

SOUTHEAST EUROPE IN THE NEW GEOPOLITICAL CONTEXT

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Abstract

Against the background of tensions and destabilizing processes in different parts of the world a global geopolitical reshuffling is taking place. A new redistribution of economic and political power within the international system is in progress. There are changing roles of the major actors on the global scene, the emergence of new centers of power and new alliances.

The paper is aimed at analyzing the strategic and geopolitical importance of the Southeast European region for the major actors in the international system in the new geopolitical situation. In the context of the growing instability on global and regional level and the renewed rivalry for influence and resources as well as in the context of the Ukrainian crisis and the developments in the Middle East, the SEE region is getting out of the geopolitical shadow and is back to the global chessboard as a particular geopolitical and geoeconomic zone.

The European Union, the United States, Russia but also China has different, often conflicting, interests in the region. All SEE countries (EU members and non-members) bind their future to the European Union. Still, there is an erosion of the hegemony of the European project itself. After a period of a relative disengagement from the region, the United States is putting back the region in the center of the US geopolitical attention. Russia – counting on the historic, cultural and political ties with the peoples in Southeast Europe - tries to further expand its economic and political influence in the region. China is the new actor in Southeast Europe. Chinese pro-active policy in this part of Europe is an integral component of “One Belt, One road” strategy, part of the strategic game of Beijing on the international chessboard aimed at gradually remodeling the existing world order.

The increased interest of the major powers towards the region adds further dynamism to the processes in the region itself. Any further intensification of the geopolitical rivalry between the great powers in the region could trigger new process of destabilization and fragmentation.

Keywords: Southeast Europe, geopolitical rivalry, global redistribution of power