
Construction and reification in nation building Author(s): Sergej Flere and Rudi Klanjšek

Source: *Ethnicities*, Vol. 16, No. 6 (December 2016), pp. 842-868

Published by: Sage Publications, Ltd.

Stable URL: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.2307/26413927>

REFERENCES

Linked references are available on JSTOR for this article:

https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.2307/26413927?seq=1&cid=pdf-reference#references_tab_contents

You may need to log in to JSTOR to access the linked references.

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at <https://about.jstor.org/terms>



Sage Publications, Ltd. is collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *Ethnicities*

JSTOR

Construction and reification in nation building: The case of Yugoslavia fully explained?

Sergej Flere

University of Maribor, Slovenia

Rudi Klanjšek

University of Maribor, Slovenia

Ethnicities

2016, Vol. 16(6) 842–868

© The Author(s) 2015

Reprints and permissions:

sagepub.co.uk/journalsPermissions.nav

DOI: 10.1177/1468796815620442

etn.sagepub.com



Abstract

The study of nations and ethnicities has been subject to recent trends, particularly, those denying substance to ethnicity and nation, but focusing on the way ethnicity and nation are socially constructed and ‘reified’ (constructivism–reificationism). In this article, this idea is tested on the Yugoslav case, where cases of reification are said to have been ‘arbitrary’. Such a position suggests that members of the Yugoslav federation went on their own ways because of ‘reification’ in the form of the republics and provinces. Although it is found that the republics and one province did enhance the process of national constitution, and although ‘ethnic entrepreneurs’ were active in the 1980s—a fact that is in line with a constructivist–reificationist theoretical position—there is one distinctive case that directly challenges such a position: Vojvodina did not opt for independence but, because of its Serb majority, it swiftly became integrated into Serbia. Moreover, the current article presents additional information to suggest that, although constructionist–reificationist approaches are relevant, they do not suffice to explain ‘nation’.

Keywords

Constructivism, ethnic-symbolism, Yugoslavia, nation, nationalism, ethnicity, dissolution

Corresponding author:

Sergej Flere, University of Maribor, Koroska 160, 2000 Maribor, Slovenia.

Email: sergej.flere@um.si

Introduction

The formation of nations is subject to much scholarly discussion and dispute, in contrast to times when Smith (1973: 53) could write of a theoretical paucity in this area, although he allowed for numerous approaches. Since then, the situation has truly changed. In the literature emerging particularly since the 1980s, various original approaches have been formulated and applied. In 2005, a symposium was held where major thinkers spoke of nation-formation within three major approaches: *primordialism*, *ethnosymbolism* and *modernism* (Ichijo and Uzelac, 2005). The editors concluded that, as a result of these endeavors, ‘...theories of nations and nationalism in general, and the approaches presented in this volume more specifically, already offer us a rich analysis of the main structural, cultural and agential changes that occur in the process of nation-formation’. However, they argued against any attempt at synthesis on the issue of nation-formation (2005: 217). This is not surprising, as such task seems impossible, not only because of the distinct theoretical positions on which said approaches rest (Barrow, 1991; Varshney, 2007), but also because there are many nuances to these approaches (Motyl, 2002) that are spawning considerable definitional debate. This, in turn, leads not only to (re)interpretations of ‘old’ concepts (Wimmer, 2008), but also to the formulation of new concepts that are often not clearly defined or consistently employed. For example, instrumentalism, usually regarded as a form of modernism, often underscores the role of the elites (who use and abuse ethnicity to enhance their positions, thus potentially inducing nation-formation), but is also used in a rather ‘individualistic manner’, in the context of rational choice action (Hechter, 1986). Next, Brown (2000) indicated that instrumentalism is often referred to as constructivism (Conversi, 2006; Lustick, 2001), although the latter can be found within conceptually fluid and elusive ‘post-modern social thought’ (Thompson and Fevre, 2001), which (with its critical stance towards ‘grand narratives’) stands in opposition to modernist positions on nation and nationalism. For example, Brubaker (1996: 16–17) argues that the nation should be understood as an institutionalised, contingent, cognitive category, and not as a substantial, ‘real’ collective, as it is understood in the context of modern discourse. The fact that nationalism and nation are notoriously difficult concepts to define (Calhoun, 1993), and that there are many theoretical and methodological overlaps, accompanied by conceptual inconsistencies and misinterpretations (Özkirimli, 2003), further adds to the ‘fluidity’ of the discourse. Nevertheless, Wimmer (2008) argues that, by the 1990s, constructivism came out victorious (over essentialism, and thus ethno-symbolism—Özkirimli (2000: 215–216) labels ethno-symbolism as essentialism), so much so that he argues that we can speak of ‘the contemporary hegemony of constructivism’ (Wimmer, 2008: 972).

One way of looking at this phenomenon is that constructivism is often associated with contemporary (i.e. post-modern) perspectives of social reality (Özkirimli, 2003; Thompson and Fevre, 2001), which, in denying meta/grand narratives, ‘first principles’ and realism, as well as by stressing the importance of discourse as privileged reality, seen as an ‘endless chains of signifiers’

(Mouzelis, 1995: 48), also symbolises a shift from structuralist to more ‘constructivist’ theoretical stances. This includes anti-foundationalism, which argues that ‘there are no essential meanings, and hence no group identity is real or definitive: ethnic group membership is always discursive, open and conditional’ (Malešević, 2004: 143). Central to the post-modern position on nation is thus the fact that there is nothing essential, immanent about it. To defend the position that a nation constitutes a binding group would immediately lead to a scholar’s being suspected of personal nationalism or upholding nationalism. Consequently, nations are situational, liquid, contingent, processual and ‘plastic’, although post-modernists do allow them to be ‘reified’ (which would typically be the result of ‘nationalising state’ action). Thus, Baumann (1999: 60), one of the proponents of this position, can maintain that ‘/t/he problematic cases are no longer those ethnicities which are socially plastic, but those where they are not’.

However, the question whether the popularity of constructivism is the result of a general theoretical shift in the social sciences or whether it can be easily labeled as (post)modernist, is not as relevant as the question whether constructivism suffices (and to what extent) to explain the social phenomena ‘on the ground’; whether ‘older views that were more in line with Herderian notions of the binding power of ethnicity and culture’ (Wimmer, 2008: 971) have nothing more to offer when debating ethnicity, nation and nation-constitution. In this light, the main aim of the current article is to analyse whether the constructivist position suffices when confronting the issue of the dissolution of Yugoslavia. Specifically, the current article will test the validity of the theoretical position on doing away with the reality of nation as advanced by Brubaker (1996, 2004), and then elaborated by Malešević (2004, 2006a, 2006b, 2013) on the case of the Yugoslav dissolution in the light of the ‘older’ essentialist (i.e. ethno-symbolist) view as proposed by Smith (1973, 1987, 2009).

The Yugoslav example was selected because we believe that it is promising theoretically in that Yugoslavia was composed of nations, some possibly incomplete in constitution, but still nations in interaction, where symbolic and sometimes physical borders were at issue to a large extent. The theoretical position of Brubaker and Malešević was selected because of the danger raised by Özkirimli (2003, see also Motyl, 2002): that constructivism is not a homogenous theory and thus cannot be analysed as such (as indicated, constructivism is sometimes perceived as a form of instrumentalism, and thus modernism, while sometimes it is ‘lumped together under the blanket term post-modernism’) (Özkirimli, 2003: 340).

We believe that the current discussion will raise some possibilities for grounding theoretical perspectives using a major empirical case and for determining the empirical validity of the constructivist–reificationist theory. We would argue that such an approach is of utmost importance, since most theories dealing with concepts of nation and nation formation are empirically poorly founded, their foundation being predominantly illustrative and by way of example.

The current article is organised in the following manner: the first part focuses on presenting the constructivist perspective as proposed by Brubaker (1996, 2004),

and then elaborated, particularly by Malešević (2006a, 2013); the second part presents counter-arguments; the third and final part reflects on constructivist positions and discusses the theoretical and practical implications of our findings.

Construction and reification in the formation of nation

The constructivist approach, although not a homogenous theoretical perspective, does rest on a common claim that nations are not real and objective, but constructed, contingent and artificial, created by elites (Walicki, 1998), often for symbolic as well as instrumental reasons (Smith, 2009). This position is also reflected in the arguments of one of the most notable proponents of the constructivist approach, Rogers Brubaker. Brubaker focuses on the dubiety of nation as an independent and real phenomenon, favouring instead the analysis of its construction and deconstruction, contingency and 'event-ness'. He also questions the real nature of social groups in general as he critiques 'groupism', i.e. 'the tendency to take discrete, sharply differentiated, internally homogenous and externally bounded groups as basic constituents of social life, as major protagonists of social conflict and as basic units of social analysis' (2004: 164, 86). Consequently, Brubaker (1996) announces not only that nations (e.g. in Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union) grew and developed under communist rule, but that such nations were somehow established by administrative construction and reification, even though the authors of such decisions (on the establishment of administrative, autonomous or 'state' units) may not necessarily have been aware of the full consequences of their deeds. This line of thinking should not come as a surprise when his understanding of nation (and ethnicity) is analysed:

We should not ask 'what is a nation' but rather how is nationhood as a political and cultural form institutionalized within and among states? How does nation work as practical category, as classificatory scheme, as cognitive frame? What makes the use of that category by or against states more or less resonant or effective? What makes the nation-evoking, efforts of political entrepreneurs more or less likely to succeed? (Brubaker, 1996: 16)

What Brubaker (1996) suggests is the need to study nation not as substance but as institutionalised form; not as collectivity, but as practical category; not as entity but as contingent event (see also Brubaker, 2004; Brubaker et al., 2004). As referred to, Brubaker recommends shifting attention from group to groupness, treating groupness as a variable and as contingent rather than fixed and given. This should be understood as part of a greater shift that he envisages: 'Scholars should refrain from "tak[ing] for granted not only the concept of 'group', but also 'groups'"—the putative things-in-the-world to which the concept refers' (2004: 7). Consequently, those who cling to explanations of social phenomena based on groups are guilty of 'groupism'. This, however, as Malešević concedes,

brings about a situation where the scholars of ethnicity can no longer speak, for example of Polish identity or Polish nationhood or the Polish national movement, but needs to introduce a long passage like ‘a multitude of individuals and organisations who pursue a particular political project by invoking a notion of Polishness’ (Malešević, 2006b)—all this within the aim of not reifying and doing a ‘cognitive theory of ethnicity’ (Brubaker, 2004; Malešević, 2006b: 700), possibly to take the symbolic interactionist side of the underdog, as Brubaker would contend (2004: 13–15). In other words, it seems that Brubaker has deconstructed what has been known as ethnicity and nation into ‘not an entity, but a contingent event’ and ultimately ‘fiction’ (1996: 16):

Reifying groups is precisely what ethno-political entrepreneurs are in the business of doing. When they are successful, the political fiction of the unified group can be momentarily yet powerfully realized in practice. (Brubaker, 2004: 13)

Brubaker expands his position, allowing for ethnicity to be a ‘cognitive schema’, but still remains firm in denying ‘groupist ontologies’ (2004: 86). And although he invokes cognitive psychology positions (2004: 82–84), themselves contentious, his assertions pertaining to ethnicity in this respect remain to be corroborated by any evidence. He also takes pains to avoid differentiation between ethnicity, race and nationality.

Brubaker thus implies that there is no space for determinism in explaining the development of ethnicities, particularly not determinism with any objective substance, certainly not of the kind proposed by another influential theoretical perspective—ethno-symbolism (Smith, 1973, 1987, 2009). If ethno-symbolism builds on the notion ‘that nations are “real” sociological communities, and not simply constructs of the analyst or discursive formations without enduring substance’, and ‘that nations, as well as nationalism, were historically embedded, not just in terms of temporal sequence, but also in geo-cultural terms’ (Smith, 2009: 7), Brubaker suggests that there are only contingencies out of which (ethnic) ‘events’ grow, including diasporas, nationalising states, relations with other nationalities and political movements. Similarly, Malešević argues that ‘ethnicity is politicised social action, a process whereby elements of real, actual lived cultural differences are politicised in the context of intensive group interaction’ (2006a: 27). In 2010 Malešević, declaring his intent not to reify the individual, refuses to downplay ethnicity to mere cultural differences or cognition, that is to allow space for a social dimension of ethnicity. Consequently, he defines it not as a group of its own right, but as ‘an interactive social situation’ (2010: 78).

It is evident from how ‘nationness’ is conceptualised that ethnicity is more universal, but the explanation of ‘cultural differences [being] politicised in pre-modern conditions’ is not quite clarified:

Nationness...is a complex process whereby a patch of relatively arbitrary territory becomes firmly demarcated, centrally organized and run while simultaneously

growing into an indisputable source of authority and group loyalty for the great majority of those who inhabit it. (Malešević, 2006a: 28)

Malešević, following Brubaker, goes to great lengths to demonstrate that national identity development is not the mechanism by which this ethnic evolution comes about, but also that national identity is a problematic concept that is almost impossible either to operationalise, or to find empirical referents for. His analysis ends by judging national identity as something that has a 'chimerical quality' (2006a: 67).

Setting national identity aside, Malešević lays the groundwork for theoretical explanation of nationness. His key explanatory instrument is 'ideology', which is not novel in the sociologist's 'toolbox'; however, Malešević does introduce two interesting points that are worth discussing. First is his extensive definition of ideology:

Ideology is not a 'thing'...but rather a complex, multi-faceted and messy process...Sociologically speaking, ideology is to be understood as thought-action related to conceptual organization of a particular social order. (2006a: 99)¹

This is a very broad and vague definition, particularly as to whether 'thought-action' pertains to the area of ideas, culture or social action, which is 'thought out' or has come about rationally or by some other route involving thought. Consequently, almost all social interaction could be seen as an ideology. There is no need to emphasise that the explanatory power of such definition is rather limited, as it is both overly extensive and lacking in clarity.

The next important building block of Malešević's analytical framework of nationness is nationalism as 'the ideology of today'.

It is nationalism in its many guises that proved to be the most potent and popular ideology of modernity. (2006: 91)

This is because:

[N]ationalism was able to articulate narratives that promised to reconcile the tension between private and public, the institutional and the communal...utilising the most egalitarian and democratic expression 'We, the nation'. (2012: 91)

Based on this line of thinking, Malešević builds his own explanation of Yugoslav collapse, complementing numerous other, political science and historical in nature explanations of the Yugoslav dissolution (e.g. Helfant-Budding, 2008; Jović, 2009; Ramet, 2004a, 2004b), Specifically, Malešević argued that 'unprecedented institutionalization of cultural difference had a decisive role to play in the disintegration of the federal state' (Malešević, 2006a: 9), where 'institutionalization of cultural differences' should be understood in the context of the reification of ethnicity that supposedly happened under communist rule, as each major (candidate) ethnic

group was appointed a ‘homeland’, which then members of the respective ethnicities considered as their own:

[E]thnicity and nationess were structurally reified with the help of the communist state. There were eight ethno-nationally distinct legislatures and eight state bureaucracies, eight academies of arts. (Malešević, 2006a: 162)

Reification is understood as an act of construction by the communist authorities, which came about from 1943–1945, whereby cultural differences attained objectified form. According to Malešević (2006a: 162), this arbitrary reification is also the crux of the explanation of the very dissolution of Yugoslavia.

Next, Malešević, using the framework outlined above, indicates that in understanding the operation of socialist Yugoslavia, the discrepancy between socialist normative and operative ideology should be understood. Specifically, Malešević contraposes ‘socialist self-management discourse’ as the normative ideology to the operative ideology of nationalism. This could well be so, if Malešević were to analyse the discourse indicative of the nations of Yugoslavia as the prime legitimating object within former communist rule. Unfortunately, to illustrate this purported operative nationalist ideology he draws on Tito, whose major vision was to constitute a socialist multinational Yugoslavia, where nationality would recede in importance and eventually have lesser weight than the supranational attachment to socialist Yugoslavia. Malešević quotes Tito in 1945: ‘We have spilt an ocean of blood for fraternity and unity of our peoples—and we shall not allow anyone to touch this and destroy it from inside’; Tito goes on to enumerate—quoted by Malešević—Serbs, Slovenes, Bosnians, Montenegrins, Macedonians and lastly Croats he was addressing (Malešević, 2006a: 101).

This statement may have arisen within an attempt to constitute an operative ideology of attachment to the Yugoslav socialist and federal state; however, the attachment that was under construction, lay not with nationess, as Malešević would designate it, but with a supranational entity, filled particularly by un-ethnic content (socialism, equality, and absence of exploitation, worker self-management and parity of nations). In this attachment, ethnic closeness may or may not have been a constituent. It is known that Edvard Kardelj, the major architect of the Yugoslav normative institutional system, belittled Yugoslav identity as ethnic and promoted its purported socialist content, whereas Tito seemed to have been favourably inclined towards the former idea (Helfant-Budding, 2008; Jović, 2009). In other words, although this may have been an attempt to launch an operative ideology, it can hardly be considered as nationalism. Furthermore, it is also questionable how Malešević would defend his position, considering that a supranational attachment within a federal state is at stake. To put it differently, such a concept would lose its scientific communicability since Yugoslavism—in Tito’s Yugoslavia at least—was supranational (insofar as it existed at all) in nature (Flere, 2007; Jović, 2009; Sekulić et al., 1994). In fact, the failure of this

supranational identity, the stages in its fading, is what is relevant in the process of dissolution of Yugoslavia (Jović, 2009: 109).

We would thus argue that Malešević's loose definitions of ideology and nationalism may lead to confusion. Nevertheless, we would simultaneously concur with Malešević that it was another type of ideological discourse that was instrumental (as an operative ideology) in bringing Yugoslavia down. This was the discourse of aggrandising one's nation, of blaming others for the former's 'tragic position' in the sense that one's nation was being purportedly exploited and repressed (a discourse that goes decades back (Ćosić, 2009; Tuđman, 1996), and that this had to stop immediately. As indicated by various authors, this was the discourse intrinsic to 'ethnic entrepreneurs', who played a key role in the dissolution itself (Klanjšek and Flere, 2011; Sekulić et al., 2006, especially p. 809). This said, it is important to note that, although this discourse gained traction among the general populace a few years before the dissolution, it does have a longer history.

Now, the principal question arises: how important and critical were the forces of 'institutionalisation' and 'reification', evoked by Brubaker (1996, 2004)² and Malešević (2006a) when thinking about the dissolution of Yugoslavia? Would there be no nations without the eight reifications? To address these questions, two issues will be explored: 1. whether ethnies under consideration could not possibly have had a reality, an independent ontological standing before being reified, before attaining republican-autonomous province status; 2. whether the boundaries between the republics were 'ethno-demographically arbitrary' (Brubaker, 1996: 33; Malešević, 2006a: 28), which would transpire if nationness was an 'event', a 'process', and entirely 'contingent'.

In regard to the first issue, the article will briefly look into the history of South Slav ethnies to see whether they can be sufficiently understood within the constructivist theoretical framework. As indicated, the validity of constructivism will be evaluated in the light of the competing theoretical perspective of ethno-symbolism (Smith, 1973, 1987, 2009), which focuses on long-lasting, enduring cultural cores of ethnicities, particularly those in the form of ethnic myths, in explaining the development of nations. Although its main proponent, Smith, refrains from claiming that the growth process leads to nation states (1987, 1999), there is such a universal trend (Smith, 2004: 96), allowing for exceptions, and Guibernau has supplemented Smith on this issue (Guibernau and Hutchinson, 2004). Specifically, ethno-symbolism builds on a premise that groups have an inherent tendency to develop into politically established groups, that is, nation-states.³ Within such a perspective, nations have an immanent longing for political independence or at the least somewhat lesser 'political claims' (Smith, 1999: 265).

This theory rests on a romanticist position, which can be traced as far back as Fichte ([1807] 2008), who wrote of 'nationalities being individualities with special talents'. Nevertheless, by looking in to the past, we are not assuming the 'stiff position of ethnic perennialism', but focusing on the long, durable ethnic cores of modern nations that would be indicative of an immanent longing for political selfhood (Guibernau and Hutchinson, 2004; Smith, 1987).

Concerning the second issue, a brief analysis of historical sources will be performed in order to shed light on the process that led to the establishment of borders among the federal units in 1945.

Did the nations of Yugoslavia contain any ‘substance’?

Let us look at the groups that attained statehood after the Yugoslav dissolution, those to which Yugoslavia ‘gave birth’ or for which Yugoslavia was a ‘cradle’. Serbs, Croats and Slovenes will be analysed briefly, partly because they were titulars of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, and partly because those nations are covered much more extensively in the literature than other constituent groups (for Croats, see particularly Bellamy, 2003; Goldstein, 1999; for Serbs, Pavlowitch, 2002; Bakić-Hayden, 2004; for Slovenes, Luthar et al., 2008; Žižek, 1987).

Slovenes⁴

The Slovenian longing for national selfhood can be traced to the March Revolution of 1848 (Božić et al., 1972: 229–230). Under the Austro-Hungarian Empire, Slovenes were divided into various territorial units (Crown lands). The Catholic Church was instrumental in nation building, although the evolution of Slovenian nationhood predominantly followed the Czech pattern, with the bourgeoisie having the leading role in nation building. Their cultural core was formed by language, which had been established in a normative manner in the 16th century, and became the oldest codified literary language in this group (Lencek, 1982); their ethnic myths were those pertaining to the Ducal Rock (*Knežji kamen*), where dukes in the early Middle Ages were said to have conducted a ritual for investiture by the elders into the position, in a process involving the Slovenian language (Pleterski, 1997). This process was said to have been ‘democratic’, giving the nation such a quality, again like the Czechs (Schopflin, 1997). A further, more important, implicit (but foundational) myth uncovered by critical scholars is the one of a perennial reification of Slovene nationhood, as contained in a perennial language; this myth was promulgated by national historiography in the 19th and 20th century (Kosi, 2013; Štih, 2006). It is so well positioned that it was previously considered as unquestioned reality.

Serbs

Serbs were the first to establish the *matica* organisation (among the South Slav ethnies), as early as 1826. A Serbian movement sprang up in the Ottoman lands, where they first achieved autonomy in the early 19th century and full statehood in 1878. In 1848, a Serb movement for Vojvodina (a duchy) erupted in the South Hungarian lands (Božić et al., 1972). In addition, a ‘strategic longing’ among Serbs can be traced to the Garašanin Plan of 1844 (Bataković, 1991), where the idea of a

Greater Serbia was outlined, a concept which impelled Serbian national policy until recently. Serbia, after taking part in the Balkan wars, also played a pivotal role in the establishment of the South Slav Kingdom after World War I. Thus, their nationality maturity is not in doubt. Their cultural core comprised the rich memorialisation of the medieval state, of the monarch's sainthood by the Serbian Church, and of the battle of Kosovo, with its intricate epic literature (Popović, 2007)—all of which gave the national myth a strong covenantal nature (Schopflin, 1997).

Croats

The Croatian national movement sprang up in 1848, demanding the unification of Croats from Croatia (proper), Dalmatia, Slavonia and other regions into a single state, and emancipation from Hungary (Božić et al., 1972). In Croatia, the Illyrian movement was also strong in the first half of the early 19th century. This included, not only moving towards modern linguistic codification, but also ideas about South Slav unification (i.e. the establishment of an 'Illyrian nation', as indicated by Ljudevit Gaj in 1835). A continuation of the Illyrian movement was to be found in the establishment of the Yugoslav Academy of Sciences and Arts in Zagreb, 1866, which could be seen as another pivotal move. Furthermore, political life among Croats was thriving, with the nationality issue in the forefront throughout the 19th century. The Croat cultural core comprised commemoration of their medieval state and particularly its loss (the *Pacta Conventa*, according to which Croats were to have retained their parity in relation to the Hungarian crown, without losing independence, although the historic truthfulness of this has not been proven) (Dabinović, 1937; Jelavich, 1992: 167, 216). This national loss was associated with the heroes who protected statehood (Zrinski, Frankopan and Ban Jelačić). The idea of Croats defending (western) Christendom for 'Europe' has also been present and was often noted by the 'founding' president Tudjman (Bakić-Hayden and Hayden, 1992).

Boundary setting vis-a-vis Serbs was operationalised confessionally.

Bosniaks

Bosniaks were somewhat distinct, as they did not explicitly express strivings for their own national state in the 19th century, in contrast to all other national groups we consider. This had to do with the fact that Bosnia was a multi-ethnic, multi-confessional entity, where Bosniaks had *already enjoyed an undisputed dominant position* during the previous centuries old Ottoman period, but their position was not defined primarily ethnically, but confessionally within the feudal order. Their further difficulty in expressing themselves arose from the need to identify with Bosniakdom. Despite this distinction being critically perceived, since they were called 'Turks' by the other two nationalities in Bosnia (Croats and Serbs). At the end of the 19th century, their schooling in Turkish ceased and was transferred into

the vernacular. They also created cultural associations and political parties and established newspapers (Hadžijahić, 1974: 123–155; for more, see Imamović, 1997). The *Jugoslovenska muslimanska organizacija* party played a major role in political life of the first Yugoslav state by mobilising Bosniaks.

Their specificity was recognised as such during the World War II Partisan movement and during the Tito period, although they were not officially recognised *as a nationality* until the 1971 Yugoslav census. Their cultural core transpires from their being Muslim, in contrast to neighboring inhabitants. However, there are long-standing ethnic epic myths which are not of a religious nature, particularly the ones pertaining to the medieval pre-Ottoman Bosnian state and their rulers (Kulin Ban, the Kotromanić dynasty) (Ibrahimagić, 2003; Imamović et al., 2004). Ottoman commanders from Bosnia, fighting Christians (Alija Džerdžević and Mujo Hrnjica) are also subjects of epic veneration. During the Tito period, Bosnia and Herzegovina was a member of the federation, where three nationalities were constituent, but the other two nationalities had other homeland republics (Croatia and Serbia), making Bosniaks the group whose sole political ethnic basis lay in this republic. Thus, one can speak of Bosniaks as an ethnicity, becoming a full-blown nation in the 20th century. As Bašić (2009) writes, the term ‘Bosniak’ initially came into use to designate ethnicity in the 19th century (2009: 342) and was used self-descriptively by Bosnian Muslim landowners, but not for peasants with the same confessional background (2009: 339). This could point to an aristocratic ethnic core, which was to expand particularly during the 20th century.

Macedonians

Macedonians, subject to claims by the Bulgarians, Greeks and Serbs, expressed their national longings by calling for recognition; moreover, they expressed their nationhood strongly in the codification of the Macedonian language in the late 19th century (K. Misirkov, G. Pulevski and others), the Ilinden Uprising of 1903, during which they received the support—actual or mythical—of over 24,000 rebel participants (Pandevska, 2008: 110) and with the declaration of the Kruševo Republic and the Kruševo Manifesto for an independent Macedonia (at the time within the Ottoman Empire) (Božić et al., 1972: 351). The VMRO (Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organisation) at the end of the 19th and in early 20th century was the main bearer of the strong independence longing and at times availed itself of terrorist activity (Pandevska, 2012). However, Macedonians did not possess a codified language, nor an autocephalous (Christian Orthodox) church until after World War II, being repressed during the first Yugoslav state. Certainly, Comintern support for the Macedonian national movement represented an important boost for the movement, but the VMRO national movement mainly drew its strength from the inside. Macedonians were granted republic status by the communists in 1945. There is no trace of opposition from Serbian communists, although the Serbian Orthodox Church still does not recognise the Macedonian Orthodox Church, which declared autocephaly in 1967.

Their cultural core harks back to a memorialisation of 'Krale Marko' whose mythical nature does not coincide with his historical stature, and is distinct from the understanding of the same historical person in neighboring ethnicities (Simitčiev, 1981; the current official *Macedonian Encyclopedia* also makes note of Marko's 'kingdom' [Risteovski, 2009: 859]). The Ilinden Uprising has also been mythically understood, reinforcing the ideals of the VMRO organisation (Vishinski, 1973). Penušliski, recognising the specificity of Macedonian epics on Prince Marko (in comparison to other South Slav nations), however, holds that authentic ethnic Macedonian national epics appear at the end of the 19th century, to blossom with respect to Ilinden Uprising memorialisation (Penušliski, 1966). Strictly, only the last may be taken as a mass cultural foundational myth.

Montenegrins

Montenegrins availed themselves of a sovereign state and of an independent Orthodox Church at the end of the 19th century. Although throughout history, Montenegrins predominantly identified themselves as Serbs, their history differed, particularly because they retained a tribal organisation during the Ottoman rule, the Empire failed to achieve full administrative domination among them (Božić et al., 1972: 144–145). They also always underscored their superior military valor and humane virtues (*čojstvo i junaštvo*), their never having given in to the Ottoman Turks, in silent comparison to the 'other' Serbs (Andrijašević, 2001: 95). (After World War I, they were annexed by Serbia, and a major uprising against the new state ensued: Pavlović, 2008.) During the first Yugoslav state, they were bitterly divided into the *Bjelaši* (pro-Karadjordjević) and the *Zelenaši* (claiming the legitimacy of the Montenegrin Petrović dynasty and the independence of Montenegro). This conflict contributed to the definite construction of distinctness. After World War II, there was no dispute when the communists granted them the status of a constitutive republic (Troch, 2014). Their cultural core, although partly intermingling with the Serbian Kosovo myth, pertains to the self-understanding of their heroic anthropological nature, their never having completely given in to Ottoman rule, in particular contrast to Serbs; they thus experienced a self-construct in which they were primarily the more Spartan Serbs (Andrijašević, 2001; Miljanov, 1967; Nikčević, 2001). This political interaction also fed into their becoming a distinct nation. The purported extermination of Muslims, poetically fictionalised by P. P. Njegoš, forms their foundational ethnic myth (Andrijašević, 2001; Nikčević, 2001).

In modern times, Serbian-Montenegrin political relations were predominantly strained, contributing to Montenegrin specificity. Most important was the deposition of the Montenegrin Petrović dynasty and the abolition of the Montenegrin state at the end of the First World War, under Karađorđević auspices, bringing about the Christmas uprising and 'breathing life into the Montenegrin national idea' (Morrison, 2009: 40). Moreover, although Montenegrin national identity has been contested, Pavlović (2003: 88) claims that 'the long-lasting debate over the identity of Montenegrins could be taken as a clear indication that their identity

does have a distinct nature: that the notion of a distinct/separate Montenegrin identity is constantly being argued against proves the existence of such a level of identification’.

Albanians

There can be no doubt regarding the distinctiveness of Albanians (those in Kosovo are of interest here), the main non-Slav group within Yugoslavia (after the expulsion of Germans at the end of World War II). Although latecomers, with a strong tribal organisation in 1912, as noted by Frasheri (quoted by Judah, 2008: 10), there is also no doubt of their national nature. The demand for an independent Albanian state, including Kosovo, possibly even with Kosovo as its centre, was expressed in 1878 by the Prizren League, an assembly of Albanian elders (Božić et al., 1972; see also Pavković, 1997: 428–429). Their cultural development lagged behind for a long period, until the development of schools in their language was undertaken during communist rule. Kosovo became part of Serbia during the Balkan Wars in what was considered by Serbians as ‘Old Serbia’, but which was experienced by Albanians as a conquest. Resisting fiercely, they opposed entry into Yugoslavia at the end of both World War I and World War II (Dimitrijević, 2002). Although not limited to the Kosovo region, they were concentrated there, representing the majority, and their majority proportion rose continuously during the 20th century. Their national myth pertains to Skenderbey/Skanderbeg, a potentate depicted as a hero waging war against the Ottomans in the 15th century (Frasheri, 1964). This is in contrast to the Bosniaks, whose national heroes were Ottoman commanders.

In sum, historical sources indicate that the constituent groups of Yugoslavia all had distinct cultural cores, substantial history and development as ethnies (Smith, 1987). In other words, examples supporting an ethno-symbolist perspective can be traced in all the political nations that comprised the federal state of Yugoslavia, although it cannot be claimed that they were ‘old nations’.⁵ And although they have not all ‘evolved’ at the same pace nor taken the same paths (Božić et al., 1972; Sugar, 1969), it can be argued that they had all reached the point of no return to a nationless ethnie at the time when the Yugoslav republics/autonomous provinces were introduced in 1945. Reservation can be stated as to whether Bosniaks and Macedonians were strongly willing to attain national selfhood in state form in 1991, but the situation left them no choice.

This does not mean that the objective differences between these nations are great, or that historical processes could not have molded them differently, since both languages and myths overlap. However, the magnitude of the differences is not decisive (‘as the systems of meaning and cultural representation multiply, we are confronted by a bewildering, fleeting multiplicity of possible identities, any of which we could identify with—at least temporarily’ (Hall, 1992, quoted by Malešević, 2004a: 149).

This development of the nations was also the basis, within the historical and political circumstances of the first and the second (Tito’s) Yugoslavia, for the

creation of ‘major cleavages’ (Brass, 1993) which were not limited to Serbs and Croats—and possibly—Slovenes, as often understood (Malešević, 2002, 2006a) but involved ‘master cleavages’ among all neighboring nations. For example, Macedonians could never accept the entry into Serbia and Yugoslavia after World War I as a ‘liberation’ (a visit by President Nikolić to the memorial for the anniversary of the Balkan Wars indicated this clearly; it applies similarly for Montenegrins’ loss of independence, see Dimitrov, 2012; Pavlović, 2008).

Furthermore, nationalist movements in all groups were preceded by some objective cultural distinctions among the groups, on which the movements could build. As Smith writes, ‘[i]n a purely conceptual sense, nations must have precedence, as the nationalism that seeks the autonomy, unity and identity of the territorialised historic culture-community presupposes the very idea of the nation’ (Smith, 2009: 44).

The fact that the route in nation building *matice* played a role in some cases and not in others, was not decisive. However, some issues of nation formation among the respective entities need not be dealt with here: most of the groups are probably ‘demotic’ nations, with the possible exception of Bosniaks (Imamović, 1997: 386); ‘vernacular mobilisation’ may be most expressed with Slovenians (Smith, 2009: 57; see also Lencek, 1982; Štih, 2006); the initial exact ethnic compositions of all national groups are probably complex, in the case of Macedonian nationalists, certainly very complex (Pandevska, 2012: 755–757); the state formation of Serbs and Montenegrins (Božić et al., 1972: 349–350; Pavlović, 2008; Troch, 2014: 33) is in contrast to the other nations, although its further relevance differed, as Montenegrins lost their statehood—but these issues are beyond the scope of this article.

It needs to be noted here that Yugoslavia was basically without a ‘cultural core’. Twice in history there were attempts to establish a common cultural core, both times on the part of the state, that is the forces in power. At the inception of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, the cultural core was to contain the Kosovo myth, which was to have been sculpturally embodied by Ivan Meštrović in a colossal construction, intended to be erected on Kosovo Polje, but which was never made. The Kosovo myth, very powerful among Serbs even today, was completely alien to Croats and Slovenes, and antagonistic to Bosniaks, whereas Macedonians could not develop an attitude, since they were not recognised. The other attempt of cultural core imposition at the time of the first Yugoslavia was to impose a single ‘Serbo-Croat-Slovene’ language, ignoring the Macedonian one, nor was there schooling in or official use of the Albanian language until 1945. These attempts to establish a Yugoslav cultural core failed badly in every respect. The communists were more cautious, knowledgeable of the failure of these attempts and having an antagonistic ideological attitude towards them (labelling them Serbian hegemony). Furthermore, the communists fully recognised the existence of nations (and the concomitant dangers; see Flere and Klanjšek, 2014) and thought they would tame ‘the wild horses’ of the respective nationalisms. The Communists attempted to build a small cultural core around the ‘achievements’ of the ‘National Liberation Struggle’ by the communist Partisans during World War II, and the particularly active cooperation of

nations within Yugoslavia on the basis of national (republic, later also province) parity, towards which the entire political system was geared. However, over time the initial motto of 'brotherhood and unity' was replaced by 'togetherness', and thus emptied of content. Vernaculars by Slovenes and Macedonians, as well as Albanians, were allowed to effloresce, whereas it was accepted that Serbo-Croat was a single language, with dialects admissible.

The other element of a cultural core during the communist era was a 'political religion' (Flere, 2007), which also completely failed. The weakness of the cultural core, the failure to implement it and the ever-greater failure to make it plausible and transform it into a living legitimacy, assisted greatly in bringing Yugoslavia down. In other words, although Yugoslavia was a sovereign state during almost the entire 20th century, there was no chance of its integrating the nations constituting it. Each strove, at least by way of its ethnic entrepreneurs, supported by cultural cores, to establish their national states. As to the completeness of their success, the Bosnian knot needs to be untied: whether the frail flower of a multinational state can find self-sustaining ways of operation in the long term, without need of external support, remains to be seen.

Vojvodina – A special case

The deterministic relevance of the republic-autonomous republic status versus ethnicity in the establishment of post-Yugoslav states can best be explored from the case of Vojvodina. During the first Yugoslavia, complaints from Vojvodina usually concerned its being exploited via taxes and the prices of agricultural produce (Končar and Dožić, 2006). However, in terms of ethnic composition, the Vojvodina before and after World War II differed significantly. Before World War II, Vojvodina had only a relative ethnic majority of Serbs, whereas after this war, with the expulsion of Germans and simultaneous colonisation, particularly by Serbs, an absolute Serb majority rose, and is still rising (RZS, 2011).

Vojvodina attained the position of autonomous province in 1945, and the autonomous provinces became practically equal to republics in 1971. In the functioning of Yugoslavia, Vojvodina was a staunch opponent of Serbia; it failed to support Serbia on any important issue, which the Serbian leadership considered a particular annoyance. Jović (2009: 196) and Končar and Boarov (2011) underscore this issue throughout their book on the purported Vojvodina leader Doronjski. This opposition between Vojvodina and Serbia may be in line with Brubaker (1996) and Malešević's (2006a) concept of reification of cultural difference in territorial units as such, of their nature of power agents and brokers, although it is not of a particularly ethnic nature. The relevance of this cultural specificity between Serbia proper and Vojvodina Serbs waned with the tides of Serb migration into Vojvodina over the course of the 20th century.

However, in spite of bearing a communist political leadership opposed to the Serbian one, in spite of differences in ethnic composition and in spite of major historical differences (from Serbia), during the Yugoslavia dissolution period,

Vojvodina took no steps to attain independence and did not achieve it. In fact, Vojvodina is the major acquisition on the part of Serbia during the 20th century (some territories known as Sandžak being the other one; all other acquisitions proved to be temporary). It was the national substance, basically the same as in Serbia, which prevented reification from transforming into statehood.

The failure to move towards independence or to achieve it, on the part of Vojvodina works against the argument of Brubaker (1996) and Malešević (2006a). According to them, Vojvodina being reified, and with its state-like institutionalisation, should have gone along with the others, availing itself of the military command, of the academy of sciences and arts, of all the other trappings of statehood and should have attained independence, if necessary in a pool of blood. It was a clear case of a situation 'where the chips were down', a historical situation was at issue, and where the national community, 'terminal' or 'imagined', 'effectively commanded men's loyalty, overriding' (Geertz, 1963: 107) in this case the reified autonomy with trappings of statehood. However, Vojvodinians did not claim independence (in full contrast to what eventuated in another autonomous province, Kosovo and the republics). Consequently, the following question arises: is it difficult to explain this aberrant case of Vojvodina? We argue that it is not, but that it does require an ethno-symbolist or even ethnic essentialist approach. Namely, by 1991, Vojvodina was populated by a Serb majority. Despite the cultural particularities (Serbs in Vojvodina having matured nationally under Austria-Hungary), they became integrated into the Serbian nation, separationist movements being almost non-existent. This was so despite the differences in the manner of the original establishment of Serbian nationhood—in Vojvodina it was the bourgeoisie that created the main ferment, whereas in Serbia proper it was a combination of bureaucracy and agriculturists (Sugar, 1969: 46–54).

Although one cannot claim that, by 1991, Serbian nationality had become fully unified, there was no substantive difference in the behavior of Serbs from Vojvodina and those from Serbia proper with respect to action in the Yugoslavia dissolution. At that time, in the meaning of Brubaker (2004), Vojvodinians showed that they were neither a 'bounded group' nor a 'homeland' (Brubaker, 1996), but part of another. In the theatre of war of the 1990s, many Serbs from Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina fled to Vojvodina (Mitrović, 2005). The Vojvodinians' participation in the post-Yugoslav war was no different from the role of Serbs from Serbia proper, nor was their opposition to war (Šušak, 2002). Thus, Malešević's idea that '[t]he peculiar character of this unprecedented institutionalization of cultural difference had a decisive role to play in the disintegration of the federal state' (2006a: 9) did not hold true in this particular case, making it a major exception, one that might challenge it.

Border issues between republics and provinces

After World War II, with the establishment of the republics and the autonomous provinces/regions, borders between them were also delineated. It has been

suggested that these were acts of communist fiat, i.e. Brubaker's 'fiction', possibly with a view to a Machiavellian *Divide et impera* (as suggested by Zaslavsky and Vujačić, 1991: 137), with relation to both the Soviet and the Yugoslav internal borders.⁶

There are significant historical sources addressing how borders among the federal units were established in 1945. There seemed to have been some disagreement and bickering among the communist decision makers. For example, in *Rise and Fall*, Djilas, who in 1945 was one of the top Yugoslav communists, recalls having chaired a federal commission, approved by the Transitional Federal Parliament, to delineate borders. He alleges that the borders were drawn 'according to the principle of ethnicity' (Djilas, 1983: 99), so that the lowest number of the 'alien' ethnicity would be found in each republic. He also recalls conflicting claims by Serbian and Croat communist leaders. This also contributed to the establishment of Vojvodina as an 'autonomous province' within Serbia.

The paramount fact in delineating borders was the decision taken by the Transitional Parliament of Yugoslavia in early 1945, establishing the borders of the republics: Slovenia, according to the Banovina Dravska borders; Croatia, according to the Banovina Savska borders with the addition of the littoral and Dubrovnik; Bosnia and Herzegovina according to the Berlin Congress borders; Serbia, according to the borders before the Balkan Wars, with territories taken from Bulgaria according to the Versailles Treaty; Macedonia, including Yugoslav territory south of Kačanik and Ristovac; and Montenegro, according to the borders prior to the Balkan Wars, including Berane, Gusinje and Plav (*Zakonodavni rad*, 1951: 58). Later on, minor corrections were made.

Thus, although the communists may have seemed free to create a state in which they believed borders to be almost irrelevant (Tito often stressed this publicly, indicating their 'administrative' nature; see Helfant-Budding, 2008: 99), they followed the doctrine of 'ethnicity ruling borders', as much as they could (Djilas, 1983: 101). However, they did make an exception in the case of Bosnia and Herzegovina, but there, a long-established historical fact was taken into account, as mentioned above.⁷ A similar exception was proposed by representatives of the population (Sandžak, i.e. Raška), but was rejected by the Provisional Assembly Presidency (still today, the region is partitioned into Montenegro and Serbia, with a mix of Bosniak, Serb and Montenegrin populations). The establishment of a Sandžak unit, as proposed, would have meant a second exception for the same mix of ethnic populations. In addition, the introduction of the two autonomous units in Serbia could also be seen as an exception. First, Kosovo Albanians were a particular problem for the ruling communists (and for any Yugoslav decision makers, since the ethnic feelings of Albanians were intense, anti-Serbian and separationist). But it would be difficult to imagine a full-fledged federal unit for an ethnicity which would have its matrix state adjoining. Second, although Vojvodina was 'promised' federal status by Tito in 1936 (*Klasici marksizma*, 1978: 178–179), its borders did not meet ethnic criteria. Nevertheless, it cannot be argued that, after World War II, the ruling communists created borders between

republics ‘out of the blue’, or ‘arbitrarily’ as Brubaker and Malešević claim. True, there were serious discussions and disputes (Djilas, 1983: 101). The Croatian leader Hebrang claimed Sirmium in its entirety, but was compensated by Baranja (both regions had substantial Croatian population). This may appear to be an arbitrary trade-off. However, not only did numerous Sirmium Croats side with the German Nazis and take part in atrocities against the Serbs during World War II, they were also less numerous than the Serbs. Baranja always had a higher proportion of Croats than of Serbs, in contrast to Sirmium (particularly relevant was the 1931 census, the last prior to World War II (*Narodnosni i vjerski sastav 1880–1991*, 1998)). In other words, the Serbian-Croat border was contentious, but could hardly have been dealt with differently if the basic ethnic lines were observed, and this was done in a scrupulous manner. One can also ponder whether Vojvodina’s position could have been different – whether it could have been a full-fledged republic.

Discussion

The main aim of the current study was to evaluate whether constructivism suffices when confronting the issue of the dissolution of Yugoslavia in the light of the ‘older’ essentialist leaning, that is ethno-symbolist view as proposed by Smith (1973, 1987, 2009). Based on the findings presented, we tend to agree with Smith’s position that constructivism ‘illuminates a corner of the broader canvas’ (Smith, 1999: 220), but that it may help more to take a *longue durée* look at the issue when understanding the dissolution of Yugoslavia. We have offered indications that the nations showed a firm basis of establishment before the 1945 rules on republics and autonomous provinces were established, although these territorial units helped in their development as nations. Moreover, the borders between them were drawn with care, in that ethnic and historical principles were observed, although in some situations different decisions could have been taken.

It has also been demonstrated that the nations at issue all had ethnic myths and national movements by the end of the 19th century. Two had enjoyed the position of states during that period. Thence, their routes in national establishment differed in spite of their alleged ethnic closeness (with the exception of the Albanians). Consequently, the ‘Yugoslavia period’ could be seen as a transitory phase that ended as soon as internal and external (i.e. geopolitical) factors allowed age-old trends to be materialised in the form of a nation-state. Ivo Lola Ribar, head of the Yugoslav Communist Youth (SKOJ) (*Dokumenti ljudske revolucije*, 1981: 69), at the time when early efforts were under way to establish Tito’s Yugoslavia, reported on Slovenian ‘secessionism’ as early as January 1943. Furthermore, Tito expressed doubt about and concern over Yugoslavia’s sustainability in March 1962, at a Politburo meeting (Zečević, 1998: 35), in a phase which was externally understood as ‘stable’, based on ‘unity of communists’ (National Intelligence Estimate 15-61, published in Pavlović, 2009: 207–208).

Traces of nation building could also be found in the 1974 constitution which, by treating republics as sovereign states and autonomous provinces as also enjoying 'sovereign rights', signaled that 'the abandonment of attempts at cultural nation building on the part of both political and cultural elites' was to be expected (Wachtel, 1998: 229). This finalised the nationalism of constitutive nations, which, as indicated by Gellner (2006), rests on the belief that the political and the national unit should be congruent. That said, it could also be argued that this period was not only transitory, but in most cases also necessary and Yugoslavia undoubtedly played a key role in enabling its constituent parts to achieve the level of socio-political development that is otherwise required for the formation of individual nation-states (Flere, 2003; Gellner, 2006; Klanjšek and Flere, 2011), although this process could have been achieved by other routes). Evidence that the quest for individual nation-states was indeed omnipresent from the beginning of the Yugoslav era is also clearly discernible from the fact that ethno-nationalism was not only always present as a 'political doctrine in its many forms' (Jović, 2009: 104), but also identified as one of the principal enemies of the Yugoslav federation (Pavković, 1997). Not surprisingly, 'neoprimitivist scholars' (Gagnon, 2004) often argued that the election of nationalist parties to power (which, according to these scholars, tried to create homogenous nation-states, following the sentiments of the wider population), could also be seen as supporting the concept of an ethnic longing for independence.

Already during the Yugoslavia period, the republics and provinces, by their organisation had most features of statehood, but the name (with entrusting Yugoslavia with discharging some of the tasks, but solely by way of agreement (veto power) on important issues). The nations in the republics and one province did almost complete the journey to statehood, a national statehood in all cases but that of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

We would thus argue that, beneath the havoc in the late 1980s undertaken by ethnic entrepreneurs and contained in their discourse, lay 'homeland' nationalism, immanent manifestations of the nations themselves, of Yugoslavia, drilling through the structure of the federal state for decades,⁸ where at the end nothing remained of it. By 1990 the federal state had factually ceased to operate as a federal state, and ethnic entrepreneurs claimed to have liberated Slovenia, Croatia (and others), while results from various referenda indicated that Yugoslavia had stopped being a functioning state (Flere and Klanjšek, 2014), as it had lost legitimacy for imposing decisions and dispensing repressive power. It can thus be summed up that the formation of new states could and should be also associated with ethnic essences at work, activated in a crisis situation by instrumental operators. In other words, we argue that instrumental operators did not carry out their jobs *ex nihilo*. It seems that the nations at issue were also ripe and ready (with the two possible exceptions). This being said, what Brubaker (1996) and Malešević (2006, 2013) contend is not entirely without merit. The republics (and one province) did enable further national maturation (with a possible exception of Serbs). One could speculate about what would have happened had the communists not established such a state at the end of

World War II. Officially, the Allies supported the renewal of Yugoslavia, since the Axis powers not only occupied it, but also partitioned it during the war. However, on the issue of its sustainability, we offer a quotation from President FD Roosevelt, a remark made in March 1943 when speaking to the British Foreign Minister: ‘The Croats and Serbs had nothing in common and it is ridiculous to try to force two such antagonistic peoples to live together under one government’ (Sherwood, 1948: 711).

One can freely hypothesise about the paths down which the Yugoslav nationalities might have gone separately after the Second World War, even if the Karadjordjević monarchy had been reinstated with the help of the British (which seems a more reasonable and likely solution, had Tito not outwitted Churchill). Some form of separation would have ensued, considering the nationalities and the history of the first Yugoslav state.⁹ However, the republics and the provinces were not vehicles necessarily driving towards independence—owing to their reification power, as Brubaker and Malešević seem to maintain.

Therefore, as a general explanation, the ‘event’, ‘contingent process’ and even outright ‘fiction’ theories suggested by Brubaker (1996, 2004) and Malešević (2006a, 2006b) do have some relevance and shed light on some processes during the communist period, but on the whole they do not meet Occam’s razor. The variable they introduced may improve the explanation in some instances, but it is not truly necessary to understand the growth of the ethnicities at issue into full blown national states, Bosnia and Herzegovina excepted. Their theory particularly fails to account for the lengthy period of historical development, which each of the ethnies at issue had already experienced by the time they became units of the Yugoslav federation. Malešević (2006a) further attributes unwarranted ‘arbitrariness’ (2006a: 28) to the delineation of borders within Yugoslavia. Borders could be contested and were so, particularly by the Serbian nationalists (Čavoški, 1987), but they were not drawn ‘out of the blue’. In this context, a more promising direction for researching the dissolution of Yugoslavia (in regard to nation and ethnicity) can be found in the following passage: ‘The nation is the source of all political power, and loyalty to it overrides all other loyalties. . . nations can only be liberated and fulfilled in their own sovereign states’ (Smith, 1987: 187). One must consider the role of all nationalisms, ethnic entrepreneurs (who did not have much work in the collapsing state), symbolic interaction (spreading fear, see e.g. Jović, 2009: 239–243), even the weak support for independence among the populace before the very collapse (Klanjšek and Flere, 2011), the collapse of the state functioning in the last stage: all this fits into a broader concept, encompassing the historical development. However, this does not mean we disagree with Gellner that every nationalism has an ‘ugly head’ (2006: 45). Although ‘ugly’, it doesn’t mean it does not have an ‘objective nature’. Public opponents of nationalism, like Zola, may be ethically superior to the majority, mainstream of nationalist acquiescence, but remain marginal in historical processes like the ones we have scrutinised. In addition, there was opposition to nationalist xenophobia in all environments where it flared up, but this remained a minor phenomenon in the 90s (Macdonald, 2009: 399–409).

However, nowhere did a political movement to maintain Yugoslavia take hold (after Ante Marković's Reform Forces failed in all the republic elections of 1989–1990, Woodward, 1995: 125).

We advanced support for the contention that the nationalities at issue were true groups, national in nature (conceding possible incompleteness in the cases of Bosniaks and Macedonians), tending towards separate states, having somewhat matured during the Tito era in this respect; and found no support for downgrading them to 'events', particularly not fortuitous ones – although events do play a role, as do actors. In addition, we do not claim these were 'old' nations, or that their ethnic myths contained the idea of 'divine election', although the latter issue could be studied in some instances. Specifically, the Slovene nationalist movement drew its strength from linguistic essentialism and exclusivism; the Croat one from the memorialisation of the Croat medieval state, which was to be 'renewed'; the Montenegrin one from the idea of renewal of the state existing less than a century earlier and quibbles about minute differences vis-a-vis Serbs; the Bosniak one again from the idea of medieval Bosnia and the continuous existence of Bosnia as entity throughout history; the Albanian one drew strength from the Prizren League declaration on an Albanian state congruent with ethnic borders; the Macedonian nationalist movement alone was not fully articulate, although independence ideas were supported by the Ilinden uprising memorialisation. Last, but not least, possibly the one nationalism which most dynamised the entire process was the well-known Serbian one, with a cultural core pertaining to the Kosovo Battle and renewal of the Serbian state within borders as Serbian nationalists understood them, a renewal of the Serbia of Emperor Stefan Dušan. Of course, these manifestations of cultural cores in the period in question could be further elaborated; on the other hand, this is not to deny the relevance of current events in the 1980s, but it does extend the cultural framework within which these events came about and were able to resonate among the common folk of the nations in question and not less – the common folk of their neighbors.

A final note on the nature of Brubaker's and Malešević's thought: it has already been noted that it may fit into post-modern thinking, by relativising substance and the grand narratives, while favouring discourse and 'actors' free play' (Ritzer, 1996: 124) and 'power-grabs by particular people or groups' (Gottdiener, 1993: 653) as the true reality in social life (acts of constructing and deconstructing). Calhoun has rightly pointed to another feature. He casts these ideas within the context of cosmopolitanism, one that disregards the fact that 'no one lives outside particularistic solidarities' (2003: 546). He also advanced the idea of ethnic groups being immanently bound by solidarity. Thence, Calhoun considers 'we should not dismiss the invocation of "groupist" notions as merely errors made by practical participants to be avoided by analysts' (2003: 547). The thought of these authors aiming to deconstruct and take away all legitimacy from the reality of nations, however, does not fit well with reality, no matter how noble the intentions. This again is not to extend any tacit

moral support or exculpation for the misdeeds of ‘ethnic’ or ‘ethnopolitical’ entrepreneurs. The authors of this article do not have less disgust for them than our potential critics. The entrepreneurs’ dealings may often be morally detestable, but they usually find an audience which they mobilise on the basis of prior culture and history. This pursues particularly from the fact that these entrepreneurs usually form a small, but strategic segment in the elite. Furthermore, the existence of nations as real groups never means that there are no dissonant voices and no apostates. Nations, however, do act collectively in ethnic conflict, even if only minorities take active part and, as Malešević notes, whereas the other members of the nation may be forced to do so.

Declaration of conflicting interests

The author(s) declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Funding

The author(s) received no financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Notes

1. In 2010, ideology practically disappears from Malešević’s explanation of ethnicity. However, in the works on Yugoslavia it takes center stage.
2. In 2004, Brubaker et al. (2004) ceases to speak of reification and confines himself to ‘arbitrary classification’, which is seen to have been committed under communist rule, with the same effect of constructing a nation.
3. The very interesting issue of linguistic (dis)unity among Bosniaks, Croats, Montenegrins and Serbs will not be dealt with (but see Kordić, 2010).
4. The order of nations follows no particular system of priority.
5. Still, it is important to note that in Yugoslavia, nationless ethnies did exist. Tsintsars, Wallachs, Trans-Mura Slavs (Prekmurci), the Torbesh and the Ruthenians would be among the candidates for such a designation, along with groups which have existed as nations but that have a homeland elsewhere (e.g. Italians, Hungarians and Turks). Romanies were the major such ethnie.
6. In this context, it may be mentioned, as Brubaker and Malešević are well aware, that in almost all European states today there are (autochthonous) ethnic minorities, ethnies that do not perfectly coincide with territorial borders. Such a situation can be observed in Finland, Italy, and Denmark (Swedes in Finland, the Germans and Slovenes in Italy, Germans and Faroese in Denmark). In other words, a perfect match is beyond reach in a national state, if this term is to be allowed.
7. Imamović states that the borders of Bosnia, in contrast to those of neighboring lands, did not change after the beginning of the 10th century (1997).
8. One can consider the process as continuous, going far back considering Tito’s deep concern in 1962, already referred to above. The motive at the time involved conflicts among republics on the distribution of investments and on blame for the

then Yugoslavia's insolvency (Devic, 1998: 389). As noted, republic and province communist elites clashed about the distribution of funds, about economic measures having effects varying by republic, attempting to ascertain and legitimise power in respective electorate. This also brought about autarky of the republic and province economies.

9. Banac consents that without the communist partisan movement, Yugoslavia would not have been reestablished after World War II (Banac, 2009: 463).

References

- Andrijašević Ž (2001) Istraga poturica – istoriografija, izvori, istoričnost – da li je bilo istrage poturica. *Almanah* 15–16: 93–129.
- Bakić-Hayden M (2004) National memory as narrative memory: The case of Kosovo. In: Todorova M (ed.) *Balkan Identities: Nation and Memory*. London: C. Hurst and Co.
- Bakić-Hayden M and Hayden RM (1992) Orientalist variations on the theme “Balkans”. *Slavic Review* 51(1): 1–6.
- Banac I (2009) What happened in the Balkans (or Rather ex–Yugoslavia)? *East European Politics and Societies* 23(4): 461–478.
- Barrow JD (1991) *Theories of Everything: The Quest for Ultimate Explanation*. New York: Fawcett Columbine.
- Bašić D (2009) *The Roots of the Religious, Ethnic, and National Identity of the Bosnian-Herzegovinan Muslims*. PhD Dissertation, University of Washington.
- Bataković D (1991) *Načertanije Milutina Garašanina*. Beograd: MIV.
- Baumann G (1999) *The Multicultural Riddle: Rethinking National, Ethnic and Religious Identities*. London: Routledge.
- Bellamy A (2003) *The Formation of Croatian Identity. A Centuries Old Dream?* Manchester: Manchester University Press.
- Božić I, Ćirković S, Dedijer V, et al. (1972) *Istorija Jugoslavije*. Beograd: Prosveta.
- Brass P (1993) *Ethnicity and Nationalism*. London: SAGE.
- Brown D (2000) *Contemporary Nationalism: Civic, Ethnocultural, and Multicultural Politics*. London: Routledge.
- Brubaker R (1996) *Nationalism Reframed: Nationhood and the National Question in the New Europe*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Brubaker R (2004) *Ethnicity without Groups*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Brubaker R, Loveman M and Stamatov P (2004) Ethnicity as Cognition. *Theory and Society* 33(1): 31–64.
- Calhoun C (1993) Nationalism and ethnicity. *Annual Review of Sociology* 19: 211–239.
- Calhoun C (2003) Belonging in the cosmopolitan imaginary. *Ethnicities* 3(4): 531–556.
- Čavoški K (1987) *Iz stvaranja nove Jugoslavije*. London: Naša reč.
- Conversi D (2006) Mapping the field: Theories of nationalism and the ethnosymbolic approach. In: Leoussi AS, Grosby S (eds) *Nationalism and Ethnosymbolism: History, Culture and Ethnicity in the Formation of Nations*. Edinburgh, UK: Edinburgh University Press, pp.15–30.
- Ćosić D (2009) *Srpsko pitanje u XX. veku. Lična istorija jednog doba*. Beograd: Službeni glasnik.
- Dabinović A (1937) *Hrvatsko državno pravo u davini : prilozi za proučavanje postanka ugovora god. 1102. (pacta conventa) i trogirskje diplome*. Zagreb: Merkantile.
- Devic A (1998) Ethnonationalism, politics and intellectuals: The case of Yugoslavia. *International Journal of Politics, Culture and Society* 11(3): 375–409.

- Dimitrijević B (2002) Šiptarski oružani izazov komunističkim vlastima Jugoslavije, 1945–1950. *Istorija 20. veka* 20(2): 49–60.
- Dimitrov B (2012) The Macedonian Politicians proved again to be Serbian Colony, 28 October 2012. Available at: http://www.macedoniainfo.com/Macedonia_Serbian_Colony.html (accessed 15 December 2014).
- Djilas M (1983) *Rise and Fall*. New York, NY: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich.
- Dokumenti ljudske revolucije Slovenije* (1981) Ljubljana: IZDG, knjiga 6, document 89; AJ, 507, CKKPJ, 1994/65, 1943/98.
- Fichte JG ([1807]2008) *Addresses to the German Nation*. Cambridge University Press: Cambridge.
- Flere S (2003) Blind alleys in ethnic essentialist explanations of the downfall of the former Yugoslavia. *Critical Sociology* 29(2): 237–256.
- Flere S (2007) The Broken Covenant of Tito's People: The Problem of Civil Religion in Communist Yugoslavia. *East European Politics & Societies* 21(3): 681–703.
- Flere S and Klanjšek R (2014) Was Tito's Yugoslavia Totalitarian?. *Communist and Post-Communist Studies* 47(2): 231–245.
- Fraseri K (1964) *The History of Albania: A Brief Survey*. Tirana: s.n.
- Gagnon VP (2004) *The Myth of Ethnic War: Serbia and Croatia in the 1990s*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.
- Geertz C (1963) *Old Societies and New States: The Quest for Modernity in Asia and Africa*. New York: Free Press.
- Gellner E (2006) *Nations and Nationalism*, 2nd ed. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers.
- Goldstein S (1999) *Croatia: A History*. London: Hurst.
- Gottdiener M (1993) Ideology, foundationalism, and sociological theory. *The Sociological Quarterly* 34(4): 653–671.
- Guibernau M and Hutchinson J (2004) Anthony D. Smith on nations and national identity: A critical assessment. *Nations & Nationalism* 10(1–2): 125–141.
- Hadžijahić M (1974) *Od tradicije do identiteta. Geneza nacionalnog pitanja bosanskih muslimana*. Sarajevo: Svjetlost.
- Hechter M (1986) Rational choice theory and the study of race and ethnic relations. In: Rex J, Mason D (eds) *Theories of Race and Ethnic Relations*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp.264–279.
- Helfant-Budding A (2008) Nation/People/Republic: Self-determination in Socialist Yugoslavia. In: Dragovic-Soso J, Cohen LJ (eds) *State Collapse in South-Eastern Europe: New Perspectives on Yugoslavia's Disintegration*. Lafayette, IN: Purdue University Press, pp.91–129.
- Ibrahimagić O (2003) *Bosanska državnost i nacionalnost*. Sarajevo: Vijeće kongresa bošnjačkih intelektualaca.
- Ichijo A and Uzelac G (2005) So, when is the nation? In: Ichijo A, Uzelac G (eds) *Dating a Nation*. New York: Routledge, pp.212–218.
- Imamović E, Lovrenović D and Nilević B (2004) *Bosna i Hercegovina od najstarijih vremena do kraja Drugog svjetskog rata*. Sarajevo: Bosanski kulturni centar.
- Imamović M (1997) *Historija Bošnjaka*. Sarajevo: Preporod.
- Jelavich C (1992) *Južoslavenski nacionalizmi: jugoslavensko ujedinjenje i udžbenici prije 1918*. Zagreb: Globus and Školska knjiga.
- Jović D (2009) *Yugoslavia: A State that Withered Away*. Lafayette, IN: Purdue University Press.

- Judah T (2008) *Kosovo: What Everyone Needs to Know*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Klanjšek R and Flere S (2011) Exit Yugoslavia: Longing for mononational states or entrepreneurial manipulation? *Nationalities Papers* 39: 791–810.
- Klasici marksizma i stavovi KPJ/SKJ o nacionalnom pitanju* (1978) Zagreb: CDD.
- Končar R and Boarov D (2011) *Obrana autonomije Vojvodine*. Novi Sad: Muzej Vojvodine.
- Končar R and Dožić L (2006) O razvoju privrede Vojvodine 1919–1945. In: Dožić L (ed.) *Privreda Vojvodine: 1918–1945: kroz odabranu arhivsku građu*. Novi Sad: Arhiv Vojvodine, pp.5–45.
- Kordić S (2010) *Jezik i nacionalizam*. Zagreb: Durieux.
- Kosi J (2013) *Kako je Nastal Slovenski Narod*. Ljubljana: Emka.
- Lencek R (1982) *The Structure and History of the Slovene Language*. Columbus, OH: Slavica.
- Lustick I (2001) Agent-based monitoring and constructivist identity theory. *APSA-CP* 12(1): 22–25.
- Luthar O, Grdina I, Sašel-Kos M, et al. (2008) *The Land between: A History of Slovenia*. Frankfurt: Peter Lang.
- Macdonald DB (2009) Living together or hating each other? In: Ingraio C, Emmert TA (eds) *Confronting Yugoslav Controversies. A Scholars' Initiative*. West Lafayette, IN: Purdue University Press, pp.390–423.
- Malešević S (2002) *Ideology, Legitimacy and the New State. Yugoslavia, Serbia and Croatia*. Abingdon, UK: Routledge.
- Malešević S (2004) *Sociology of Ethnicity*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.
- Malešević S (2006a) *Identity as Ideology. Understanding Ethnicity and Nationalism*. London: Macmillan-Palgrave.
- Malešević S (2006b) Rogers Brubaker: 'Ethnicity without groups'. *Nations and Nationalism* 12(4): 699–700.
- Malešević S (2010) Ethnicity in time and space: A conceptual analysis. *Critical Sociology* 37(1): 67–82.
- Malešević S (2013) *Nation-States and Nationalisms: Organization, Ideology and Solidarity*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Miljanov M (1967) *Primeri čojstva i junaštva*. Titograd: Grafički zavod.
- Mitrović M (2005) Etničko čišćenje kao strategija država na prostoru bivše SFRJ. *Tokovi Istorije* 16(1–2): 180–203.
- Morrison K (2009) *Montenegro – A Modern History*. London: I.B. Tauris.
- Motyl JA (2002) Imagined communities, rational choosers, invented ethnies. *Comparative Politics* 34(2): 233–250.
- Mouzelis N (1995) *Sociological Theory: What went wrong? Diagnosis and Remedies*. London: Routledge.
- Narodnosni i vjerski sastav 1880–1991* (1998) Zagreb: RH DZS.
- Nikčević VP (2001) *Istraga poturica – mit ili stvarnost*. Podgorica: Almanah.
- Özkirimli U (2000) *Theories of Nationalism: A Critical Introduction*. London: Macmillan.
- Özkirimli U (2003) The nation as an artichoke? A critique of ethnosymbolist interpretations of nationalism. *Nations and Nationalism* 9(3): 339–355.
- Pandevska M (2008) Бесмисленоста на равенството: Политиката на терор = македонското револуционерно движење (1893-1903). In: Евро Балкан Прес (ed.) *Македонија помеѓу Византискиот комонвелт и Европската Унија*. Скопје, 105–119.

- Pandevska M (2012) The term “Macedonian(s)” in Ottoman Macedonia: On the map and in the mind. *Nations and Nationalism* 40(5): 747–766.
- Pavković A (1997) Anticipating the disintegration: Nationalisms in former Yugoslavia, 1980–1990. *Nationalities Papers: The Journal of Nationalism and Ethnicity* 25(3): 427–440.
- Pavlović S (2003) Who are Montenegrins? Statehood, identity, and civic society. In: Bieber F (ed.) *Montenegro in Transition. Problems of Identity and Statehood*. Baden Baden: Nomos Verlagsgesellschaft, pp. 83–105.
- Pavlović S (2008) *Balkan Anschluss: The Annexation of Montenegro and the Creation of the Common South Slavic State*. West Lafayette, IN: Purdue University Press.
- Pavlović M (2009) *Dokumenti CIA o Jugoslaviji 1948.1983*. Beograd: Institut za savremenu istoriju.
- Pavlowitch SK (2002) *Serbia: A History behind the Name*. London: Hurst.
- Penušliski K (1966) Macedonian revolutionary folk poetry and the national consciousness of the Macedonian people. *Journal of the Folklore Institute* 3(3): 250–266.
- Pleterski A (1997) *Mitska stvarnost koroških knežjih kamnov*. Ljubljana: Zveza zgodovinskih društev Slovenije.
- Popović M (2007) *Vidovdan i časni krst: ogled iz književne arheologije*. Beograd: Čigoja.
- Ramet SP (2004a) Explaining Yugoslav Meltdown, 1. “for a charm of pow’rful trouble, like a hell-broth boil and bubble”. *Nationalities Papers* 32(4): 731–763.
- Ramet SP (2004b) Explaining Yugoslav Meltdown, 2. A theory about the causes of the Yugoslav meltdown. *Nationalities Papers* 32(4): 764–777.
- Ristevski B (2009) *Македонска енциклопедија*. Скопје: МАНУ издавачки центар.
- Ritzer G (1996) *Postmodern Social Theory*. New York, NY: McGraw Hill.
- Republički zavod za statistiku – RZS (2011) Popis stanovništva 2011. Available at: <http://webzrs.stat.gov.rs/WebSite/public/ReportView.aspx> (accessed September 2014).
- Schopflin G (1997) The function of myths and a taxonomy of myths. In: Schopflin G, Hoskin G (eds) *Myths and Nationhood*. London: Hurst, pp.19–35.
- Sekulić D, Massey G and Hodson R (1994) Who were the Yugoslavs? Failed sources of a common identity in the former Yugoslavia. *American Sociological Review* 59(1): 83–101.
- Sekulić D, Massey G and Hodson R (2006) Ethnic tolerance and ethnic conflict: The case of war in Croatia. *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 29(2): 118–142.
- Sherwood RE (1948) *Roosevelt and Hopkins, an Intimate History*. New York, NY: Harper and Brothers.
- Simitičev K (1981) *Марко Крале во македонската народна епика : (во споредба со српски и бугарски мотиви)*. Skopje: Institut za folklore.
- Smith AD (1973) Nationalism: A trend report and bibliography. *Current Sociology* 21(3): 7–122.
- Smith AD (1987) *Ethnic Origins of Nations*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Smith AD (1999) *Nationalism and Modernism*. London: Routledge.
- Smith AD (2004) The genealogy of nations: An ethno-symbolic approach. In: Ichijo A, Uzelač G (eds) *When is the nation? Towards an understanding of theories of nationalism*. London: Routledge, pp.94–112.
- Smith AD (2009) *Ethno-Symbolism and Nationalism A Cultural Approach*. London: Taylor & Francis.

- Štih P (2006) Miti in stereotipi v starejšem videnju slovenske nacionalne zgodovine. *Nova revija* 25: 244–267.
- Sugar PF (1969) External and domestic roots of Eastern European nationalism. In: Sugar PF, Lederer I (eds) *Nationalism in Eastern Europe*. Seattle, WA: University of Washington Press, pp.40–64.
- Šušak B (2002) Alternativa ratu. In: Popov N (ed.) *Srpska strana rata II*. Beograd: Samizdat, pp.98–123.
- Thompson A and Fevre R (2001) The national question: sociological reflections on nation and nationalism. *Nations and Nationalism* 7(3): 297–315.
- Troch P (2014) From “And” to “Either/or”: Nationhood in Montenegro during the Yugoslav Twentieth Century. *East European Politics and Societies* 28(1): 25–48.
- Tuđman F (1996) *Povjesna sudba naroda*. Zagreb: Školska knjiga.
- Varshney A (2007) Ethnicity and ethnic conflict. In: Boix C, Stokes S (eds) *The Oxford Handbook of Political Science*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp.274–294.
- Vishinski B (1973) *The Epic of Ilinden*. Skopje: Macedonian Review Editions.
- Wachtel A (1998) *Making a Nation, Breaking a Nation: Literature and Cultural Politics in Yugoslavia*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.
- Walicki A (1998) Ernest Gellner and the “constructivist” theory of nation. *Harvard Ukrainian Studies Cultures and Nations of Central and Eastern Europe* 22: 611–619.
- Wimmer A (2008) The making and unmaking of ethnic boundaries: A multilevel process theory. *American Journal of Sociology* 113(4): 970–1022.
- Woodward S (1995) *Balkan Tragedy: Chaos and Dissolution after the Cold War*. Washington, DC: The Brookings Institution.
- Zakonodavni rad Predsedništva AVNOJ i Privremene narodne skupštine DFJ (od 19. novembra 1944 do 27. oktobra 1945) (1951) Beograd: Prezidijum Narodne skupštine FNRJ.
- Zaslavsky V and Vujačić V (1991) The causes of disintegration in the USSR and Yugoslavia. *Telos* 88: 121–140.
- Zečević M (1998) *Početak kraja SFRJ: stenogram i drugi prateći dokumenti proširene sednice Izvršnog komiteta CK SKJ održane 14-16. marta 1962. godine*. Beograd: Arhiv Jugoslavije.
- Žižek S (1987) *Jezik, ideologija, Slovenci*. Ljubljana: Delavska enotnost.