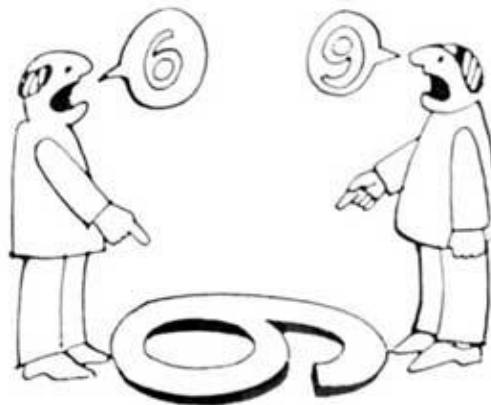


Utrecht University

MA International Relations in Historical Perspective

- Changing Perspectives of the Second Yugoslav State -

Master thesis analysing the change from a multinational Yugoslavia to a system of national successor states (1980 – 1991) using different perspectives in International Relations Theory and weighing their value for understanding the past events.



Author: R.C.C. Šijaković, 5698847

Supervisor: Prof. Dr. Bob de Graaff

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Preface

Finally, I wrote about the Balkans. It took me a while. Even though, my family connections and warm heart towards the region and culture could have made it obvious for me to write a paper or essay about the subject a long time ago, but somehow I never really tried. This thesis is has therefore been even more interesting and enlightening than I could have hoped.

Nevertheless, I realise the shortcomings that can be found in my text, especially when it comes to the use of sources. I don't speak Serbo-Croatian and therefore had to rely on English and Dutch sources exclusively. Fortunately some great collective academic works have been produced in those languages in recent years.

Romana Šijaković

Utrecht, 19 December 2016

As you will soon learn, this thesis is about different perspectives, and I sincerely hope that through these “versions” of the Yugoslav breakup more people – not just researchers – will come to realise how complex this conflict really was and perhaps will understand that ‘Yugoslavia is not a state of borders, it is a state of mind.’¹

In conclusion, this thesis would not have been completed without the support of my supervisor prof. dr. Bob de Graaff, who inspired through his own stories and adjusted my research course when needed. In addition to my supervisor I had useful and much appreciated help from Ljubomir Šijaković and Pepijn Aarnink. In terms of references and sources Utrecht University has been very helpful in providing me with access to books and articles needed.

¹ Bobinac, Una, ‘The Disintegration of Yugoslavia: An Analysis of Globalization Effects on Union and Disintegration of Yugoslavia’, *International ResearchScape Journal*, Vol. 1 (2014) 19.

Summary

This thesis tries to establish which of the three main International Relations theories, namely realism, liberalism and constructivism, offers the best explanation for the dissolution of Yugoslavia and the birth of new-nation-states on its territory. In the analysis different causes for the conflict, which are frequently mentioned in the literature, are represented such as the political system, economy, history, technology and ideology. Subsequently, the thesis explores how the different International Relations theories relate to these causes by comparing the theories with the causes from the traditional explanations. The analysis then indicates that, while all theories separately provide a comprehensive explanation (linking different causes), realism mostly focuses on the influence of the political system and its political leaders, while liberalism adds the importance of the ongoing learning process of humankind - which however can also have a negative influence. It is constructivism, however, which takes into account most of the (important) aspects and therefore seems the most valuable theory for explaining the breakup of Yugoslavia. Only theoretical pluralism, though, gives a fair amount of thought to all aspects involved and thus leads ultimately to a better understanding of the events regarding the deconstruction of Former Yugoslavia and the creation of its successor states.

1 | Introduction

Suppose a young man steals something from the grocery store around the corner. How can you tell why he stole something? It probably depends on who you ask. There are already four reasons that give some insight in why this young man decided to take something without paying for it. Perhaps he steals because he is hungry, or poor, or just because he can, or maybe because someone else stole from him before. The confusing part is that there are many more reasons to give for stealing, and all of them can be true, often depending on one's position and perspective (think about the cover image of this thesis). The same confusion arises when we try to find reasons for bigger events or conflicts. Single explanations are hardly ever sufficient to understand why events occur and especially why conflicts occur. Multiple causes can be true and eventually an academic debate will aim to decide which of them was most important, but what if there is no single important reason?

This thesis addresses the disintegration of Yugoslavia in the 1990s, including its beginning in the previous decade, and the coming about of new independent states on its soil. In the existing literature different explanations are offered for this dissolution, often concentrating on a single cause. As a student of international relations I wondered what the explanatory power would be of the three most prominent theories of international relations (IR) theory. The goal of this thesis is to show that different theories or perspectives have different explanatory value.

The Balkan region has known many conflicts and wars over the past century, the Balkan Wars (1912 and 1913), the First World War (1914 – 1918), the Second World War (1941 – 1945) and the Yugoslav Wars of the 1990s (1991 – 2001). The final war is especially sensitive, because for many people living in the Balkans this war is not even history yet. The last war in Yugoslavia was fought because of the disintegration of the country, a breakup which was slowly set in motion when the authoritarian Yugoslav president Josip Broz Tito died in 1980 and perhaps even before that.

It was a breakup that was both expected and unexpected. In numerous articles and newspapers stories about Yugoslavia were filled with hope², whereas other authors did not see anything else but 'a mechanism of national suppression' which was destined to fall

² Ullman, Richard H., 'The Wars in Yugoslavia and the International System after the Cold War', in: Ullman, Richard H., *The World and Yugoslavia's Wars*, Council of International Relations Press (1996) 9., Wachtel, Andrew and Christopher Bennett, The Dissolution of Yugoslavia, in: Charles Ingraio & Thomas A. Emmert (ed.), *Confronting the Yugoslav Controversies – A Scholar's Initiative*, Purdue University Press. (2013) 15., Pfaff, William, 'Invitation to War', *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 72, No. 3 (1993) 101.

apart.³ Looking back, it was never an easy task: keeping together six different republics (Serbia, Croatia, Slovenia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Montenegro and Macedonia) and two autonomous – officially Serbian - provinces (Vojvodina and Kosovo). Since the beginning of the twentieth century these republics had built up quite a history together. A history that could be built upon as well as a history that could divide people and it is this history – together with significant additional internal and external factors - that has been used and misused to bring together and tear apart people living there. Chapter three offers a more elaborate description of 20th century Yugoslav history.

The amount of literature written about the Balkans and the wars and conflicts that occurred there is overwhelming. Scholars have analysed the multiple conflicts that broke out over time, also from different perspectives. Nevertheless, the emergence of different perspectives on the last war has not been around that long. At the start of the war (1991) the conflict was often framed as being ethnic. An important example is Robert D. Kaplan's *Balkan Ghosts* (1993), which was widely read by politicians, the public and scholars as well. In this book Kaplan emphasizes the ethnic hatred that has always existed in the Balkans and emphasizes the particular Balkan behaviour, which according to him is (quite) aggressive and therefore prone to war.⁴ Even though this book was already published in the early 1990s, it had a great influence on how the Yugoslav Wars were perceived until 2001 and beyond. In many books and articles scholars claim that then American president Bill Clinton was very much influenced by Kaplan's book and as a consequence perceived the conflict as an ultimately ethnic one,⁵ leading to inaction of Western states for a long time.

The reason that articles or books have a certain frame is usually, because scholars, in the end, follow one theory – like realism or Marxism - and through this they end up focusing on one perspective. The goal of this thesis is to show different perspectives of the same war and thereby emphasizing the possibility and importance of exploring multiple perspectives in history and the idea of multiperspectivity.

The main question in this research is: *Which of the three most prominent IR-theories offers the most satisfying explanation for the change from a multinational Yugoslavia to a system of national successor states (1980 – 1991)?* In this vein, I realize that theories in International Relations are not static. For example, before the Cold War realists were probably unable to synchronize liberalist ideas with their theory. In recent

³ Bobinac, 'The Disintegration of Yugoslavia' (2014) 19., Hayden, Robert M., 'Yugoslavia's Collapse: National suicide with Foreign Assistance', *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 27, No. 27 (1992) 1380., Bieber, Florian, *Debating the End of Yugoslavia*, Ashgate Publishing (2014) 3., Lampe, R. John, *Yugoslavia as History: Twice there was a country*, Cambridge University Press (2000) 4-6.

⁴ Ramet, Sabrina P., *Thinking about Yugoslavia. Scholarly Debates about the Yugoslav Breakup and the Wars in Bosnia and Kosovo*, Cambridge University Press (2005) 3., Sekulić, Dusko, *Ethnic Intolerance as a Product Rather than a Cause of War: Revisiting the State of the Art*, in: *War, Community and Social Change*, Peace Psychology Book Series 17 (2014) 45., Pfaff, 'Invitation to War' (1993) 99.

⁵ Sekulić, (2014) 46.

times however, most scholars agree that realists, liberalists and constructivists all need certain aspects of each other's theories. This thesis will assess the theories by applying them to different aspects of the Yugoslav Wars and test their explanatory value per aspect such as the political system, economy, history, technology and ideology. By carefully showing how the events in Former Yugoslavia can be viewed, I want to stress the importance of realizing what kind of perspectives exist and how they influence the way we perceive a conflict.

In addition, the theories will be used to analyse the beginning of a new state system in the Balkans, instead of applied as usual to an – already existing - international system. The main question above and the academic debate outlined in the third chapter focus on the beginning of the Yugoslav Wars. The central reason for this is that the Yugoslav Wars consist of multiple conflicts – which explains the plural. Sabrina P. Ramet provides us with a convincing division: the war of Yugoslav Succession (1991-1995) and the War for Kosovo (1998-1999).⁶ Even though the second conflict is part of the overall Balkan crisis, the War for Kosovo could be considered an affair between Serbia and Kosovo, whereas the fighting in the first half of the 1990s demonstrates more direct links with the political crisis of the whole Yugoslav state.

The next chapter offers an overview of the three theories used in this thesis: realism, liberalism and constructivism. Different forms and points of discussion within each theory's framework are discussed. The main reason for choosing realism, liberalism and constructivism is that they are considered to be the most prominent and dominant among the existing theories in IR.

The third chapter will provide a short summary of the events and developments that took place during the 20th century before the breakup, followed by an overview of the academic debate explaining the different perspectives on the Yugoslav breakup and subsequent war.

After this overview, the dissolution of Yugoslavia is analysed in chapter four using a model of general aspects – distilled from chapter three – and the three IR-theories, in their most common form.

Once all three perspectives are discussed, a fifth chapter will summarize the points of view including a discussion on what is the most satisfactory theory for explaining the past events by clearly demonstrating where the limitations and opportunities of the theories lie.

The conclusion explains the added value of this kind of analysis (theoretical pluralism) for the Yugoslav Wars.

⁶ Ramet, Sabrina P., 'Disputes about the Dissolution of Yugoslavia and its Wake', in: Bieber, Florian, *Debating the End of Yugoslavia*, Ashgate Publishing (2014) 40.

2 | Conflict of Theories

As mentioned in the introduction this chapter aims to provide an overview of the debate surrounding the three main perspectives in International Relations (IR) Theory, namely: (neo)realism, (neo)liberalism and constructivism. These IR-theories will then be used in the analysis and eventually assessed in their value for researching and explaining the end of Yugoslavia and the beginning of the Yugoslav Wars. The theories have been analysed over and over again, because scholars have tried to explain international politics over and over again. It must be stressed that this overview does not elaborate on all subsets and different forms of a theory, because the discussion on IR theory is too broad and has too many possible differences to explain in one chapter and for this research only the main and most important aspects should be illuminated.

REALISM

Realists see the world as dominated by sovereign nation-states. These nation-states hold the highest form of power, which means that conflicts and wars will always keep occurring because there is no world government to keep states from engaging in these activities.⁷ As Kenneth Waltz, one of the founders of neorealism – which soon will be explained as a theory -, said:

‘Where there is nothing to prevent the use of force as a means of altering the forms and the results of competition, the capacity to use force tends to become the index by which the balance of power is measured.’⁸

However, a missing world government alone does not immediately lead to war and conflict. A driving force behind the occurrence of conflict, according to realists, is the principal goal of nation-states to survive. States want to gain power in order to protect themselves. Realism explains that there is no way out of this system: states will never be secure enough, never trusting enough and they will always strive for hegemony (maximum power).⁹ The German scholar John H. Herz explains that a security dilemma exists, because of this international anarchy. This dilemma points out a situation in which, when states try to protect themselves, they will automatically threaten other states, who will then

⁷ Mearsheimer, John J., *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*, W.W. Norton & Company (2014) 3., Weber, Cynthia, *International Relations Theory: A critical introduction*, Routledge (London / New York 2001, 2005), 14.

⁸ Waltz, Kenneth N., *Man, the State, and War: A Theoretical Analysis*, Columbia University Press (2013) 210.

⁹ Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics* (2014) 3., Weber, *A critical introduction*, (2001, 2005), 16., Jacobi, Daniel, and Annete Freyberg-Inan (ed.), *Human Beings in International Relations*, Cambridge University Press (2015) 53.

again start to protect themselves, causing other states to be threatened.¹⁰ In this regard, Waltz prefers the bipolar situation of the Cold War over the multi-polar situation we have known since then. Balancing power between two states seems fairly easy compared to balancing between e.g. eight, who could all feel threatened one way or the other.

Even though classic realism and neorealism tend to agree on many aspects in International Relations, there are differences to be found. Classic realists see human nature as imperfect or flawed and this is why 'international politics will remain anarchical and conflictual.'¹¹ Neorealists consider the state system - in which state and man act - to be decisive. The discussion is best summarized by the opinions of the two most prominent representatives of respectively classic realism, Hans Morgenthau, and neorealism, Kenneth Waltz: 'Morgenthau argues that states strive to gain power because they have an innate desire for power, Waltz maintains that the structure of the international system forces states to pursue power to enhance their prospects for survival.'¹²

As power and the balance of power take such a central role in realism theory, it should come as no surprise that certain scholars like John Mearsheimer primarily focus on the great nation-states. Smaller states have less power and eventually less influence on the political system.¹³ Mearsheimer combines the notions of Morgenthau and Waltz by suggesting that it is indeed the structure of the system that determines actions and attitudes, but this system forces states to always strive for hegemony, not to concentrate on the balance of power.¹⁴ It is this kind of offensive realism that dominates international politics, at least according to neorealists. However, this strive for hegemony is not irrational. Politicians 'find that the expected benefit of war sometimes outweigh the expected costs, however unfortunate this may be.'¹⁵ In other words it is a coldblooded calculation whether or not to start fighting.

In the book *Human Beings in International Relations* Annette Freyberg-Inan explains that there is an 'emotional dimension of realist views on human nature.'¹⁶ The book aims to illustrate that human beings are an important part of International Relations, even in the paradigm of realism. According to her the emotional motives 'fear' and 'despair' are essential to realism.¹⁷ States are uncertain about other states and the 'realist response to uncertainty is fear.'¹⁸ Once the emotion of fear is in place, the whole idea of need for

¹⁰ Herz, John H., *Political Realism and Political Idealism*, University of Chicago (1951) ch. II, sec. II., Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics* (2014) 36.

¹¹ Jacobi, *Human Beings in International Relations* (2015) 42., Weber, *A critical introduction*, (2001, 2005), 16.

¹² Mearsheimer, 15.

¹³ *Ibid.* 17.

¹⁴ *Ibid.* 21-22.

¹⁵ Fearon, James D., 'Rationalist explanations for war', *International Organization*, Vol. 49, No. 3 (1995) 379.

¹⁶ Jacobi, 35.

¹⁷ *Ibid.* 36.

¹⁸ *Ibid.* 43.

power and protection is set in motion. However, the dangerous part is that fear can be ‘invented and skilfully deployed’¹⁹ to undermine or dominate.

LIBERALISM

Two important aspects of liberalism are clearly present in international politics today: *democracy* is one of the most common political systems in the world and *globalization* (of the world economy) is making the world bigger and at the same time smaller.²⁰ Liberalism and realism are opposing views in international relations, but according to some scholars they are also very different theories. Realism is seen as an empirical theory, in contrast to liberalism which is sometimes viewed as a more normative theory.²¹ In other words, liberalism addresses how international politics should and could be arranged and realism shows where the system is failing at the moment and why it will continue to do so.

In the eyes of liberalists, realists are pessimistic, because they seem to deny that human history is evolving and this progress ‘can be measured by the elimination of global conflict and the adoption of principles of legitimacy that have evolved in domestic political orders.’²² In addition to this progress, human nature is not as bad as realists suggest. Human beings are not always in search for more power and will not have to if more people or states can be trusted. Through the eyes of realism, liberals are optimistic and idealistic, like former American president Woodrow Wilson in the first half of the 20th century or the professor of International Relations Charles W. Kegley Jr., who believes ‘that human nature – classical realism to the contrary – is subject to modification and not permanently governed by an ineradicable lust for power.’²³

In liberalism too, states are the dominant actors within the international system. In contrast with realism, however, liberals emphasize that with each state interaction, states learn about the process and will learn not to resort to violence.²⁴ The (world) economy plays a crucial role in this viewpoint. More (economic) ties mean more cooperation, more prosperity, overlapping interests and eventually less war. In other words, it will result in economic interdependence and in this system conflict and war occur for very specific

¹⁹ Weber, 23.

²⁰ Burchill, Scott (et al.), *Theories of International Relations*, Palgrave Macmillan (2005) 57.

²¹ Jacobi, Daniel, *Human Beings in International Relations* (2015) 53., Buchan, Bruce, ‘Explaining War and Peace: Kant and Liberal IR Theory’, *Alternatives*, Vol.27 (2007) 410-411.

²² Burchill, *Theories of International Relations* (2005) 58., Kegley, Charles W. Jr., *The Neoidealist moment in international studies? Realist Myths and the New International Realities*, *International Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 37, No. 2 (1993) 141., Walker, Thomas C., *Two Faces of Liberalism: Kant, Paine and the Question of Intervention*, *International Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 52, No. 3 (2008) 455.

²³ Kegley, *The Neoidealist moment in international studies?* (1993) 141-142.

²⁴ Doyle, Michael W., ‘Liberalism and World Politics’, *The American Political Science Review*, Vol. 80, No. 4 (1986) 1151-1158., Keohane, Robert O., *After Hegemony: Cooperation and Discord in the World Political Economy*, Princeton University Press (2005) 132.

reasons like an economic crisis or the rise of an authoritarian regime. This last reason is fairly confusing, because an authoritarian state is in fact a state, but liberals have stressed the fact that liberal states ‘engage in warfare only with illiberal and undemocratic states.’²⁵

As in realism, liberalism has had a theoretical extension in the shape of neoliberalism. Neoliberals, such as Robert O. Keohane and Joseph S. Nye Jr., have underlined the importance of interdependence - beyond the economy - and raise awareness that interconnectedness is not the same as interdependence; ‘interdependence relationships will always involve costs.’²⁶ They also underline the fact that interdependence is not always positive and beneficial to all actors, to quote a great metaphor: ‘As every parent of small children knows, baking a larger pie does not stop disputes over the size of the slices.’²⁷ In his book *After Hegemony*, Keohane also shows that ‘interdependence can transmit bad influences as well as good ones: unemployment or inflation can be exported as well as growth and prosperity.’²⁸

CONSTRUCTIVISM

In international relations theory literature constructivism is seen as a (relatively) new paradigm. Realism and liberalism go way back, but constructivism has been deployed as a serious paradigm in IR only since the 1980s. The paradigm uses different ideas and theories of sociology to examine and understand international politics and international history.²⁹ Constructivism aims to explain reality by studying – socially constructed - ideas, norms, culture, national interests and national governance.

Even though the international realm is anarchic – in this respect they do not disagree with realists and liberals – there is a ‘spectrum of anarchies ranging from benign, peaceful, even friendly ones to bitterly hostile, competitive ones.’³⁰ Constructivist Alexander Wendt explains the spectrum as follows: ‘anarchy is what states make of it’³¹, meaning that not all states are equally afraid and untrusting towards each other. Anarchy does not have to lead to conflict or cooperation per se. According to constructivists identities and interests are not pre-given or stable, they are in flux and therefore able to change, these changing identities and interests can then lead to alterations in human behaviour as well as state actions. This view implies that anarchy is produced by states and

²⁵ Buchan, ‘Explaining War and Peace: Kant and Liberal IR Theory’(2007) 407.

²⁶ Keohane, Robert O., and Joseph S. Nye, Jr., *Power and Interdependence*, Pearson (2012) 8.

²⁷ Ibid. 9.

²⁸ Keohane, *After Hegemony*, (2005) 5-6.

²⁹ Nye Jr., Joseph S., and David A. Welch, *Understanding Global Conflict & Cooperation: Intro to Theory and History*, Pearson Educated Limited (2014) 75.

³⁰ Nye Jr., Welch, *Understanding Global Conflict & Cooperation* (2014) 15.

³¹ Ibid.

because of this, 'we end up responding to identities, interests and institutions as if they were authored by no one.'³² Through constructivism states can, more or less, be held accountable for their actions; it is not the international system per se that lures them into conflict – as a realist would say -, but only when states choose to do so themselves.

Even though various scholars see constructivism as a new paradigm becoming equally important as realism and liberalism, the theory is also viewed as being a bridge between realism and liberalism or simply as a supplement to realism and liberalism, because it makes use of a 'thicker' understanding of 'structure'.³³ Alexander Wendt sees constructivism as a 'purely formal approach', the paradigm does not have a single idea about human nature, and so it will not 'generate substantive claims or expectations about how actors behave.'³⁴ However, according to Samuel Barkin constructivism does have an idea about human nature: 'that people are by nature social, that they identify with groups and that this identification informs their politics.'³⁵ In constructivism intersubjectivity takes up a central position and this intersubjectivity is only accomplished through a group process.

What can be concluded from the explanations above is that the three main theories oppose, overlap and make use of each other to make sense of international politics. In recent years there have been many more crossovers between theories. This thesis aims to show where the theories do not overlap and value them for their specific set of starting-points, using the case of Yugoslavia between 1980 and 1991. Before we can do so, however, we will first turn to this era of dissolution of state power, followed by new state-building, and the explanations that have been given for its causes up until now.

³² Weber, 71.

³³ Nye Jr., Welch, *Understanding Global Conflict & Cooperation* (2014) 75.

³⁴ Ibid. 76.

³⁵ Jacobi, 156.

3 | Explaining the Yugoslav Wars

This chapter aims to give a short but clear description of the situation in Yugoslavia in the 20th century and it shows different explanations for the Yugoslav Wars that one encounters in current literature. These explanations change from scholar to scholar and throughout the years. One of the main reasons why there are so many different perspectives and why some enjoy more public agreement than others is because of the fact that the Yugoslav wars have been greatly commented on, not only by scholars, but also by politicians, journalists and columnists, making some of the perspectives overly simplistic or provocative – for political or other purposes. In addition, this conflict was and is highly sensitive when it comes to *who* writes (about) *what*. The explanations put forward in this chapter will generate a number of general aspects which can be ascribed to the war in Yugoslavia. The next step is to show which explanations already exist and how they are covered by the IR theories explained in the previous chapter.

For the research's clarity it is important to differentiate between the aspects and explanations, this is why some authors are only mentioned in one paragraph, even though in reality they give multiple accounts in their own books and articles. Nevertheless, many authors do emphasize one certain aspect as being the most important or decisive one.

THE 20TH CENTURY IN YUGOSLAVIA

It is important to realise that the Yugoslavia of the 1990s was the Second Yugoslav state. The first Yugoslav state – at first called the kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes - was established after the First World War and brought together Serbs, Croats, Slovenes, Montenegrins, Macedonians and Albanians.³⁶ Even though this kingdom was renamed the kingdom of Yugoslavia in 1929, which implies a certain unity, it did not take good care of its minorities and eventually turned into a dictatorial state. However, in 1934 the king was murdered by terrorists and the new leaders had to come up with another system. In the new agreement things changed for the Croats, who got more autonomy within Yugoslavia, but with the rise of Nazism in Germany, the Croatian leaders could not enjoy their newly

³⁶ Lendvai, Paul, and Lis Parcell, 'Yugoslavia without Yugoslavs: The Roots of the Crisis', *International Affairs (Royal Institute of International Affairs 1944-)*, Vol. 67, No. 2 (1991) 253., Morton, Jeffrey S., R. Craig Nation, Paul Forage and Stefano Bianchini (eds.), *Reflections on the Balkan Wars: Ten Years after the Break Up of Yugoslavia*, Palgrave Macmillan (2004) 4., Romijn, P. (ed.), *Srebrenica: een 'veilig' gebied. Reconstructie, achtergronden, gevolgen en analyses van de val van een Safe Area*, Nederlands Instituut voor Oorlogsdocumentatie (2002) 45.

acclaimed rights very long. The Germans and the Italians decided to attack Yugoslavia in 1941 and created pro-Nazi regimes in Serbia and Croatia.³⁷

The instalment of the pro-Nazi Ustashe regime in Croatia brought about a time of horror in the Balkans. It is the memory of this period in Balkan history that haunted many people until the 1990s and beyond. Indeed, Professor David Bruce MacDonald is right when he argues that ‘collaboration [was] often seen to be worse than the crimes of either of the invading countries that had perpetrated in the region.’³⁸ It was Germany and Italy who invaded the country, but the violent crimes committed by either the Ustashe regime, Serbian extremists (Chetniks) or the Partisans (the army of the Yugoslav Communist Party), are the crimes which people seem to remember most. The Partisans, led by Joseph Broz (Tito), were ultimately the victors after the Second World War and created the Federal People’s Republic of Yugoslavia in 1945, which was renamed the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia in 1963. The Communist Party was the only ruling party in the country: the federal republic was highly centralised and authoritarian.³⁹

Socialist Yugoslavia enjoyed a unique position in the world, especially after Tito decided to break ties with Stalin’s Soviet Union in 1948. Yugoslavia developed its own kind of communism (Yugoslav socialism) by fostering trade with the West and introducing self-management among Yugoslav workers. Yugoslavia prospered because of the system and the many tourists arriving every year.⁴⁰ The country was also known as a ‘progressive’ non-alignment state, which at the time increased the country’s prestige worldwide especially in Third World countries and Eastern Europe.⁴¹

Nevertheless, the federal system had its weaknesses and centralism caused much discontent among the republics. As a solution Tito was inclined to tolerate an ongoing process of republicanisation,⁴² which perhaps provided ad-hoc solutions, but also gave more space to nationalist movements in all republics, especially in Croatia and Serbia.⁴³ It is this process of decentralisation and republicanisation that made it extremely difficult for Yugoslavia to overcome the economic crisis of the 1970s. Republics did not cooperate

³⁷ Tromp, Nena, *Srebrenica: een ‘veilig’ gebied, deelstudie: Achtergronden van de Joegoslavische crisis*, Nederlands Instituut voor Oorlogsdocumentatie (2002) 28., Morton, *Reflections on the Balkan Wars* (2004) 5.

³⁸ MacDonald, David Bruce, *Balkan holocausts? Serbian and Croatian victim-centered propaganda and the war in Yugoslavia*, Manchester University Press (2002) 253.

³⁹ Jović, Dejan, ‘Reassessing Socialist Yugoslavia, 1945-1990: The case of Croatia’, in: Djokić, Dejan, and James Ker-Lindsay (eds.), *New perspectives on Yugoslavia : key issues and controversies*, Routledge (2011) 121., Romijn, *Srebrenica: een ‘veilig’ gebied* (2002) 68.

⁴⁰ Morton, G., Allcock, J., *Explaining Yugoslavia*, Hurst & Company (2000) 90., Crnobrnja, Mihailo, *The Yugoslav Drama*, McGill-Queen’s University Press (1996) 71-72.

⁴¹ Allison, Roy, *The Soviet Union and the Strategy of Non-Alignment in the Third World*, Cambridge University Press (1988) 59-60., Lendvai, ‘Yugoslavia without Yugoslavs’ (1991) 251., Crnobrnja, *The Yugoslav Drama* (1996) 73., Romijn, (2002) 77.

⁴² Romijn, (2002) 82-83.

⁴³ Hayden, Robert M., ‘Yugoslavia’s Collapse: National suicide with Foreign Assistance’, *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 27, No. 27 (1992) 1379., Allcock, *Explaining Yugoslavia* (2000) 90., MacDonald, *Balkan holocausts?* (2002) 99.

economically and through non-cooperation it was almost impossible to solve the crisis. The problem was that most republics saw the economic system as a zero-sum game⁴⁴ and this idea of one republic's gain is the other's loss led to an even higher level of fragmentation.

Decentralisation culminated in the 1974 constitutional change. This new constitution gave all republics more autonomy and more rights and in addition it gave these rights to two Serbian provinces: Kosovo and Vojvodina.⁴⁵ When Tito died in 1980, there was very little authority left for the Communist Party to stop the process of fragmentation. The Presidium system which followed Tito as leading body of Yugoslavia was too complex – six republics and two autonomous provinces could all vote - to function properly.⁴⁶

The rise of nationalist political leaders like Slobodan Milošević and Franjo Tuđman created even more problems. From the moment that Milošević took power in Serbia in 1987 one of his goals was to undo the 1974 constitution and reclaim Kosovo and Vojvodina as 'normal' provinces. The Serbian government achieved this in 1989, because in both provinces the leadership changed, its leaders becoming pro-Milošević. In both Croatia and Slovenia politicians were concerned about the possibility of Serbian dominance in Yugoslavia. The 1990 League of Communists congress in Belgrade was supposed to be an opportunity to take away these concerns, but it turned out to be a disaster for the federal republic: both the Slovene delegation and the Croatian delegation left the congress, because according to them there was no possibility of a fair discussion. Both Macedonia and Bosnia-Herzegovina refused to continue without them.⁴⁷

This unsuccessful congress inaugurated the end of the Yugoslav Communist Party and the cry for change became even louder and elections were held in all Yugoslav republics in 1990.⁴⁸ The newly elected – mostly nationalist – leaders were determined to break with Yugoslavia. Even though the Yugoslav federal Prime Minister Ante Marković – mostly through economic measures - kept trying to keep Yugoslavia together.⁴⁹ In June

⁴⁴ Hayden, 'Yugoslavia's Collapse: National suicide with Foreign Assistance' (1992) 1380.

⁴⁵ Guzina, Dejan, 'Socialist Serbia's Narratives: From Yugoslavia to a Greater Serbia', *International Journal of Politics, Culture and Society*, Vol. 17. No. 1, Studies in the Social History of Destruction: The Case of Yugoslavia (2003) 95, 101, 109., Lendvai, 'Yugoslavia without Yugoslavs' (1991) 258.

⁴⁶ Weller, Marc, 'The International Response to the Dissolution of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia', *The American Journal of International Law*, Vol. 86, No. 3 (1992) 569., Romijn, P. (ed.), *Srebrenica: een 'veilig' gebied. Reconstructie, achtergronden, gevolgen en analyses van de val van een Safe Area*, Nederlands Instituut voor Oorlogsdocumentatie (2002) 93-94.

⁴⁷ Wachtel, Andrew and Christopher Bennett, 'The Dissolution of Yugoslavia', in: Charles Ingrao & Thomas A. Emmert (ed.), *Confronting the Yugoslav Controversies – A Scholar's Initiative*, Purdue University Press. (2013) 35., Morton, *Reflections on the Balkan Wars* (2004) 8.

⁴⁸ Morton, *Reflections on the Balkan Wars* (2004) 8., Wachtel, 'The Dissolution of Yugoslavia' (2013) 36-37., Hayden, 'Yugoslavia's Collapse' (1992) 1380.

⁴⁹ Tromp, *Srebrenica* (2002) 49., Wachtel, 'The Dissolution of Yugoslavia' (2013) 29, 35.

1990 Slovenia was the first to make the decision official, very soon followed by Croatia.⁵⁰ Decisions which the Yugoslav People's Army – at that time backing Serbia, because it seemed to be the last republic trying to keep Yugoslavia together - could not accept the declarations of independence by its fellow republics, upon which the physical fighting started in Slovenia and shortly after Croatia. The Yugoslav National Army acted quickly and locked Yugoslav borders, but after only 10 days of fighting a ceasefire and the following Brioni Accord made it possible for Slovenia to officially secede from Yugoslavia on 7 July 1991. The final chance for the Yugoslav federal republic to remain together was wasted.

The war in Croatia was more complex and lasted longer (almost five years) which most certainly had to do with the fact that a large number of Serbs lived in Croatia. Because of the 11.6% Serbian population within Croatian borders, Serbia made territorial claims against Croatia.⁵¹ It seemed that the Serbs living in Croatia 'would have preferred not to choose camps [...] they had little choice because of a tit-for-tat escalation in hostilities and an increasingly intense media war over which they had minimal influence.'⁵² One year after the war in Croatia started, fighting broke loose in Bosnia-Herzegovina as well, which was an even more complex situation given the population's division of that country (some call it miniature version of Yugoslavia). The war in Croatia ended in November 1995 and resulted in the secession of Croatia from Yugoslavia. One month later the Bosnian War came to an end as well as a result of the Dayton Accord, signed by Izetbegović (Bosnia-Herzegovina), Milošević (Serbia) and Tuđman (Croatia) and five Western political leaders.

The events described above give a general overview of what happened in the Balkans from the 20th century until the breakup in the 1990s, the next paragraphs will shed some light on how these events are explained.

TO HATE, OR NOT TO HATE?

The ethnic argument or the *ancient hatred theory* is a perspective that was brought to the public during the first years of the Yugoslav conflict. American author Robert Kaplan drew attention to this idea in his book *Balkan Ghosts: A Journey through History* (1993). In this book, Kaplan gave an extremely simplistic version of the troubles in Yugoslavia. He explained it as 'long term and incomprehensible for outsiders.'⁵³ Since his book has been published, different scholars have emphasized the simplicity of the story and have proposed other theories or perspectives to explain the horrors of the past. Nevertheless, the

⁵⁰ Coulson, Meg, 'Looking behind the Violent Break-up of Yugoslavia', *Feminist Review*, No. 45, Thinking Through Ethnicities (1993) 99., Wachtel, 'The Dissolution of Yugoslavia' (2013) 41.

⁵¹ Lendvai, 'Yugoslavia without Yugoslavs' (1991) 255, 261.

⁵² Wachtel, 'The Dissolution of Yugoslavia' (2013) 39.

⁵³ Tromp, *Srebrenica* (2002) 71.

influence of this best-selling book on the public and politicians, like the incumbent American president Bill Clinton, cannot be ignored.⁵⁴

According to sociologist Dusko Sekulić the popularity of this ancient hatred theory can be easily explained. The theory made it possible for Balkan politicians and their following 'to see their actions as inevitable or as a reflection of some historical necessity.' For the international community the theory justified,

'their inaction by the notion that nothing could be done because the Balkan people's behaviours are motivated by deeply ingrained hatred. If a conflict had been developing for 500 years, then any intervention would be a waste of resources.'⁵⁵

When aiming to apply the ancient hatred theory to the Yugoslav case, one runs into a number of problematic aspects. For example it is an undeniable fact that Balkan people are (mostly) 'physically indistinguishable.'⁵⁶ Well-known political scientist Joseph Nye Jr. once spoke to a Bosnian-Croat military commander during a battle in the Bosnian city Mostar and asked him 'how he knew whom to shoot, since people on the street looked so similar', the commander replied 'that before the war, you would have to know their name, but now uniforms made it easy.'⁵⁷ And even if there were physical differences – many people say they could tell the difference between Germans or French for example and these peoples also have quite a long and conflicting past – how come they are not judged in the same way?⁵⁸ Furthermore, this 'animosity between or among a variety of groups' can be found in 'many existing states', and 'yet, these animosities do not inevitably lead to conflict in the present.'⁵⁹

Sekulić's research also shows that 'the rise of ethnic intolerance (or exclusivism) actually followed the outbreak of the war in the former Yugoslavia', instead of causing it.⁶⁰ He and other scholars argue that there are very few examples that provide academic evidence for 'interethnic conflict' or even 'suppressed ancient hatreds'⁶¹ before the war.

Along with many of her colleagues, political scientist Sabrina P. Ramet, also questions the ancient part of the theory, since there were no Serbians or Croats in the Balkan region during ancient times.⁶² Finally – and this might be one of the biggest

⁵⁴ Sekulić, 'Ethnic Intolerance as a Product Rather than a Cause of War' (2014) 46.

⁵⁵ Sekulić, (2014) 47-48., Pfaff, William, 'Invitation to War', *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 72, No. 3 (1993) 99.

⁵⁶ Pfaff, 'Invitation to War' (1993) 102.

⁵⁷ Nye Jr., Welch, *Understanding Global Conflict & Cooperation* (2014) 218.

⁵⁸ Ramet, Sabrina P., *Thinking about Yugoslavia. Scholarly Debates about the Yugoslav Breakup and the Wars in Bosnia and Kosovo*, Cambridge University Press (2005) 3.

⁵⁹ Wachtel, 'The Dissolution of Yugoslavia' (2013) 15.

⁶⁰ Sekulić, (2014) 48.

⁶¹ Wachtel, 'The Dissolution of Yugoslavia' (2013) 15., Sekulić, (2014) 48.

⁶² Ramet, *Thinking about Yugoslavia* (2005) 3.

downsides of the ancient hatred theory - Ramet states that the theory ‘distracts the reader from examining relevant evidence which might lead one to more useful conclusions.’⁶³

UNUSUALLY WILD

Alongside – and actually some time before - the *ancient hatred* theory, the perspective of Balkan culture has proved to be very persistent in some fields of study as well. The idea of Balkan culture has been popularized by British author Rebecca West through her travel book named *Black Lamb and Grey Falcon: A Journey through Yugoslavia* published in 1941. In her book she describes her own journey through Yugoslavia and the encounters she has with different people. It is made clear from the book that people are hospitable, but the hatred that exists among peoples should always be kept in mind:

‘it is, therefore, not sensible to trust the Roman Catholic Croat to like and understand the Orthodox Serb, or even to discourage the artificial hatred that has been worked up between them in the past.’⁶⁴

Another example of an academic who presented a certain Balkan character in his work is Kaplan. He carried West’s travel book everywhere during his journey through the Balkans and stated that ‘the peoples of the Balkans are unusually wild and predisposed to violence.’⁶⁵ In *Habits of the Balkan Heart* sociologist Stjepan Mestrovic aims to show that ‘Eastern European and former Soviet habits of the heart flow from autocratic principles found in Byzantium’.⁶⁶ The idea of Balkan culture – like ancient hatred - can be easily used for political purposes. For example to create a sharp contrast between the civilized West and the primitive Balkans.⁶⁷ This contrast between the West (Europe) and the Balkans has existed for quite some time. Historian Maria Todorova expresses her astonishment about:

‘the ease with which American journalists dispense accusations of genocide in Bosnia, where the reported casualty figures vary anywhere between 25.000 and 250.000, it is curious to know how they designate the over three million dead Vietnamese. Whether the Balkans are non-European or not is mostly a matter of academic and political debate, but they certainly have no monopoly over barbarity.’⁶⁸

⁶³ Ramet, *Thinking about Yugoslavia* (2005) 3.

⁶⁴ West, Rebecca, *Black Lamb, Grey Falcon: A Journey Through Yugoslavia*, Penguin Books (1982) 153.

⁶⁵ Ramet, (2005) 3., Sekulic, (2014) 45., Pfaff, ‘Invitation to War’ (1993) 99.

⁶⁶ Mestrovic, Stjepan., Slaven Letica and Miroslav Goreta, *Habits of the Balkan Heart: social character and the fall of communism*, Texas A&M University (1993) 5.

⁶⁷ Naarden, Bruno, *Western Perceptions and Balkan Realities*, Boom (2002) 3, 51, 57.

⁶⁸ Todorova, Maria, *Imagining the Balkans*, Oxford University Press (2009) 7.

In her book *Imagining the Balkans* she names the Balkan Wars (1912-1913) as the first time Europe was 'seriously upset' with the Balkans⁶⁹ and shows how the relationship between Europe and the Balkans can be easily seen as a form of 'balkanism' (like orientalism; the dangers of depicting the Orient as 'the other').⁷⁰

MYTHICAL CONFLICTS

Although the hatred between Balkan peoples is not ancient, past events and conflicts unquestionably played a role in the exploding tensions in the Balkans at the start of the 1990s. The existence of old, but persistent myths is probably one of the main reasons why theories about ancient hatred or Balkan culture received as much attention as they did, however,

'while each of the camps... includes people who think they are avenging events from the fourteenth to the nineteenth centuries, the political struggle between Serbs and Croats is mainly an affair of the twentieth century, and their military conflict began only in 1941. There is no ancient and irrational conflict between them that exempts them from responsibility of their actions or from accountability to the norms of modern international law.'⁷¹

In addition to the hatred not being ancient there were over a million Yugoslavs who were the children of mixed marriages and even more who were in a mixed marriage.⁷² This does not indicate widespread hatred as some perspectives suggest. However, different myths about the ancient past did play an important role giving input for the tensions that rose in the 1980s and beyond.

In his book *Heavenly Serbia: From Myth to Genocide*, Branimir Anzulovic gives a very clear and detailed overview of the journey that Serbia went through before the start of the war in 1991. He clearly explains the specific aspects of the Serbian state; however, he does this without forgetting that the developments this country went through could have happened in many other (European) countries: 'Like other countries that re-emerged as sovereign nation-states in the nineteenth century after a long period of foreign domination or political fragmentation, Serbia displayed a strong expansionist trend.'⁷³ It is made clear from his book that historical myths in Serbia played a huge role in facilitating the

⁶⁹ Todorova, *Imagining the Balkans* (2009) 3.

⁷⁰ Ibid. 7-20.

⁷¹ Pfaff, 'Invitation to War' (1993) 103.

⁷² Wilmer, Franke, *The Social Construction of Man, the State and War: Identity, Conflict and Violence in the Former Yugoslavia*, Routledge (2002) 8., Lendvai, *Yugoslavia without Yugoslavs* (1991) 253.

⁷³ Anzulovic, Branimir, *Heavenly Serbia: From Myth to Genocide*, Pluto Press Australia (2000) 2.

horrifying events of the 1990s. Anzulovic goes on to conclude that 'the difference between beneficial and harmful myths derives from what they convey of man's possibilities.' Myths can thus have a positive influence as well as provide 'the basis for the glorification of particular persons, classes, races or nations as saviours who will eliminate the evil from history' and 'such a lofty end legitimizes the use of any means to achieve it.'⁷⁴

The emphasis usually lay on the conquest of Balkan regions by large empires like the Ottoman or the Habsburg empires. For example, starting in the fourteenth century Serbs lived under Ottoman rule for a long time, in some regions up to the nineteenth century.⁷⁵ In this regard, the Battle of Kosovo, which, according to most Serbs - but contested by scholars - was basically the final defeat before the rule of the Ottomans began, exemplified the idea 'better to die than to live in shame.' The myth also served as an 'inspiration for the Serbs in the nineteenth century and during the Balkan Wars (1912-1913) when the time was ripe to shrug off Ottoman domination.'⁷⁶

Professor of psychiatry Vamik Volkan has applied his theory of 'chosen trauma' on Serbia and the Battle of Kosovo in order to show how one historical event can slowly cause 'a large group (i.e. ethnic group) to feel helpless, victimized, and humiliated by another group.'⁷⁷ This use of victimisation in order to legitimize own actions was and is a familiar and valuable tool among Yugoslav republics like Serbia or Croatia.⁷⁸

Using myths as actual history may sound rather dangerous, but in comparison to the rewriting of history it seems quite innocent. Rewriting of history was something that all Yugoslav republics did somewhere along the road and the Communist Party of Yugoslavia set the example after 1945. The Party made sure that people remembered the war in a way that the Partisans - the military section of the Party (active from 1941-1945) - would be considered heroes. The Party also overstated the number of war victims, probably to receive larger war reparations.⁷⁹ However, obtaining more reparations was not the Communists' only goal: disregarding or changing wartime memories was meant to keep social order⁸⁰, how else were they to achieve 'Brotherhood and Unity'?

In the final years before the breakup of Yugoslavia it was clear that most countries were in it for themselves. Historical and current facts were constantly exaggerated to place fellow Yugoslav republics in a bad light. Some scholars argue that if reconciliation would

⁷⁴ Anzulovic, *Heavenly Serbia* (2000) 181.

⁷⁵ Judah, Tim, *The Serbs: History, Myth, and the Destruction of Yugoslavia*, Yale University Press (2000) 6.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.* 30.

⁷⁷ Volkan, Vamik D., *Bosnia-Herzegovina: Chosen Trauma and Its Transgenerational Transmission*, in: Shatzmiller, Maya, *Islam and Bosnia: Conflict Resolution and Foreign Policy in Multi-ethnic States*, McGill-Queen's Press (2002) 86.

⁷⁸ Subotic, Jelena, 'Identity, Narrative, and Human Rights in the Balkans', *Slavic Review*, Vol. 72, No. 2 (2013) 312-313., MacDonald, *Balkan holocausts?* (2002) 105, 258., Ramet, *Thinking about Yugoslavia* (2005) 4.

⁷⁹ Anzulovic, (2000) 100.

⁸⁰ Denich, Bette, 'Dismembering Yugoslavia: Nationalist Ideologies and the Symbolic Revival of Genocide', *American Ethnologist*, Vol. 21, No. 2 (1994) 370., Anzulovic, (2000) 99.

have been possible after the Second World War ‘Yugoslavia would have been less susceptible to violent disintegration.’⁸¹ Still, when we look at some of the horrific events that did take place during the Second World War – for example the concentration camps in Croatia and the slaughters by the Chetniks⁸² – some parts of Balkan history did not need to be re-written to provoke violence and hatred.

The historical background of a conflict is important, because it explains some of the processes that were set in motion, but as professor of Strategic Studies Norman Cigar states: ‘history has not been the deterministic factor.’⁸³ In his view making history as important, as many journalists, politicians and scholars have done, causes a solution to be ‘elusive and ‘pointless to seek.’⁸⁴

MONEY MAKES YUGOSLAVIA GO ROUND

For many scholars, journalists, politicians and maybe even civilians the fall of the Yugoslav political system was seen as inevitable. Speculations about what would happen to the country after Tito died and stories about ancient hatreds are indications of this notion. Some scholars, like Meg Coulson and John B. Allcock, believe that economy should be considered the driving force behind Yugoslavia’s breakup.

External threats like the oil crisis of the 1970s and the collapse of the aluminium prices added greatly to the problematic status of the country. Industrialisation was very important for the Yugoslav state, and because of this industrialisation the country needed a great deal of energy (mostly oil), but Yugoslavia was not an oil-producing country and therefore it needed to import around 40% of its energy.⁸⁵ When something extremely valuable and important as oil becomes so expensive the economy of a country can be damaged severely. At the same time prices for aluminium went down⁸⁶, which meant less money coming in and more money going out. Other countries experienced problems themselves during these years, and so, many Yugoslavs returned home after having worked abroad for years (and always sending money back home).

⁸¹ Anzulovic, *Heavenly Serbia* (2000) 99.

⁸² Naarden, *Western Perceptions and Balkan Realities*, 64, MacDonald, *Balkan holocausts?* (2002) 252, 260., Steinberg, J.B., ‘History, policymaking and the Balkans: Lessons imported and lessons learned’, in: Brands, H., Suri, J. (ed.), *The Power of the Past: History and Statecraft*, Brookings Institution Press (2015) 239., Cigar, Norman L., *Genocide in Bosnia: The Policy of ‘Ethnic Cleansing’*, Texas A&M University Press (1995) 19.

⁸³ Cigar, *Genocide in Bosnia* (1995) 12.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.* 13.

⁸⁵ Allcock, *Explaining Yugoslavia* (2000) 93., Romijn, P. (ed.), *Srebrenica: een ‘veilig’ gebied. Reconstructie, achtergronden, gevolgen en analyses van de val van een Safe Area*, Nederlands Instituut voor Oorlogsdocumentatie (2002) 96.

⁸⁶ Allcock, *Explaining Yugoslavia* (2000) 94.

The economic internal problems of Yugoslavia were gigantic and many of these problems could be considered “self-inflicted.”⁸⁷ Yugoslavia had always been a weak economic country because of its high debts and dependence on foreign aid or investment. But now was a time when people could really feel the economic problems at home. Many people lost their jobs, and partly because of the return of fellow Yugoslavs who used to live abroad, most were unable to find another one. This meant less money for a lot of families. In addition to this, the government was not capable of stopping the high inflation and ensuring “stable supplies of such basic goods as coffee, cooking oil, everyday medicines etc.”⁸⁸

The economic and political problems all merged together and because of the complexity of the situation Yugoslav republics started blaming each other for their own troubles. The North (Slovenia and Croatia) blamed the South (Serbia, Kosovo, Montenegro, Macedonia and Bosnia-Herzegovina) for holding them back in their economic growth, while the South blamed the North for not contributing enough or not realising they only made money because of Yugoslavia. Moreover, after Tito died, Yugoslavia did not have a federal government who was capable of taking decisions to stop all these negative processes.⁸⁹ This development paved the road for nationalism and extremists in each of the republics who only had to start their engines.

NO STATE IS AN ISLAND

The collapse of the political system is not something that is distorted history - it happened. In fact, considering the amount of literature written about what would happen to Yugoslavia after Tito, it seems that many scientists, journalists and politicians foresaw a breakup. As mentioned in the previous paragraph, there was no federal government who could step up and take measures into their own hand, because it seems that

‘from the 1970s forward the separate Yugoslav republics behaved in great measure as if they were independent entities whose priority was to maximize the well-being of their inhabitants, regardless of the effect that this might have on the country as a whole,’⁹⁰

and the constitution of 1974 exacerbated this behaviour. In the final years before the war there was an ongoing clash between the ‘Belgrade centre’ and the insubordinate

⁸⁷ Ibid. 93.

⁸⁸ Coulson, Meg, ‘Looking behind the Violent Break-up of Yugoslavia’, *Feminist Review*, No. 45, ‘Thinking Through Ethnicities’ (1993) 92.

⁸⁹ Allcock, *Explaining Yugoslavia* (2000) 92-98., Coulson, “‘Looking behind the Violent Break-up of Yugoslavia’ (1993) 92., Bieber, Florian, *Debating the End of Yugoslavia*, Ashgate Publishing (2014) 3.

⁹⁰ Andrew, ‘The Dissolution of Yugoslavia’ (2013) 20.

republics.⁹¹ It is interesting to see that this clash seems to have been inevitable because of the contradictory structure of the political system within Yugoslavia under Tito. The Yugoslav state existed of six republics and two autonomous provinces, but all these entities were governed by ‘the absolute centralized rule of the communist party, directed from Belgrade.’⁹² So, even though the system seemed to reflect a lot of political freedom, in reality this was not how Yugoslavia functioned. In practice it was not the system – with all the different entities – that kept everyone in place, but the Communist Party and above all: Tito.

Still, if Tito was that important for the system at first, then was it really the system that failed after his death or the people working in the system? Some scholars cast the political leaders and policymakers of Serbia, Croatia, Slovenia, Bosnia-Herzegovina and to a lesser extent Macedonia and Montenegro, in the starring roles of the whole conflict. For example, several academics consider Slobodan Milošević’s coup in 1987 as a watershed,⁹³ causing him to have control over Serbia and the Serbian media, which added greatly to the emotions of anger and fear among the people. Warren Zimmerman and Robert Hayden, on the other hand, blame Slovenia for leaving the sinking boat (too early) instead of help to keep it going.

After Tito the clash between ‘Belgrade’ and the republics began to take a more decisive and aggressive form through actions and decisions made by politicians. The economic crisis and the rise of nationalism – both processes are explained in this chapter as well – caused decisions to be taken on political grounds, not by looking at what was best for the Yugoslav economy.⁹⁴ This caused the gap between North (Slovenia and Croatia) and South (Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Macedonia and Kosovo) to become even larger. Because of this situation communism lost its good name and was more and more associated with crisis, poverty and corruption.

For many people decentralisation seemed to be the answer. The answer of which various scholars now argue was ‘the decisive cause of Yugoslavia’s disintegration.’⁹⁵ The discussion about decentralisation was one that was held at the federal level, but also at the republican level. However, this call for decentralisation coincided with an economic crisis and together they caused much more tension. What happened in the end was that the

⁹¹ Tromp, *Srebrenica* (2002) 50.

⁹² Lendvai, *Yugoslavia without Yugoslavs* (1991) 255.

⁹³ Bennett, Christopher, *Yugoslavia’s Bloody collapse: Causes, Course and Consequences*, New York University Press (1995) 187, 94., Meier, Viktor, *Yugoslavia: A history of Its Demise*, trans. Sabrina Ramet, Routledge (1999) 211., MacDonald, *Balkan holocausts?* (2002) 65.

⁹⁴ Tromp, *Srebrenica* (2002) 47-48., Coulson, ‘Looking behind the Violent Break-up of Yugoslavia’ (1993) 92.

⁹⁵ Guzina, Dejan, ‘Socialist Serbia’s Narratives: From Yugoslavia to a Greater Serbia’, *International Journal of Politics, Culture and Society*, Vol. 17. No. 1, ‘Studies in the Social History of Destruction: The Case of Yugoslavia’ (2003) 93.

communist party of Yugoslavia disbanded in January 1990⁹⁶ and thus, Yugoslavia lost. Reformers or nationalists 'had in common [...] their understanding of the illegitimate character of the Yugoslav socialist political system.'⁹⁷ The old system no longer fitted their new – or before suppressed – ideas and expectations, only a new system could.

INTERNATIONAL INTERESTS

It is undeniable that the international community played a role in dissolution of Yugoslavia and the outbreak of the Yugoslav Wars. Sabrina P. Ramet states that 'in the end the Yugoslav war was both an international war and a civil war.'⁹⁸ She feels that there have been too many influences from outside of Yugoslavia to not assess it as an international war. Among scholars there is a general consensus that the international community had a profound influence on the conflict – culminating first in the Dayton Accord and later in the bombing of Serbia during the Kosovo War, - but the size and effect of this influence is still a debated issue.⁹⁹

It seems that Yugoslavia enjoyed a favourable international position during the Cold War.¹⁰⁰ It was in the interest of the entire international community that Yugoslavia remained an independent socialist federative state. Especially for the West, Yugoslavia seemed like the living proof – some would argue a living laboratory¹⁰¹ - that socialism could work. However when the Cold War ended, the world, and again specifically the West moved its attention elsewhere; its interests changed. This change had political and economic consequences, because Yugoslavia was in many ways highly dependent on foreign interest and investments.¹⁰²

Even though for some countries their interest in Yugoslavia was not on the line, through public opinion and political pressure from other countries – especially from Croatia and Slovenia - the international community did in the end intervene. According to several scholars intervention came too late and others might say that some countries intervened too soon, nevertheless almost all of them consider the interventions to be

⁹⁶ Denich, Bette, 'Dismembering Yugoslavia: Nationalist Ideologies and the Symbolic Revival of Genocide', *American Ethnologist*, Vol. 21, No. 2 (1994) 383.

⁹⁷ Guzina, 'Socialist Serbia's Narratives: From Yugoslavia to a Greater Serbia' (2003) 99., Coulson, 'Looking behind the Violent Break-up of Yugoslavia' (1993) 99.

⁹⁸ Ramet, Sabrina P., *Disputes about the Dissolution of Yugoslavia and its Wake*, In: Bieber, Florian (eds.), *Debating the End of Yugoslavia*, Ashgate Publishing (2014) 42.

⁹⁹ Wachtel, 'The Dissolution of Yugoslavia' (2013) 41., Hayden, 'Yugoslavia's Collapse' (1992) 1381., Pfaff, 'Invitation to War' (1993) 101.

¹⁰⁰ Jakovljevic, Branislav, 'Theatre of War in the Former Yugoslavia: Event, Script, Actors', *TDR*, Vol. 43, No. 3, 'Puppets, Masks and Performing Objects' (1999) 8., Wachtel, Andrew and Christopher Bennett, *The Dissolution of Yugoslavia*, in: Charles Ingrao & Thomas A. Emmert (ed.), *Confronting the Yugoslav Controversies – A Scholar's Initiative*, Purdue University Press. (2013) 41.

¹⁰¹ Ullman, Richard H., *The Wars in Yugoslavia and the International System after the Cold War*, in: Ullman, Richard H., *The World and Yugoslavia's Wars*, Council of International Relations Press (1996) 9.

¹⁰² Allcock, *Explaining Yugoslavia* (2000) 90., Wachtel, 'The Dissolution of Yugoslavia' (2013) 41.

unsuccessful.¹⁰³ Beverly Crawford, for example, explains the influence of Germany when they chose to recognise Croatia in December 1991. According to her this was very early in the process and incited even more anger among Serbian nationalists living in Croatia and in Serbia. In accordance with her statement, it seemed that Croatia and Slovenia were very much trying to get international attention for their cause. However, other scholars come to the conclusion that ‘diplomatic efforts focused on pressuring Slovenia and Croatia into abandoning their independence declaration’ at first,¹⁰⁴ because the international community deemed that Yugoslavia ought to stay together. However, when they finally realised that this was no longer possible, they decided to intervene, although quite reluctantly.¹⁰⁵

FOR THE LOVE OF COUNTRY

The exaggeration of historical facts and current (economic) problems in Yugoslavia cleared the way for a rise of nationalism in many of the Yugoslav republics. It is indeed a paradox that ‘during the Communist era nationalism was considered to be an ideological danger and intolerable, while at the same time ethnic criteria were used to create the federal system.’¹⁰⁶ For Serbs and Croats, myths – which are mentioned in the paragraph ‘Mythical conflicts’ – played a central role in the nationalistic messages. There were historical events that emphasized the pain and suffering of people and for the Serbs the Battle of Kosovo took this suffering to a completely different level; leading the torment back to more than 600 years ago. What made things worse was that all this suffering was not because of external enemies, but because of enemies from within: the fellow Yugoslav republics. Especially among Serbian and Croatian nationalists the message was clear: the other was the reason for their suffering and this had to stop. Even President Tito was being blamed for their problems: Yugoslavia was now set aside as an artificial cage in which the Serbian people were oppressed (referring to loss of control over Kosovo and Vojvodina), Croats were forcefully kept locked up (because of their economic growth) and the Slovenes were held back (in their economic growth).

The political and economic problems were an excellent opportunity for the new populist leaders to gain power and support. Slobodan Milošević was one of the first politicians to take advantage of the angry sentiments among the Serbian population of Kosovo. Other policy makers, the old Communists, were still too much trying to restrain these nationalistic feelings among the public and among themselves. However, in multiple

¹⁰³ Pfaff, ‘Invitation to War’ (1993) 101-4.

¹⁰⁴ Wachtel, ‘The Dissolution of Yugoslavia’ (2013) 42.

¹⁰⁵ Wachtel, (2013) 41-43., Weller, ‘The International Response’ (1992) 570.

¹⁰⁶ Tromp, *Srebrenica* (2002) 50.

countries, like Slovenia, Croatia and Serbia ‘the democratic moment was sliding away.’¹⁰⁷ It is said that Milošević quickly changed from Communist to Serbian nationalist in order to seize power, but not because he firmly believed in nationalist ideas.¹⁰⁸ In addition,

‘control over the media allowed the regime to determine strictly what people understood about the government and its role in the wars that were to follow [...]. The role of the media was assessed primarily on its ability to maintain support for Milošević’s regime, and not necessarily for Serbian nationalism as such.’¹⁰⁹

Quite a few scholars blame the then presidents of Serbia and Croatia, Slobodan Milošević and Franjo Tuđman, for the disintegration of Yugoslavia through their political decisions and aggressive rhetoric. For example, in the new Croatian constitution of 1990, the Serbian population of Croatia was defined as a national minority without addressing new rights regarding their position.¹¹⁰ These kinds of political changes confirmed the stories about a ‘Greater Croatia’ (or a ‘Greater Serbia’) in which ethnic minorities had no place and which were feared by most people.

Besides political leaders, intellectuals played a crucial role as well in inciting the public. Most scholars in favour of this explanation use the *Memorandum on the Position of Serbia in Yugoslavia*, a document that was published (or leaked) by the Serbian Academy of Science and Arts in 1986.¹¹¹ This document addressed the problem that Serbia was facing in the final years before the breakup which was either to continue as socialist republic within a federal Yugoslavia or to become a sovereign state and break with Yugoslavia.¹¹² In the end this choice was not about which political system or which ideology was preferred, but how all Serbian people could stay together (in one state). It seemed that staying in Yugoslavia was the only way to achieve this, because it would include the Serbs living in Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina. These questions were discussed before, but never were they published together in a document like this. It seemed that at least for Serbia the issue of Kosovo and to a lesser extent Vojvodina were the main fuel for nationalism in Serbia.¹¹³

Politicians and elites with aggressive rhetoric found their way to power in Yugoslav republics and, it should be emphasized that, a large part of the public supported this kind

¹⁰⁷ Zizek, Slavoj, ‘Thanks but no thanks: the unhappy fate of reform communists’, *East European Reporter*, Vol. 5, No. 6 (1992) 73.

¹⁰⁸ Tromp, *Srebrenica* (2002) 89.

¹⁰⁹ MacDonald, *Balkan holocausts?* (2002).68.

¹¹⁰ Tromp, (2002) 54.

¹¹¹ Guzina, ‘Socialist Serbia’s Narratives’ (2003) 100., Lampe, R. John, *Yugoslavia as History: Twice there was a country*, Cambridge University Press (2000) 7.

¹¹² Guzina, (2003) 101.

¹¹³ Coulson, ‘Looking behind the Violent Break-up of Yugoslavia’ (1993) 99.

of language and ideas.¹¹⁴ The question is: did the public know what nationalism implied and entailed? Professor Jasminka Udovički believes ‘the public identified nationalism with patriotism’¹¹⁵ and thus they did not understand the consequences. And even if people knew what it implied, nationalism did not immediately ‘make them ready to fight for Greater Serbia, as evidenced, for instance, by widespread draft-dodging in most Serbian cities.’¹¹⁶ However, the media made sure that whoever had second thoughts would be convinced sooner or later.

IT WAS ON TELEVISION

Politics found its way to the media very quickly in Yugoslavia. Leaders and elites used the media to demonise other Yugoslavs and left little room for other opinions.¹¹⁷ Before the actual fighting started there was a huge media war going on between and within different republics. The Communist grip on people and the political system was slowly loosening and as a consequence people could more freely speak their minds in the media. However, speaking more freely in many Yugoslav republics meant more nationalistic rhetoric and emphasizing past offenses done by others.¹¹⁸ Some authors describe how, once the politicians found their favourite tool and political pressure started to get intense, most Yugoslav people had no choice but to choose sides and in the end 60% believed every word that was said on the news.¹¹⁹ Besides this, new Serbian law

‘made it an offence to criticize the government or cast doubt on the country’s leaders. Government ministries of Information and Interior now had a mandate to censor, delete or change any aspect of reporting found to be at odds with official government accounts.’¹²⁰

In Croatia things were not that different.¹²¹ It was in both countries that Yugoslav TV or any television channel ‘supporting a multinational concept of Yugoslavia had to be silenced.’¹²² Television was that important, because most people were unable to afford a newspaper.

¹¹⁴ Naarden, *Western Perceptions and Balkan Realities* (2002) 58.

¹¹⁵ Jasminka Udovički, ‘Introduction’, to Jasminka Udovički and James Ridgeway (eds.), *Burn This House: The Making and Unmaking of Yugoslavia*, Duke University Press (2000) 6.

¹¹⁶ Zivković, Marko, ‘Kosovo is the most expensive Serbian word: political enchantment and Milošević’s rise to power’, *The Anthropology of East Europe Review*, Vol. 19, No.1 (2001) 94.

¹¹⁷ Tromp, *Srebrenica* (2002), 101-2., Coulson, ‘Looking behind the Violent Break-up of Yugoslavia’ (1993) 99., Subotic, Jelena, ‘Identity, Narrative, and Human Rights in the Balkans’, *Slavic Review*, Vol. 72, No. 2 (2013) 308.

¹¹⁸ Tromp, (2002) 36-8.

¹¹⁹ Milan Milošević, ‘The Media Wars: 1987 – 1997’, in: Jasminka Udovički & James Ridgeway (eds.), *Burn this House, the Making and Unmaking of Yugoslavia*, Duke University Press (2000) 124.

¹²⁰ Thompson, Mark, *Forging War: The Media in Serbia, Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina*, University of Luton Press (1999) 59-60

¹²¹ MacDonald, *Balkan holocausts?* (2002) 101-3.

¹²² Milošević, ‘The Media Wars: 1987 – 1997’ (2000) 115.

For Milan Milošević, who wrote extensively on the media use and influence during the Yugoslav wars, it is evident: ‘the media fragmentation favouring strident nationalism was at least as fatal for Yugoslavia as was its economic and political fragmentation.’¹²³ In the years preceding the Yugoslav Wars media in the fighting states became more and more channelled through their governments. There are a couple of reasons why this was possible. One reason was already mentioned above: an adaptation of the media law, making ministries of Information more powerful. Media trying to spread a different message were under immense pressure by the ministries of Information and other media channels which were already following government-friendly opinions. People on television with divergent ideas about the war were opposed and set aside as traitors or dumb. The economic sanctions imposed on Yugoslavia by the international community seemed like a good idea at the time but actually ‘almost financially crushed’ the independent media¹²⁴ thereby adding to the amount of people unable to buy an independent newspaper.

However, it is important to note that there were television channels like TV studio B or papers like *Vreme*, *Svetlost* or *Borba*, which did spread an anti-war sentiment and continued to do so until long after the war had started. In addition to this, there were multiple instances in Serbia and Croatia where people entered the streets in protest against the media regime. It just shows that even though media, and this includes media outside of Yugoslavia as well, follow one story, it does not mean that everyone took part in that same one.

In the end government media control would have been less of a problem if the messages that were transmitted had been in accordance with what was actually going on. The real issue is however that in many instances events were analysed and visualised differently and sometimes even made up. For example in the Croatian town Pakrac, where journalists initially lied or at least greatly exaggerated the number of victims claimed in an armed conflict on 2 March 1991, caused people to get all roused up and angry, even when it later became clear that none of this was true. And even though the Yugoslav government came with an official statement declaring that there were no victims, the damage had already been done.¹²⁵ It is this kind of damage that makes the story of media influence in the Yugoslav Wars extremely important.

¹²³ Ibid. 110.

¹²⁴ Ibid. 114.

¹²⁵ Milošević, (2000) 119-21., Wachtel, ‘The Dissolution of Yugoslavia’ (2013) 40.

GENERAL ASPECTS

In the above paragraphs I aimed to emphasize how the Yugoslav wars are being explained. It was made clear at the beginning of this chapter that most authors acknowledge the importance of multiple aspects, but usually end up focussing on one explanation. Nevertheless, it should be clear from the previous part of this chapter that the combination of causes is what made Yugoslavia collapse in the end, because however compelling some of the explanations may be, none of them truly convinces of being the ultimate (or only) cause. It is the combination of a political and economic crisis, politicians like Milošević and Tuđman taking power in Serbia and Croatia and a fertile ground for nationalism that could have led to the war.

The analysis – which will follow in the next chapter – focuses on the general aspects of the war in Yugoslavia and connects these to the three prominent IR theories: realism, liberalism and constructivism. On the next page I would like to summarize the general aspects which can be deduced from the academic debate outlined previously:

- *Regional political system*
- *International political system*
- *Geopolitics*
- *Individuals*
- *Economy*
- *History*
- *International or regional (democratic) institutions*
- *Ethnicity*
- *Ideological*
- *Cultural (religion)*
- *Human nature (character)*
- *Technology (media)*
- *Nationalism*

Now that these aspects have been established we can turn to the question which of the IR theories explains the causes of the Yugoslav disintegration best.

4 | Analysis: Different Aspects of the Yugoslav Wars

In addition to the aspects verbalized in the previous chapter a model will be used that aims to identify the value of realism, liberalism and constructivism for the analysis of the Yugoslav Wars by indicating whether these theories give adequate information of each aspect. For each theory “+”, “-“ or “+/-“ will indicate whether a theory gives a satisfactory explanation for a cause of the wars. However, some of the general aspects – even though mentioned in the academic debate – turned out to have had a smaller, perhaps even non-existent influence on the process of dissolution and war. Therefore the aspects will also be given a “+”, “-“ or “+/-“. This way IR theories will not only be judged on taking into account the number of aspects, but also which aspects they consider.

In order to give a clear overview of the aspects I have grouped the general aspects – as formulated at the end of the previous chapter - in five subcategories: *Political* (includes the political system – both international and regional - and the influence of geopolitics), *Individual* (includes the influence of individuals and human nature in general), *Societal* (includes important aspects of society like the economy, institutions and technology), *Historical* (includes influence of history and ethnicity) and *Ideological* (includes the influence of cultures, religions and nationalism). Each paragraph also indicates – using a plus or minus indication - whether the subcategory discussed is important, non-important or more or less important and whether the aspects are taken into account by the three IR theories. The subsequent chapter will conclude which theory provides the most satisfying explanation for the Yugoslav Wars.

POLITICAL

(+)

As for most countries, the interplay between international and national politics eventually leads to political decisions, agreements and procedures. In Yugoslavia this was no different, except that in addition to this interplay a third level was present: federal politics. Even though the republics and provinces formed one socialist state, every one of them had to keep in mind both the republican and the federal interests. In other words: think about what is best for Yugoslavia and what is best for each republic? This interplay seemed to get increasingly harder for the republics the longer Yugoslavia existed and the more (economic) problems arose. When Yugoslavia was officially formed in 1945 federal politics were dominated by the Communist Party and Tito, and through this domination the republics were kept together. However, when Tito died in 1980 it was the Presidium's task to keep Yugoslavia together and this construction which perhaps seemed like a good idea on paper, it actually did more harm than good.

The Presidium, which was supposed to give all republics equal influence in the Yugoslav political affairs, did not work properly because of one major power shift. Montenegro had been under Serbian influence since the beginning of the Yugoslav state, but when Serbia retook control over its provinces it provided Milošević a peculiar veto right, because no matter the proposal, Serbia, Montenegro, Kosovo and Vojvodina – together four out of eight Yugoslav entities – could always veto it, because the result would always be even and thus several proposals would never get adopted. For Croatia, Slovenia, Macedonia and Bosnia-Herzegovina this was quite intimidating, and caused them to start thinking about secession. Eventually the republics could not come to an agreement on what should be the future of Yugoslavia: sovereign states in a loose federal system or semi-sovereign states in a tight political system.

Looking at this political system from a realist perspective, some (neo)realists might say that without Tito there was no “world government” for the Yugoslav republics, there was no referee to solve the disputes between the republics, or at least no referee that anyone trusted or took seriously enough. Without trust the situation in Yugoslavia got much tenser than before. Likewise, Waltz generally suggests that balancing power between multiple states is more difficult than balancing power between two, hinting at the relatively calm and bipolar situation during the Cold War. Through the multi-polar situation conflict will become more likely, because states – in this case republics – seek survival and in order to survive, they must protect themselves. This then, leads to the (in)famous security dilemma, which implicated that when one of the republics tried to protect itself this was seen as a threat by the others. Consequently, neorealists would add that it would seem that after Tito everything collapsed, however the situation under Tito was not natural at all and the real situation was laying under the surface all along: the natural state of being according to realists is anarchy, which means that no matter the existence of someone like Tito, the system will eventually drive states into conflict anyway.

Liberalists would also focus on the republics as the most dominant factors in the system, but for them interaction is even more important. In liberalism democratic processes and economic ties are central aspects of international politics, but what happens if there is no democracy and economic ties only exist in theory? Yugoslavia was not a democracy, it was an authoritarian federal socialist republic and economically the republics did not work together at all. Liberalists have the idea that states can learn from cooperating – because they realise it increases their well-being - and through this process start working together even more. However, Yugoslavia did not come together through a process of cooperation. On the contrary, it came together through a process of extreme violence. And in the same way as positive historical interactions can be remembered, this will be true for negative historical interactions as well.

In constructivism the Yugoslav conflicts could be explained through a more case specific and detailed background. Constructivists would show how socially constructed ideas and norms change national interests and therefore national governance. For them each case is different and anarchy does not constantly lead to conflict. It is a matter of changing identities and interests. In the case of Yugoslavia this can be true because of the fact that not all Yugoslav wars show the same kind of intensity or aggressiveness. For example, the war against Slovenia only lasted for 10 days, while the wars in Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina dragged on for years. The intensity and actions differ because the interests differ. In more recent accounts of the Yugoslav wars scholars tend to show how these interests have developed over the years. In the case of Serbia it is especially interesting to see how the Serbian elite changed its ideas about the future of Yugoslavia and instead of promoting Yugoslavia as a solution, they started supporting the idea of all Serbs living in one separate state.¹²⁶ However, it was not just the Serbian elite that changed their views of Yugoslavia, in Croatia and Slovenia the federal state was seen as increasingly negative by the population as well. Yugoslavia was holding them back and was costing them a lot of money, which they could otherwise invest in their own country. This image contrasts sharply with the idea of the 'progressive' non-alignment state of the 1960s and 1970s.

National interests thus played an important role when it comes to the outbreak of the wars, but international interests also played their part when it comes to the question of intervention. No matter how different a perspective or an opinion may be, fact is that the international community responded very late to the Yugoslav crisis. Constructivists would explain this development as a change in interests and thus behaviour. Most countries that had the power to intervene did not believe that their intervention was helpful or necessary. This was especially the case during the first year of the conflict when the ethnic hatred theory was still (too) widely accepted among politicians and journalists. The war was framed as an internal affair caused by problems that could not be overcome, which meant that it made no sense to intervene. Once the United States and West-European countries like Germany and Great Britain started to realize that their interests were going to be influenced by this conflict they finally intervened. For historical reasons, Germany, however, did not intervene militarily until the war in Kosovo. Constructivists would explain the outcome of intervention through a process of changing ideas and interests. Realists or liberalists, however, would simply conclude that the states acted out of self-interest: their security turned out to be at stake.

Realism + | Liberalism + | Constructivism +

¹²⁶ Guzina, 'Socialist Serbia's Narratives' (2003) 104.

INDIVIDUAL

(+)

In the previous paragraph – and in the first chapter of this research – it has been made clear that there is a distinction between realists and neorealists. On the subject of human behaviour this distinction is most clearly visible. According to realists human nature is imperfect and flawed, with an innate desire for power. This kind of behaviour has influence on the international political system. Neorealists consider human nature being influenced by the system and not the other way around. When looking at the Yugoslav Wars the question is: do politicians like Milošević, Tuđman or even Clinton act because of the system or because of their human nature? The theoretical preference of a scholar will influence the way he or she views individual behaviour. A neorealist will perhaps condemn the actions, but will explain it through the anarchic system, while a realist would show how individual leaders act in selfish and calculating ways. Nonetheless, the emotional dimension of realism is always present: fear and despair are essential to this theory. Whether through the system or by nature: states or state leaders are uncertain about other states' and state leaders' intentions and the realist response to this is self-protection. What becomes evident through the Yugoslav Wars is that this fear can be used for specific goals. For instance, it seemed that Milošević wanted to create a Greater Serbia for all Serbs in Yugoslavia and used the fear of Serbian people to make them fight and to fuel hate towards Croats or Bosnian Muslims. Kenneth Waltz stated that human nature alone can never explain why conflict occurs. He thought that the existing social and political institutions should be taken into account as well; Serbia was scared to lose its people if Yugoslavia collapsed and Croatia and Slovenia were scared to be dominated by the Serbs if they did not leave Yugoslavia.

Constructivists build upon the idea that human nature cannot explain why conflict occurs, because if human nature – the selfish version of realists - leads to conflict then there should be war always and everywhere and this is obviously not the case. The only aspect that constructivism can conclude about human nature is its social nature. People identify with groups and this identification informs their politics. This is true for the Yugoslav Wars as well. Through politicians and the media – who claimed to speak for the whole of Serbia or Croatia or another republic – people were influenced in their ideas and actions.

The influence of individual politicians on the course of the Yugoslav conflict has been agreed upon by numerous scholars. Most often named are Slobodan Milošević and Franjo Tuđman (some of their actions have been explained in the previous chapter), but both Slovenia and Bosnia-Herzegovina's political leaders – Milan Kučan and Alija Izetbegović – had quite an impact as well. It was under leadership of Kučan that Slovenia

chose to secede from Yugoslavia. This decision led to Croatia declaring independence as well – not willing to remain in a Yugoslav state dominated by Serbia. Slovenia has been accused of leaving the federal republic too soon and causing fear and anxiety among the other states which led ultimately to its violent breakup. Bosnian president Izetbegović decided to initiate a referendum on independence in 1992 in which a majority voted in favour of independence – with a large group of Serbian Bosnians boycotting the referendum and Serbia warning for secession from Bosnia by the Serb-inhabited regions of the country. Izetbegović did declare independence in 1992 and fighting immediately started after this.¹²⁷

It are these kind of decisions taken by individuals that would lead realists to give full blame of the war to people like Milošević and Tuđman. Neorealists on the other hand would prefer to pay little attention to individual decision making and focus on the political system, which according to them ultimately caused the war to start: if there was no Milošević in the Serbia in the 1980s and 1990s another president would have filled his place, changing nothing about the system and therefore nothing about the conflict. It is important to note that liberalists, even though they, like neorealists, pay more attention to the system have a different opinion about the outcome of the system and believe that through interdependence and economic or political ties states could not give in to the eternal pursuit of power. In the construction of interdependence and economic or political ties, political leaders most certainly play a role.

Finally, constructivists would emphasize the change of ideas and interests. The influence that ideas can have on political leaders and the public is massive. Therefore statesmen like Milošević or Tuđman, once in control of the media, can truly change people's and states' interests and behaviour. Additionally, state leaders can also be influenced by ideas from the public or elites. For example the intellectual elite in Serbia already had ideas about one Serbian state for all Serbs before Milošević came to the stage. The Serbian leader only had to claim the spotlight.

Realism + | Liberalism +/- | Constructivism +/-

HISTORICAL

(+/-)

Realists tend to focus on why actions are taken and usually they can argue that actions are taken because of the search for security and power. Their accounts of international relations hardly include historical aspects as being important. It is the innate desire of

¹²⁷ Tromp, *Srebrenica* (2002) 55.

power that drives people's and states' actions. What happened in the past will not change their view of human nature.

Liberalists on the other hand explain international politics in terms of a process, which already indicates that they do take into account historical events. Individuals and states have a capacity to grow and learn from historical events. States may feel less insecure and unsafe when the past shows that other (democratic) states have never attacked them or have actually helped them in times of distress. Consequently, liberalists will have to acknowledge that a negative history between states will also have an impact. Many Serbs and Croats will have negative memories of each other. After the violent years of the Second World War and now after the violent years of the Yugoslav breakup countless individuals will have lost friends or relatives to the fighting. As said in the Introduction: for many people this war is not even history yet.

When it comes to historical aspects or ethnicity, constructivism provides the best approach. This theory has an eye for the changing yet influential character of people, cultures and ideas. Constructivists will use the history between for example Serbs and Croats to explain the changes that took place during the last century. The ideas that Serbian or Croatian people had about themselves or about one another were very different in the 1930s – during the Second World War - or during the 1960s – when Yugoslavia was doing very well politically and economically. Good or bad memories can also have an influence on ideas. Constructivism forces us to look at ethnicity, culture, people and ideas in constant movement and aims to explain this movement.

Realism - | Liberalism +/- | Constructivism +

S O C I E T A L

(+)

The societal aspects of the Yugoslav Wars are primarily linked to the economy, the international or regional (democratic) institutions and technology. All these aspects are linked as well, because, since Yugoslavia had quite some economic problems in the final years before the dissolution, it was difficult to create more or even maintain certain institutions in the republics. Moreover increased technological possibilities– even though this development could have had a positive effect on institutions as well – gave many politicians total control over the media and left little room for institutions with different opinions.

The situation outlined in the previous chapter indicates that in the final years before the wars there was no longer any economic interdependence between the Yugoslav republics. It was each republic for its own and this created an atmosphere of grudge and mistrust. Realists consider this atmosphere to be common practice when it comes to

international politics. In their view republics acted as expected: more uncertainty, means more need for protection – also known as power -, means higher probability of conflict. Liberalism highly emphasizes the importance of (economic) interdependence and would also indicate lack of interdependence as a cause of conflict and – as mentioned in the previous paragraph – influence can be both positive and negative: unemployment or inflation can be exported as well. Almost every Yugoslav republic was facing economic problems and it seems that constructivism can explain what happened next: national leaders started to blame each other for their problems. This is where the gap between North and South was quoted many times. Constructivists will show that politicians used the economic problems to socially construct ideas about ‘the other’ and about their own people. For example, many Croats were given the idea that even though they worked hard, economic problems arose because they were obliged to contribute to the federal state and thus pay for other – in their eyes less contributing – republics.

It is important to be conscious of the fact that Yugoslavia was not a democracy, which also entails that democratic institutions did not exist and were unable to stop authoritarian powers once they were at work. Liberalists would claim that these institutions are exactly the kind of entities that could have stopped political leaders from stimulating violent aggression among the population. Realists on the other hand would simply argue that these kinds of stimulations were logical consequences of the anarchical system and that more democratic institutions could not have stopped these consequences.

Technology played an influential role in the Yugoslav Wars, mainly because it gave major power to the media. Cameras could film violent scenes and people could witness the same day what had happened in a little village in Croatia. Unfortunately, these images did not always depict the truth. From a constructivist perspective some images were literally constructed in order to frame events in a nationalist convenient way. In a tense atmosphere ‘fear’ and ‘despair’ – the realist emotions – can become very dangerous, as these can be used for specific goals such as inciting violence and racism.

Realism +/- | Liberalism + | Constructivism +

I D E O L O G I C A L

(-)

Under communist rule Yugoslavia’s (federal) ideology was – or at least should have been – one of brotherhood and unity. Nationalist ideologies were suppressed. When the power of the Communist Party decreased, power of nationalists increased. Nationalistic ideology in multiple Yugoslav republics had profound impact on the wars. For example in Serbia this nationalism was intertwined with the idea of territory and through this, Serbian nationalist

leaders emphasized the importance of a common territory for all Serbs in Yugoslavia – including areas in Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina.¹²⁸

Following the recent academic accounts cultural aspects of Balkan people do not play a decisive role when it comes to the outbreak of the Yugoslav Wars. Even though the “ancient hatred theory” did have some influence at the beginning of the 1990s. Both realism and liberalism tend not to look at cultural aspects. Constructivists, however, emphasize the importance of changing ideas, interests and thus (partly) changing culture. They would also have an eye for religion – as this is considered to be part of culture. In Yugoslavia religion even became a part of a nationalist ideology: ‘the Croatian Catholic Church and the Serbian Orthodox Church appear to have remained exceedingly loyal to their respective regimes, which in turn promoted religion as a central aspect of national identity.’¹²⁹

A final ideological aspect – which came to the fore in the “No state is an island” paragraph – is the clash between centralists and decentralists. This clash may at first sight not be too ideological, but more political, however centralists were closer to a communist (or Yugoslav socialist) idea of society, while decentralists were more closely tied to capitalism (or liberalism). Nevertheless, this contrast triggered quite some debate in the Yugoslav state. Both constructivism and realism explain this aspect, but in very different ways. Realists would focus on the interest of decentralisation for each republic, except Serbia – who was highly in favour of centralisation – while constructivists would explain this clash in terms of the greater international battle between communism and capitalism, which was more or less won by capitalism when the Soviet Union collapsed in 1989.

Realism - | Liberalism - | Constructivism +

¹²⁸ Cigar, *Genocide in Bosnia* (1995) 16.

¹²⁹ MacDonald, *Balkan holocausts?* (2002) 253.

5 | Theory value in the case of Former Yugoslavia

In the previous chapter we have discussed different aspects of the Yugoslav Wars and explained how, respectively, realists, liberalists and constructivists would explain these aspects and thus how they explain the beginning of the conflict. Each paragraph also indicated how important an aspect was and how well the three theories used this aspect to explain the Yugoslav situation.

First, it seems that realism is more valuable than liberalism, since liberalism – in the eyes of realists – only dictates how international politics should be instead of explain why it failed in the first place. The disintegration of Yugoslavia came as a shock to many people, but perhaps especially to liberalists, since the collapse of the Berlin wall was seen a great victory for democracy and liberalism. Fukuyama even wrote his famous book *The End of History and the Last Man* in 1992, but it seems this message was already outdated at the time of its writing, because Yugoslavia had started falling apart only one year before. On the other hand liberalism can be more valuable than realism when we think of humans or human nature more positively. After all not all breakups are violent. Nevertheless, this does not help to analyse the Yugoslav conflict, since in this case the dissolution was violent. Liberalists explain how it is difficult for violence to erupt, but fail to accurately explain why it does sometimes. According to supporters of liberalism we should pay more attention to circumstances (like an economic crisis) and missing institutions, instead of saying ‘I told you so’ like - in their minds - realists would say. Finally, constructivism has shown that it has an open mind when it comes to conflict analysis. It does not have a teleological ‘Yugoslavia was destined to fall’ view on events like realists tend to have or a slightly normative ‘If only the republics cooperated’ view like liberalism, but it argues that even though Yugoslavia fell apart, it may very well not have and there are multiple reasons why this particular federal state did.

In the table on the next page you can see how and if the theories consider different aspects. Most striking seems to be the fact that constructivism takes into account all aspects – even though some of these aspects are not as important – while realism and liberalism tend to focus on less and more specific ones. Because not all aspects are equally important the bottom row of the table is essential. This row indicates how many important aspects (+) are explained by a theory. In the Yugoslav case constructivism explains the most: 5 aspects. Even though realism explains 4 important aspects and is still considered by many scholars to be the most important IR-theory, for Yugoslavia constructivism seems to be more clarifying because it also takes into account the influence of technology (the media) and nationalism. This further indicates that the added value of constructivism is

indeed its capability to analyse socially constructed ideas (nationalism) and interests (technology).

| Aspect / Theory | | Realism | Liberalism | Constructivism |
|------------------|-----|---------|------------|----------------|
| Political system | + | + | + | + |
| Geopolitics | + | + | + | + |
| Human nature | + | + | +/- | +/- |
| Individuals | + | + | +/- | + |
| Economy | + | +/- | + | +/- |
| Institutions | + | +/- | + | +/- |
| Technology | + | +/- | +/- | + |
| History | +/- | - | +/- | + |
| Ethnicity | +/- | - | - | + |
| Culture | - | - | - | + |
| Religion | - | - | - | + |
| Nationalism | + | +/- | +/- | + |
| Direct + | | 4 | 3 | 6 |

We should be aware of the interaction between the more or less static internal and external factors – which are indeed also explained by liberalism and realism – and more vague and dynamic factors like interests or ideas, which are better explained by constructivism. It brings to mind the example of Sabrina P. Ramet in which she argues that if we would only look at history or ethnic hatred than why are there no wars between France and Germany anymore? This can only be explained because of a specific interplay between factors like a conflicting past and a prosperous or depressing present. France and Germany may have a conflicting past, but because they are living in a prosperous present – according to liberals mainly achieved by trade and a democratic system – there is no incentive to conflict.

This research and these aspects have shown that constructivism is most valuable for explaining the breakup of Yugoslavia. However, the general consensus about the conflict is a more realist one: Yugoslav leaders and especially Serbia's then President Slobodan Milošević should be blamed for the disintegration of Yugoslavia. Even though it seemed that after the collapse of the Soviet Union the end of history was upon us, realists could use the Yugoslav Wars as an example of how their ideas about the world are still valuable.¹³⁰ Given the outcome of this analysis, I can only agree with this verdict partially and believe that Milošević and his colleagues should be blamed for the *violent* disintegration of

¹³⁰ Ramet, Sabrina P., *Thinking about Yugoslavia. Scholarly Debates about the Yugoslav Breakup and the Wars in Bosnia and Kosovo*, Cambridge University Press (2005) 54.

Yugoslavia. In other words: Milošević being leader of Serbia from 1987 until 2000 was perhaps a significant condition for the dissolution of Yugoslavia, but it was not sufficient. According to this research only constructivism can illustrate the importance of other factors like the rise of nationalism through elites, the influence of the media or the interplay between an economic crisis and tensions between Yugoslav republics.

6 | Conclusion

If this analysis has made it more difficult to give one reason for the beginning of the Yugoslav Wars, than it has already achieved its goal. The main question of this thesis was: *which of the three most prominent IR-theories offers the most satisfying explanation for the change from a multinational Yugoslavia to a system of national successor states (1980 – 1991)?* As the analysis in the previous chapter indicates constructivism seems most valuable for understanding past events in Yugoslavia. In the third chapter we have established the general aspects of the Yugoslav Wars, already recognizing that this conflict has more than one cause. Constructivism at least takes into account all aspects found, of course some to a lesser extent than others. The added value of constructivism then, lies in its capability to analyse socially constructed ideas (nationalism) and interests (technology). Nevertheless it is important to realise that all these IR-theories acknowledge the fact that there is more than one cause for this conflict and emphasize different aspects. In addition, the theories do not just give a sum of different aspects – like this thesis has done in chapter three -, but provide a theory model in which different causes are linked together and thus creating a more consistent theoretical approach.

Besides acknowledging the worth of each separate theory and indicating that constructivism provides the most comprehensive approach, there is a more important conclusion still, which is that the point of International Relations is not trying to decide which of the –isms is most valid, but trying to build bridges. Only together they provide an image which will give scholars, politicians, journalists and citizens the opportunity to really understand what was going on at the time. In a sense the analysis of this thesis was a bit unnatural, because I purposely separated certain aspects to make a point, where in fact these aspects should be mentioned together because they influence each other. Take for example the relation between economic stagnation and the rise of nationalism. Then again, this illustrates the importance of theoretical pluralism even more and shows the insight it can give into a certain case study – especially one where a new state system is being formed.

Possibly it was and is too easy to criticize scholars and journalists for popularizing an ethnic hatred perspective, but at that time, people needed answers and they needed them quick. The only problem is that these quick answers have implications – for example when other countries decide not to act because it seems it has no use – and it is important that, even though this make take a while, the whole image and explanations of the war come to the fore. An ethnic conflict has certain connotations and I believe that it was and is too easy to put the Yugoslav Wars in an – sometimes exclusive - ethnic light and this

should continue to be debated at all costs, because it just does not explain it fully and it certainly does not help people nowadays to really understand what happened and why. Even though this is important for the continuing process of reconciliation. It could be compared to the attitude of the international community – primarily the European Commission and the United States – during the first years of the war: it is a mostly ethnic conflict which means you are unable to help. But what if people in the Balkans today would think the same way? The analysis showed that there are many factors to keep in mind when analysing this conflict, and of course ethnicity and especially history play a role, but it is impossible to prove that they play a decisive one. If there would have been no specific political structure or economic crisis there would have been no vacuum for nationalism to jump into.

Perhaps in the end it is not necessary to know which reason was most important for a young man to steal, because in the end it is more important to just acknowledge and understand the complex collection of reasons why someone would start stealing in the first place.

7 | Literature

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