

“The Berlin Wall Crumbled Down Upon Our Heads!” 1989 and Violence in the Former Socialist Multinational Federations*

Igor Štikš

University of Edinburgh, UK

Introduction: The Dark Side of 1989

The last twenty years in Central and Eastern Europe might be branded *les années 89*. Here I paraphrase what is in France nowadays called *les années 68*, the years of 1968, to underline the long-lasting effect of a historic turning point. The fall of the Berlin Wall heralded sweeping changes in the “other Europe”. These included the end of decaying communist regimes between 1989 and 1991, the end of the Cold War, the re-unification of Germany, the introduction of liberal democracy, the beginning of a hasty “transition” to a free market economy and, eventually, the unification of most of the European East and West under umbrella of the European Union.

However, from this vantage point, perceptions on the years of 1989 depend on diverse political, social and economic consequences of these profound changes that affected in different ways different parts of the former socialist Eurasia. When the real, political and symbolic walls started to crumble down in 1989, it was difficult to predict—nor would the euphoria of those days allow this kind of pessimism—that the change would also bring many unwanted consequences. Not only did these unwanted consequences involve economic hardships, travesties of a new democratic order and painful social shocks, but also—at the moment of Western European unification—disintegrative political trends which swept away three former socialist federations during 1991 and 1992. The disintegrative process was followed by the outbreaks of violence, destructive and bloody wars, the return of concentration camps in Europe, massacres and

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ethnic cleansing which culminated with the Srebrenica genocide in 1995, as well as the brutal destruction of cities such as Vukovar, Sarajevo, Mostar and Grozny. This dark side of 1989 found one of its most horrifying manifestations in the year siege of Sarajevo. When asked about the fall of the Berlin Wall, a citizen of besieged Sarajevo allegedly said that, on one hand, it had been a good thing, but, on the other, that the Wall had unfortunately “crumbled down upon our heads”.

In this article, I will deal with the violence, conflicts and wars that followed the disintegration of the former socialist multinational federations. The question of why these federations disintegrated so soon after the collapse of the communist regimes is followed by more puzzles. Why did violence occur in some places and not in others? Where, under what circumstances, and when was violence most likely to happen? Finally, why was the disintegration of Yugoslavia so uniquely brutal? I start my analysis by asking, what are in my opinion, two crucial questions. The possible answers to these determined the fate of many citizens of the former socialist federations in the context of their imminent disintegration: *Did the incipient states (republics) and the federal centre accept the separation and the existing borders? Did all groups and all regions accept independence and the authorities of the new states?* The analysis of the possible answers to these questions will bring us to what I call three decisive *triggers of violence*: citizenship, borders and territories, and the role of the military apparatus of defunct federations. However, this analysis cannot bear fruit without first providing preliminary descriptions of the former federations under scrutiny, since their different natures produced different outcomes during the years that followed 1989.

Different Federations, Different Disintegrations: Three Years that Changed the Face of Europe, 1989 - 1992

The case of the disappearance of all of the three multinational socialist federations, Yugoslavia, Czechoslovakia and the Soviet Union, between the last months of 1991 and 1 January 1993 calls for a thorough comparison between these federations which will identify the similarities and differences in their creations, their structures, and

their final dissolutions into, more often than not, the unitary national states of their ethnic majorities.¹ In this regard, as Valerie Bunce observes, the exit from socialism was not only a matter of regime change or state rejection, but also of national liberation.² Democracy itself was one of the essential tools which mobilized ethnic populations around an agenda of national liberation, independence and international recognition.

The federal institutions and existing administrative structures, including the internal division of these federations into constitutive republics, together with the internal administrative division of the republics which harboured autonomous provinces were also critical elements. Alfred Stepan claims that the “activation of federalist structures in a context where they had previously been *latent* rapidly creates “political opportunity structures” and new forms of “resources mobilization possibilities”.³ I agree with Stepan that the previous existence or activation of latent federal structures created new political opportunities and resources in the final years of the communist regimes. However, by putting all of these federations into the same category, Stepan overlooks the fact that in Yugoslavia the republics were not autonomous only “on paper,” but were already experienced “institutional veto players.” One could even adopt Stepan’s expression “moribund federal institutions”⁴ to describe, not “façade federalism” or a “federalism on paper,” but a federal system such as the one in Yugoslavia which since the early 1970s empowered constituent units to the point where the federal centre began losing its own autonomy.

¹ See, among other works, Valerie Bunce, *Subversive Institutions. The Design and the Destruction of Socialism and the State* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999); Valerie Bunce “The Yugoslav Experience in Comparative Perspective”, in K. Bokovoy, Jill A. Irvine and Carol S. Lilly (eds.) *State-Society Relations in Yugoslavia, 1945-1992* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1997), pp. 345-365; Reneo Lukić and Allen Lynch, *Europe from the Balkans to the Urals. The Disintegration of Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union* (Solna and Oxford: Sipri and Oxford University Press, 1996); Carol Skalnik Leff, “Democratization and Disintegration in Multinational States: The Breakup of the Communist Federations”, *World Politics*, Vol. 51, No. 2 (1999), pp. 205-235. Veljko Vujačić and Victor Zaslavsky. «The Causes of Disintegration in the USSR and Yugoslavia», *Telos* No. 88 (Summer 1991), pp. 120-141. Lenard J. Cohen, “Disintegrative Synergies and the Dissolution of Socialist Federations: Yugoslavia in Comparative Perspective”, in Lenard J. Cohen and Jasna Dragović-Soso (eds.), *State Collapse in South-Eastern Europe* (West Lafayette: Purdue University Press, 2008), pp. 365 - 396.

² Bunce, *Subversive Institutions*, op. cit, p. 132.

³ Alfred Stepan, “Electorally Generated Veto Players in Unitary and Federal Systems”, in Edward L. Gibson (ed.) *Federalism and Democracy in Latin America* (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004), p. 347.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 348

When it comes to some important differences between these three federations which eventually influenced the different ways by which they disintegrated, one needs to state the obvious differences in their nature. The Soviet Union was composed of fifteen republics with the Russian Federation being territorially, politically, economically, and culturally dominant within a largely centralized federation. Czechoslovakia, for example, was after 1969 a bi-national federation of a senior partner (Czechs) and a junior partner (Slovaks). Yugoslavia, in contrast, was composed of six institutionally equal partners and two autonomous regions enjoying almost the equal status as the republic after the constitutional changes of 1974. One needs to add to this that many Soviet republics had ethnically autonomous regions within their boundaries. In Yugoslavia only Serbia had two above-mentioned autonomous regions, one being historically formed as a multiethnic and multilingual region with the Serb majority (Vojvodina) and the other as ethnic Albanian autonomous region (Kosovo). This created completely different internal political dynamics. Majority of the Soviet republics, including Russia, united against their federal centre and got rid of it. In absence of a strong federal centre the Yugoslav republics either turned against each other or formed opposing coalitions. Czechoslovakia's disappearance differed in that it was played out between two partners, or at least their political elites, who found a common interest in separation.

Yugoslavia's internal structure and the relations among the republics were defined by what I call *centrifugal federalism*. My definition stresses the process which gradually but irreversibly empowers the subunits over the centre. This process is characterized by accelerated decentralization and constant concessions to the subunits, which then prove to be impossible to revoke without a serious destabilization of the whole system and without the potential for violent conflicts. Centrifugal federalism dominated Yugoslav politics beginning with the introduction of a number of constitutional amendments between 1967 and 1971. These were finally incorporated in the last Yugoslav constitution of 1974. This type of genuine federalism, as well as Yugoslavia's position outside the Soviet bloc, made it a unique case among socialist federations. But, it is also the only federation in which almost all of the republics, at different times after 1989, were involved in violence.

Sabrina Ramet described socialist Yugoslavia as a balance of power system and found rather unusual but "striking parallels between the patterns of interstate behaviour in

18th and 19th century Europe and those of inter-republican behaviour in contemporary Yugoslavia”.⁵ Although the accuracy of this comparison may be challenged, Ramet rightly points to the crucial role of the balance of power. The fundamental principle of the balance of power system is that no single actor has sufficient power to dictate terms unilaterally to the others and that no unit, regardless of its size, is deprived of equal status. I find this theory compatible with Henry Hale’s claim that the absence of a “core ethnic region” guarantees equilibrium, equality and stability of ethno-federations.⁶ Hale argues that the collapse of a multinational polity is more likely if it has a “core ethnic region” and less likely if the dominant group is territorially divided. According to Hale’s criteria of what constitutes a core ethnic region— in which either the unit constitutes a majority of the whole population or it makes up at least 20 percent more of the whole population than the second largest group—the USSR (Russia), Czechoslovakia (Czech Republic) and Yugoslavia (Serbia) also had core ethnic regions.⁷

I disagree with Hale when it comes to Yugoslavia. Until 1989 it was, in my view, a country without a “core ethnic region” capable of precipitating “ethno-federal state collapse” since the only region capable of acting as core ethnic region (Serbia) was *de iure* divided internally into Serbia proper (which could not qualify for a core ethnic region), autonomous Vojvodina and autonomous Kosovo. However, it was divided *de facto* after the constitutional reforms carried out between 1967 and 1974. Serbia was *re-unified* under Slobodan Milošević after the abolition of the provincial autonomies in 1989, and this is what transformed Serbia into the core ethnic region in Yugoslavia during the crucial 1989-91 period. Re-centralisation of Serbia consequently radically altered the existing balance of power. In addition, the dependence of Montenegrin elites on Belgrade reinforced Serbia’s position as the core ethnic region of Yugoslavia.⁸ When

⁵ Sabrina P. Ramet. *Nationalism and Federalism in Yugoslavia 1962 – 1991*, Second edition, (Bloomington & Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1992), p. 4.

⁶ Henry E. Hale, “Divided We Stand: Institutional Sources of Ethnofederal State Survival and Collapse”, *World Politics*, Jan 2004, pp. 165-193.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 169-170.

⁸ This imbalance of power was illustrated by Serbia’s insistence on keeping Vojvodina’s and Kosovo’s seats in the collective Presidency. It became clear that when Milošević had political control over not only Serbia proper, Vojvodina and Kosovo, but over also Montenegro, that the balance of power had changed drastically. Serbia now confronted the other four republics with four votes out of eight in the Presidency. The paralysis of the collective Presidency culminated in Serbia’s refusal to recognize the Croatian

he consolidated Serbia's position within Yugoslavia, Milošević was attempting to re-centralize Yugoslavia as well. Faced with resistance from other republics, the core (ethnic) region, that is to say Milošević's Serbia with the addition of Montenegro (Montenegrins were often considered to be another branch of the Serbian people by Serb nationalists and many pro-Serbian Montenegrins themselves), abandoned the project of re-centralizing Yugoslavia altogether and focused instead on the ethno-national unification of Serbia, Montenegro and ethnic Serbs in neighbouring republics. This, in turn, gave a strong impetus to secessionist movements in Slovenia and Croatia. Nevertheless, the core ethnic region would have never had the same leverage over the others without the tacit and later overt support of the federal army (JNA), the majority of whose personnel had an ethnic Serb background or was originally from Serbia itself.

Different institutional settings in the three socialist multinational federations undoubtedly played a role in their disintegrations. Bunce identifies a causal link between confederalism (and the associated inter-republican conflicts) and violence in Yugoslavia, and then contrasts this with the relatively non-violent outcome resulting from federalism in both the Soviet Union (where the republics cooperated with each other against the centre) and Czechoslovakia, which dissolved itself entirely peacefully.⁹ In other work, she also argues that "the bloc provides the answer" to the question of whether the exit from socialism will be violent or peaceful.¹⁰ All the countries which experienced violence, Bunce argues, were outside of the Soviet bloc, namely Yugoslavia, Albania, and Romania (which was a Warsaw Treaty member but in "poor standing" and with no Soviet troops stationed on its soil). Bunce claims that the military apparatus, unlike elsewhere in the Soviet bloc, was not controlled by Moscow and was thus more inclined to use force to retain power and old privileges. But, the end of the Soviet Union was not that *peaceful* and, as I show below, the role of the Soviet military was highly controversial. Bunce's insight certainly helps us to understand the general process of disintegrative dynamics, but, in my opinion, it does not explain *why* violence erupted in

candidate Stjepan Mesić as President, even though it was Croatia's turn to take over the presidency of Yugoslavia.

⁹ Bunce, "The Yugoslav Experience in Comparative Perspective", *op. cit.*, pp. 356-7.

¹⁰ Bunce, *Subversive Institutions*, *op. cit.*, p. 70-1.

some and not in other places in the former federations and *why* it had such varying degrees of intensity.

Why Was There Violence in the Former Socialist Multinational Federations?

I argue that in the context of imminent disintegration of the socialist multinational federations—regardless of the actual importance of internal federal or confederal institutional setting and the above-mentioned "bloc factor,"—the potential for violence can be explained by answering the two following questions:

- a) Did the incipient states (republics) and the federal centre accept the separation and the existing borders?
- b) Did all groups and all regions accept independence and the authorities of the new states? (If not, it is important to know if their non-acceptance entailed rebellion, secession or even integration with another, usually neighbouring, state.)

The possible combinations of the answers produce four scenarios that, when placed into a simple 2x2 matrix, look like this:

		Did the federal centre and other incipient states (republics) accept separation and existing borders?	
		YES	NO
Did all the groups and/or regions accept the independence and the authorities of the new states?	YES	Czech Republic, Slovakia <i>(no violence)</i>	Slovenia, Lithuania <i>(limited violence)</i>
	NO	Georgia (Abkhazia, South Ossetia), Russia (Chechnya), Moldova (Transnistria), Serbia (Kosovo) <i>(high likelihood of violence)</i>	Croatia / Bosnia / Serbia / Montenegro; Armenia / Azerbaijan <i>(inevitable violence)</i>

If the answer to both questions is positive, then violence is less likely to happen, as in the case of Czechoslovakia. The Czechoslovak federation was first democratized when the first elections were held at both the federal and republican levels (unlike Yugoslavia which never had federal-level elections), and on 1 January 1993 dissolved by the mutual agreement of the Czech and Slovak political elites. There was no interference from the federal centre. Although many citizens were sympathetic to the former federation, there was no significant opposition to the disintegration coming from groups of citizens, regions or ethnic groups. A small percentage of Czechs living in Slovakia and Slovaks living in the Czech Republic—and there were no concentrations in any particular region—did not pose a problem in mutual relations. Slovakia is, however, a home to a sizable Magyar minority but the Czech-Slovak divorce was not a concern for them nor did it change much in their relationship with the Slovak majority.

However, if the answer to both questions is negative, then violence is almost inevitable, as in the former Yugoslavia where war broke out among the republics with Serbia and Montenegro on one side and Croatia and Bosnia on the other from 1991 until 1995. From 1993 to 1994 Croatia was also militarily engaged against the Bosnian government. Violence also resulted between two republics in the former USSR, Armenia and Azerbaijan.

Majority of Croatian and Bosnian Serbs did not accept the independence of Croatia and Bosnia and refused loyalty to the authorities. It is important to note that they did not have any regional autonomy, unlike Nagorno-Karabakh, and were dispersed over Croatian and Bosnian territory. Their rebellion meant conquering territories which they claimed as belonging to Serbs with idea of attaching them to Serbia or Serbian-Montenegrin state in the making. They were backed by Serbia, Montenegro and the Serb-dominated JNA, who did not accept the independence and borders of the neighbouring republics. When they were eventually ready to accept independence, such as in the case of Croatia, they demanded territorial concessions and the change of existing borders.

Although the war between Armenia and Azerbaijan over Nagorno-Karabakh resembles the conflicts in the former Yugoslavia insofar as it involved direct violence between the former republics over borders and territories, there is a significant difference.

Nagorno-Karabakh is an Armenian-populated former autonomous region within Azerbaijan. It opted for independence from Azerbaijan with an obvious intention of joining the Armenian state, a goal supported by Armenia itself. The only problem was how to attach the region surrounded by ethnic Azeri territories that Armenia eventually “solved” by simply occupying these territories. In this case, we can see both an autonomous region populated by an ethnically different group than the rest of the republic rebelling against the republican centre, and the neighbouring republic demanding a change of borders and claiming the region for itself.

If, however, the former republics mostly agree among themselves on their territorial shapes but (ethnic) groups and/or regions within the republics either disobey the newly independent authorities or express discontent with independence or with their position within the new state—or even attempt secession, with or without the intention of joining another state—violence has a significant chance of occurring. This was the case with Georgia (Abkhazia and South Ossetia), Moldova (Transnistria), Russia (Chechnya), and Serbia (Kosovo). In Georgia and Moldova the new authorities were unable to quell the rebellion, whereas Russia succeeded after almost a decade to crush the Chechen uprising after a horrible price was paid in human lives and material destruction. A special attention should be paid to the case of Serbia. In an open expansionist campaign, Serbia militarily questioned the territorial shape of the western neighbouring republics (Croatia and especially Bosnia), but no other republic challenged its own administrative borders. The case of Kosovo appears different from the other cases in this category since Serbia *initially* managed to suppress Albanian demands for autonomy and even independence after Kosovo’s autonomy was revoked in 1989. Kosovo Albanians opted for a peaceful rebellion against the Serbian state and built their own parallel institutions until 1998 when the conflict erupted between the Serbian authorities and the Albanian guerrilla. It ended with the NATO intervention and withdrawal of Serbian troops from Kosovo in 1999.

Macedonia deserves a special status in our analysis and therefore it does not find a place in our matrix. It exemplifies a situation in which the ethnic Macedonian majority and the ethnic Albanian minority *initially*—at the moment of Yugoslavia’s break-up in 1991—accepted independence. The state was thus not threatened with external

intervention and it secured loyalty of its ethnic minority. However, over the years—ten years later and under different circumstances—the Albanians’ discontent with their position in Macedonia, coupled with political demands and secessionist threats, resulted in an armed rebellion, backed by armed groups from Kosovo, and open defiance of the Macedonian state authorities in 2001.

Although it was not part of the initial implosion of the Yugoslav federation and it took place fifteen years later, it is necessary to mention here Montenegro’s independence from the State Union of Serbia and Montenegro in 2006 as well as Kosovo’s independence from Serbia in 2008. Many expected and perceived Montenegro’s independence as a final stage of fragmentation along the republican lines of what had been Yugoslavia. First steps towards independence had already been taken in late 1990s when the Montenegrin leadership—comprising many people such as Montenegrin current Prime Minister Milo Đukanović who enthusiastically supported Milošević and his war campaigns in early 1990s—turned its back on Belgrade. By 2003, when the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia was replaced by malfunctioning State Union, Montenegro was already a semi-independent country. Although it opposed Montenegrin independence, Serbia did not dispute the territorial shape of Montenegro and furthermore decided to respect the outcome of the referendum on independence in 2006. As for the Serbs in Montenegro, they expressed their discontent with independence rather *peacefully*, and did not rebel against the authorities. However, many Montenegrin Serbs continue to press for special status and special relations with Serbia. Once again, the case of Montenegro’s independence in 2006 must be placed in the context of an entirely different political setting than the one which dominated Yugoslavia’s disintegration in early 1990s. In February 2008 Kosovo declared independence from Serbia and acquired only partial but significant international recognition: the move was opposed by both Serbia and the ethnic Serb minority. Since Kosovo has been completely separated from Serbia for almost a decade and governed by international bodies (UN), since there is a strong international military and police presence in Kosovo (NATO, EU, UN) and, since Serbia renounced the use of violence, violence has been limited to ethnic Serb enclaves.

Finally, the fourth possible scenario in our matrix can also generate violence, but on a smaller scale. This situation arises when citizens largely obey the authorities of the

incipient new state and agree with independence and the borders of the new state. In such a situation there are no regional or ethnic protests or, if a minority is not content with the independence (as it was the case in the Baltic states) it doesn't act to prevent it or rebel against the authorities. The federal centre institutions do however question the decision to separate. The Yugoslav army's (JNA) one-week intervention in Slovenia and the Soviet army's intervention in Lithuania in 1991 are examples. Since both federal centres were extremely politically weak at that point and since other republics did not directly oppose independence of the republics in question, the violence was ultimately short-lived and resulted in withdrawal of the federal troops.

Only one case does not fit the matrix at all because of the entirely different nature of the conflict. From 1992 to 1997 the Central Asian republic of Tajikistan was plunged into a war between the government and its political opposition which ranged from liberal-democrats to Islamists. All sides accepted independence and there were no challenges to Tajikistan borders or the state. Although the war was in some aspects characterized by mostly regional and some ethnic rivalries, Tajikistan clearly constitutes a separate case of civil ideological war for political power.

It is important to add here that in the post-1989 international arena, the international community generally accepted only the former republics as independent states that were therefore entitled to join international organisations such as the United Nations. The only major exception to this unwritten rule came seventeen years later with Kosovo's independence. Both the US and the EU members who recognized Kosovo insisted that it was an *exceptional case*. The move was opposed by some EU members and, most staunchly, by Russia. In response, and coming to the conclusion that the rule was irretrievably broken, Russia recognized the independence of the Georgian provinces of Abkhazia and South Ossetia after the war with Georgia in August 2008.

Triggers of Violence: Citizenship, Borders and Territories, and the Role of the Federal Military

The first question—*Did the incipient states (republics) and the federal centre accept the separation and the existing borders?*—is intimately related to future territorial shapes and thus borders of incipient states and, inevitably, to the role of the federal military in the initial phase of the break-up. The second question--*Did all groups and all regions accept the independence and the authorities of the new states?* In addition to this, one should also ask *Did they attempt rebellion, secession or even integration with another state?*--is intrinsically bound with citizenship or, generally, with the relationship between state and individuals and/or groups involving, among other things, political inclusion or exclusion, citizens' loyalty, political, social and cultural rights, duties, property and, last but not the least, security. Another perspective on violence in the post-1989 post-communist space opens up if we look at it through the lenses of citizenship, the struggle over borders and territories, and the role of the federal military that I define as main *triggers of violence* in the former socialist multinational federations. By the triggers of violence I understand stakes (in this case disagreements on citizenship issue and territorial shape of the new states) and actors (in our analysis partial or full engagement of the federal military) that could facilitate and even initiate the use of violence by the parties in conflict having opposing political agendas.

In the context of the disintegration of a federation, the role of the federal forces as the major military formation and their active involvement in the events or their non-involvement certainly determines the level of violence. Therefore, if all three triggers of violence are *pulled*, large-scale violence will occur. An example of this is the war in which five of the six Yugoslav republics participated together with the disintegrating federal army which sided with Serbia and Montenegro and ethnic Serbs' paramilitaries in Croatia and Bosnia in 1991-2. The war was brought to an end by the general peace agreement in 1995 sponsored by the US and the EU and signed by Croatia, Bosnia-Herzegovina and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro). The Serb rebellion in Croatia failed but Bosnia was internally divided into the Serb republic and the Croat-Bosniak federation. Regardless of wide-spread destruction and heavy losses in human lives (as many as 100,000 in Bosnia according to the exhaustive database of the

Research and Documentation Centre in Sarajevo¹¹ and around 15,000 in Croatia¹²), the former republican borders were not changed.

The conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh, on the other hand, involved two triggers of violence: citizenship (rebellion of ethnic Armenian citizens against Azerbaijan as state) and conflict over disputed territories and new borders among states (intervention of Armenia with intention to annex the Azeri territory).it. Although initially the Soviet army was militarily involved the conflict—that started already in 1988!--was played out among two neighbouring republics and an autonomous province. The final result was a frozen conflict which lasts until this very day: a *de facto* annexation of Nagorno-Karabakh by Armenia together with Armenian control over the regions outside Nagorno-Karabakh linking the region to Armenia.

If you pull the trigger of citizenship involving refusal of loyalty to new state and if you couple it with the secessionist demands, and this inevitably means pulling also the trigger of control over territories and borders, the result is internal conflicts between the new states and one or more rebellious regions. The outcome is likely to be, as in the case of Nagorno-Karabakh, a frozen conflict. Only internationally-supervised Kosovo managed to achieve a partial international recognition, although the conflict with Serbia remains. This recognition is not the case for some of the rebellious regions in the former USSR, such as Transnistria, Nagorno-Karabakh, Abkhazia and South Ossetia (the later two indeed recognised by only Russia, Nicaragua, and Venezuela), which are *de facto* independent statelets or, for that matter, Chechnya which has been brought under Moscow's control again. In many of these regions the federal military or its remnants and the Russian army as its successor played a highly controversial role. For example, the former 14th Soviet army generously helped the rebellion in Transnistria, the Soviet army was implicated in the first phase of the Armenian-Azerbaijani war, and Russia militarily backed Abkhaz and South Ossetian secessionism.

Macedonia is a special case for the reasons discussed above. It escaped initial violence, but faced an internal Albanian rebellion in 2001 which, after a decade of general loyalty, pulled *only* the trigger of citizenship and played with a prospect of

¹¹ The data are available at www.idc.org.ba

¹² For various estimates see Antonija Petricusic, "Nation-Building in Croatia and the Treatment of Minorities: Rights and Wrongs", *L'Europe en formation*, N 349-350, automne-hiver (2008), pp.136-7.

secession. Albanians perceived themselves as “second-class” citizens in the state constitutionally defined as ethnic Macedonian state, complained about the discriminatory citizenship law and demanded more autonomy for municipalities with an Albanian majority and some important cultural rights such as higher education in Albanian language. The Albanian uprising started in the area inhabited by ethnic Albanians who did not have a previous autonomous region within Macedonia. In this regard their armed rebellion was similar in some respect to the one of Croatian and Bosnian Serbs, or to the one in Transnistria where the Slavic speakers (Ukrainians and Russians) unilaterally declared autonomy and secession from Moldova in the municipalities of the Dniester region, with the difference that they could not count on any foreign assistance. With Albania not interested and Kosovo not a state, and without international sympathies, the armed insurgency was greeted only in the Albanian nationalist circles based mainly in Kosovo. The Macedonian case ended in settlement. For their acceptance of citizenship and loyalty, the Macedonian state offered the Albanians concessions in citizenship matters, linguistic and educational policy, and internal administrative divisions which consolidated the Albanian majority in the Western Macedonia. Also included were significant political concessions such as re-definition of the constitution and the larger participation of Albanians in government.

If a situation involved the federal military’s action—assuming the triggers of citizenship and/or territoriality have not been pulled—the result was the failed involvement of a weak federal centre. (The alternative was an occupation that would have demanded a very strong federal centre and a massive intervention of the army). This was the case in Slovenia and Lithuania. Violence was short-lived and the federal army, as it counted its final days, retreated making these republics completely independent. Finally, if none of the triggers are pulled; needless to say, violent outcomes are unlikely, as in the example of the Czecho-Slovak separation.

Here below, by treating them separately, I will explain *why* and *how* citizenship, the question of borders and territories, and the role of the federal military, its remnants or successors, influence the eruption of violence.

Trigger 1: Citizenship

Generally speaking, citizenship is a legal link between a state and individuals, involving rights guaranteed by the state to its citizens and duties citizens own to their state. I claim that some of the fundamental questions related to citizenship status—namely, *To what state do I owe my loyalty?* And, in turn, *what state guarantees, or promises to guarantee my rights and protection?*—are closely related to the outbreak of violence in the former socialist multinational federations in the context of their imminent collapse.

All subunits in the former socialist federations—except Bosnia-Herzegovina which was formed as republic according to historic and not ethnic criteria—were defined in ethno-national terms. Every republic had its titular nationality which *owned* the republic in question regardless of ethnic plurality within its borders. It is not surprising that at the moment of independence almost all of these republics therefore offered a privileged position to members of ethnic core group, even to those living outside their territory. Citizenship—access to it and exclusion from it—became a crucial political battlefield in the former multinational socialist federations. The question of citizenship was also intimately related to the introduction of liberal democracy. Simply put, only citizens are invited to participate in the political arena and, ultimately, allowed to vote. I argue that once the supra-ethnic federal roof disappeared, the ethno-national conception of citizenship largely prevailed and, in the places of conflict, fuelled the eruption of violence over the redefinition of borders within which the new ethno-national states were to be formed on the basis of absolute majorities of the core ethno-national groups.

Democracy, in this vision, was seen as workable only if it was essentially ethno-national. In other words, majority rule should not entail a division between an ethnic majority and an ethnic minority but rather should be practiced *within* the core ethno-national group with the liberal democratic majority /minority division formed on the basis of ideological preferences. In this sense, a projected ethno-national state—be it a former republic within a pre-defined territory or expanded to include ethnic kin members in other republics, or a former ethnic autonomous region—could be truly democratic *only if* the core ethnic group had an absolute majority and political independence from any other group or centre, and ethnic minorities within the borders of its state were reduced to an

insignificant percentage of the population.¹³ To sum up, the ideal of an (expanded) ethno-national state in which the core ethnic group would be in an absolute majority and in which its ethnically homogenized citizens would *democratically* decide upon their own destiny conquered the hearts and political reasoning of many former Yugoslav and Soviet citizens.

With the progressive disappearance of the federal state, citizens were left to deal with the republics in which they resided. Many simply refused to be loyal to their republics, which they perceived as another ethnic group's national home. This was exemplified in the rebellion of the groups such as Bosnian and Croatian Serbs and Bosnian Croats, or in the rebellion of the ethnically defined regions as in Georgia, Moldova, Russia, Serbia, and Azerbaijan. In these republics (except Bosnia), the ethnic majority also often succumbed to the temptation to re-define the republic as being *exclusively* the state of their core ethnic group and promoted discriminatory practices vis-à-vis their ethnic minorities. In both cases citizens simply switched their loyalties to whatever they considered as their ethnic "state in the making" (their ethnic kin-state, their ethnic republic, or their ethnic autonomous region). This resulting state would also ideally include their homes within its future borders.

Throughout the former socialist federations, nationalist elites have attempted to reduce ethnic heterogeneity and to create ethnically "purer" ethno-national states. This was often confirmed through citizenship legislation and citizenship-related administrative practices in majority of newly formed states.¹⁴ Even when the states in question did not

¹³ On the attempts and failures to establish a viable "ethnic democracy" in Eastern Europe and on the very concept of ethnic democracy, see Sammy Smooha, "The Non-Emergence of a Viable Ethnic Democracy in Post-Communist Europe", in Sammy Smooha and Priit Jarve (eds) *The Fate of Ethnic Democracy in Post-Communist Europe* (Budapest: Open Society Institute, 2005), pp. 241-25

¹⁴ See Katherine Verdery, "Transnationalism, Nationalism, Citizenship, and Property: Eastern Europe since 1989", *American Ethnologist* Vol. 25. No. 2 (1998), pp. 291-306; For the former Yugoslav republics see Jelena Pejić, "Citizenship and Statelessness in the Former Yugoslavia: The Legal Framework", in Siofra O'Leary and Teija Tiilikainen (eds.), *Citizenship and Nationality Status in the New Europe* (London: The Institute for Public Policy Research / Sweet & Maxwell, 1998), pp. 169-186; Shpend Imeri (ed.), *Rule of Law in the Countries of the Former SFR Yugoslavia and Albania: Between Theory and Practice* (Gostivar: Association for Democratic Initiatives, 2006); Mihajlo Dika, Arthur C. Helton, and Jasna Omejec (eds.) 1998. *The Citizenship Status of Citizens of the Former SFR Yugoslavia after its Dissolution*, in *Croatian Critical Law Review* Vol. 3, No. 1-2 (1998); Igor Štiks, "Nationality and Citizenship in the Former Yugoslavia: From Disintegration to the European Integration", *South East European and Black Sea Studies*, Vol. 6. No. 4 (2006), pp. 483-500; for the Czech Republic and Slovakia see Dagmar Kusa, "The Slovak Question and the Slovak Answer: Citizenship during the Quest for National Self-determination and

directly exclude the groups of their residents (as it was the case in the Baltic republics Estonia and Latvia that excluded from citizenship their Russian and Russophone populations), they often engaged in what I call *ethnic engineering*. I understand ethnic engineering as deliberate policies by governments to use laws and related administrative practices to influence the ethnic composition of their population in favour of the core ethnic group.¹⁵ These policies were aimed to numerically reinforce the ethnic majority and to reduce the number of other ethnicities in the citizenry of the new states. Therefore, the inclusion of the core ethnic group's members, regardless of their places of residence (inside or outside state borders), and, as much as possible, the parallel exclusion of members of minority ethnic groups was one of the strategies most useful for the transformation of the socialist federations' multinational spaces into a series of more or less ethnically homogenized *democratic* states. Here it must be added that even when they were legally included, members of minority groups often felt discriminated against or threatened by a state dominated by a different ethnic group.

Before we turn to concrete examples, it is important to recall that in most countries violence occurred even before concrete new citizenship legislation was in place. It was usually adopted after independence was proclaimed. The *citizenship question* was, therefore, asked by many citizens at the moment of disintegration and the different answers given to this question influenced the lawmakers. The context of unavoidable disintegration opened up a possibility that the federations could fragment not only along the republican borders but along ethnic divisions as well. The citizenship question involved the question of civic *versus* ethnic loyalty. For the individual, the questions asked were the following: Should I be loyal, regardless of my ethnic background, to the

After", in Rainer Bauböck, Bernhard Perchinig and Wiebke Sievers (eds.) *Citizenship Policies in the New Europe* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2007), pp. 185-212; Andrea Barsova, "Czech Citizenship Legislation between Past and Future", in Rainer Bauböck, Bernhard Perchinig and Wiebke Sievers (eds.) *Citizenship Policies in the New Europe* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2007), pp. 163-184; For the ex-Soviet states see Rogers W. Brubaker, "Citizenship Struggles in Soviet Successor States", *International Migration Review* Vol. 26 No. 2 (1992), pp. 269-291; Georg Brunner, "Citizenship and Protection of Minorities in Eastern Europe", in Roger Clark, Ferdinand Feldbrugge and Stanislas Pomorski (eds.) *International and National Law in Russia and Eastern Europe: Essays in Honor of George Ginsburgs* (The Hague, Boston, London: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, 2001), pp. 113-138; For other post-socialist states see Rainer Bauböck, Bernhard Perchinig and Wiebke Sievers (eds.) *Citizenship Policies in the New Europe* (Expanded and updated edition, Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2009). The chapters are also available at <http://www.law.ed.ac.uk/citmodes/newcountryreports.aspx>.

¹⁵ Štikš, *op. cit.* p. 484.

incipient state? Or, should I be loyal to my ethnic group that may or may not have its own autonomous region within the incipient state, or may have its own, usually neighbouring, kin-state? At the level of existing autonomous republics, the question was to be loyal or not to the republican centre, or to declare independence—once the federation that was guaranteed the existing administrative division disappeared—or even integration with another republic. Where they did not exist, autonomous regions were hastily created by the ethnic groups which rebelled against the republic in which they lived. For instance, Croatian and Bosnian Serbs formed “Serb autonomous regions” in territories they considered to belong to them, organized referendums on independence among Serbs, set up their own parliaments, transformed “autonomous regions” into “Serb republics” and declared independence from Croatia and Bosnia, and, in a similar fashion, Bosnian Croats created “Croatian Community [later Republic] of Herzeg-Bosna”.

When it comes to violence in the former Soviet Union, one must note a phenomenon that at first glance appears as an anomaly. In the two countries, Estonia and Latvia, where a large minority (Russians and other Russophones) were *legally* excluded from citizenship there was no violence.¹⁶ Open discrimination in Estonia and Latvia was justified by fears of not “becoming a minority in its own country” and by democratic procedures that would, if citizenship was granted, offer political power to ethnic Russians. Therefore, Estonia and Latvia opted for a discriminatory democratic system in which only ethnic Estonians and Latvians could take part, whereas ethnic Russians and generally Russophones were subjected to severe citizenship entrance exams which involved language competences. Our matrix could explain the absence of violence in this situation. Although ethnic Russians resisted the idea of the independence of the Baltic republics and the federal government was against this initially—and even intervened in

¹⁶ In his early analysis of the “citizenship struggles” occurring in the former USSR immediately after its dissolution, Rogers Brubaker distinguishes between three models of citizenship policy adopted by some of the new successor states: the “restored state model” by which citizenship is restored to the lawful citizens of the inter-war independent republics and their descendants (implemented in Estonia and Latvia); the “new state model” by which a new state defines the initial body of citizens simply by including all residents on their territory (implemented in Byelorussia and Ukraine, despite the large percentage of ethnic Russians in both states, and in the Central Asian republics where governments wanted the Russian minority to stay because of its important economic and social position); the third model being a combination of the two (implemented in Lithuania): both restored citizenship and inclusiveness that should satisfy general democratic standards (Brubaker, *op. cit.*). For other post-Soviet states see also Brunner, *op. cit.*

Lithuania—they eventually accepted the new authorities and their position as non-citizens or simple residents and struggled for better social, political and economic position¹⁷, and Russia—once the federal centre was put out of game—accepted their independence and borders and did not interfere. The combination of Russia’s non-involvement together with the fact that there was no territorial basis for rebellion—no (ethnic) autonomous regions and a territorial dispersion—coupled with their specific position of “non-autochthonous” minority that couldn’t have claimed self-determination or unification with a kin-state, provides the answer as to why there was no violence in the Baltic republics.

Where it did occur, violence mostly involved autonomous regions. In these regions the ethnic majority was different from the majority of the whole republic. It rejected authorities of the new state judged that it could not, being the state of a different ethnic group, offer the basic guarantees involved in any citizenship contract, such as protection and rights. In addition, even if the new state was willing to offer all the required rights, this was rejected in favour of forming its own national independent state as with Chechnya, South Ossetia, and Abkhazia or of attaching the region to the kin-state to share its citizenship as with Nagorno-Karabakh.

Where, however, ethnic minority and/or autonomous regions accepted the new authorities, the new state guaranteed their autonomy and offered full citizenship rights to all citizens and, at the same time, the borders were mutually recognized between the new states, violence had little chance to occur.

Nevertheless, the “citizenship struggles” were not put off the agenda in the former USSR. Since 1991 Russia has offered its citizenship to the former Soviet citizens in “near abroad”. The policy was confirmed in a special “Compatriots Act” in 1999. It was revoked in 2002 when the new citizenship act came into force. However, the new citizenship legislation also allows, under certain conditions and until 2009, acquisition of Russian citizenship by the former Soviet citizens residing outside Russia. Some Russians from the Baltic republics preferred Russian citizenship to statelessness, although this

¹⁷ See Valerie Bunce and Stephen Watts, “Managing Diversity and Sustaining Democracy: Ethnofederal versus Unitary States in the Postcommunist World”, in Philip G. Roeder and Donald S. Rothchild (eds) *Sustainable Peace: Power and Democracy After Civil Wars* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2005), pp. 133-158.

permanently disqualified them from citizenship of the Baltic states, and Russia *nationalized* almost all the citizens of South Ossetia and Abkhazia and, reportedly, offered its citizenship to many Crimean residents as well. Moreover, Russia justified its intervention in Georgia in 2008 on the grounds of citizenship: Russian officials often claimed that Russia was only protecting its own citizens.¹⁸

In the former Yugoslavia, the question of citizenship played a considerable role in fuelling tensions. Generally, the democratization reinforced the factor of ethnicity, i.e. the citizen's identification with his or her ethnic group. The democratic elections confirmed the conflict between the citizens' civic/republican and ethnic identities. However, the very fact that almost all of the republics were defined as the "national homes" of their core ethnic group only underlined the primacy of ethnic identity even when the citizens themselves, regardless of their ethnic origins, rejected ethno-nationalism and expressed a purely *civic* patriotism or loyalty to the institutions of their republics and the Federation. The civic and ethnic political identities could only be easily reconciled if a citizen resided in his own ethnic republic and therefore belonged to its ethnic majority. However, this was not the case for the considerable number of individuals who lived outside the "national homes" of their ethnic groups and were instead inside republics to which they had historically belonged *civically* (as republican citizens or residents) but not *ethnically*.

Constant communication via the republican-controlled media between the republican political leaderships and citizens—or more precisely nationalist leaders and their ethnic bodies—is essential for understanding the political dynamic of Yugoslavia's dissolution. The first democratic elections took place in an atmosphere of conflicting nationalist aspirations. It is not surprising, then, that the elections revealed strong backing for ethnic leaders and ethnic parties whose message of ethnic solidarity traversed republican borders. They promised to "protect" and guard the interests of their ethnically defined electorate in the inter-republic and inter-ethnic disputes and in the case of Yugoslavia's disappearance.¹⁹

¹⁸ Russian President Dmitri Medvedev said "I must protect the life and dignity of Russian citizens wherever they are", reported by BBC News on 8 August 2008, available at <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/europe/7548715.stm>

¹⁹ Some examples of these nationalist movements can be found in the formation of the Serb Democratic Party (SDS) which was established in both Croatia and Bosnia and was under the direct influence of Milošević who was already perceived as not only the leader of Serbia but of *all* Serbs. Similarly Franjo

This ethnocentric vision of citizenship, coupled with the new democratic order, fuelled extreme nationalism: most ethnic Serbs and ethnic Croats started to perceive Serbia or Croatia respectively as *their* state, regardless of their place of residence. They refused loyalty to Croatia and Bosnia (in the case of most ethnic Serbs) or to Bosnia (in the case of many ethnic Croats, particularly in Western Herzegovina during 1993-4) and hoped that their ethnic state's borders would expand to politically and legally encompass their place of residence even if it was located in territories where they lived as a minority. These territories were to be conquered and ethnically "cleansed," as was the case, for instance, of the Bosnian Serb capture of almost 70% of Bosnia's territory and the massive ethnic cleansing of ethnic Muslims and Croats, which accompanied this expansion.

Trigger 2: Territory and Borders

The previous paragraphs clearly show how closely related the questions of citizenship and the territorial shape i.e., the borders of new states are. The conflict over borders is an infallible trigger for violence both in cases where a region or a group inhabiting a certain territory refuses loyalty to the authorities of a new state and declares secession and in cases when the (usually) neighbouring country questions the existing borders claiming more often than not that its minority in neighbouring country should join the "homeland".

With the disintegration of these federations looming in 1990 and 1991, citizens began to wonder *how*, if at all, the federations would break down. The logical lines of separation were the existing republican borders, but the signal sent from the republican leaders and nationalist politicians suggested ethnic separation was the aim: the break-up thus presented an opportunity in some regions to redraw "artificial" republican borders.

As mentioned above, the arguments for re-arranging political borders often centred on the "artificiality" of the existing territorial divisions. These did not correspond, it was claimed, to "natural" ethnic territories. The inherited inter-republican and intra-

Tudman's Croatian Democratic Union (HDZ) founded a Bosnian branch and Tudjman, though the president of the Republic of Croatia, fashioned himself as the "president of all [ethnic] Croats." Alija Izetbegović's SDA—the main ethnic Muslim party—founded a Sandžak branch outside Bosnia as well.

republican administrative divisions were often portrayed—both by the republican centre willing to keep its borders or eventually expand them and by secessionist regions willing to form independent states or join other states— as “a communist trick” and a clear example of “communist divide and rule” policies. Once the communist regimes had imploded the legitimacy of political and territorial arrangements made under their rule were also called into question. However, any separation according to the ethnic lines had to solve the “problem” of many ethnically mixed regions. Therefore, the physical separation of ethnic communities was to be created in these zones by the use of mass violence, executions, expulsions and “ethnic cleansing”.

Although the post-Soviet states, except in the case of Armenia and Azerbaijan, recognized the existing republican borders as new borders between independent states²⁰, the internal borders became the blueprint for fragmentation where autonomous regions rebelled against the republican centre. However, in the former Yugoslavia one witnessed conflicts where there were no previous intra-republican administrative borders, except in the case of Kosovo, and some republics (Serbia and Montenegro) openly challenged the existing inter-republican divisions. In all cases, the project of creating ethnically homogenized independent states on a territory inhabited by co-members of an ethnicity put in question the inherited political geography.

The wars between the Yugoslav republics over territories and borders were the most intensive and destructive ones. Therefore, a closer look is needed to explain the logic behind the wars for territories. Initially in Yugoslavia, the motivation for the conflict over territory was the position of Serbs outside Serbia (in Croatia and Bosnia). Slovenia was the most ethnically homogenous republic whose borders corresponded to the territorial distribution of ethnic Slovenes and hence was not eligible to play the game of changing borders along ethnic lines. On the other hand, Serbia itself had the largest proportion of minorities on its soil in Kosovo and Vojvodina. But, both Albania and Hungary renounced any claims to Serbian territory inhabited by ethnic Albanians and Magyars, whereas ethnic Muslims from the Sandžak region (divided between Serbia and Montenegro) lacked a kin state in the conventional sense and never formed a political

²⁰ Russia broke this initial agreement when it comes to Georgia by recognising Abkhazia and South Ossetia in 2008.

platform to advocate secession or integration with their ethnic kin in Bosnia. As for the Macedonian Albanians, they struggled in the 1990s to have their minority rights and equal position alongside the Slav majority recognized.

In other words, the possibility of violent conflict opened up in the former Yugoslavia when a kin-state supported the irredentist ambitions of its kin-minority in neighbouring republics with the more or less explicit intention of annexing a certain portion of their territories. (This is equally valid for the Armenian-Azeri conflict.) In the context of Serbia's expansionist policies, the conflict in Croatia was facilitated, as explained by Rogers Brubaker, by a nationalizing Croatian state that threatened and reduced the political, social and economic rights of local Serbs (downgrading them from a constituent people of Croatia to a minority), and which itself refused to shun its own expansionist policies in neighbouring Bosnia. The war "was a contingent outcome of the interplay of mutually suspicious, mutually monitoring, mutually misrepresenting political elites in the incipient Croatian nationalizing state, the incipient Serb national minority in that state, and the incipient Serbian "homeland" state".²¹

But if Croatia represents a textbook example of Brubaker's triadic relationship between a "nationalizing state," a "national minority" and a "national homeland," the most bloody post-communist war in Bosnia-Herzegovina, as the only true multi-ethnic country with no titular nationality, defies the model. Indeed, in his 1996 collection of essays on *Nationhood and the National Question in New Europe* Brubaker admits that he does not intend to deal with the conflict in Bosnia. Nonetheless, since the triadic relationship—though in the case of Bosnia it was more of an *imagined* triadic relationship—is considered a hotbed of ethnic conflicts in Eastern Europe, it is necessary to explain the Bosnian situation in exactly these terms.

Bosnia was not a "nationalizing state" to start with. Nor could it later qualify as one. Bosnian Serbs and Croats were not "national minorities" in this truly multinational country with, regardless of actual percentages, no majorities and no minorities. So far as Brubaker's triangle is concerned, only Serbia and Croatia were perceived as "external homelands" by nationalist Bosnian Serbs and Croats. The mobilization of Bosnian Serbs

²¹ Rogers W. Brubaker, *Nationalism Reframed. Nationhood and the National Question in the new Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p. 76

for war was mostly motivated by the Greater Serbia project that had already begun in Croatia in 1991 and was territorially inconceivable without the acquisition of Bosnian territories. However, Bosnian Serbs could have not claimed to be in the same position as the Croatian Serbs, that is to say, a “national minority” whose rights were threatened by a “nationalizing” Croatian state. Moreover, their representatives shared power with Croat and Muslim ethno-nationalist parties. Serb nationalistic propaganda therefore concentrated on portraying Bosnia as an incipient Muslim nationalizing state and in portraying Bosnian Muslim leaders as “fundamentalist” plotters who wanted to subjugate or eliminate Serbs in a future Islamic state. Eventually, a significant proportion of Bosnian Serbs rejected Bosnia as a multinational state, formed “Serb autonomous regions” and decided to join Serbia, taking with them as much Bosnian territory as they could conquer.

As for Bosnian Croats, their tactic, in 1991 and 1992, was initially to support Bosnia’s statehood. During this period, the reinforcement of Bosnian statehood also entailed the reinforcement of Croatia’s bid for independence from Belgrade. However, as the war progressed, in 1993, Bosnian Croats—under direct influence and control from Zagreb—adopted a position similar to that of the Bosnian Serbs. They rejected Bosnia as a multinational state, portrayed Bosnian Muslims as fundamentalists, entered into an open conflict with Sarajevo and tried to get as much territory as possible with the intention of attaching it to Croatia. Again, it is impossible to speak about a *real* triadic relationship. It is only possible to speak of how the triad was simulated in order to legitimize ethnic Serbs’ and Croats’ ambitions to join their “national homelands.”

What were the results of these bloody wars over territories and borders? The internationally recognized borders are still those which separated the republics within the former socialist federations, save in the case of Kosovo. When it comes to the contested territories the situation on the ground is quite different: ethnic Serbs in Croatia lost their short-lived republic, ethnic Serbs in Bosnia obtained an autonomous Serb Republic but failed to join Serbia, Chechen rebellion failed, Kosovo eventually separated from Serbia thanks to international intervention, Transnistria, Abkhazia and South Ossetia are internationally unrecognized quasi-independent territories as well as Nagorno-Karabakh which is *de facto* attached to Armenia.

Trigger 3: The Role of the Federal Military

Finally, it is necessary to return to the role of the federal military as discussed above. The federal armies, by the simple fact of their “monopoly on violence”, played one of the crucial roles in the violent clashes which occurred during the progressive disappearance of the socialist federations. The federal army stayed in the barracks in Czechoslovakia and, unlike Yugoslav federal army, was not interested in any kind of intervention into political affairs.²² I mentioned above Bunce’s theory that the bloc provided the answer and that violence was likely to occur in the countries whose military apparatus was not controlled by Moscow. Although Moscow decided not to use massively its huge army to keep the Soviet Union together and Russia later accepted the independence of other republics and the often unfavourable position of Russians living outside Russia, the Soviet army was implicated in violent events occurring in the former Soviet space, It *did* intervene in Lithuania in 1991, some of its generals staged a coup against Gorbachev in 1991, it was implicated initially in the conflict in Azerbaijan, and its remnants in Moldova helped the rebellion of Transnistria. In addition, Russia, as the sole successor of the Soviet army, later on played an important role in the conflicts in Georgia.

I concur with Bunce that an independent and powerful military in Yugoslavia, Albania and Romania succumbed to the temptation to enter into an already volatile political arena in order to defend its own privileges. However, violence in Albania and Romania resulted from short-term conflicts which ended in democratic changes demanded by the citizens themselves. This did not endanger the existence of the state as such. Whereas the intervention of the Soviet army was relatively limited, the Yugoslav People’s Army (JNA) fully participated in the inter-republican and inter-ethnic conflicts by choosing not to defend the Yugoslav federation (although in Slovenia it intervened to protect the federation’s borders and it portrayed its role there and in Croatia as a defence

²² See Jacques Rupnik, “Divorce à l’amiable ou guerre de sécession ? (Tchécoslovaquie - Yougoslavie) / Divorce by Mutual Consent or War of Secession? (Czechoslovakia - Yugoslavia)” *Transeuropéennes* No. 19/20 (2000).

of Yugoslavia). Instead, its leadership decided to support the Serbian nationalist programme of creating—on the ruins of Yugoslavia once it became clear it was about to collapse—a greater Serbian state out of Serbia, Montenegro and the Serb-populated areas of Croatia and Bosnia.

The Serbian member of the Yugoslav Presidency, Borisav Jović, writes in his memoir about the plan “to attack Yugoslavia” which was discussed among Serbian leaders as early as March 1990 after the failure of the 14th Congress of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia (LCY). The plan involved a change of internal borders if Slovenia and Croatia decided to defect from the federation.²³ The JNA confirmed its close ties with Milošević after the army, on Milošević’s orders, crushed the Belgrade demonstration on 9 March 1991. “At this moment, the JNA ceased to function as the defence force of the Yugoslav federation, and transformed itself into the military wing of a political faction”.²⁴ Numerous reports and testimonies confirm the JNA’s submission to Milošević and to the close and secret collaboration and planning of the war between the army’s chiefs, and Serbian and Montenegrin leaders. Belgrade’s lawyer Srđa Popović draws on an enormous number of documents (memoirs, transcripts, and testimonies) to show that this was—according to the Yugoslav Constitution and laws still in force at that time—an anti-constitutional conspiracy of the above-mentioned leaders which had as its goal the creation of a Serbia-dominated state on the ruins of the Yugoslav federation.²⁵

The JNA and Milosevic himself often claimed that they were actually defending Yugoslavia against separatists whether they were Albanian, Croatian, or Slovenian. The fact that their “defence” of Yugoslavia went hand in hand with Serbian nationalist expansion progressively alienated non-Serbs from any idea of a common South Slavic state. The JNA, therefore, became a key player in the inter-republic strife, not as an independent actor, but rather as “an army without a state”—as it was dubbed by its last

²³ Eric Gordy, “Destruction of the Yugoslav Federation: Policy or Confluence of Tactics?”, in Lenard J. Cohen and Jasna Dragović-Soso (eds.) *State Collapse in South-Eastern Europe* (West Lafayette: Purdue University Press, 2008), p. 285.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 290.

²⁵ Srđa Popović, “Raspad Jugoslavije” [*The Disintegration of Yugoslavia*], *Peščanik*, September 29, 2008. <http://pescanik.net/content/view/2160/66/>

military commander Veljko Kadijević in the subtitle of his 1993 memoir “My view of the Break-up” — in search of a state.

Epilogue: Two Decades Later...

This paper has shown one of the possible ways to tell the story of *les années 89*. This is the type of story which incites our curiosity to know what happened to the main actors and where they are now, two decades later. The peaceful disintegration of Czechoslovakia was followed by successful transformation of the Czech Republic and a shaky transition of Slovakia. Both countries, together with Slovenia and Lithuania which experienced a small dose of post-1989 violence, joined the EU in 2004.

However, the consequences of the wide-scale violence which occurred in the rest of the former Yugoslavia and USSR are still felt. Croatia ended the Serb rebellion in 1995 with a military takeover which left large portions of Croatia empty. It still struggles to heal these wounds and to transform itself from a nationalist into a euro-compatible state ready to join the EU. Bosnia-Herzegovina is internally divided and supervised by international bodies. Although local nationalist leaders often invoke partition of the country, there has been no significant inter-ethnic violence since 1995. Serbia is still a country with no fixed borders—they depend on different perceptions of what territories constitute Serbia—and is still fighting its nationalist ghosts, the consequences of its engagement in Croatia and Bosnia, and the loss of Kosovo as well as Montenegro’s departure. The recent fragmentation turned it into a landlocked country much smaller in size than it was before its expansionist campaigns.

In the post-Soviet world, meanwhile, one finds a series of self-governed entities and frozen conflicts which erupt from time to time such as that in Georgia in summer 2008. There is no strong will by local actors or by the international community—which is unprepared to tackle the issues in Russia’s immediate zone of interests and engagement—to solve the conflicts in Transnistria, Abkhazia, South Ossetia, and Nagorno-Karabakh. Chechnya seems to be forgotten and the brutal Russian governance of the region forgiven in a post-September 11 world.

In this paper I have suggested that the eruption of violence and its intensity largely depends on questions related to citizenship and individual's citizenship status, his rights and security, conflicting interpretations about who should "own" certain territories and where inter-state borders should be drawn, and, finally, the role of the federal military, its successors or remnants, as the only force possessing the overwhelming means of warfare at the moment of dissolution. Obviously, other factors that are closely related to the proposed analysis should be taken into consideration. Any multi-factor analysis of each individual case needs to include regional particularities, historical experience, economic concerns, relations between democratic procedures and violence, functioning and forming of political elites and their manipulation of the above-mentioned issues, as well as general international context and international involvement.

Twenty years on from *annus mirabilis*, this analysis has tried to tackle the darker side of the fall of the Wall which has involved the destruction of tens of thousands of human lives as a consequence of profound changes in the post-socialist world. Finally, a very general lesson from that gloomy side is very simple: when the walls crumble down, no matter where and when, they often crumble down on somebody's head. Ironically, the walls often fall down on the heads of the very people who dreamed of tearing them down.