

Introduction: Potentials of (Dis)order in the Caucasus and Yugoslavia

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Conflict after empire

Organised inter-group violence has been linked to primordial instincts, to the struggle for power and profit, to the ambitions of ethnic entrepreneurs, and most often to uncertainty and fear. Here violence is linked to institutions. It is asked which institutions foster violence, and which institutions on the contrary provide for procedures that turn 'either-or-conflicts' into 'more-or-less' conflicts. It is asked which institutional arrangements lead to societal fragmentation, and which can integrate society even when state power is virtually absent. The implosion of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) and the Federal Yugoslav Republic provide ample material for this endeavour.

Judging by historical and contemporary evidence, the collapse of multi-ethnic empires is almost inevitably a conflict prone process. The implosion of the central state and its hierarchies turn imperial peripheries into peripheries without empires. The former centrally administered society fragments into multiple societies, which have to (re-) build state administrations, (re-) draw boundaries, and (re-) invent loyalties. They have to establish new institutional arrangements for self-regulation in order to ensure security, political participation and economic development after empire. These institutions have to be inscribed into a political space, whose boundaries are often ill defined and contested. And there has to be an understanding of who is legitimately in charge of drawing these institutions, and to whom these new rules of the game are going to apply.

The implosion of the socialist empires forced the societies of the post-socialist spaces to redefine the most basic institutions that govern social life. They had, in short, to embark upon a process of competitive and contested polity building.

All the societies of the collapsed empires faced this challenge. Not all societies, however, managed to find a non-violent solution. Those administrative units of the collapsing empires with a multi-ethnic population faced particular problems: the ambitions and fears of two or more ethnic groups had to be addressed, separatist tendencies had to be avoided, growing antagonism along ethnic lines needed to be defused and the attempts of ethnic entrepreneurs to conquer the state by using ethnicity as a mobilising resource had to be blocked. Some of the post-socialist societies have successfully managed these tasks and have avoided violence; others have succeeded in polity building, but only at the price of conflict and violence. And some have completely failed – they have lost the state and internal violence became endemic.

Thus, it is not only violence that needs to be explained, but, in a more general sense, the different response of the post-socialist societies to the conflicts that followed the collapse of the central state.

This volume deals with the institutional framework in post-socialist, after-empire spaces. The volume consists of nine case studies and two contributions of a more theoretical nature. Each of these analytical narratives sheds some light on the micro-politics of organised violence. All case studies are taken from the Caucasus and Former Yugoslavia. This has allowed, implicitly, and at times directly, the use of a comparative approach in order to identify those institutions which had an impact on the organisation of violence, and on the organisation of non-violent stability respectively. Comparing cases from the Caucasus and Former Yugoslavia can be a rewarding endeavour for two reasons: firstly, both regions have produced ample material for the study of violent conflicts. Secondly, both regions share a number of structural similarities. All cases are thus embedded in a relatively similar context, which makes it easier to identify the relevant factors.

In the Caucasus, there have been four major violent conflicts. The first to erupt was, in 1988, the quarrel between Armenians and Azeris over Nagorno-Karabakh, an autonomous province within Azerbaijan but mainly populated by Armenians (on this war see Koehler in this volume). The quest of the Armenians of Nagorno Karabakh to join Armenia lead to a large-scale conflict and massive ethnic cleansing on the territories of Armenia and Azerbaijan. The conflict is still not resolved and Nagorno Karabakh's status remains undecided.

The status of Georgia's break away autonomous provinces of South Ossetia and Abkhazia are also undecided; both provinces broke away when their host state, the Georgian Soviet republic, became the independent sovereign Republic of Georgia (see Baev in this volume). After heavy fighting, which has caused massive refugee flows, the two conflicts are frozen, at least for the time being.

The forth major Caucasian conflict is the Chechen war for independence. When the USSR broke apart in 1991, the Chechens reacted by declaring their independence, thus

unilaterally seceding from the Russian Federation. This move eventually triggered the first Chechen war (1994 – 1996), which Russia lost on the battlefield. Since October 1999, Russia has again engaged the Chechen guerrilla, trying to re-establish its state authority. Surprisingly, Chechnya's neighbour, the republic of Dagestan, has avoided internal turmoil and has opted to stay within the Russian Federation. Kisriev in this volume discusses the factors that caused the very different response to the Soviet breakdown by these two republics which share many structural similarities.

In Yugoslavia, there were also four major violent conflicts: the first to start and to end was the short campaign of the Yugoslav army against the breakaway republic of Slovenia in June 1991. This is the only conflict from this sample that qualifies as a typical inter-state war. The second was the violent clash in Croatia between Croats and Serbs. In August 1991, the fighting began in those regions of Croatia where Serbs formed an absolute or relative majority of the population. Intensive fighting took place in Eastern Croatia and in the Krajina. The Serbian militias that had been organised well in advance, were armed mainly from the stock of the Yugoslav Army, which actively took part in the fighting. Grandits and Leutloff provide in this volume a detailed account of the organisation of violence in the Krajina.

The third Yugoslav conflict was the war in and about Bosnia and involved fierce fighting between Serbs, Bosniaks¹ and Croats, with changing local alliances between adversaries in the course of the war (see Gosztanyi on consequences of the war for so-called Herceg-Bosna).

The most recent war so far in former Yugoslavia was the war over Kosovo, which was fought on the one hand between Serbs and Kosovo-Albanians in Kosovo, and on the other hand between NATO and Serbia. Raufer in this volume treats one aspect of the Kosovo wars, namely the intertwining of political violence and organised crime. Mappes-Niediek takes a broader

perspective and sheds light on the process of restraint and eventual escalation of violence focusing on the organisational potential of the local population and the state at place.

All of these conflicts are often labelled ethno-political conflicts. This term implies that at the core of the organisation of violence lie the political aspirations of ethnically defined groups. This is certainly not wrong: the slow decline and eventual collapse of the Soviet and the Yugoslav empires was partly triggered, partly accompanied by the quest for national sovereignty, put forward by the ideologists of many nationalities in the crumbling empires.

However, the label 'ethno-political' is in some respects more deceiving than revealing. While all of these violent conflicts may have been fuelled by the aspirations of ethnically defined groups and their leaders, all were framed and shaped by the administrative-territorial borders of the crumbling empires. At the core of these conflicts lies the struggle over the status of territorial units, which formerly belonged to federal states. Thus, the label of 'status conflict' is probably more adequate than the label of 'ethno-political conflict'. Status conflicts arise when the main objective of one conflict group is to unilaterally upgrade the status of its territory or its administrative unit or when an existing status is downgraded by the central power. The objective can be to form an autonomous unit within the host state, to form an independent, sovereign state, or to join a neighbouring state.

The fault line of all hot conflicts in the two regions can be traced back to the system of ethno-federalism of the USSR and Yugoslavia: Both the USSR and Yugoslavia were asymmetric federations, that is, they consisted of territorial units with different status. On the first level, there were, in the case of the USSR, fifteen federal republics, while Yugoslavia consisted of six federal republics. First order units were, according to the Soviet constitution, sovereign states and possessed all institutional prerequisites for statehood. They had political institutions, political symbols, a constitution, borders and a titular nation. *De jure* they even had the right to have their

own armed forces. Within these first order units, there were units of the second order, which were subordinated to the units of the first order. While these second order units enjoyed lesser privileges than the first order units, they nevertheless possessed similar institutional prerequisites for statehood. Overall, there are eleven units of the second order in the Caucasus.² Three of them (Abkhazia, Adzharia and South-Ossetia) were autonomous republics within Soviet Georgia; Nagorno-Karabakh was a second order unit within Soviet Azerbaijan. Seven second order units are within the Russian Federation. These are Chechnya, Adygeja, Dagestan, Ingushetia, Kabardino-Balkaria, Karachayev-Cherkessia and North-Ossetia.

Yugoslavia had only two administrative units of the second order, Kosovo and Voivodina, both within Serbia. In 1989, Milosevic had removed the autonomous status of both units, a move which created a dramatic backlash in Kosovo, leading to the establishment of a parallel shadow administration and aggravated the Kosovo-Albanians' quest for more autonomy or even independence.

After the implosion of the USSR and Yugoslavia, the first order subjects of the federations became independent and were quickly recognised by the international community.

Thus, Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan of the former USSR, and Serbia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia, Slovenia, Montenegro and Macedonia of Yugoslavia became newly independent states. (Serbia and Montenegro together form the successor state of Yugoslavia).

The sovereignty and territorial integrity of these newly independent states was from the beginning challenged by the secessionist ambitions of the second order units, the former Autonomous Republics. Thus, Russia was confronted with breakaway Chechnya, Georgia with breakaway Abkhazia and South Ossetia, Azerbaijan with breakaway Nagorno-Karabakh, Serbia with breakaway Kosovo. In all these cases, the administrative borders of the USSR and of the Yugoslav Federation provided the template for the secessionist movements, while the

bureaucracies of the second order units provided the organisational resources for the secessionist movements. Only the armed secessionist movements in Croatia (the Serbs of the Krajina) and in Bosnia-Herzegovina (the Croats and the Serbs) did not follow the template of the administrative borders, but rather the patterns of ethnic settlements and ethnic geography.

Notably, there has been no 'classical' inter-state war, with the possible exception of the short campaign of the Yugoslav Army against Slovenia. The form of violence witnessed in the Caucasus and in Former Yugoslavia has typically not been organised and executed by state armies, and the violence has typically been confined within the borders of the state or polity where it has its roots. Although some of the neighbouring states assigned considerable resources to the support of their secessionist ethnic brethren (Serbia supported the Serbs in the Krajina, and later in Bosnia; Bosnian Croats were supported by Croatia; Armenia supported Nagorno-Karabakh Armenians), all avoided straight, official intervention, thus avoiding outright escalation on the one hand and stigmatisation by the international community on the other hand (Gosztonyi 1998).

Violence is organised either between the state and an identity group, or between two identity groups rather than between states. However, with regard to the Caucasus and Yugoslavia during the first years after the end of the empires, the notion of 'state' is misleading. The successor states of the USSR and Yugoslavia often had to organise their state capacities from scratch. The violent contest between 'secessionist rebels' and 'states' thus resembles, especially in the Caucasus, the competition between two up-starts competing for the same market. With the wars of Azerbaijan against the breakaway Nagorno-Karabakh and Georgia against the breakaway Abkhazia and South-Ossetia, the 'rebel up-starts' proved to be much more efficient in organising violence than the 'up-start states' they challenged. Consequently, the 'rebels' won on the battlefield.

In all conflicts, the borders between privately organised, entrepreneurial violence and publicly organised, state sponsored violence were somewhat permeable. The armed conflicts in the Caucasus and in Yugoslavia may have been fought in the name of the state and of ethnicised groups, but the fighters were more often than not private entrepreneurs. In all cases not only state actors were involved in the organisation of violence, but also a myriad of non-state actors, like paramilitaries, warlords, criminal gang leaders, militias, and self-defence units, and the distinction between state actors and non-state actors was blurred. Grandits and Leutloff's account of organised violence in the Krajina, Mappes-Niediek's of Kosovo, Koehler's of Nagorno-Karabakh and Baev's account of the internal war in Georgia underline this point.

Christophe in her chapter shows that the key actors in the ethno-political conflicts in post-Soviet Caucasus are not ethnic groups, but instead patrimonial networks with particular interests. These networks are in turn an institutional legacy of the 'socialist production state'. This socialist mode of production required the total penetration of society by the state. As a result the Soviet state constantly overstretched its capacities. In order to compensate for the resulting institutional weakness, the state vested power in personal networks rather than institutions. Patron-client networks were used as a means of governance. After the collapse in 1991, these networks filled the institutional vacuum - patrimonial networks, using symbols and discourses of ethnicity, took over what was left of the state. This, however, must be seen as a sign of weakness rather than a sign of strength of nationalism: nationalism proved to be too weak to overcome the patrimonial networks dominating society and regulating conflicts over the distribution of resources. In this sense the weakness, not the strength of Transcaucasian nationalism proved to be harmful. Nationalism can be crucial in overcoming informal practices and ousting patrimonial networks, as was the case in the Baltic States. As a rule in the Transcaucasus, it merely served as an additional resource for patrimonial, private networks.

The exception, as argued by Koehler, is the period of Armenian 'war-nationalism'. For the period of perceived existential crisis, otherwise competing patrimonial networks were temporarily integrated, an integration facilitated by the imitation of core functions of statehood through nationalist mobilisation.

Organisers of violence may develop a vested interest in the sustainability of organised violence for economic motives. Conflicts which started as struggles for ideological-political goals may then turn into 'markets of violence', a term used by Georg Elwert in this volume to describe a situation where violence becomes a means for profit making and warlords become entrepreneurs of violence. Elwert argues that violence requires logistics and logistics require investments: one can steal weapons but one still needs to buy fuel. In environments where violence is profitable the invisible hand of the market rewards those who economically organise violence; this means that entrepreneurs in markets of violence must trade in goods with a very high value per weight such as drugs, gold, diamonds or weapons, they must recruit a cheap 'labour-force' (fighters) through the spreading of fear and the destruction of alternative labour ('burn the crops and blame the enemy'), and they must tap humanitarian aid to sustain the market of violence. By understanding the economic rationale of markets of violence, conclusions can be drawn about how to stop violence: raising the costs of violence can be achieved by closing the borders for supply, denying access to financial markets and eventually establishing a monopoly of violence by external powers.

Raufer's chapter also stresses the importance of what he calls an often-overlooked aspect of the Kosovo war, namely the symbiosis of political and private violence, the latter being interested only in economic profits. His chapter focuses exclusively on Albanian organised crime and omits the political context of the Kosovo conflict. This view from a criminologist reminds

scholars of organised violence that the linkages between political violence and organised crime deserve more systematic research.

Yugoslavia and the Caucasus are 'conflict regions' that are characterised by a remarkably similar environment. Firstly, when the central states collapsed in 1989 (Yugoslavia), and 1991 (USSR) respectively, both regions fell victim to the most dramatic mode of state weakness – state collapse. State weakness breeds uncertainty and fear and opens windows of opportunity for political entrepreneurs, all of which increase the risk of violent conflicts.

Secondly, banal but highly important – both regions were flooded with cheap weapons after the collapse of empires. Each successor state of the two empires received its share of weapons, and rebel up-starts simply stole or bought weapons from the crumbling central armies.

Thirdly, both regions score relatively high on risk increasing factors, such as history of mutual grievances, rough terrain and complex, intermingled patterns of ethnic settlement. These are the factors, among others, that the literature has identified as having a negative impact on prospects for ethno-political stability.³

Administrative Units in the Caucasus and Former Yugoslavia, selected (ethnic, religious and titular) identity groups⁴

Administrative Unit / Republic	Population	Titular identity group	Largest other identity groups
North Caucasus			
Chechnya ⁵ (Russian Federation)	836,000	Chechen 73%	Russian: 27%
Dagestan	1,800,000	None	Avar

(Russian Federation)	2,188			28%	Dargin
				16%	Kumyk
				13%	Russian
				09%	Lezgin
				11%	Tabasaran
				04%	Nogay
				02%	Rutul
				01%	Aghul
				01%	
South					
Caucasus					
Abkhazia (Georgia)	525, 061	Abkhaz ⁶	18%		Georgian
					46%
					Armenian
					14%
					Russian
					13%
Adzharia ⁷ (Georgia)	392, 432	Adzharian			Georgian (non-Muslim)
		63%			23%
					Russian
					08%
					Armenian
					04%
South Ossetia (Georgia)	98,5 27	Ossetian	66%		Georgian
					29%
					Russian
					02%
Nagorno- Karabakh (Azerbaijan)	189, 085	None			Armenian
					77%

Former Yugoslavia ⁸ Administrative Unit / Republic	Population	Titular identity group	Largest other identity groups
Bosnia-Herzegovina	4,359,895	None	Azeri 22% Muslim 44% Serb 31% Croat 17% Yugoslav 05%
Croatia	4,784,265	Croat 78%	Serb 12% Yugoslav 02%
Macedonia	2,159,503	Macedonian 65%	Albanian 22% Turkish 04% Roma 03% Serb 02% Other 04%
Serbia and Montenegro (Yugoslavia) ⁹	11,101,833	Serb 63% Montenegrins 06%	Albanian 14% Hungarian 04% Other 13%
Slovenia	1,965,116	Slovenian 91%	Croat 03% Serb 02%
Kosovo ¹⁰	1,974,747	None	Albanian 82% Serb 10%

Muslims

03%

Roma

02%

Montenegrin

01%

Fourthly, there is the institutional legacy of the Socialist system. The most important of the bits of imperial wreckage that continue to shape events is the socialist system of ethno-federalism. As a peculiarity of Soviet and Yugoslav federalism, all first order units (the fifteen federal republics in the USSR and the six federal republics of Yugoslavia) and some of the second order units (autonomous republics within federal republics) were ethnically defined. Although Yugoslav Federalism was originally very much a copy of the Soviet system, there were some differences. The USSR was *de facto* and *de jure* more centralised than Yugoslavia. A Yugoslav Federal Republic enjoyed more privileges than a Soviet Republic did. On the other hand, in the USSR there was an informal system of quotas that assigned a more than proportional share of key posts within the republic to members of the titular nation. This was not applied in Yugoslavia. The relatively high percentage of Serbs in key position within Kosovo (10 per cent Serbian population) and Croatia (17 per cent Serbian population) was indeed an issue of complaint for Kosovo-Albanians and Croats.

The most important aspect of this system of ethno-federalism was, however, that in both Federations, the federal units each had their titular nation; ethnicity thus became 'territorialised'. After the breakdown of the federal states, this linkage of a territory to an ethnic group provided an excellent breeding ground for a wave of secessionism, since the socialist ethno-federalism had

provided the titular nations with a clear cut territory, a state bureaucracy, mass media, an education system and national symbols. These were assets that considerably reduced the cost of secessionism. Giordano reminds us in his chapter that the territorialisation of ethnicity is not only the legacy of socialist federalism but started earlier with land reforms motivated by emerging nationalist political elites in the Balkan region.

All four factors - state weakness, cheap and readily available weapons, the presence of risk-increasing factors and the legacy of the socialist ethno-federalism – help explain the emergence of organised violence. And since all factors are common to both regions, the comparability of the case studies presented here is increased.

The rich empirical material that these regions have produced can be structured in different ways. Firstly, in both regions, hot conflicts have emerged on the ruins of collapsed ethno-territorial, socialist federations. By comparing Yugoslavia and the Caucasus as macro-regions and highlighting the similarities, we are able to highlight the risk potential of the socialist legacy, most notably, of the system of ethno-federalism.

A second comparison could be designed for addressing the different processes of conflict escalation in these two regions: organised violence in Yugoslavia proved to be more intense and more contagious than in the Caucasus. Organised violence in Yugoslavia has torn a country to pieces, - Bosnia-Herzegovina - and only international intervention has put it back together again, albeit in a rough and ready way. Violence in Yugoslavia has been organised on a larger scale, and, as inappropriate this may sound with regard the individual suffering in all of these wars, has led to even worse atrocities than in the Caucasus. Comparing the Caucasus with Yugoslavia may help to find an answer to the question of why the Caucasus has so far avoided following the worst-case scenario. Two factors are apparent which help explain the different outcomes:

The first factor pertains to the way the federal centres reacted to the secessionist ambitions of the subjects of the Federations. In Yugoslavia during the 1980s, the most powerful of the Republics, Serbia, tried to usurp the position of the dwindling federal Yugoslav centre. This alienated the other republics, which feared Serbian hegemony. Thus they intensified their struggle for secession, while the Serbian dominated centre tried to hold the federation together by force. When this became apparently impossible, Milosevic tried to secure a 'greater Serbia' - at the expense of the territorial integrity of Croatia and later Bosnia-Herzegovina.

By contrast, in the USSR, the most powerful of the Republics, Russia, opposed the Soviet centre. It was mainly the democratic movement in the Russian republic that prevented the centre from holding the Union together by force. Russia was, until 1991, the natural ally of the secessionist Union Republics. The Russian Republic under Yeltsin thus checked the hegemonic aspirations of the Soviet centre, which explains the relative ease with which the centre let the republics go during 1990 – 1991.

Secondly, size matters. After the demise of the USSR, Russia became by far the most powerful of the successor states. Russia still had, despite the period of dramatic state weakness after 1991, the means to protect the vital interests of the state, to protect Russian minorities living outside Russia and to scare off challengers. Russia thus, by and large, avoided ethno-political violence within its territory and refrained from large-scale interventions outside its territory. The bloody war in Chechnya is the exception. In Yugoslavia, Serbia and Croatia emerged as two states with relatively similar capacities. Therefore, neither had the means to scare off the other or decisively win. The results were the bloody wars in Croatia and Bosnia.

The chapters in this volume are, however, mainly concerned with the third aspect, namely with the micro-politics of organised violence. Most chapters in this volume deal with the question of how conflict potential was either defused or transferred into organised violence, taking

into account the relatively similar environment of Yugoslavia and the Caucasus. If there is a common question in all of the case studies, then it is the question of which institutions provided incentives for the organisation of violence, and which institutions, on the contrary, discouraged the organisation of violence. The task that the contributors to this volume have taken up in empirical case studies is to identify those particular institutional frameworks that have blocked or promoted organised violence. The findings of the case studies (a synopsis of which is presented in the last chapter) should therefore be of interests to both area specialists and scholars of conflict and peace.

Explaining violence: Institutions at work

Violence, although here by no means the black hole of irrationality and atavism as often portrayed, nevertheless retains a great deal of contingency. In almost every social situation, violence can be one of the strategies that actors chose in order to obtain their goals. Violence is a socially ubiquitous phenomenon, and therefore there are an unlimited number of possible factors and combinations of factors that can trigger violence. The understanding of violence by social sciences is also seriously hampered by the fact that there are only few empirical studies on the processes of violence available; such empirical expertise seems to be, however, of special importance, since violence is a phenomenon of human interaction in which discourse and action may radically differ – the narratives on the phenomenon may conceal rather than describe the process itself.¹¹ This point is demonstrated by Kisriev in this book; according to his assessment of the post-Soviet power games in Dagestan the public ethno-nationalist discourse ‘does not reveal but hides the structures of power’. The same point is stressed by Koehler in his account of the war in Nagorno-Karabakh.

In their search for explanations of violence, many scholars focus on factors which increase the risk of violence. Among the most often quoted are such factors as cultural differences; a history of mutual grievances and ancient hatred; group cohesion and the strength of group identity; patterns of settlement and ethnic demography; defensible borders and rough terrain; the degree of state violence and group discrimination; external support and access to weapons. While it is certainly not denied that these factors can and do increase the risk of organised violence (and many chapters in this book illustrate the importance of some of these factors) the listing of such factors is considered of only limited explanatory value.¹²

Organised stability and organised violence are always multi-factoral phenomena, and it may be very difficult to isolate the right factor or the right combination of factors that have actually triggered violence. Therefore, the question of 'what causes violence' may be of less heuristic value than 'how and when violence is organised'.

For organised violence to emerge, it takes certain social situations in which actors think that the relative costs of violence are smaller than the relative costs of non-violence. There may be a myriad of such situations, each requiring a tailored approach, but they all boil down to two words: fear and opportunity.

Fear and opportunity are likely to emerge when trained and institutionalised patterns of interactions between groups are subject to rapid change, and when the perpetuation of these patterns seems endangered or unlikely. In an ideal world, the ideal state provides institutions that guarantee inter-group stability. The state provides mediating structures between groups, checks aggressive claims and protects weaker groups. State institutions regulate access to resources and to political power. The state guarantees a continuous information flow between groups by providing impartial media¹³ and lastly, the state defends its monopoly over violence.

The disintegration of the state structures that had, for seventy and fifty years respectively, provided interethnic accommodation is the key to the explanation of organised violence in Yugoslavia and in the Caucasus. It was the state collapse that has pushed the societies of these two regions into a state of fear and uncertainty and has opened up windows of opportunity for political entrepreneurs. State weakness, and its most extreme manifestation, state collapse, has been acknowledged by many authors as the key variable for explaining conflict.¹⁴ Michael Ignatieff summarises the causal chain thus:

Note here the causative order: first the collapse of the overarching state, then Hobbesian fear, and only then nationalist paranoia, followed by warfare. Disintegration of the state comes first, nationalist paranoia comes next. Nationalist sentiment on the ground, among common people, is a secondary consequence of political disintegration, a response to the collapse of state order and the interethnic accommodation that made it possible. Nationalism creates communities of fear, groups held together by the conviction that their security depends on sticking together. People become "nationalistic" when they are afraid; when the only answer to the question "Who will protect me now?" becomes "my own people." (Ignatieff 1998: 45)

Fear and opportunity, the two inevitable companions of state weakness, often trigger violence. State weakness opens up large windows of opportunity for political entrepreneurs. It is exactly through this window that ethnic entrepreneurs enter the political scene. State weakness, or state collapse unblocks access to resources and power: established institutions that have regulated access to and distribution of resources crumble or collapse, and new ones have yet to be designed. Elites thus inevitably engage in a competition, which is no longer framed by existing, accepted institutions. A key resource in power struggles can be ethnicity. Political entrepreneurs

thus often turn into ethnic entrepreneurs – they appeal to real or perceived threats and injustices in order to mobilise support, that is, they instrumentalise ethnicity and fear. Instrumentalism explains ethno-political conflict by the political ambitions of ethnic entrepreneurs.¹⁵ Ethnification of politics is thus a result of a strategic decision of elites in search of a new power base or a new legitimisation. Successful ethnic entrepreneurs often portray themselves as the best safeguard against an aggressive, threatening 'Other' while at the same time making sure to establish the means of internal coercion to punish those that do not perceive the imminent danger to the collective and the necessity of action (something which results in acts of violence frequently blamed on the enemy). Not every social situation favours the entry of ethnic entrepreneurs into the political scene. Ethnic entrepreneurs often only take centre stage when state weakness and fears of coming anarchy lead people to believe that the only viable answer to the question 'who will protect me' becomes 'my ethnic kin.' A breeding ground for ethnic entrepreneurs is the situation when an ethnic group starts to think that their mistrust of the other group is justified, the warnings of their leaders thus correct. When the group believes that its fears of the other group are rational and well founded, it tends to enhance its support for radical leaders. This 'rationality of fear' (de Figueirido and Weingast 1999) can quickly spiral into ethnic violence, as it has in numerous cases in Yugoslavia and in the Caucasus.

A detailed account of the rationality of fear is provided in the chapter by Grandits and Leutloff. Their chapter examines the role of discourses of violence and threat and the exploitation of 'violent events' for conflict escalation. After 1990, Serbs and Croats were competing over access to the resources needed for institution building and state building. Fear proved to be the key resource. Fear in turn triggered ethnic mobilisation. Within one year, an 'unprofessional' riot of Serbs in the Krajina region developed into a professional war between Serbs and Croats in Croatia, in which several thousand died and several hundred thousand people were forcefully

expelled from their homes. The authors stress the relevance of institution building and the role of changing perceptions in the process of escalation.

The instrumentalist approach is obviously highly plausible, and it is hard to think of an ethno-political conflict where ethnic entrepreneurs did not play a crucial role. The list of Yugoslav and Caucasian ethnic entrepreneurs is long and prominent: Milosevic in Serbia, Tudjman in Croatia, Elchibey in Azerbaijan, Dudaev in Chechnya, Ardzinba in Abkhazia and Gamsakhurdia in Georgia. They have all pursued politics of ethnification and used a rhetoric which centred on the rights of their ethnic group to sovereignty, on the threats that the group faced from other groups and on the undivided loyalty that the group was entitled to receive from individual members.

There are other perils in state weakness. When state institutions fail, private organisers of violence get more leverage. They develop private interests and acquire the means to pursue their interests. The official leaders of the state may no longer be able to control them, even if they wished to. Thus, even if leaders committed themselves to peace, they are no longer able to deliver, a dilemma demonstrated in Koehler's analysis of drawbacks in the Nagorno-Karabakh peace process. Such situations are referred to as commitment problems (Fearon 1998; Walter 1999). In such a situation, leaders might prefer a preventive strike to a shaky settlement which, they think, cannot hold. Again, the wars in Nagorno-Karabakh, Bosnia and Croatia provide insights into the mechanism of the commitment problem.

Meaningful conflict resolution must take steps towards minimising the commitment problem. However, in his intriguing chapter, Gosztonyi describes how well intended 'soft-interventions' by the international community sometimes have the opposite effect. The end of the Cold War, he argues, saw the emergence of a new, 'soft' type of intervention, based on democratic principles and an aversion to overt engagement. Under certain circumstances, soft intervention seems to effect a decentralisation of power and responsibility rather than its

centralisation. Herceg-Bosna is such a case. External 'soft' intervention contributes to a diffusion of power, when four conditions are met: the external intervention is relatively restrained; the interveners target pre-existing political structures instead of appointing new ones; there is a willingness on the side of the interveners to hold the representatives of the local political structures responsible for certain policy failures and human rights abuses; and there is a strong common sentiment among the recipients of the foreign intervention that the aims of the intervention are not just. These conditions, in turn, create an incentive structure, which make it rational for local elites to appoint weak leaders and to create an institutional 'jungle' in order to diffuse responsibility. In time, the local elite loses the ability to commit themselves and to deliver – both preconditions for instability.

Institutions and the potential of (dis)order

Taking into account general risk factors, the institutional legacy of socialist ethno-federalism and state weakness causing fear and opportunity go a long way towards explaining organised violence. However, questions remain. Most important (in the sense of it being heuristically the most rewarding to ask) is probably the search for factors explaining the variation:

Why do some potential conflicts not erupt into violence, even if the underlying structures and proximate causes are remarkably similar to cases where violence has erupted? What are the factors that block ethnic mobilisation? What does it take to remove the market for ethnic entrepreneurs? Why do some multiethnic societies fragment, but others hold together, while both have to deal with state weakness, fear and opportunity? Under what conditions can ethnic entrepreneurs conquer the state? And under what conditions can they consolidate it?

Answers have been sought in the institutional framework of the post-socialist societies of the Caucasus and of Yugoslavia. We assume that stability and violent conflicts in inter-group relations are social outcomes that have been produced by the combined effect of many institutions, state or non-state, formal or informal, self-enforcing or externally enforced.

Institutions are, according to the classical definition of Douglass North, 'the rules of the game in a society or, more formally, are the humanly devised constraints that shape human interaction' (North 1990: 6). Institutions are trained patterns of human interaction, which are codified in contracts and rules, or which root in shared norms, values, and codes of behaviour. Because institutions are trained, repeated and 'sticky' patterns of interaction, they stabilise social expectations and help reduce transaction costs. By focusing on the existing institutional framework, actors are placed in the context that structures their actions. Thus, the 'pathological social systems' (Lake and Rothchild 1998: 6-7) that make violence both probable and individually rational, become the central unit of analysis.

Institutions perform three functions which are relevant for the organisation of stability/violence:

Firstly institutions are accepted, trained and sometimes enforced patterns of interaction, which can frame conflicts. Conflict potentials can thus be defused. The breakdown of such a framework may enable the risk factors to 'go active'. As a rule all societies have institutions in place that specialise in conflicts in a way that contains violent dispute by fostering compromises in favour of alternative conflicts (Hirschman 1994). On a smaller social scale or in remote stateless societies crosscutting networks of loyalty and services of institutionalised mediators or councils of elders may sufficiently provide for this. In complex societies these institutions provide for (due) procedures in the classic understanding of Luhmann: they exclude the actual power of the antagonists and channel the decision power over the conflict to a third party, implement a set

of rules independent from everyday-life reality and guarantee a meaningful and applied result (Luhmann 1983: 38-53, 100-106).

Secondly, the institutional framework provides the incentive structure for local actors and thus determines their strategic action. Institutions can thus not only diffuse violence, but they can also produce violence, if the incentive structure is 'badly' designed. Thirdly, institutions have distributional effects. They determine the access to resources crucial for organising violence and determine the relative position of actors.

All three functions of institutions are of consequence in the probability of organised violence emerging.

Institutions matter. The institutional arrangement of a society produces incentive structures for actors, defines the windows of opportunity for political entrepreneurs and establishes the constraints in which actors are locked. Challenging widespread state-centric approaches, it is argued here that the institutional framework consists not only of the institutional legacy of the 'official' state institutions of the socialist systems, but also of the 'shadow' institutions that have emerged as a response to the organisational deficits of socialism. Attention should also be paid to locally rooted norms and conventions that have survived in niches not occupied by the socialist state. These three analytically distinct sets of institutions form together a hybrid, eclectic, locally distinct framework, which structures actors' incentives, opportunities and constraints.

'Official' institutions

Official institutions are understood to be the legacy of the socialist systems. The relevancy of socialist ethno-federalism has already been underlined. It has left behind territories, equipped with titular nations, territorial bureaucracies, territorial media, proto-democratic

institutions, such as parliaments (soviets), and an ethno-territorial elite that was ready to take over this legacy. In the case of Yugoslavia and the USSR, these borders thus formed a template for status conflicts. Other residues of empire are not territorial, but functional (Rubin and Snyder 1998: 6). These include military organisations, economic networks of supply and production, networks of party or business nomenclature or parts of bureaucracies that have survived the collapse. Some of them have adapted to post-imperial circumstances. They became the new locus of power and formed the functional backbone of the newly assembled polities. The rise of Milosevic, for example, can only be understood by taking into account his taking over and skilful manipulation of the Serbian Communist Party. Most of the authors in this collection stress the importance of surviving socialist institutions. But while Milosevic's takeover of the Party structure led to escalation, there are also cases when the takeover of post-socialist institutions, on the contrary, led to stabilisation. Kisriev on Dagestan and Koehler on Nagorno-Karabakh show that the 'old' Soviet institutions, and primarily the rubber stamp parliaments, were vital for the reconstruction of statehood, once they were allocated real power.

Another often-overlooked official institution is property rights. Giordano in his chapter deals with the link between nationalism, agrarian policy and property rights on land. Laws on land were and still are often used as a strategy for cultural homogenisation and 'purification'. Emerging nation states claim the management of property rights on land and often use it to change ethnic composition. Giordano compares over time and across borders the link between land reform and nationalism in South-Eastern Europe in 1900, between the two World Wars and after 1989.

'Unofficial' institutions

Here, 'unofficial' (or shadow) institutions are those which were not part of the socialist state design, but which emerged as a reaction to the organisational voids in the system. Institutions that survived the socialist modernisation also belong in this category.

These unofficial institutions went largely undetected by political science and 'sovietology', which focused mainly on 'official' state institutions, but they proved to have a significant impact on the way polities reassembled after the implosion of the central state. A typical example of a shadow institution is the endemic second economy and the highly sophisticated administrative corruption, both of which are common features of post-socialist societies (Kordonskii 1995).¹⁶ Another widespread unofficial institution of socialist systems, which has retained its importance and functionality beyond the collapse, is the networks of patronage (Willerton 1992). In areas, where the state lacked the resources to penetrate the periphery with bureaucratic institutions, it had to rely on personal networks for governance and control. After the collapse of the central state, networks of patronage became, in many places, the most cohesive institutional structure, substituting state tasks and concentrating political power and economic resources.

Other unofficial institutions are based on local know-how and local traditions, which retained their functionality during and after the socialist period. For many Caucasian and Balkan societies networks of trust based on a notion of extended kin groups are important structuring elements.¹⁷ Political power is vested, to a large extent, in these structures, a fact that could be easily overlooked, since many powerful clans occupied important positions in the socialist hierarchies. This does not mean, however, that the 'modern' bureaucratic state system has replaced a 'traditional' clan system. Instead there was a parasitic exploitation of the bureaucratic hierarchies by the clan system (cf. Willerton 1992: 191-222).

In large parts of the Caucasus and the Balkans, specific forms of local regulation of justice, solidarity and conflict regulation exist, which do not depend on a modern state bureaucracy, even though they might depend on it in their functionality to regulate conflict on the monopoly of violence of the state. Codified traditional value systems (e.g. *adat* - the 'law of the mountains' in many remote parts of the Caucasus) existed together with the Soviet, and later,

Russian legal systems.¹⁸ Detecting and describing such local institutions is crucial for understanding post-socialist spaces – from the Balkans to Central Asia, the Caucasus and the multiethnic provinces of China. It is precisely this hybrid, eclectic combination of official and unofficial institutions that forms the institutional framework, which governs post-socialist, and in fact most political spaces after modernity. Today it is obvious that socialist self-perception and western analysis both dramatically underestimated the residual power of ‘the local’. A better understanding of this simultaneous functioning of different codes and value systems is by no means only of ‘folkloristic’ value, but helps to understand the capacity of a society to deal with conflicts and state building.

Kisriev’s chapter on Dagestan offers a stunning demonstration of this. Dagestan is notable for its ethnic diversity and even by post-Soviet standards, its dramatic economic deprivation. Dagestan’s ethnopolitical stability against all odds is something that needs to be explained. Kisriev argues that Dagestani society has avoided the pitfall of ethnic unrest due to a functional integration of official and unofficial institutions. In a spontaneous and highly political balancing act the political elite has successfully institutionalised mechanisms of restraint, cooperation and power sharing. These institutions draw heavily on traditional, trained societal mechanism of conflict mediating and inter-group cooperation. Of crucial importance in overcoming the dangers of an ethnic security dilemma proved to be the traditional *dzhammat*, a crosscutting, non-ethnically defined village community.

Another view on the perspectives for stability is offered by Vasileva’s chapter. She analyses the integrative potential of cooperative movements at the republican, the regional and the inter-state level for the Caucasus. A major finding of the analysis is that cooperative movements had strongest impact on the republican level, while they remained marginal at the regional and inter-state level. Within republics, cooperative movements were effective only when

they became institutionalised procedures of power sharing within parliament or alternative bodies with legislative power.

If the local know-how of building cooperatives as networks of solidarity fails to integrate with official institutions it may instead be disruptive, as shown in the two chapters on Kosovo and the chapter by Christophe on Georgia.

The chapter by Elwert offers insights into the economics of ending violence. He argues that violence can be ended by raising the costs of violence. This can be achieved by closing the borders for supply, denying 'rebels' access to financial markets and eventually by external powers establishing a monopoly of violence.

Finally, Borneman in his contribution addresses the question of reconciliation after ethnic cleansing. Reconciliation is seen here as a project of departure from violence by breaking the vicious circle linking the present to the pains of the past. Common futile strategies for survivors include the perpetuation of violence by revenge and/or the group's engagement in a further purification of its principles – usually connected with nostalgia for autochthony, obsession with origins and clear demarcation of itself from other groups. Such a turn inward, an inner purification, not only appears to complete, in a putatively voluntaristic spirit, the ethnic cleansing initially perpetrated on the group, but it also institutionalises a further 'cleansing' of the group by enforcing endogamy on its members. Reconciliation, says Borneman, is an intersubjective process, an agreement to settle accounts that involves at least two subjects who are related in time. They are related in a temporal sense not in that they necessarily have a shared past or a shared future. Consensus about what was shared in the past or what will be shared in the future - in modern parlance, a 'collective memory'- is not necessary for reconciliation, and its expectation may in fact awaken counterproductive drives to recover a lost whole or to produce a harmonious community. Instead, in order to reconcile, different subjects must agree only to share a present, a present that

is non-repetitive. Politics of intersubjectivity may be reached through the retribution of justice in judicial processes holding perpetrators publicly accountable for their deeds.

The case studies presented here reinforce the argument that focussing in on the micropolitics of conflict and examining social institutions on the ground is essential for the analyses of conflict. Generally speaking, the search for rules governing social processes is complicated by two factors when dealing with collective violent conflict: a) the widening divide between the rationale of action and the normative narratives assigning sense to deed *ex post* and b) the increasing relevance of informal institutions.

'This is not about religion,' Barnett R. Rubin is quoted as saying about the building of a post-Taliban order in Afghanistan. 'It's about a fight for the post-colonial state system' (Eurasia Insight 2001). Aside from the grand tale of good and evil, war always involves institutionalised interests not directly connected to or coinciding with the normative story.

Also for the post-socialist conflicts dealt with in this book the differentiation between the normative framing of the conflict and the rules guiding the incentives of relevant actors is essential. The normative framing of a conflict by the parties and other interested observers is by no means just a fancy, an irrational story of good and evil told by otherwise rational war-mongers in order to appease their children and rid themselves of bad dreams. Making sense of violence (perpetrated or endured) is but one crucial function of normative frameworking and has strong implications for the chances of post-violence rapprochement and healing. However, of much more immediate practical influence for the organisation and channelling of violence is the mobilising power of the normative story. In terms of mobilising young people to fight, kill and die it may come second only to the organisation of fear.

Despite the intimate interrelation between the normative and the practical levels in the organisation of violent conflict, the differentiations between them is crucial for our understanding of conflict as a dynamic process; this differentiation is of particular importance when the rules set by the normative story are not in tune with the incentives governing the practical level and may lead to the failure of the overall operation (as in the abortive attempts to kick-start independent statehood on a nationalist grand scale in Georgia and Azerbaijan as referred to in the chapters by both Christophe and Koehler).

In order to come to terms with state weakness leading to violent conflict or resulting from sustained conflict, analysing the dysfunctions of the official institutions is insufficient. The ability of society to penetrate, exploit or replace weak or even defunct official institutions with informal rules, drawing on local social or cultural know-how is of decisive importance in grasping patterns of difference and similarity in post-socialist development. The post-colonial (here: post-socialist) state-system referred to above by Rubin is emerging from the hybrids of the official rump institutions of the state and informal networks of trust, capable of negotiating power and resources along channels considered criminal in any functioning state.

Detecting potentials of (dis)order requires therefore that both official and unofficial institutions are addressed in order to identify the real incentive structures of local actors. Actors in conflicts usually veil their real incentives behind a discourse of seeming – but false – clarity. Particularly in situations of insecurity and potential violence, political protagonists put great effort into establishing discourses of ‘unambiguity’ and creating a facade of clear codes for defining friend and foe, truth and justice. This discourse veils the typical post-socialist condition of hybrid institutions. It also veils the fact that key players are most successful when they command various social languages and can thus exploit different institutional settings - official, unofficial or even international. Both the official and informal levels have – when institutionalised and not contingent

– their own normative discourses and logic of action. These discourses may compete with each other, or may be compatible. In any case all four levels of ‘the rules of the game’– the official and the unofficial normative discourses and the official and the unofficial practice – have to be addressed in order to gain a thorough understanding of the potentials of order and disorder in weak states. The editors hope that this volume presents a fruitful first attempt.

Notes

1 The term Bosniak denotes the Muslim population of Bosnia, whereas Bosnian refers to the citizens of Bosnia-Herzegovina

2 Here Autonomous Republics (ASSR) and Autonomous Oblasts (AO) are both treated as second order units.

3 For a useful overviews of factors which can increase the risk for ethno-political violence, see van Evera 1994; Brown 1997; Gurr and Harff 1995.

4 The figures are, unless otherwise indicated, from the census of 1989 (Goskomstat 1991). They do not reflect the considerable migration flows, particular in Chechnya (Russians, leaving for Russia, Chechen refugees to Ingushetia or Russia), Abkhazia (Georgians, fleeing or forced to leave) and South Ossetia (refugees, mainly leaving for North Ossetia).

5 Exact figures are only available for the Chechen-Ingushetian Republic, which split into two republics in 1992. Figures are based on the authors' estimates.

6 Other sources give 8% (Pirtskhalava 1997). Evidently, the percentage of the Abkhaz population is highly politicised

7 The data on Adjara is not very reliable; Adjarians were counted as Georgians (324,813 - 83% of overall population), as they are distinguished by religion which was not adequately reflected in the census. The approximate number of Adjarians, according to estimates, is around 250,000. With thanks to Gia Tarkhan -Mouravi for sharing this information with the authors.

8 Figures refer to the census of 1991. Unless otherwise indicated, the data is taken from Heller 1997.

9 Data is from Gosztonyi 1998.

10 Figures for 1991 are based on estimates of natural population growth and migration since the census of 1981 conducted by the Federal Institute for Statistics of Yugoslavia (quoted in Judah 2000: 313).

11 A series of papers addressing this issue is published in Elwert, Feuchtwang and Neubert 1999.

12 For a criticism of what he calls 'mainstream' research on violence from a sociological viewpoint see von Trotha 1997. Trutz von Trotha argues that a sociology of the causes of violence is not the same as a sociology of violence itself and presses for a paradigmatic change in the research on violence, replacing the etiological 'why?' with the phenomenological 'how?' For a discussion of the problems both 'new' and 'mainstream' research on violence pose for the empirical work of social science see Koehler 1998.

13 Exchange of information between groups is crucial. Once an information failure emerges, groups are no longer able to judge the intentions and the real capabilities of the other group. They might miscalculate the costs of a preventive strike, be it predatory or strictly defensive, and engage in organised violence. See Lake and Rothchild 1998.

14 On the importance of state weakness for explaining ethno-political conflict, see Brown 1997: 5; Fearon and Laitin 1996.

15 For empirical evidence see Tishkov 1997; Gagnon 1994; Glazer and Moynihan 1995; Brass 1995; Rothchild 1986; Laitin 1995.

16 The general theory of venality (Elwert 1985) would have to be adapted for socialist societies, where, in most cases, favours and privileges replaced fiscal relations.

17 In particular for the Balkans the relevancy of institutions of loyalty based on an emic concept of extended kinship (e.g.. the *zadruga*) has been intensely discussed and sometimes branded more of a myth than a social reality (Kaser 1995: 36-60; Todorova 1990). However, the line of

argumentation presented here is not concerned with the question of whether local institutions 'survived' by tradition, are invented or reactivated. Networks of loyalty based on kinship or ethnicity may also well be consequences of organisational shortcomings of the state. A convincing example is demonstrated by Verdrey on how the economy of shortages fostered ethnic networks in Romania (Verdery 1993).

18 As a case in point see Koehler 1999 on legal pluralism in Svanetia, Georgia.

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