perspective, regions have got the essential role of the creators of the global or international security mosaic, thus contributing twofold: as an relevant and reliable partner with efficient and effective role, while, from the other side, as a variable which additionally threatens already unstable international security infrastructure. Buzan and Waever have argued that the regional level provided a better and much clearer empirical and theoretical understanding of the dynamics of international security.¹³ It is also important to note that the regional security complex and its theoretical and empirical development have gone along with the the process of globalization and multilevel inter-dependence followed by the security challenges, risks and threats characterized with cross-border and hybrid consequences. Such scenario additionally has contributed in the process of empirical understanding of the importance of regional security complex in the understanding of wider and international security flows. „The national security of a state is too narrow, while international security is broader because it is based on relations between states. The global perspective, on the other hand, is too broad and too general, because security issues are not the same or equally integrated everywhere in the world. Moreover, they vary from place to place. The regional level, on the other hand, as an intermediate level between the

¹¹ Barry Buzan, *From International System to International Society: Structural Realism and Regime Theory Meet the English School*, International Organization, 47(3), 1993, DOI: 10.1017/S0020818300027983, pp. 344–346. op. cit u: Leszek Sadurski, „Regional Security Complex Theory: Why is this concept still worth developing?”, Athenaeum: Polish Political Science Studies, vol. 75(3)/2022, pp. 138.

¹² Lake D. A., Morgan P. M.. 1997. *Regional Orders: Building Security in a New World*. University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press., Buzan B., Wæver O.. 2003. „Regions and Powers.” In *Regions and Powers*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. and Hurrell A.. 2005. „The Regional Dimension in International Relations Theory.” *Global Politics of Regionalism: Theory and Practice*, edited by Farrell Mary A., Hettne Björn, van Langenhove Luk, 38–53. Ann Arbor, MI: Pluto Press. op. cit. u: Dennis Senam Amable, „Theorizing the Emergence of Security Regions: An Adaptation for the Regional Security Complex Theory”, *Global Studies Quarterly*, Volume 2, Issue 4, October 2022, <https://doi.org/10.1093/isagsq/ksac065>, str. 2.

¹³ Buzan B., Waever O.. 2003. „Regions and Powers.” In *Regions and Powers*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. str. 30. op. cit u: Dennis Senam Amable, „Theorizing the Emergence of Security Regions: An Adaptation for the Regional Security Complex Theory”, *Global Studies Quarterly*, Volume 2, Issue 4, October 2022, <https://doi.org/10.1093/isagsq/ksac065>, str. 2.

two, binds the interdependence of national security and global security and constitutes the theatre where most of the activities related to the creation of international security take place.¹⁴ From the perspective of the positions of the scholars who are promoting, explaining and advocating the theory of regional security complex, there are no doubts that such level of analyzing security flows plays twofold role: first, it provides explanation about the concrete contribution of certain regions in the global security mosaic, while, from the other side, it provides understanding about the security flows in concrete regions, thus offering understanding about the importance of national (domestic) and regional security phenomena with triple consequences: domestic (intra-state), regional and international. In this paper, second dimension, about the national (domestic) and regional challenges, risks and threats would be in the separate chapter analyzed aiming to providing an answer about the importance of regional security complex in the contemporary processes of management with ongoing security phenomena; second, to provide explanation about the significant role of small states in the actual international security chapter, thus offering variables which are answering to the question about the capacities of the independent foreign policy acting of small states in the field of security.

Small states and security agenda

So-called small and micro states within the international system, according to classical realists, do not play any significant role in the context of determination the flows in the international relations. In fact, it is classical, but also empirically nowadays unprovable thesis. If we analyse international relations thorough the prism of so-called big powers, their foreign policy goals and national interests, we could confirm such thesis, that international flows depend to interests of already mentioned powers. But, if we move the center of gravity of perception, from so-called big powers to the ongoing challenges, risks and threats, in a huge manner the perception of classical realists related to small and micro states would be problematized. Thus, it means that also classical perception about the national capacities should be different explained. Namely, the political strength, military power, economic development and natural resources possession do not automatically lead us to the answer that the subject of international relations is ultimately ready for facement and management with contemporary security phenomena. Mentioned capacities, from quantitative perspective are surely playing significant role, but not the crucial due to characteristics of modern security challenges,

¹⁴ Leszek Sadurski, „Regional Security Complex Theory: Why is this concept still worth developing?“, *Athenaeum: Polish Political Science Studies*, vol. 75(3)/2022, pp. 140.

risks and threats and also due to the globalized and multi-level inter-dependent chapter of international relations.

In fact, contemporary international relations faced with modern security phenomena, mostly with cross-border characteristics, request synchronization of quantitative and qualitative capacities and methods in the process of dealing with mentioned security obstacles. In the context of big powers, if we position diplomacy, domestic institutional framework and capacities for cooperation, coordination and synchronization as a qualitative characteristics, the process would be also easier for mentioned types of countries bearing in mind their general advantages, qualitative and quantitative, as well as „soft-power” instruments for creation basis for allied actions. While, from the other side, when it comes to small and micro states, lack of quantitative capacities does not mean, by definition, posses of qualitative ones. There are numerous of small and micro states, so called weak states, that are lacking both, qualitative and quantitative capacities. In this paper authors will use the empirical example of Western Balkans entities to prove that regional security complex could play a role of chance for small states in facement and management contemporary security phenomena, thus performing independent foreign policy activity on micro (regional) level, but only in the case of possessing and sustaining strong qualitative capacities both, on internal and regional level.

Important role in proving this thesis plays contemporary security challenges, risks and threats, but, as we have noted previously, there are certain preconditions on the side of small and micro states, including the regional framework, that should be meet aiming empirical prove of the author's thesis. Cross-border and hybrid characteristics of contemporary security challenges at the same time are playing twofold role: an opportunity and threat closely related to sustainability. First, let us focus on negative explanation. Contemporary challenges, risks and threats with cross-border and hybrid consequences are direct obstacle in the context of creation sustainability for small and micro states placed in the group of weak states, thus questioning their statehood the context of existence. If we define weak states as political entities which are lacking quantitative and qualitative capacities, logically we will conclude that there are no any tools for facement and management. Because, in the reality of lack of quantitative mechanisms, institutional framed strategy conducted by effective diplomacy and skillful foreign policy „hedging”, as a qualitative mechanism, could play the decisive role in the process. In the negative context, visibility, approachment and effective positioning of small and micro states to the international stage, thus playing integrated role in the facement with cross-border security phenomena, is impossible without sustainable qualitative capacities. Followed the previous, negative constatation, the positive one is quite simple and clear: Active foreign policy role in the context of managing contemporary security challenges, risks and threats could play exclusive-ly small and micro states with solid, built and sustainable internal

(domestic) institutional infrastructure resistant to potential internal issues and able to deal with „imported” ones, on regional or international level.

The connectivity between the small and micro states and their active role in the international security flows (with an assumption of reliable institutional infrastructure) and regional security complex lies in internal and regional security challenges, risks and threats. The expectations of significant contribution by small and micro states in the global security framework are quite limited, but their contribution on the national and regional level are quite realistic. Why? From the international relations perspective, having stable and sustainable internal institutional framework on the national level means having a partner that is able to deal with potentially imported security phenomena, thus sharing responsibilities with it, and, what is most significant, avoiding spending additional security mechanisms for resolving authentic internal challenges, risks and threats on the side of so-called big powers or international security organizations. On the regional level, lack of regional issues and disputes positions the region as a stability exporter, thus enabling it to play the role of contributor of global security and stability through the common and synchronized activities on regional level with effects on wider basis. As it was the case on national level, there is also no need for foreign „interference” by potentially interested sides, thus additionally preserving the resources on the security phenomena with comprehensive consequences from one side, while, from the other, the „maneuvering space” for micro foreign policy activism of small states is additionally extended.

In fact, regional security complex, could be a chance or destiny for small and micro states from the perspective of regionalism. If the region is composed of small and micro but institutionally reliable political entities, regional security complex could be dynamic framework from the perspective of cooperation, coordination and integration, thus contributing threefold: in the processes of management of internal, regional and internationally „imported” challenges, risks and threats, using the mechanisms of capacity-sharing, experience-sharing and mutual trust — as an imperative and one of the crucial preconditions of the whole process, beside the institutional effectiveness and sustainability.

From the other perspective, it could be a destiny in the case of regions composed of weak political entities from the perspective of the internal institutional infrastructure. Such entities are producing domestic (national and authentic) security challenges, risks and threats, while, from the other side, their institutional framework is not resistant to „imported” regional and international security flows, on contrary, contributing to the raising of their consequences. Case study of the Western Balkans in the next chapter would be an empirical example of this scenario, where in the context of regional security complex are used exclusively negative trends, thus losing the potentials of the regionalism it could provide from the security perspective.

And third, „middle” scenario could be the option of regional cooperation, coordination and integration of weak small and micro states with expressed inter-state trust, on political or national level. Such scenario, from the perspective of neoclassical realists¹⁵ could be applicable even in the case of the Western Balkans. In the context of regional security complex, this potential scenario could to dynamize the regional security flows in positive manner only if there are political representatives with mutual trust, with clear understanding about the institutional weakness and with pragmatic approach which could contribute to management and resolving internal and regional challenges, risks and threats, but also with realistic potentials and consciously projections for personal or own political losses in the context of popularity.

Western Balkans case study

Western Balkans states and political entities represent an empirical example about the misused opportunity that regionalism, thus regional security complex provides to this group of small and micro states. From the other side, mentioned, in a significant manner negative example, represents a practical basis for theoretical confirmation of the authors thesis about the opportunity that regional security complex provides to small states, at the same time confirming the positions of the scholars of the regional security complex theory referred in previous chapters in this study.

Before concrete explanation about the regional flows within the Western Balkans from the security perspective, we have to note that those are states and political entities with a quite unstable, thus weak political, social and institutional infrastructure. Firstly, so-called Western Balkans Six are facing with internal (domestic) challenges, risks and threats which are additionally threatening the regional security mosaic,¹⁶ on contrary from the process of stabilization. In fact, internal security phenome that are facing countries and political entities in the case study region are contribution to the comprehensive

¹⁵ Marjan Gjurovski, Mitko Arnaudov & Nikola Hadžić, „Conclusion of the Council for National Security of the Republic of Serbia adopted on the Occasion of the Armed Conflict on the Territory of Ukraine that Began on 24 February 2022.” u: Svetlana Veljanovska (ur.), *Towards a Better Future: Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions*, University „St. Kliment Ohridski” — Bitola, Faculty of Law — Kicevo, 14–25. str. 16.

¹⁶ Sanja Jelisavac Trošić & Mitko Arnaudov, Mitko „Political Antagonisms, Misaligned Security Policies, and Economic Integration Efforts in the Western Balkans: Present Challenges and Future Perspectives”. In: Dušan Proroković, Paolo Sellari, Rich Mifsud (ur.), *Global Security and International Relations After the Escalation of the Ukrainian Crisis*, Institute of International Politics and Economics; Faculty of Security, University; Sapienza University, Department of Political Science; Austin Peay State University, Belgrade; Rome; Clarksville, pp. 429–454. str. 431 i 432.

erosion of domestic institutional and social framework, thus contributing to twofold negative trend: institutions are becoming producers, instead of mechanisms for facing and managing security issues; institutions are not able to prevent internal social animosity on political, economic, ethnic and religious level, thus allowing deep and unsustainable negative polarization of the nation. From this, internal perspective, Western Balkans „actors” do not possess any domestic strategic or tactic, based on the social confirmation, to perform active role in the context of cooperation, coordination and integration within the framework of regional security complex through synchronized mechanisms in the process of resolving both, domestic, as well as regional challenges, risks and threats.

Second dimension is the regional perspective. The Western Balkans can be taken as an empirical model of negative peace (with the absence of war and violence), and it is very difficult to present it as a model of positive peace, based, according to Galtung, on the integration of human society,¹⁷ in the context of the Western Balkans, on the integration of societies.¹⁸ Without clear and mutual resolvent of the open regional and bilateral issues after the armed process of disintegration of former Yugoslavia, the mistrust on social and political level still serves as a political tool for political „battles” on daily level basis, as well as a justification to the political and institutional representatives who are de facto refusing to understand the potential benefits of regionalism as a model for development and sustainability. The essential problem is the fact that mistrust in the front to so-called others, as a politically based thesis, is still well founded within Western Balkans societies. Certain political and institutional representatives are misusing the negative flows and consequences since the so-called nineties in their justification of the lacking process of regional cooperation, coordination and integration,¹⁹ although there are significant percentage within the all-Western Balkans Six societies which are aware about the importance of regional integration, including in the field of security, as a variable in the process of understanding political, economic and social flows.

Third dimension would be exclusively political one. Namely, Western Balkans countries and political entities are facing with the lack of so-called progressive political representatives who are separating

¹⁷ Johan Galtung, „An Editorial”, *Journal of Peace Research*, Oslo, 1964. str. 2. op. cit., u: Grewal, Singh Baljit. „Johan Galtung: Positive and Negative Peace”. Academia. edu, San Francisco, 2003. str. 1. op. cit. u: Sanja Jelisavac Trošić & Mitko Arnaudov, *Uloga regionalne saradnje u savremenim međunarodnim odnosima*, Institut za međunarodnu politiku i privredu, Beograd, 2024, str. 106.

¹⁸ Sanja Jelisavac Trošić & Mitko Arnaudov, *Uloga regionalne saradnje u savremenim međunarodnim odnosima*, Institut za međunarodnu politiku i privredu, Beograd, 2024, str. 106.

¹⁹ Mitko Arnaudov, *Otvoreni Balkan — ekonomska integracija u kontekstu političkih i bezbednosnih razmimoilaženja*, Institut za međunarodnu politiku i privredu, Beograd, 2023., str. 103.

the internal „political battle”, from one side, and regional flows, from the other side. In fact, the region is composed of the political representatives who are basing their political and institutional decisions exclusively from the political perspective, precisely, from the perspective of popularity and populism. There is lack of institutionally and thus strategically based decision-making process which will be released from political influence, from one side, while from the other side will provide systematic, pragmatic and well-based explanation and justification for certain national/state decisions, including those related to regionalism, as those are cooperation, coordination and integration. As a concrete example we could recall to the missed opportunity of full implementation of the „Open Balkans” regional cooperation initiative which have faced significant political obstacles.²⁰

Based on the all three explained levels, we will use the beginning of the Ukrainian War as a current and empirically verifiable micro case study related to Western Balkans. Since the start of military operation on the Ukrainian territory, Western Balkans states and entities have missed the opportunity to establish systematic, thus institutionally and strategically based decision-making process. On contrary, state decisions were politically and individually based which have long-term consequences,²¹ especially in the field of energy supplies and stability²². It is concrete example about the domestic institutional weakness of the so-called Western Balkans Six. Second dimension perspective, it was also missed the opportunity for synchronized regional approach from one side, using the geostrategic momentum in the process of European integration (bearing in mind the fact that the EU membership represents strategic foreign policy goal for all entities within the region), while, from the other side, it was missed the potentials for common approach to the global energy market, including the joint processes of creation alternative resources. From the third perspective, instead of the understanding of necessity about the regional cooperation, especially in such unstable and unpredictable chapter of international relations characterized of compilation traditional (hard) and soft (hybrid and cross-border) challenges, risks and threats, political representatives are misusing this circumstances to strengthen their domestic political power, thus additionally forcing

²⁰ Sanja Jelisavac Trošić & Mitko Arnaudov, *Uloga regionalne saradnje u savremenim međunarodnim odnosima*, Institut za međunarodnu politiku i privredu, Beograd, 2024, str. 121.

²¹ Marjan Gjurovski, Mitko Arnaudov & Nikola Hadžić, „Conclusion of the Council for National Security of the Republic of Serbia adopted on the Occasion of the Armed Conflict on the Territory of Ukraine that Began on 24 February 2022.” u: Svetlana Veljanovska (ur.), *Towards a Better Future: Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions*, University „St. Kliment Ohridski” — Bitola, Faculty of Law — Kicevo, 14–25. str. 24.

²² Boris Rabrenović, Sankcije NIS-u: Srbija plaća cenu saradnje sa Rusijom, Dojče Vele na srpskom, 14. oktobra 2025., <https://www.dw.com/sr/sankcije-nis-u-srbija-pla%C4%87a-cenu-saradnje-sa-rusijom/a-74305081>

and promoting unresolved regional issues and bilateral disputes as a mechanisms for domestic political confirmation and de facto marginalization of each regional opportunity in the direction of development and sustainability. As it is explained by Jelisavac Trošić and Arnaudov, „first, internal obstacles lead these countries and political entities to self-produces challenges that become risks and threats which endanger internal stability and sustainability; second, potential self-produced risks and threats are eroding internal institutional framework of these subjects, including foreign policy service, thus creating unable „actors” for realization of foreign policy goals, including positioning within international relations”²³, as well as international security flows.

Conclusion

Three are decisive pillars which are determining the effectiveness of small and micro states in their independent process of facement and resolving contemporary challenges, risks and threats with cross-border and hybrid characteristics. Authors of the paper have used the empirical example (negative one) of the Western Balkans region in the process of empirical explanation and justification the placed thesis.

First pillar is related to internal (domestic) institutional and political infrastructure. The institutional independence, stability, predictability, professionalism and resistance is essentially important for small and micro states with limited economic, military, resource and political capacities, in order to play relevant role as a contributor in the process of dealing with contemporary cross-border and hybrid security phenomena through the so-called mechanism of regional security complex, as a micro level of the comprehensive and global security mosaic. In fact, predictable institutional domestic infrastructure, released from internal political, economic and social obstacles, could be able to deal with „imported” regional and international challenges, risks and threats.

Second pillar is related to the possibilities of regionalism and regional open issues and disputes. It is precisely related to regional security complex. If there are interests for establishing regional security complex with positive prefix, political entities which are part of the certain region should play twofold role: first, to contribute to the process of resolving open obstacles, as those are bilateral and

²³ Sanja Jelisavac Trošić & Mitko Arnaudov, Mitko „Political Antagonisms, Misaligned Security Policies, and Economic Integration Efforts in the Western Balkans: Present Challenges and Future Perspectives”. In: Dušan Proroković, Paolo Sellari, Rich Mifsud (ur.), *Global Security and International Relations After the Escalation of the Ukrainian Crisis*, Institute of International Politics and Economics; Faculty of Security, University; Sapienza University, Department of Political Science; Austin Peay State University, Belgrade; Rome; Clarksville, pp. 429–454. str. 433.

regional open disputes, which could disturb regional security framework; second, to be eager and focused to opportunities and possibilities for regional cooperation, coordination and integration even in the field of security, although it is a field closely related to political independence and sovereignty.

Third pillar, quite marginalized if the first one is secured, is related to the political and institutional representatives. Bearing in mind the political and personal obstacles in the context of regional cooperation, coordination and integration that are facing states and political entities within the Western Balkans, in this paper used as an empirical example, the variable of the personal and political dimension is extremely important for weak, but also for the small and micro states with stable political and institutional infrastructure in the context of contemporary international relations and the dimension of personal connections within diplomatic activism.

Based to the explained pillars, authors have reached empirical explanation about the promoted thesis, at the same time providing contribution to the theory of regional security complex by the involvement of small and micro states in the process of relevant and realistic understanding of the presented theoretical approach.

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REGIONALNI BEZBEDNOSNI KOMPLEKS KAO
ŠANS ZA MALE DRŽAVE U ERI PREKOGRANIČNIH
I HIBRIDNIH IZAZOVA, RIZIKA I PRETNJI

Glavni cilj rada je da se iz teorijske perspektive prikažu prednosti regionalnog bezbednosnog kompleksa u savremenim međunarodnim odnosima iz perspektive malih i mikro država. Pored toga, na empirijskom primeru takozvanog Zapadnog Balkana, u radu pokazujemo kako regionalni bezbednosni kompleks u slučaju slabih država može sam po sebi predstavljati izazov, rizik i pretnju. U tom kontekstu, istraživačko pitanje rada je u kojoj meri male i mikro države mogu efikasno doprineti savremenim bezbednosnim tokovima iz perspektive regionalnog bezbednosnog kompleksa. Glavna istraživačka hipoteza je da regionalni bezbednosni kompleks predstavlja šansu za male i mikro države da se efikasno suoče sa savremenim prekograničnim i hibridnim bezbednosnim fenomenima.

Ključne reči: regionalni bezbednosni kompleks, male i mikro države, Zapadni Balkan, hibridni i prekogranični izazovi, rizici i pretnje