Partners into Competitors: Divisive Democracy and Conflicting Conceptions of Citizenship

In his book *States and Power in Africa: Comparative Lessons in Authority and Control*, Jeffrey Herbst describes the conflicts between the Zulu and early Dutch settlers over their opposing conceptions of sovereignty over territory and people. The Zulu believed that their political authority extended wherever people had pledged obedience to their king regardless of the territory where they happened to be. Also, 'the Zulu believed that they could let the whites settle on land without giving up ownership', whereas for the European whites, occupation over a certain territory also meant the ownership of that territory and control of the people that happened to be there (2000: 40–41). Extrapolated from its colonial context in which the Dutch colonizers wanted to absolutely dominate the colonized and take their land, the story could be interpreted as a clash between the conception of a political community based on ethnic, cultural, hereditary or maybe also declaratory loyalty and solidarity, regardless of existing political boundaries and polities in which the members of this community live, and a political community based on loyalty to the authorities governing a territory where one lives and, ideally, on solidarity with all those who happen to be on that territory under the same authorities. Modern states in reality often combine these two principles in a particular way: they often claim that their citizens or their ethnic kin abroad are bound to their polity and thus expect a loyalty and sometimes exercise an influence on diaspora members (who, in turn, are often interested in meddling in political affairs of the 'old country'), but, internally, they always insist on undivided loyalty of the population they govern. Even further from its original South African situation, the clash between what we can generally call civic and ethnic solidarity, as well as different understandings of whom should be loyal to whom and who belonged together, turned crucial during the last years of Yugoslavia and decisive at the moment when the multi-party majority democracy was introduced in its republics.

Democracy and nationalism

In socialist multinational federations, Bunce argues, 'the very concept of citizenship […] became dual' (1999: 49). On the one hand, according to her it implied membership in the ideological-political community attached to the 'socialist regime-state', and, on the other, membership in a national community. Nevertheless this notion of the *duality* of citizenship in socialist federations needs to be refined. This was the case in the USSR and in Czechoslovakia (before 1969). But in both Yugoslavia after 1945 and Czechoslovakia after 1969, membership in the 'ideological-political community' was *bifurcated* into federal-level and republican-level membership. Therefore, citizenship became not only formally *dual* but *triadic*: on the one hand, there was a *dual* legal citizenship – federal and republic-level citizenship – and, on the other, membership in a given ethnonational community; with no obligation, at least in the Yugoslav case, to declare ethnic belonging and with the option of even declaring Yugoslav 'ethnicity'. Since one of the crucial tasks of post-communist democratization consisted in 'identifying the community in which democratic rights and responsibilities are to be vested' (Skalnik Leff 1999: 205), democratic participation and political belonging clashed in Yugoslavia at the junction of Yugoslav citizenship, republican citizenship and ethnic membership.

One way of understanding Yugoslavia's initial democratization – a democratization that eventually exacerbated inter-ethnic conflicts which had been meticulously nurtured and controlled by those nationalist elites who were attempting to, by multi-party elections, accede to power or stay in power – is to examine furthermore the nature of Yugoslavia's confederal citizenship. As described in the preceding chapters, Yugoslav citizenship was not only *legally* ambiguous but was becoming *politically* less important owing to the progressive confederalization of Yugoslavia since the mid-1960s. Hence, given that political decision-making had been taking place at the republican level and that the federal level mostly served – since the early 1970s – as a platform for inter-republican, or almost inter-state bargaining, democracy could only have been introduced from the bottom-up, from the republics themselves as clearly identified 'communities'. In the Yugoslav case, the problem was that democratization occurred only at the 'bottom' without ever reaching the 'top'. Since Yugoslavia was *de facto* a confederation, republican citizenship was the natural answer to the question of how and where democracy should be exercised. After the break-up of the LCY, the

republican elites did not hesitate to call for democratic elections *only* at the republican level in order to legitimize their power and, having attained a democratic mandate, proceeded to negotiate Yugoslavia's future.

In the confusing situation surrounding the introduction of liberal democracy in the Yugoslav republics, an ordinary citizen was obliged initially to play three mutually non-exclusive roles. First, he or she was invited to vote as a citizen and/or resident of his or her republic and to express his or her political preferences through multi-party republican elections. At the same time, nationalist elites and politicians targeted him or her as a member of their ethnic group, a group that usually stretched across republican boundaries. And, finally, during this whole period he or she was still a citizen of Yugoslavia where there were still functioning federal institutions in place, including the Yugoslav People's army and he or she was recognized in the international arena uniquely as Yugoslav. These three identities remained compatible only so long as citizens could perform all of them simultaneously, in other words, only insofar as the Federation provided a solid framework within which Yugoslavs could be at the same time members of their civic (republican) people, their ethnic nation and remain in a position of mutual loyalty, unity and solidarity within the general Yugoslav 'community of citizens'.

However, the progressive disappearance and the weakening of the federal framework immediately caused severe difficulties for those living in a republic that was not dominated numerically by their ethnic group. When it became distinctly possible that Yugoslav federal protection would be lost along with the dissolution of the supra-republican and supranational community of citizens, they realized that they would simultaneously acquire an unwanted status of ethnic minority in a new state and lose any supra-republican institutional protection and connection with their kin-state and other members of their ethnic nation. This created an atmosphere of mutual suspicion among groups as well as – in the context of Yugoslavia's imminent dissolution – an urgent need to establish new states – preferably ethnically homogeneous and territorially enlarged – that would guarantee to their future citizens their full equality and democratic rights as well as protection. It became increasingly clear that the creation of such states in the context of conflicting territorial claims could not be achieved without violence.

Consequently, the debate on the sovereignty of nations and of republics turned into a debate about membership and a given citizen's loyalty to democratic states about to be created on the basis of Yugoslavia's internal organization. Slobodan Milošević's double measure is instructive here. In a nutshell, when it

comes to Serbia, only republics are sovereign and *unitary*. By contrast, when it comes to other republics, the badge of sovereignty belongs to ethnic nations. It is not surprising then that Serbia contradicted the principle of ethnic sovereignty and solidarity in its new constitution adopted in September 1990. Serbia defined itself as the 'state of its citizens', therefore as *civic* and republican – strategically a wise move if we compare it to Croatia's constitutional self-definition as an exclusively ethnic Croat state. It also meant that no internal secession is possible in a civically bound community of citizens of Serbia that as such at least rhetorically guaranteed all rights to all citizens, which also legitimized the reduction of regional autonomies. At the same time, Serbia insisted on the sovereignty of ethnic groups, portrayed itself as the protector of Serbs in Bosnia and Croatia and demanded their separation from the seceding republics and, preferably, their union with a constitutionally *civic* Serbia!

Federalism formally creates a *national demos* at the national level and *subnational demoi* at the regional level. However, in mono-national and monolingual federations this necessary product of every federal system does not entail parallel and often competing nation-building projects at the sub-federal level that could result in distinct national *demoi* living under the same federal roof. In multinational federations *nations* are usually organized territorially. The federal identity and membership is thus in constant competition with the ethnonational sub-federal identities and memberships. Centrifugal and centripetal forces continually oppose one another and the equilibrium depends, among other things, on the institutional setting in place, historical legacies and experiences, citizens' perceptions and use of the *dual* nature of their citizenship, the interaction between their multi-level citizenship status, legally codified or not, and their ethnocultural membership and also on the practical solutions to political and economic disputes and crises taken by regional and federal political elites. The socialist policies in Yugoslavia worked towards the disabling of the federal Yugoslav *demos* in favour of sub-federal *demoi* that should have had a civic component, although difficult to uphold in the context of ethnic imbalances. Only Bosnia corresponded to this ideal of civic republican citizenship that acknowledged informally its multiethnic composition as well as its high degree of inter-ethnic mixing.

Nonetheless, the introduction of liberal democracy offered, perhaps, the last opportunity for creating a Yugoslav *demos* through the means of representative democracy had the rules of the electoral game been different. Some observers believe that a majority vote at supranational level would have created such a demos (Jović 2001a: 30). Linz and Stepan (2001 [1992]) also argue that the initial

democratic elections should have been organized at the federal level (see below). According to these authors, this would have legitimated the federation and reinforced federal citizenship. However, the experience of Czechoslovakia – where the first elections were organized simultaneously at both federal and republican level – demonstrates that this was not a safe bet either.

It is interesting to note that at a certain point it was Milošević who proposed nationwide elections, hoping to capitalize on his position as the leader not only of Serbia but of all the Serbs and so of Yugoslavia's most numerous nation (see Jović 2001a). He was obviously interested in profiting from the double role he played as both Serbian nationalist and the 'saviour' of a multinational Yugoslavia – rhetoric that, at least initially, had a certain appeal even for some non-Serbs and many non-nationalist Serbs as well. This initiative, however, stoked fears of the kind of ethnic imbalances characteristic of multinational polities. Obviously, the classic model of representative democracy (one citizen – one vote) at the supranational level would never have been acceptable for smaller nations (Slovenes, Croatians, Bosniaks, Albanians and Macedonians). Only Serbs and Montenegrins were interested in this kind of power sharing, but only to a certain extent. All Serbs and Montenegrins taken together were still in a minority position in Yugoslavia as a whole and thus were fearful of a potential 'anti-Serb' coalition. In the absence of an institutional counterweight that could have guaranteed separate national/republican interests, the idea eventually turned out to be unacceptable for everyone. The first democratic elections made federal citizenship politically redundant. It was *de jure* existing but only as a derivative: democratization laid bare its true confederal nature. From these elections organized between early Spring 1990 and late Autumn of 1990 to the final disintegration of Yugoslavia in 1992, federal citizenship was only relevant if citizens travelled or fled abroad and was thus limited to passports, which were themselves issued by the republics.

The moment the Yugoslav leadership decided to introduce liberal democracy and organize multi-party elections, a certain number of questions immediately arose, the answers to which would critically determine future events. Let us just enumerate the most pressing questions that anyone wishing to play the game of liberal democracy – especially if the game is played in a democratizing socialist multinational (con)federation – must tackle head on: what is the institutional and territorial framework for democracy or, in other words, where exactly, for whom and by whom, is liberal democracy to be introduced? In the Yugoslav case, is it in the Federation, in the republics or, maybe, in the ethnic groups? Democracy should be the rule of people by the people, but who is 'the people'

in Yugoslavia? Is it the citizens of Yugoslavia? Citizens of Yugoslav republics? Members of constitutive nations? Or, perhaps, 'the working class and all working people', as stated in the existing Constitution? If a citizen is asked to perform his or her duty, to elect and be elected, now in multi-party elections as opposed to his or her previous socialist experience with elections at the commune level and delegate system, and to take a part at a new emerging *agora*, then where is this agora and who are his or her co-citizens? And since every agora has its limits, who will be excluded? If elections are to be called, *where* should he or she cast their vote and for *whom* can they vote? Since representative democracy usually entails majority rule, who is likely to be in the majority and who in the minority? And what relationship should be built between these two camps, the tyranny of the majority or consociational cooperation? After all, who is *sovereign* in Yugoslavia or, in other words, who is capable of making and implementing political decisions?

Indeed, the question of sovereignty was immediately posed, coupled with the unavoidable issue of the right to self-determination. Confusing definitions of Yugoslav sovereignty – contained both in its various constitutions and in the speeches of its leaders – did not make the task easy for Yugoslavs and turned the process of democratization itself into an open constitution making and thus heavily contested process. Suddenly, the previous rules were open for debate and, unsurprisingly in an atmosphere of complete liberalization, many had different, opposing and often mutually exclusive visions of the future.

The 1974 Constitution declares in its first article that Yugoslavia is 'based on the power and self-management of the working class and all working people'. The working class is complemented with 'all working people' (thus those outside the leading class as well) as the bearer of sovereign power. Since this alliance of working people is almost all-encompassing when it comes to working adults in Yugoslavia, could we read it simply as the 'people', and, furthermore, as the Yugoslav people? But, alas, this interpretation would have been contrary to the Yugoslav solution to the national question, a solution that gave all sovereignty and the right of self-determination to the constituent nations. By this reasoning, and in the context of the introduction of liberal democracy, i.e. voluntary abandonment of the socialist heritage by that very socialist elite in power and at the moment when the de-legitimization of socialist heritage was in full swing, 'the working class and all working people' and, more generally, the Yugoslav people as such were excluded as potential bearers of sovereignty. With self-management rejected and put in question as an economic and political model, it was hard to imagine how the working class and the working people could have constituted themselves as major political subjects.

Therefore, Yugoslavs essentially faced two alternatives as to who (or what) could be sovereign: ethnic nations or the republics and their citizens? Serbia and Serbia's junior partner Montenegro argued that the former was sovereign; all other republics insisted on the latter. Furthermore, the question was related to the even more explosive issue of the constitutionally guaranteed right to self-determination and secession. Into this volatile debate, Milošević launched an argument that resonated heavily among ethnic Serbs. It could be summarized as follows: if the republics have the right to secede from Yugoslavia, then ethnic Serbs as a whole have the same right to secede from everybody else (see Budding 2008: 92; also Dimitrijević 1995: 58).

Milošević used the sovereignty of ethnic nations argument against Slovenia, Croatia and Bosnia, but he insisted on it only when it concerned ethnic Serbs outside Serbia. However, at the same time Serbia expected loyalty from all of its citizens, despite the fact that up to 35 per cent of them were not ethnically Serbs. The Serbian leadership was not ready to apply the ethnic principle within Serbia and acknowledge an equivalent right of secession for ethnic Albanians in Kosovo and Magyars in Vojvodina (as 'national minorities' they were not seen as bearers of the right to self-determination), or ethnic Muslims in the Sandžak (who due to smaller number and the lack of separatism were not seen as threatening). The sovereignty of ethnic nations, regardless of actual administrative divisions, was unacceptable as a principle of Yugoslavia's disintegration both to the other republics and, later, to the international community. The general principle of the disintegration of socialist federations was – until the recent Western recognition of Kosovo's independence and Russia's recognition of Georgia's breakaway provinces – anchored in respect for their internal republican borders.

But what would the final result of the extreme application of ethnic sovereignty in Yugoslavia have been? Most probably Slovenia would have remained in its present shape alongside a series of strange state creatures: a Croatia without at least 20 per cent of its territory but with Western Herzegovina and tiny parts of Bosnia; a Greater Serbia with Serb-populated Croatian and Bosnian territories, possibly with Montenegro, but without Kosovo, Serbian and Montenegrin Sandžak and parts of Vojvodina; a Greater Albania with Kosovo and Western Macedonia attached, a smaller Macedonia; and, finally, an ethnic Muslim state comprising the patchwork of Bosnian territories and most of the Serbian and Montenegrin Sandžak. Faced with the choice of breaking up Yugoslavia along either republican or ethnic lines, nationalist politicians in Yugoslavia opted for a combination of the two in accordance with their interests at the time. Hence, Milošević's Serbia insisted on the inviolability of its own borders but demanded control over Montenegro and the Serb majority territories in

Figure 6.1 Ethnic map of Yugoslavia in 1991 (Source: Wikimedia Commons).

Bosnia and Croatia. Similarly, Tudjman's Croatia insisted on a republican form of sovereignty – though interpreted as the sovereignty of ethnic Croats – inviolability of its republican 'AVNOJ' borders, and on the right to secede from Yugoslavia, but nevertheless challenged Bosnian sovereignty in and sometimes beyond Croat-populated areas.

Citizens as voters: Democratize and divide

In socialist Yugoslavia, there was, constitutionally, no minority and no majority, but only equal nations and nationalities. The old federal framework made it, therefore, possible for any individual to move to another 'ethnic' republic

without becoming a minority member in that republic; the common citizenship guaranteed equal rights throughout Yugoslavia. Nonetheless, demographic data, including ethnic group membership, competing percentages and the territorial distribution of these groups became a major concern at the end of the *ancien régime* (Stokes 2013). In a multiethnic state, the transition from self-management socialism, implying in principle widespread democratic decision-making at the workplace level and the no-majority-no-minority rule, to a liberal democracy formed exclusively around political parties and where everything hinges on the constitution of the majority and minority easily created turbulences and highlighted inter-ethnic competition. Many citizens were suddenly placed before the choice of being a member of a minority in a large state or being in the majority in a smaller one. Vladimir Gligorov's famous aphorism captures the nature of ethnic rivalry in the Balkans: 'Why should I be a minority in your country when you can be a minority in my country?' The principle of majority rule at the federal level was rejected for the above-mentioned reasons – ultimately no one would have a majority – but the majority principle was applied within the republics and that inevitably created a 'fear of becoming a minority' (Jović 2001a).

Rogers Brubaker reveals the striking historic parallels between the post-First World War context and the post-communist situation regarding the triadic relation between national minorities, nationalizing states and national homelands (1996). There was an internal triadic relation between ethnocentric republics, ethnic minorities and external homelands (republics). The federal centre was a strong guarantor of the equality of all groups and was therefore a necessary counterweight to ethnic imbalances in the republics. Nevertheless, the internal 'triadic configuration' was occasionally discussed – as testified by the debates on the position of Croatian Serbs during the Croatian Spring movement – but the federal roof and all the rights attached to federal citizenship made the question of borders, ethnic republics, national homelands and ethnic minorities politically less salient.

Early democratization in ethnically diverse societies can easily lead 'from voting to violence' (Snyder 2000). 'Naively pressuring ethnically divided authoritarian states to hold instant elections, argues Jack Snyder, can lead to disastrous results' (2000: 16). In ethnically diverse societies, democratization more often divides than unites. As Michael Mann warns in his book *The Dark Side of Democracy*, 'democracy has always carried with it a possibility that the majority might tyrannize minorities, and this possibility carries more ominous consequences in certain types of multiethnic environments' (2005: 2). This does not mean that ethnic diversity must ineluctably lead to a failed or conflictual

democratization. However, it does suggest that pushing for a rapid introduction of classic democratic rules in a context where ethnic differences can be used for political mobilization – and then legitimized and reinforced through the popular vote – will more often than not contribute to and cement ethnic fragmentation. In the former socialist federations that were mostly divided into ethnonational territories, the lines of fragmentation were already clearly demarcated. Moreover, since citizens often declared their ethnic belonging in addition to their republican identity – as a rule in the USSR and less so in Yugoslavia – ethnonational lines of fragmentation were already present within republican societies as well. Katherine Verdery observes that

> Western purveyors of 'democracy' (etymologically, 'rule by the people') therefore brought it into an environment predisposed to ethnicize it. As external observers came to ratify that elections were free and fair, they failed to ask who 'the people' were who would be allowed into the social contract creating citizens and rights. (1998: 297)

As in many other post-communist countries, the first democratic elections in Yugoslavia demonstrated the 'ethno-national cartelization of opinion and electoral competition' (Skalnik Leff 1999: 214). Civic membership was soon eclipsed by ethnic belonging as the most important marker of a citizen's identity. Vojin Dimitrijević describes the mechanism of ethnic identification:

> individuals are pushed not to act primarily as citizens but as members of the ethnic group. They are induced not to recognise any social, economic, professional and other interests and to behave as if all members of the ethnic group were in the same social position. (1998: 147–154)

To illustrate the rejection of civic identity – by a great number of individuals but not by everyone! – Dimitrijević quotes Miroslav Toholj, one of the leaders of Bosnian Serbs: 'Serbs have been finally deprived of their Serb name, they have been made citizens, which they will not accept.' Toholj here basically describes a certain conception of citizenship which is based on political community brought together by 'blood' and ethnoreligious belonging as opposed to 'citizens' brought together only by neutral civic status. Thus becoming 'citizens', i.e. accepting the legal fact as the basis for political community was seen as superseding or potentially subjugating ethnic groups. Unsurprisingly, Serb nationalists in Bosnia put in practice their vision of ethnic citizenship – and even voted a law on 'Serb citizenship' to that effect – applied in ethnically cleansed territories. And they were not alone in this kind of enterprise.

I agree with Jack Snyder who dismisses explanations centred on the supposedly long-term popular nationalist rivalries that precede democratization – often a very important feature of the 'ethnic hatred' argument. Snyder claims that 'before democratization begins, nationalism is usually weak or absent among the broad masses of the population. Popular nationalism typically arises during the earliest stages of democratization, when elites use nationalist appeals to compete for popular support' (2000: 32). He argues that 'nationalist conflicts arise as a by-product of elites' efforts to persuade the people to accept divisive nationalist ideas' (32). In this sense, his position is similar to that of V. P. Gagnon who claims that the responsibility for igniting nationalism lies solely with the political elites who channel nationalist sentiments for their own political and economic benefits (2004). Skalnik Leff points out that democratization may segment rather than pluralize and liberalization may easily result in authoritarianism and intolerance (1999: 211). On the other hand, the veteran scholar of ethnic conflict Donald Horowitz notes that divisions and conflicts caused by electoral competition in ethnically diverse societies 'can often be averted by prudent planning of elections and territorial arrangements' (1985: 682).

Neither of these were present in Yugoslavia in 1990. Elections were definitely not planned prudently to avoid conflicts. They were organized hastily by the republics and with significant time gaps between them, which had serious consequences for the political dynamic in Yugoslavia's final hours. As for the territorial arrangements, the internal borders were well established. Nevertheless, they began to be openly challenged, first of all by Serbia's demands for a revision of existing 'AVNOJ' borders, judged to be 'artificial' by mostly Serb, but also many Croatian nationalists. Any eventual change of borders, naturally, was supposed to happen at the expense of others.

Similar to Horowitz, in their widely quoted 1992 article on 'political identities and electoral sequencing' Stepan and Linz diagnosed the decisive impact of the first democratic elections – their organization (at the national and/or regional level), timing and sequencing – on the survival of non-democratic multinational polities such as Spain, the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia. They claim, in short, that the 'sequence of elections *per se* can help construct or dissolve identities' (2001: 202). The very fact that democratic elections did not take place at the federal level in Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union prevented their legitimatization as states and contributed to their disintegration into democratized sub-units. The Spanish case was clearly different. The first democratic elections there were organized at the national level and this alone,

by virtue of the consequent national electoral competition, consolidated all-national parties and the Spanish state in spite of its ethnonational and regional diversity. Although electoral sequencing heavily influenced the political dynamic in Yugoslavia – we will never know, however, if all-Yugoslav elections would have saved Yugoslavia as a state – one should not overlook some important differences between Stepan and Linz's various cases, especially between highly centralized and unitary post-Franco Spain[1] and federalized, to different degrees, Yugoslavia and Soviet Union where elections came after an initial period of liberalization in the 1980s that allowed republican and local elites to capture advantageous positions. It is true that 'no significant polity wide parties emerged' (Stepan 2004b: 348) in Yugoslavia. One needs to add that this happened precisely because the political space, unlike in Spain, was institutionally already fragmented. The Yugoslav communists did not *pluralize* their polity, only their own party. The League of Communists of Yugoslavia was indeed a *league* of six parties – or eight parties if we count the independent parties from Vojvodina and Kosovo – based in their republics. It easily turned regional communist elites into the representatives of their *nations* in the federal arena. The only polity-wide, all-Yugoslav and pro-Yugoslav party in Yugoslavia's history was thus a federalized 'league' that disintegrated even before the first democratic elections (January 1990). There was a dearth of politically significant actors, standing neutrally above ethnonational cleavages that could have eventually given rise to new polity-wide parties. The republican political elites decided to organize the first democratic elections separately in order to ensure their legitimacy and reinforce their positions in anticipation of future bargaining over the preservation or disintegration of the Yugoslav federation, bargaining that eventually took place in a highly volatile context.

Nevertheless, the *timing* and *sequencing* of republican democratic elections did play an important role in the electoral preferences of citizens. Slovenia held elections only three months after the failed Fourteenth Congress of the LCY. These elections brought victory to the centre-right pro-independence coalition, but Milan Kučan, a reformed communist, was elected president. Croatia completed the electoral process soon after in May 1990. Ivica Račan's reformed communists got 35 per cent of votes but lost heavily – largely due to their poor electoral calculation and poorly designed electoral rules – to Tudjman's nationalists who with 42 per cent won an absolute majority in the Parliament. The Parliament later elected Franjo Tudjman as President. Then followed a huge gap (for such turbulent times) between the elections in the northwestern republics and subsequent elections in the southeastern republics, which were

finally called in late Autumn 1990. In brief, the democratically elected, mostly right-wing republican governments of Slovenia and Croatia co-existed for half a year with the old socialist governments in Bosnia, Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia, the latter two being nationalistic as well.

Already in August 1990 local Serbs in, as it would be proclaimed later, the *Krajina* region of Croatia blocked the roads between two major Croatian cities, Zagreb and Split, in open defiance of the new Croatian authorities. A month later Serbia adopted a new Constitution confirming the abolition of Vojvodina's and Kosovo's autonomy but retaining their two seats in the Yugoslav Presidency. If Milošević's bullying clearly handed the advantage to nationalist and separatist forces in Slovenia and Croatia, inter-ethnic conflicts in Croatia, in turn, had a strong impact on the electoral preferences of Bosnian, Montenegrin and Serbian citizens. The nationalist reformed Communists won in Serbia and Montenegro, whereas in Bosnia nationalist anti-Communists (Serb, Croat and Muslim ethnic parties) formed a coalition with disastrous results for the country's future. Milošević's Socialist Party of Serbia largely won the elections and at the presidential elections Milošević won 65 per cent of the votes. Finally, in Macedonia nationalists won in November of 1990 but reformed communist Kiro Gligorov was elected president. In sum, conservative nationalist political forces triumphed almost everywhere in Yugoslavia even in the guise of 'socialist parties' such as Milošević's.

No true left-leaning pan-Yugoslav party made a strong showing at the elections. In a belated attempt to fill the vacant spot left by the Yugoslav Communists as the only all-Yugoslav supranational political force, the federal Prime Minister Ante Marković founded the Alliance of Reform Forces (SRS) in July 1990. In spite of his all-Yugoslav popularity for some successful economic policies such as the introduction of the convertible dinar and stabilization of the prices in early 1990, he entered the political game too late. In addition to rampant nationalism, some social costs of his own liberal economic policies and austerity measures, as dictated by IMF, could also explain his political defeat: a huge number of the unemployed,[2] especially outside Slovenia and Croatia, and tens of thousands on strike were more likely to look for solutions in their own republic and to listen to nationalist arguments that blamed him and his federal government or other republics and other ethnic groups for their miserable conditions. His party predictably performed well only in highly mixed Bosnian urban centres and in Macedonia, two republics whose citizens were well aware that they would be the ones to pay a heavy price in the case of Yugoslavia's disintegration.

A secret handshake between nationalism
and electoral democracy

In the words of Linz and Stepan, 'agreements about stateness are *prior* to agreements about democracy'. 'A "stateness" problem, they argue, may be said to exist when a significant proportion of the population does not accept the boundaries of the territorial state (whether constituted democratically or not) as a legitimate political unit to which they owe obedience' (Linz and Stepan 2001 [1992]: 200). This definition, however, needs to be amended. The stateness problem can also occur when one or more countries question a particular country's or each other's stateness and territorial shape. One can also argue that the imperative of nation-state building, as the condition for successful integration of post-communist states into the democratic family of nations, could produce extreme conflicts in states that perceive or create a perception that their stateness (in terms of their sheer existence or their borders) is disputed from within or/ and without. There is an apparent conflict between conceptions of a consolidated nation-state – which in Eastern Europe usually means an ethnically defined and homogenized nation-state – and a state that should provide equal treatment to its citizens regardless of their origins and eventually, preferably in diversified countries, promote a pluralized democracy and effective minority rights.

Messages sent from the West underscoring the importance of solid stateness for successful democratization did not pressure regional actors to redefine or reform their ethnically heterogeneous states towards greater pluralism. On the contrary, they reinforced the idea that a truly functional state could only be an ethnically homogenized nation-state. After all, it is argued, only solid nation-states successfully democratized and exited communism without violence, whereas multinational federations and countries with a significant proportion of minorities experienced serious problems, conflicts, violence and a delayed democratization. In other words – and this message resonated well among local nationalist elites – the issue of minorities could prevent the consolidation of the state and even endanger its borders and ultimately its very existence.

As Will Kymlicka points out, the West often sends contradictory demands to Eastern Europe by pushing equally hard for the adoption of state models developed in monolingual nation-states and for a series of minority rights characteristic of multilingual and multination states (Kymlicka 2001a: xiv). This ambiguous message presents local leaders with a crucial choice: either they continue to build an ethnically *consolidated* nation-state or they adopt multiple

measures to reform their states on a civic and even multinational basis (which might include the 'threat' of federalization), which they do only under external pressure or when facing serious internal rebellion and almost always reluctantly. The post-communist states often argue that they need to construct themselves as solid nation-states through the process of *transition* before they can pluralize and implement high standard minority rights protections. The false belief that under communist rule nation-building was frozen and thus should be *defrosted* as part of the democratic transition is overwhelmingly accepted both on the ground and in the West. Hence, a toleration of many controversial policies by nationalist democratizing elites such as, for instance, the massive deprivation of citizenship of the former Soviet citizens on the grounds of their non-Baltic origins in Estonia and Latvia.

But the question remains as to whether *democratization* can be achieved without *pluralization*. Kymlicka sees a clear correlation between democratization and minority nationalism (2001b: 369). The Eastern and Central European countries without minorities democratized successfully, he concludes, whereas a slow and painful democratization results from the inability to accommodate minority nationalism. However, the example he cites as evidence for his claim could, contrary to his intentions, support the opposite conclusion. We have here another ambiguous message from the West because, once again, the successful democratization of an ethnically homogenous country could be perceived by other states with minority difficulties as an example to emulate in their own attempt to consolidate and democratize. Minorities, therefore, are not seen as allowing an opportunity to achieve full democratization through a joint effort, as Kymlicka advocates, but rather are considered an obstacle on this path. Since almost all countries with minorities have experienced 'difficulties' in democratization, this simply reinforces the powerful and dangerous stereotype that ethnic diversity itself is to blame for the failure. The accommodation of minorities' requests, especially if followed by consociational arrangements, veto powers and territorial autonomy, is thus seen as a threat to the functioning and even the cohesion of the state. In short, why should they bother to democratize by accommodating minorities' demands, when they can just as easily 'get rid' of them – either literally or by simply restricting access to citizenship – and thereby *democratize* successfully like the others.

Observers of democratization in countries with a high degree of ethnonational plurality often quote (often uncritically) the classic liberal authority John Stuart Mill, who claims in his *Considerations on Representative Government* (1861) that 'free institutions are next to impossible in a country

made up of different nationalities' (296) and that 'it is in general a necessary condition of free institutions, that the boundaries of governments should coincide in the main with those of nationalities' (298–299). According to Philip Roeder, the post-communist experience demonstrates that 'democracy is unlikely to survive in ethnically plural societies' (1999: 855). Roeder is among those scholars worried about the 'third wave of democracy' and claims to have statistical evidence that 'successful democratic transitions are improbable when national revolutions are incomplete' (1999: 856). Democracy promoters thus very often encourage nationalist politicians – although sometimes they worry about their human rights records – through their own claims that democracy is possible only with a solid ethnic majority, or failing this, a peaceful and complacent minority. To insist on ethnic homogeneity as a pre-condition for liberal democracy in Eastern Europe is essentially to advocate a system of ethnically 'pure' and separated territories. But to achieve such ethnic 'purity', or at least to reduce ethnic plurality, as demonstrated in the former Yugoslavia and in some post-Soviet regions, requires the massive employment of *non-democratic* methods involving statelessness, discrimination, human rights violations, violence against civilians, expulsions and, ultimately, mass killings. After all, this is exactly how the countries of 'old Europe' achieved their ethnonational homogeneity and a 'democratic peace'. This 'advice', unfortunately, resonated well in post-socialist 'new Europe'. In multinational socialist federations, it promoted ethnically based political communities in opposition to the existing civic-legal political communities at the republican level as a basis for democracy. This ethnocentric vision of citizenship challenged social realities and institutional settings, put in question the existing borders and helped to open the door for violence and war.