


## CHAPTER 25

# From creation to disintegration of Yugoslavia

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### ABSTRACT

Yugoslavia has a unique history in the 20th century. This article proposes to show the history of this country composed of six republics – Serbia, Montenegro, Croatia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Slovenia and Macedonia. It should be shown how internal

rivalries combined with external factors such as the world system contributed to its disintegration. Yugoslavia's relationship with hegemonic powers such as the United States and the USSR and with large financial institutions such as the IMF and the World Bank will also be analyzed. The place occupied by this state in the world system is essential to explain its collapse.

### 1 INTRODUCTION

Yugoslavia has a unique history in the 20th century. This article proposes to show the history of this country composed of six republics – Serbia, Montenegro, Croatia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Slovenia and Macedonia. It should be shown how internal rivalries combined with external factors such as the world system contributed to its disintegration. Yugoslavia's relationship with hegemonic powers such as the United States and the USSR and with large financial institutions such as the IMF and the World Bank will also be analyzed. The place occupied by this state in the world system is essential to explain its collapse.

The country, located on the Balkan Peninsula, has suffered over the centuries numerous political, economic and especially cultural influences. These influences came from empires such as Austro-Hungarian, Ottoman Turk, as well as Slavic peoples. Religious influences are the most visible. Croats and Slovenes are Catholics. Serbs are Slavs and thus inherited orthodox Christianity. Bosnians are Muslims. In addition to the predominant ethnicities, there are minorities such as Albanians, Hungarians, Gypsies and Vlachs . The Albanian minority is very strong in Kosovo . All of them helped to form the Yugoslavian mosaic. According to Tito, the country was made up of “six republics, five nations, four languages, three religions, two alphabets and a single party” (PADRÓS, 1999: 140).

The republics coexisted peacefully while their greatest leader – Joseph Broz Tito – lived. Nationalist insurgencies began well before the 1990s, but were repressed by the government. The president promoted population movements in order to mix ethnicities. It can be said that, during the country's existence, Tito was the biggest promoter of “Yugoslav national identity.” The government was centralized, dictatorial in character and had a one-party regime – the Communist Party, later called the Communist League of Yugoslavia. Tito guaranteed the republics a relative autonomy that was protected by the constitutions. This helped to contain nationalist insurgencies.

In the 1970s, the country showed difficulties in responding to the demands of the population and regional identities were strengthened. With the weakening of the state, the Yugoslav identity also weakened. The desire for secession increased especially in the wealthier republics such as Croatia and Slovenia. These wanted to follow an independent path mainly in the economic sector. They believed that the central government got in the way of their decisions. In Kosovo, the poorest region of the country with a large Albanian population also opted for separation from Serbia, even though the region did not seem to gain anything from secession.

In 1980, Tito's death drastically changed the path to be followed by the country. It was one of the main factors for its dissolution. In the late 1980s, the collapse of communism in the Soviet republics contributed to the loss of legitimacy of the Yugoslav state. Over time, the country increasingly lost this legitimacy. Adherence to the neo-liberal system brought numerous negative consequences. The resulting crisis also worsened the economic, social and political situation. The civilian population felt helpless for not having their rights guaranteed, which were guaranteed by the socialist model.

In the 1990s, as Europe consolidated its integration, Yugoslavia did the opposite. The rampant crisis, unemployment, misery helped to foment the already existing ethnic and nationalist rivalries. The contradictory actions of some countries such as the European community stem from the lack of understanding of the conflict – civil war or international conflict. The NATO air strike in Kosovo is one of the most controversial examples. Many consider it an imperialist action by the United States. The article will also show the interdependence of Yugoslavia, located in the semi-periphery of the world system with the hegemonic powers.

The fact that conflicts are commonly characterized as simple ethnic rivalries depoliticises the issue. It is not possible to look at the conflicts and characterize them merely as an internal Yugoslavia issue. The article also mentions other factors such as capital, the world system, neoliberalism. Any internal event has the capacity to reflect on the external scenario and encourage the action of others from other countries. The dissolution of Yugoslavia has an intrinsic relationship with the international situation of the moment and with the strategic interests of the great powers.

## **2 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND**

The territory that today forms the former Yugoslavia has undergone numerous transformations over the centuries. In the 6th and 7th centuries, Slavic tribes from Russia settled in the south of the Balkan Peninsula. Croatians came from southern Poland. In the Late Middle Ages, the influence of the Byzantine Empire spread Orthodox Christianity. In the 11th century, the Kingdom of Serbia was formed, comprising the territories of Serbia and Montenegro.

Turkish invasions in the 14th century defeated the Serbs at the Battle of the Maritsa River. After this event, the Serbs would only see their independence in the 19th century. This Turkish invasion caused Serbs to move northwards creating a demographic vacuum in the regions of Kosovo and Macedonia. As

Padrós shows , “this problem was solved by displacing the Albanian population already Islamized and incorporated into the Turkish Empire, and this was the beginning of the presence of Albanians in the south of the future Yugoslavia” (1999: 138). With an Austrian and Catholic population, Croatia and Slovenia suffered mainly cultural influence from the Habsburg Empire .

In the 20th century, the first major event was the Balkan Wars. The first took place between 1912 and 1913. Greece, Serbia, Montenegro and Bulgaria united against the Ottomans and formed the Balkan League. At the end of that war, Albania came out independent. The end of the war came with the Treaty of London in 1913, but it did not please the countries. "Bulgaria did not accept dividing Macedonia with Serbs and Greeks, with a view to dominating the Balkans, and therefore proceeded to attack Serbia, with the support of Austria-Hungary" (SEVERO, 2011: 55).

This was the trigger for the second Balkan war. Bulgaria faced Serbia which was supported by Montenegro, Romania, Greece and the Ottomans. Bulgaria was defeated and Serbia as a regional power. At the end of the Balkan Wars, the Ottoman Empire in Europe was reduced to a small portion of land in the south; Serbia gained control of Macedonia and doubled the size of its territory and population. (HUDSON, 2003).

### **3 THE FORMATION OF YUGOSLAVIA AND THE WORLD WARS**

In 1914, the peninsula was the stage for the outbreak of the First World War. In Sarajevo, the heir to the Austrian throne Franz Ferdinand was assassinated by Gavrilo Princip , a Bosnian -Serb student from the Black Hand group . It is worth remembering that Bosnia and Herzegovina had been annexed to the Habsburg Empire in 1908. At the beginning of the war, Austrians tried to occupy Serbia twice, but were defeated. But later, the Serbs did not resist the German occupation. The region would only be liberated in 1918 with the help of the British and French armies.

In 1915, the Yugoslav Committee to work in favor of the union of the South Slav peoples was formalized in London. And at the end of the First World War, the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes was formed, which a year later received the name Yugoslavia. Thus, World War I combined with the dissolution of the Austro-Hungarian Empire and the Ottoman Empire contributed to the formation of the new state. Western countries supported the formation of Yugoslavia, as they saw it as an interesting strategic space to make this their area of influence.

But the newly formed country faced several problems: there was no acceptable leader for all units, the form that the state should take on unitarism or federalism was also in doubt. In addition, the country was made up of economically disparate regions and the economy in general was weak. Agriculture was the main activity. Industrialization advanced in the interwar period, mainly with the help of Germany, and mining gained prominence. However, Yugoslavia was heavily dependent on international trade, which made it vulnerable to fluctuations in the foreign market.

In 1921, the first Yugoslav Constitution was proclaimed, adopting Unitarianism as a form of state. The constitution allowed for the decentralized administration that has been seen throughout most of the country's existence. The Communist Party of Yugoslavia (CPY) stood out on the political scene by promoting a “Yugoslavism” above regional and ethnic particularities. Marshal Joseph Tito was a great propagator of this idea.

Political instability and economic weakness characterized the country in the 1920s. At that time there were disputes with Italy over the port of Rijeka in Croatia. The region was annexed to Italian territory in 1924, which forced a kind of “Italianization” of the resident Croats. The situation would only be resolved after the Second World War when Yugoslavia definitively occupied the region. In the early 1930s, the country was under the dictatorship of Serbian King Alexander, who was assassinated in 1934 by the Ustasha group, the Croatian fascist movement.

During World War II, Yugoslavia was occupied and divided by Germany, Italy, Hungary and Bulgaria. The Nazi-backed Ustasha movement took control of the country. Its aim was to form a “pure” Croatian state. In this way, several massacres were promoted. The most famous was the massacre of Serbs in Krajina, Croatia. Resistance movements did not take long to appear.

As Vizentini (2003) states, resistance movements ended up becoming a form of people's war, which in many cases represented not only a struggle against the invader, but a class conflict. The workers, tortured by the Nazis, organized themselves into guerrillas and formed a strong expression of the resistance movement.

Effective resistance came with the Partisans, members of the CPY. It was they who, practically single-handedly, managed to free the country from the Nazis. In this scenario, the figure of Josip Broz Tito, secretary general of the CPY. Even during the war, meetings of the Anti-Fascist Council for the National Liberation of Yugoslavia (AVNOJ) determined that federation was the form of state. It was this council, of which Tito was a member, that provisionally took over the country after the war.

#### **4 THE CONSOLIDATION OF YUGOSLAVIA AND THE COLD WAR**

Tito took control of Yugoslavia and was widely accepted. The provisional government introduced important changes: it structured a basic state apparatus centralized in the federal government, nationalized the exploitation of mineral resources, communications and foreign trade. Industries, companies and financial institutions were also nationalized. This showed that Yugoslavia was following the political and economic model of the socialist countries. With respect to agriculture, most of the land remained under private control.

The first Constitution of the now Federative People's Republic was published in 1946. The immense diversity due to the country being composed of a multi-ethnic population was protected by the constitution. It formalized the right of succession of republics. The first fifteen years of the country, made up of six republics – Serbia, Croatia, Slovenia, Macedonia, Montenegro and Bosnia-Herzegovina were peaceful.

Tito's government was centralized and based on the structure of a single party – the Communist League. In the years in which he was in power, he sought to discourage conflict between ethnicities. For this, it encouraged the displacement of populations in order to mix ethnicities. The objective was to consolidate the idea of a Yugoslav identity above all else (PADRÓS, 1999). Thus, according to Hobsbawm, “the great achievement of communist regimes in multinational countries was to limit, within them, the disastrous effects of nationalism” (1990: 205).

Differences between Tito and Stalin caused the country to be expelled from the Cominform in 1948. Among the differences were the port city of Trieste, the formation of a possible Balkan Federation that could disrupt Stalin's plans regarding Central Europe. But the main difference was that Tito vehemently refused any intervention by the USSR with the desire to chart an independent path.

The consequences of this rupture in favor of national communism (SEVERO, 2011) were enormous: trade deficit, loss of basic necessities and manufactured goods, increase in arms expenses. The solutions for this were to base the economy on self-management, which resembled market socialism. This strategy worked well in general and the growth of the industry was observed in the 1950s. But the biggest problem was the foreign trade deficit that could only be solved with foreign loans. The huge Yugoslav foreign debt was one of the main causes for the country's dissolution in the post- Cold War period.

Tito's authoritarian regime decentralized the administration and gave power to the regional Popular Committees created during the Second World War. The next constitutions reinforced this idea and gave more autonomy to the republics. However, decisions at the federal level were hampered by this. In addition, the leader decided to separate the Communist Party, called since 1952 the Communist League of Yugoslavia from the State. This action spread administrative command socialism. It is observed that the USSR made this decision from 1986 onwards with Gorbachev's reforms.

During the Cold War, Tito sought to balance himself between Western and Soviet powers. Thus, it did not participate in the Marshall Plan and COMECON. It hosted the First Conference of Heads of State of Non-Aligned Countries in 1961 (HOBSBAWN, 2008). This movement increased Tito's *status* on the international scene (SEVERO, 2011). But Serbia was supported by the USSR, as it was historically linked to its area of influence, unlike Croatia and Slovenia, which were supported by Germany (JUDT, 2008).

For many years, the republics coexisted without problems, in part due to the charisma of the president. But in the 1970s, tensions began to appear. Serbia, supported by Montenegro, tried to achieve greater centralism in relation to the other republics, which displeased Slovenes and Croats who supported the federation. The figure of Slobodan Milosevic gained strength, who defended integration under Serbian hegemony.

On the economic front, the scenario was disheartening. Unpreparedness of the domestic economy, rising unemployment and external indebtedness were some of the problems. This indebtedness was caused by the chronic dependence on foreign loans from countries such as the United States and Germany and also from institutions such as the IMF and the World Bank. As Severo states, “political choices and economic

mismanagement on the part of the Yugoslav leaders also contributed to the country's economy not being able to get rid of external indebtedness" (2011: 82). It is possible to say that these financial institutions moved the country's economy. Despite pressuring the country to open its market to the West, economic advances up to the 1970s must be considered. Yugoslavia, an 80% agricultural country, managed to overcome underdevelopment.

Linked to economic aid were IMF pressures for market liberalizing reforms. As Michael Doyle (2007) said, the IMF does not oblige nations to follow its rules, but negotiates the conditions for receiving aid. But these processes are never devoid of political intentions. This shows how indebted countries become vulnerable to central countries that intend to increase their dominance over peripheral regions.

Over time, the import-based economy and dependence on international trade and financial institutions became unsustainable. That's what happened when the crisis hit for good in the 1980s. The oil crisis in the 1970s and the ensuing global debt crisis are some of the causes of the recession. In addition, the loss of the country's strategic importance resulting from the end of the Cold War must also be considered. From an internal point of view, Tito's death in 1980 contributed to the destabilization of the country.

Unemployment and international trade were Yugoslavia's two biggest problems at the time. In addition, the country suffered from adverse factors such as a rise in the value of the dollar, the diversion of private loans, an increase in interest rates and low prices of primary products. The recession made the country unable to import its basic products. Its exports were also severely affected due to the unfavorable international situation at the time.

The exit came through a structural adjustment loan by the IMF and the World Bank. This loan was directly related to the implementation of Washington Consensus policy guidelines . The consequences of these directives would prove to be disastrous and separatism appeared to be the only chance to escape the crisis.

## **5 YUGOSLAVIA DISINTEGRATION AND THE END OF THE COLD WAR**

In 1980 Tito's death brought what might be called the beginning of the end of Yugoslavia's history. The country was handed over to a rotating government among the eight autonomous republics and provinces (Vojvodina and Kosovo). This system did not work for long after the president's death, as the republics rose up in favor of independence.

The IMF provided two loans in 1979 and 1982 that had no practical effect. As a result, in 1983 the Long-Term Economic Stabilization Program was launched . This program was a package of market liberalization macroeconomic reforms (SEVERO, 2011). For the reform of the economic system, the Kraigher Commission was created in 1981 and for the reform of the political system, the Vrhovec Commission was created in 1985.

A controversial issue of the reforms was related to the extent of opening to the market. Some supported the restructuring of self-governing socialism. But the international community supported full adherence to market liberalism. To implement the reforms, the central government needed to regain its political authority. However, the republics were used to their autonomies guaranteed by constitutions and amendments for several years. This change brought several problems.

Early in the implementation of the reforms, the results were positive. There was an increase in exports, growth in GDP, surplus in the balance of payments. But soon after, a decrease in the population's quality of life was observed. The prices of basic consumption products increased as well as unemployment, which brought a general impoverishment of the population.

The richest republics, Croatia and Slovenia, which always felt they were supporting the poorest, were even more dissatisfied and wanted autonomy to deal with the crisis. This was due to the fact that Yugoslavia's economic production was aimed at the western market at the time, which favored Croatia and Slovenia. But this conjuncture harmed the poorer republics like Serbia and Montenegro that had an economy focused on agriculture and mining.

In this way, anti-federalist movements ended up gaining strength in the most developed republics. In the other republics, the appeal was for the recentralization of the government and the restructuring of the Yugoslav market. At that time, Kosovo, an autonomous province belonging to Serbia, began to show its aspirations for independence. The population, mostly Albanian, wanted to create an Albanian state independent of Yugoslavia. This Albanian state, later known as "Greater Albania" will gain considerable prominence in the Kosovo war in the late 1990s.

An example of this was the demonstration by Kosovar students at the University of Pristina in 1966. They demanded "political rights, recognition of republic status and participation in state development programmes. They justified their claims by remembering that they constituted a third of the total population of the Federation" (PADRÓS, 1999: 140).

Regarding Wallerstein's (1976) world system theory, Yugoslavia could be compared to the world system and was divided into centre, periphery and semi-periphery (SEVERO, 2011). The most developed republics such as Slovenia and Croatia were characterized as the center, which already had their economies fully turned to the West. Serbia and the autonomous province of Vojvodina were the semi-periphery. Macedonia, Montenegro and Bosnia-Herzegovina, the main suppliers of primary products, served as the periphery. Kosovo, a very poor province with a family farming economy, did not even enter this system.

In the midst of the economic recession, new agreements with the IMF had to be made in 1987. But this time, the aid was conditioned to clearly neoliberal measures and they were more rigid than the others. Due to the growing trade deficit there was no other way out for Prime Minister Branko Mikulić. The new reforms again brought negative consequences for the population such as new taxes, currency devaluation, salary cuts, increase in the price of oil, food and transport. The reform also brought greater political and economic centralization, which served to contain nationalist insurgencies.

In 1989, the then Prime Minister Ante Markovic abolished the system of self-management and all remnants of socialism, which led to the bankruptcy of half of Yugoslav companies. Due to the economic crisis and the collapse of communism in other countries, the government ended up losing its legitimacy, which increased the power of local elites, reinforcing nationalisms. In the next few years Yugoslavia saw its own demise. It should be noted that nationalisms and ethical issues contributed to the disintegration, but were not the only cause.

The attempt to eliminate socialism as quickly as possible had disastrous consequences for the country. The working population began to suffer from the lack of benefits that were guaranteed by the socialist model. Shock therapy, launched in 1990, had characteristics typical of countries in recession. Freezing and falling wages, very high inflation, rationing of domestic consumer goods were some of them. At the same time, Brazil was experiencing a similar recession.

Due to the economic crisis, the central government began to have difficulties in providing basic services. All the revenue obtained was turned to exports. In this way, the government ended up losing its legitimacy. This loss of legitimacy was also due to the collapse of communism in the neighboring Soviet republics. This situation made the local elites stronger and the aspirations for independence became more concrete.

Nationalist movements emerged in Croatia in the 1970s. But the Tito government responded strongly. He claimed that these movements were influenced by foreign powers more than dissatisfaction with reforms and nationalist sentiments (SEVERO, 2011). Furthermore, Hudson (2003) says that these groups wanted to weaken the self-management economy and devalue the role of workers.

According to Severo (2011), Croats and Slovenes were against centralization, as they claimed that the State restricted their economic interests. In addition, the less developed republics demanded a lot of resources and became a “burden” for the country as a whole. According to the author, this was the main reason for the separatism of Slovenia and Croatia. In 1989, the Slovenian constitution guaranteed the right of secession.

In the early 1990s, Serbs who supported centralization maneuvered to win more presidential votes than other republics. Each of them had one vote. But the regime of Slobodan Milosevic withdrew the autonomy and consequently the vote of the Serbian autonomous provinces (Kosovo and Vojvodina). Croatia and Slovenia were against this attitude. Furthermore, they accused Milosevic of extreme nationalism and of supporting the Serb minority in Croatia, which, according to unsubstantiated sources, wanted to form “Greater Serbia”. Slovenes came to support Kosovo 's independence .

In the 1990s, multi-party elections were held in republics. The federal elections, which were also planned, were vetoed by Slovenia on separatist grounds. Nationalist parties won in Croatia and Slovenia and socialist parties won in Serbia and Montenegro. Prime Minister Ante Markovic was in favor of the market economy, the federal model and multi-party democracy. In addition, he wanted to move closer to the European Union. But he received criticism from Serbia and Slovenia.

The Croatian leader elected was Franjo Tudjman . He was anti-Semitic and against Serbia. As soon as he came into power, he withdrew from public office and denationalized the Serbs residing in Croatia. As a result, relations with Serbs and other minorities turned violent. In this context, the Serb community of Krajina , which wanted to become an autonomous region, spoke out against Tudjman .

In 1991, after opening up the market, Slovenia, Croatia and Macedonia proclaimed their independence. This act triggered a serious crisis on the part of the central government and Serbia. There was armed confrontation in Slovenia that became known as the Ten Days War. This conflict pitted the central army, the JNA and the Slovenian army which acted through the Slovenian Territorial Defense. Slovenian troops managed to quickly stop the central army. Slovenia was already prepared for confrontation before independence with the formation of the Slovenian Guard and regional Militia Forces.

The JNA faced various difficulties throughout the wars. Like Yugoslavia, initially this army was made up of several ethnicities. However, during the conflicts many soldiers refused to fight against their own people. In addition, many refused to fight, as they did not want to be part of a communist army. This was formed by a Serb majority and later became an army of Serbs and began to act in their favor.

The Soviet Union did not support the disintegration of Yugoslavia because it also had breakaway regions. Thus, he intervened in the conflict only politically and not militarily. The ceasefire was made official by the Brioni Treaty on July 7, 1991 and was supported by the European Community. This agreement represented Slovenia's de facto independence.

In Croatia, on the other hand, there was an impasse in the self-proclaimed autonomous region of Krajina where the Serbian population wanted to continue belonging to Yugoslavia. But the Croatian population, which was the majority, refused the decision. There were armed clashes between Serbs and Croats and the JNA had to intervene in the region.

Croatia cut ties with Serbia shortly after its declaration of independence. This sparked a civil war between the Croatian militia and the Serb-Croats , which necessitated the intervention of the JNA. But the central army tended to support the Serb-Croats as it was mostly composed of Serb militants. Austria, Denmark, Hungary and Switzerland supported Croatian independence while the UK, France and the US and Russia supported the union of Yugoslavia.

The media supported Croatia's independence after the central army occupied the city of Dubrovnik , considered a historical and architectural heritage. Serbs were considered evil and Croats considered victims. The UN and the European Union tried to mediate the ceasefire. In September 1991, Milosevic and Tudjman signed a declaration and pledged to respect minorities and no longer use violence (SEVERO, 2011).

The UN Secretary General at the time, Pérez de Cuellar , considered the conflict to be an internal Yugoslavia issue. But the international community considered it a civil war. The final ceasefire agreement was signed in January 1992 and guaranteed Croatia's independence.

In Macedonia, tensions existed between Slavic Macedonians and Albanians. But the country achieved independence peacefully. The biggest difficulty was international recognition. Greece was its biggest obstacle. The reasons were the fear of a Macedonian advance towards Greece, in addition to the Macedonian flag which contained Greek symbols. They even decreed a trade embargo on Macedonia. With that, the country changed its flag as well as the name of the nation that came to be called the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.

In 1991, Bosnia's leader Izetbegovic proposed in parliament the country's separation from Yugoslavia. But the Bosnian Serbs rejected the proposal. Independence could only be accepted after consultation and acceptance of the three largest Bosnian communities – Bosnian Muslims, Bosnian Serbs and Bosnian Croats. Thus, in March 1992 a referendum was held to discuss independence. The Bosnian Serbs rejected it once again, as they wanted to remain in Yugoslavia. The result was 99% in favor of independence.

However, not the entire population participated in the referendum, which made it invalid. Even so, Bosnia and Herzegovina's independence was declared in March 1992 by government representative Izetbegovic. This attitude significantly increased tensions between the Bosnian, Serb and Croatian ethnic groups that formed the region. The European Union tried to make an agreement between the three ethnic groups, but it was not able to stop the conflict that took on catastrophic proportions.

The Lisbon Treaty of 1992 was an attempt to calm tempers between the three groups. It guaranteed equal rights and the right to self-determination to all groups. In addition, it divided the country into cantons based on ethnicity. But he did not address minority rights and structural issues of the state. This agreement could have avoided conflict, but it was not fully implemented. Representatives of Bosnian Muslims and Bosnian Serbs rejected the treaty shortly after signing.

The United States and the European Community recognized Bosnia's independence. The objective, for the USA, of this recognition was the strengthening of its area of influence in central Europe. At that time, the return of a united Yugoslavia became impossible.

In May, a violent armed conflict broke out. Bosnian Serbs attacked Bosnian Muslims. The Bosnian Serbs, with the help of the JNA, claimed and occupied several territories in Bosnia. However, according to Hudson (2003) these territories were historically occupied by Serbs. Muslim Bosnians tried to create a Muslim state by giving up Bosnian identity, as ethnicities could not come to an agreement. This further heightened tensions and pushed away the possibilities for a peace agreement.

The wave of violence prompted the UN to establish economic sanctions on Yugoslavia. But these sanctions, rather than discouraging Milosevic's support for the Bosnian Serbs, reinforced it further. As no one could understand the conflict, (civil war or international conflict) the international community was in doubt about who to support. The US, on the other hand, clearly supported Bosnian Muslims and Croats which helped to intensify the conflict with Bosnian Serbs.

The media portrayed the conflict as a Serbian attack on Bosnian Muslims. These were reported as the greatest casualties of the war. But Bosnian Muslims even attacked their own people only to blame the Bosnian Serbs and attract media attention. The discovery of concentration camps in Omarska worsened the image of Bosnian Serbs and shocked the international community. Concentration camps for Croats and Muslims also existed, but they were not reported in the press.

The US intervened in the conflict and NATO occupied the country. At the end of the war, in 1995, the Dayton Agreement was signed. Milosevic had to accept Bosnia's independence. From there, the country was formed by the Croatian Muslim Federation (51%) and the Bosnian-Serbian Republic (49%). The agreement guaranteed the legitimacy of sovereignty, but in practice Bosnia became an “international protectorate” in which the UN High Representative was responsible for the country's reconstruction.

Kosovar students took to the streets to demand independence. The Yugoslav government violently repressed the demonstrations and even declared a state of emergency. Many Serbs who inhabited Kosovo left the region. This episode heightened tensions between Kosovar Albanians and Serbs. In 1989 Kosovo's autonomous province status was revoked, which increased the desire for secession.

In 1992, the Democratic League of Kosovo led by Ibrahim Rugova declared the region's independence, but did not gain any international support. At the same time, the Kosovo Liberation Army (ELK) was formed. This armed force was secretly supported by the German secret service and the government of Albania and the United States. However, the group was not supported by the civilian population. The KLA has been classified as a terrorist group. Their actions caused many deaths of both Serbs and Kosovar Albanians accused of supporting the Serbian government (SEVERO, 2011).

In the late 1990s, the Albanian population in the region was much larger than the Serbian population. In addition, Kosovo received thousands of Albanians at that time, as Albania was facing a serious crisis. As tensions escalated, many Serbs had to leave the province. This huge demographic disparity contributed to the war in Kosovo. Serbia tried to soften this difference by sending Serbs to inhabit the region and creating a kind of “servility”.

In 1998, the Kosovo Liberation Army intensified its military actions with the support of some Albanian elites. The violence practiced by the KLA and the desire to form “Greater Albania” provoked a violent Serbian reaction. With that, in 1998, the Serbian army invaded the region to try to destroy the KLA bases. Once again, ethnic cleansing was the instrument used by the Serbs, led by Milosevic, against the Albanian Kosovars. In the same year, the government of Serbia agreed to the presence of the European Organization for Security and Cooperation (OCSE).

The United States intervened in the Kosovo conflict as well as in Bosnia. This intervention resulted in the bombing of NATO. The Americans were not in favor of Milosevic's policy that did not allow Yugoslavia to enter the liberal system. Thus, behind the defense of the Albanian minority and human rights, the desire of the Americans was to eliminate the remnants of socialism that remained in central Europe and to consolidate capitalism. Thus, strategic interests dictated which parties states should support.

In 1999 there was the NATO air strike. The reasons for the bombing, according to NATO, were to weaken Milosevic, avoid ethnic cleansing and impose the Rambouillet Agreement (PADRÓS, 1999). By trying to weaken Milosevic with the attacks, NATO wore out politically, caused immense destruction in the province and made more than a million refugees. The Rambouillet Agreement was not fulfilled because it meant, in short, the end of sovereignty not only for Kosovo but also for the whole of Yugoslavia.

After months of bombing and much destruction, Milosevic gives in to Western pressure and withdraws his troops from Kosovar territory. After this period, the country was under the supervision of international organizations: the UN was responsible for the administration of the territory, the OCSE for legislative demands and for NATO security issues. In 2001 democratic elections took place with the victory of Rugova, leader of the Democratic League of Kosovo (LDK).

The prime minister of what was left of Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro) was Zoran Djindjic. He denounced Milosevic at the International Criminal Tribunal for Yugoslavia. Milosevic was convicted of crimes against humanity in Kosovo and genocide in Bosnia. In 2006, Montenegro peacefully seceded from Serbia, ending the disintegration of Yugoslavia.

## **6 FINAL CONSIDERATIONS**

The conflicts that led to the disintegration of Yugoslavia can be understood using multiple causalities (GADDIS, 2003). It is true that ethnic rivalries are included in these causes, but they were not the only ones. To consider only them is to restrict the events of an entire historical process. Thus, this historical process is approached by the trajectory of its statesmen, mainly Joseph Tito and also by Milosevic - but it can also be dealt with through deep forces (DUROSELLE, 2000). The deep forces included in the causal system influence, but do not determine, the actions of statesmen. These can be called "ideal types" because they have certain characteristics and peculiarities. Based on strategic calculations, they determine the path to be followed by a given State.

Yugoslav disintegration can also be explained by its forced insertion into the post- Cold War world system. This insertion added to a crisis of gigantic proportions brought chaos, destruction, an immense number of refugees and dead. In addition, the hesitation and omission of Western countries to intervene in the conflict also caused the clashes to reach that state. This hesitation is justified by the lack of understanding of the conflict: civil or international war.

The economic crisis, unemployment, misery, corruption of the bureaucratic elite served to encourage ethnic and national rivalries. Some Western countries such as states also contributed to the disintegration and even fostered rivalries. Its objectives were political, ideological and economic. With that, they aimed at the implantation of capitalism and the adoption of the neoliberal model. This meant access to market, labor and semiperipheral resources. Slovenia and Croatia, for example, offered market opportunities that interested the great powers. The other interest of these countries in the Balkan region was the payment of the external debt.

Yugoslavia suffered from the two world wars, was historically dominated by empires and was in the dispute between capitalist and socialist powers. After Tito's death there were no solid foundations to keep the country together and the result was its dissolution. It is impossible to say whether Yugoslavia would continue to exist post- Cold War. The fact is that war, the international system and capital, allied to ethnic and nationalist rivalries contributed to the end of this singular state.

Gradually, the former republics were adopting the paths of democracy. But its economic indices remain lower than those of other European states. Kosovo is still totally dependent on Western powers and its political independence is still being discussed . Animosities exist, characteristic of multi-ethnic societies with a recent bloody past. This can be explained by the rivalries between organized soccer fans in Croatia and Serbia. It is not a simple rivalry between clubs, but the affirmation of an identity. The dispute between these teams serves to show that the Yugoslav memory remains latent.

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