

# Negotiating of Self-Identification in Spatiality: Czechs and Former Yugoslavs

(unpublished)

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

The goal of this article is to investigate how Czechs and former Yugoslavs perceive themselves in spatiality within Europe. It aims to understand whether these two units<sup>1</sup>, in spite of their differences, find similar traits in the self-identification of their spatiality – namely, in the negotiation of establishing themselves geopolitically within Europe and in the negotiation of naming their countries. In this text-based cross-case study, self-identification of Czechs and of former Yugoslavs is juxtaposed, taking account of diversified historical development, especially in the 1990s. Self-identification in space in Havel's post-Velvet Czechia, which is reputed to be an example of a smooth transition from Communism, is compared to spatial self-identification in some regions of allegedly still unstable post-war former Yugoslavia.

The two composite words, “Yugoslavia” and “Czechoslovakia”, both relating to former countries of Slavs in the Central and Eastern part of Europe, still tend to confuse the general public and parts of non-acquainted scholarship. In spite of the non-existence of the respective political units, they often continue to be used and moreover, are sometimes even interchanged. With this in mind, the (2.) introductory part, a concise guide to the discussion of former Yugoslavia and former Czechoslovakia, of two communisms, two break-ups, and other historical and geopolitical moments set in comparison, would be perhaps most appreciated by a non-Eastern European reader. Sections (3.) and (4.) contain material drawn from scholarly works, interestingly the debate on “Easternness”, “Westernness”, or “Centrality” has not finished and the decision on names of national units seem not to be completely resolved, as the debate on “the Czech Republic” versus “Czechia” points out.

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<sup>1</sup> These are admittedly rather uneven units, since this article is derived from a wider research project on Czechs in former Yugoslavia countries and their national identity negotiation.

The usage of certain terms in this paper needs to be explained. First, instead of listing all the nations, or using alternative general or inexact terms, the term “former Yugoslavs”<sup>2</sup> is being used. It refers to Slavs whose heritage is rooted in one of the legacy countries of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, which broke apart in 1991 (Slovenia, Croatia), and subsequently in 1992 (Bosnia and Herzegovina, Macedonia), in 2006 (Montenegro, Serbia) and in 2008 (Kosovo).<sup>3</sup> Second, “identity” is understood in line with social identity theory. The term “identity” might carry with itself both stability and limitation, and similarly the term “identity construction” might mislead in the way that identity can be constructed once for all. Social identity theory founder Henry Tajfel concludes that social identity changes together with the social realities out of which it is created (Tajfel 1981: 226). Tajfel’s follower John Turner describes someone’s social identity as ‘the sum total of the social identifications used by a person to define him- or herself’ (Turner 1981: 18). It is being constantly “negotiated” (Holmberg 2008: 29) and, ‘one’s social identity – indeed one’s social identities (.....) – is never a final or settled matter’ (Jenkins 2014: 4). Therefore, the preferred terms in this paper on the ongoing spatial self-perception of Czechs and former Yugoslavs are “negotiation” and “identification”.

## **2. CZECHS AND FORMER YUGOSLAVS: AND INTRODUCTORY OVERVIEW FOR SELF-IDENTIFICATION IN NAMING**

The present-day Czech Republic is located in the central part of Europe and borders Germany in the west, Poland in the north, Slovakia in the east and Austria in the south. Countries of former Yugoslavia are located in south-eastern Europe, set in-between the Adriatic Sea and the countries of Italy, Austria, Hungary, Romania, Bulgaria, Greece and Albania (arranged in this order geographically, from the northwest to the south). The Slavic language group, as one of the Indo-European languages, divides between Western, Eastern and Southern branches. Czechs, together with Slovaks, Poles and Sorbs of Lusatia, are Western Slavic people.

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<sup>2</sup> The term “ex-Yugoslavs” or “former Yugoslavs” in a non-national sense has been widely used in the academy and it proves to be both economic and sufficiently exact.

<sup>3</sup> To add on this, the break-up of Yugoslavia might still have its aftermath, with the tense situation within Bosnia and Herzegovina in relation to the Republic of Srpska, and in Kosovo which is in practice independent since 1999, and formally since 2008, but with unclear status of the Serbian north.

Bosniaks, Bulgarians, Croats, Macedonians, Montenegrins, Serbs and Slovenes belong to the southern Slavic nations.

## **Yugoslavism and Czechoslovakism**

The name “Yugoslavia” – the land of Southern Slavs (*jug* or *jyz* means “south”) builds upon the concept of yugoslavism<sup>4</sup> which originated in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>5</sup> It was not politically realized until the Kingdom of Yugoslavia came into being in 1929, having replaced the former Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes. During the Communist regime of Tito<sup>6</sup>, the transnational Yugoslav identity was introduced (Toró 2010: 48) and a specific national category “Yugoslav” was created in the census of 1961 (Tomić 2014: 277). Only a minority of the population identified with the Yugoslav nationality, especially those from mixed marriages. Some not very numerous individuals still do today, usually emigrants and the older generation. Nonetheless, “Yugoslavism” has never been accommodated, remaining only as “Yugonostalgia”, an overly optimistic picture of the past.<sup>7</sup>

“Czechoslovakia” was created in 1918 after World War One, with the goal of constituting a majority over the German and Hungarian component in the newly created state. The “Czechoslovak” nation was constructed with Czech dominance, and ‘the Czechs also quite ethnocentrically adopted the Slovaks into their own identity’ (Kubiš et al., 2005: 146). Throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Czechs accepted it and felt like Czechoslovaks more than the Slovaks did (Plecitá 2012: 13). In 1939, Slovaks declared independence under Nazi tutelage, and in 1968 the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic was constituted as a federal state. After 1989, the issue of the country’s name was highly disputed in the so called “Hyphen war”.

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<sup>4</sup> Yugoslavism originates in illyrism, a supra-national ideology aiming to unite the southern Slavs based on their commonalities. Illyrism, a mainly language-based national movement in Croatian lands, represented by the linguist Ljudevit Gaj, drew its name from the Illirian province of Napoleon’s rule in the region.

<sup>5</sup> The Yugoslav Academy of Arts and Sciences was founded in Zagreb in 1866 and the aim of the ideologists of Yugoslavism, Josip Juraj Strossmayer and Franjo Rački, was to bring Serbs and Croats to a new national consciousness which would ‘transcended all ethnic, religious and political differences of the South Slavs, and sought to build upon their shared origins and cultural ties’ (Goodwin 2006: 52).

<sup>6</sup> Josip Broz “Tito” (1892-1980) was the most influential Western Balkan statesman in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. He was the head of the Yugoslav antifascist movement and the president of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia.

<sup>7</sup> “Yugonostalgia” (*jugonostalgija*) is linked with disillusionment of nationalist politics of the legacy Yugoslav countries (Tomić 2014: 287).

Slovak deputies insisted on “Czecho-Slovak Republic” and a compromise, “Czech and Slovak Federal Republic” was accepted (Holý 1996: 190). Eventually, the events on the political scene led to the creation of two independent states on the 1<sup>st</sup> of January 1993, the Czech Republic and the Slovak Republic (Slovakia).

## **Two Communist regimes**

The Communist regime in former Yugoslavia differed in many ways from the one in Czechoslovakia or in other countries in the Eastern European region. Yugoslavia was unique in the sense that it was not the Red Army, but the local Communist freedom fighters (*partizani*) who liberated the country from the Nazis, and it was independent of the Soviet Union (Malešević 2006: 170). The regime was of a gentler nature than in the Soviet bloc, yet the initial purges in 1945 and in 1948 after Tito’s split with Stalin surpassed the persecution in some Soviet satellite countries, such as in Czechoslovakia of 1950s. Since 1948 Yugoslavia pursued a unique self-managed Socialism<sup>8</sup> and throughout the Cold War period was in the leading position of the Non-Alignment movement. Connected to that, Yugoslavs were allowed to travel to the West, unlike Czechoslovaks, who were restricted in travel, and even for holidays in Yugoslavia they needed special exit permission in their passport (Vlachová 2017: 6).

In Czechoslovakia, until 1948, the Communist Party’s intention was to promote a specifically Czechoslovak form of Communism based on the local democratic tradition. When Czechoslovakia became more anchored in the Eastern bloc, under Stalin’s influence, the Czechoslovak experience with Communism was replaced by the classic search for the enemy in political processes in 1950s (Blaive 2005 n.p.). In the “Prague Spring” of the 1960s the country experienced a loosening of the strict regime, and it was stopped by the Warsaw Pact armies’ invasion in 1968. The 1970s, on the other hand, witnessed hard-line Communists’ “normalisation”.

The fall of Communism in both Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia was connected to and followed by a break-up of the country in the early 1990s along national lines. In Yugoslavia,

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<sup>8</sup> The Communist ideologists in Yugoslavia strove for a genuine expression of the political system more in tune with the original Marxist doctrine and ‘hence more just, free and equal to all its citizens as well as its constitutive units than its Soviet (... ...) counterparts’ (Malešević 2006: 169).

the organisation<sup>9</sup> of republics and autonomous areas within the country after World War Two had its impact on national self-identification in the early 1990s<sup>10</sup>. Two important factors in this self-identification process proved to be religion<sup>11</sup> and language. Macedonian and Slovenian differ linguistically from the Serbo-Croat<sup>12</sup> language – which as a consequence of the political break-up, split into four variants: Serbian<sup>13</sup>, Croatian<sup>14</sup>, and newly coined Montenegrin<sup>15</sup> and Bosnian<sup>16</sup>.

## Two break-ups

Czechoslovakia split in peace, yet the break-up of Yugoslavia was accompanied by the most violent conflict in Europe since World War Two.

Reasons for the violent disintegration of Yugoslavia have been heavily disputed. The popular view of why “the powder keg of Europe” exploded again attempts to find its causes in the proverbial ages-long ethnic hatred, connected with the renaissance of religion which strengthened the awakened national movement, after having been suppressed on behalf of

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<sup>9</sup> Macedonia and Montenegro were instituted as republics, while Vojvodina, the northern part of Serbia, and Kosovo as autonomous areas. The first violent clashes at the end of the 1980s happened in Kosovo.

<sup>10</sup> In their historical narratives after 1991, each nation ‘symbolically reinvented itself and its past’ (Tomić 2014: 279) and engaged elements of myth (Goodwin 2006: 24).

<sup>11</sup> Religious identity of single former Yugoslav nations is addressed in the following chapter.

<sup>12</sup> Cf. Comrie 2009: 330-346. This southern Slavic language was called by the Novi Sad Agreement in 1954 *srpskohrvatski ili hrvatskosrpski* (“Serbo-Croatian or Croato-Serbian”). For more on the difference between the Serbian and Croatian variant, on the language history and on its dialects cf. Greenberg 2014: 20-31; 33; 47). When avoiding uneasy situations local speakers refer to the language often as *domaći jezik* (domestic language), ‘*naš jezik* or *naški* (our language)’ (Tomić 2014: 287).

<sup>13</sup> Serbian, as the “heir” of the Serbo-Croatian language, remained the most permissive of the four: It uses two variants, Eastern ekavian and Western ijekavian, and it actively uses two alphabets: Cyrillic and Latin (Symon 2008: 45-47).

<sup>14</sup> Croatian linguists in particular were active in creating new vocabulary replacing foreign terms and they worked hard to distinguish their language from its Serbian counterpart as much as possible, which can be documented by Brodnjak’s, “The Dictionary of the Difference between Serbian and Croatian Language”, published in Zagreb (Brodnjak 1992).

<sup>15</sup> The linguist Greenberg comments on the language situation in Montenegro: ‘The Serbs and some Montenegrins categorically deny the existence of a separate Montenegrin language’ (Greenberg 2014: 15).

<sup>16</sup> The recognition of Bosnian language by Serbs and Croats is an unfinished process. ‘Had Bosniacs called their language by the “ethnic name” (Bosniac language), rather than the “regional term” (Bosnian language), they would have weakened their link to Bosnia, their geographical and spiritual homeland. However, it ignores Bosnia-Herzegovina’s Serb and Croat communities, who might share with the Bosniacs a spiritual affinity for the region of Bosnia (.....) Simultaneously, the Bosniacs could accept neither Croatian nor Serbian since such an acceptance would have signalled the Bosniac assimilation into either the Croatian or Serbian ethnic spheres’ (Greenberg 2014: 15).

“brotherhood and unity”<sup>17</sup> under the regime of Tito. This view has been heavily critiqued, predominantly by authors from the Balkans, while different factors of the break-up have been added to the discussion. The historian Maria Todorova brings attention to how the break-up of Yugoslavia tends to keep being exhibit as a Balkan crisis, where ancient Balkan enmities, ghosts and cultural patterns come to the surface. The mixture of rationality and emotions, myths, ethnic cleansing<sup>18</sup>, all of these are according to her not to be reserved uniquely for the Balkan context.<sup>19</sup>

What might have led to the disintegration of Yugoslavia, was according to political scientist Dejan Jović, the identity crisis of the specific Yugoslav version of Communism that constructed itself in opposition to two “others”: the representative democracy of Yugoslavism between the world wars on one side, and Soviet-style communism on the other (Jović 2010 n.p.). In the second half of the 1980s<sup>20</sup> the Soviet “other” ceased to exist and liberalism entered Yugoslav society, coming hand-in-hand with nationalism. Another constructive view is held by the sociologist Siniša Malešević who targets the different phases of Yugoslavia’s decentralisation in order to explain what lead to the break-up.<sup>21</sup> According to him, after Tito’s death in 1980 was when the federal party delegated power more to republic parties’ leaderships (Malešević 2006: 183). The historian Đorđe Tomić comes to a similar conclusion when he states that it was the conservative communist elite who used nationalism to demobilize their reformist political opponents (Tomić 2014: 279). Other factors were of significance as well: the economic and ethnoreligious factors. The more developed republics of Slovenia and Croatia considered themselves held back by the obligation to contribute to the federal budget to support economically weaker fellow-republics. And the re-emergence of nationalism was no surprise after Tito’s suppression of old wounds from the Second World

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<sup>17</sup> This phrase was a hallmark of the Yugoslav regime. This brotherhood was not without inequalities, for ‘it was built out of the formal distinction between peoples (*narodi*), or titular nations of each republic, and nationalities (*narodnosti*), or groups, which belonged to a non-titular Yugoslav nation’ (Tomić 2014: 276).

<sup>18</sup> The vocabulary of “ethnic cleansing” and “genocide” came to wide usage in the 1990’s proceeding from the ethnic conflicts, especially in Bosnia and Herzegovina and in Rwanda and can be defined as ‘the creation of ethnically homogenous areas through the mass expulsion of other ethnic populations’ (Giddens 2017: 686).

<sup>19</sup> Todorova 2009: 186. Todorova quite straightforwardly complains about the Western double lens approach and briefly compares Nagasaki and Sarajevo, Vietnam and Bosnia. Cf. Hatzopoulos 2008: 176 who challenges nationalism as the ordering principle of Balkan history.

<sup>20</sup> The Soviet Union ceased to exist in 1991, yet the Soviet other had already ceased to exist for the Yugoslavs in the second half of the 1980s under Gorbachev’s reforms.

<sup>21</sup> He outlines these phases as in between the years 1948-1974, 1974-1987 and 1987-1991 and notes that ‘decentralisation was used as an ad hoc mechanism for decreasing the pressure from “below”’ (Malešević 2006: 183).

War. Turkish scholar Peri Pamir calls it the “deep freeze effect”, pointing out that these ‘were merely kept frozen only to resurface when authoritarian structures which imposed an artificial homogeneity disintegrated’ (Pamir 1997: n.p.). Generations changed, yet ethnic passions never disappeared. Ernest Gellner depicts the operation of “three generations law” when ‘the grandson tries to remember what the son tried to forget’.<sup>22</sup>

While the fall of Communism and happenings in the early 1990s meant for most regions of former Yugoslavia horrific war, Czechs and Slovaks after the “Velvet Revolution” in 1989 experienced a “Velvet Divorce” on 1<sup>st</sup> January, 1993. The era of freedom, economic improvement, unrestricted travelling – including possibilities for international mission work – began. The early 1990s were characterized by the return to Europe (to the European West) and the internationalism of civic society (Krejčí, J. 1995: 19, Holý 1996: 151). Czech citizens voted in a referendum and the country joined the EU in 2004. Gradually, the complete openness westwards was replaced by a certain dose of caution, if not opposition, and a split arose between Euro-optimists and Euro-sceptics. This conflict is best depicted by the debate of the two Václavs, the last Czechoslovak (and the first Czech) president Václav Havel and his successor Václav Klaus, who held the presidential office between 2003 and 2013.<sup>23</sup>

Czechs and Slovaks split in peace and have kept an above average relationship and culture ties.<sup>24</sup> Slovaks are Czechs’ closest Slavic others, and both languages are similar: their speakers understand each other, can read books, listen to music and watch films or TV shows in the neighbour’s language. ‘Slovaks often study or work in the Czech Republic, Slovak students are still allowed to take exams in their native language, and it is not rare to overhear a two-language conversation’ (Chalániová 2012: 4). The generally warm relationship is not without stereotypes<sup>25</sup> and a certain dose of prejudice. Nevertheless, Slovaks remain Czechs’ most appreciated and accepted significant other (Burjanek 2001: 57). The split of

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<sup>22</sup> Gellner 1964: 163. Describing the behaviour of immigrants into America, he claims it operates everywhere. Likewise, it can be applied for the Yugoslav case of remembering the atrocities of the war forty years ago – when the ethnic passions were swept “under the carpet”, leaving conflicts unresolved.

<sup>23</sup> The cosmopolitan Havel, who emphasized civic society, responsibility, and involvement, was definitely a Euro-optimist (Havel et al., 2006: 217), while Klaus, himself an economist, was very pragmatically focused on national interests and approached the EU cautiously (Cf. Auer 2006: 411).

<sup>24</sup> Chalániová 2012: 27. The newly elected presidents of Slovakia and the Czech Republic pay their first international visits to Prague or Bratislava. The two countries are political and commercial partners. There are mutual artistic productions, research projects, visits or friends and family, and associations for both Czechs and Slovaks abroad (Ibid: 4).

<sup>25</sup> “Stereotypes” can be defined as ‘popularly shared (mis-)conceptions, common beliefs and general characteristics of groups’ (Chalániová 2012: 1) or ‘fixed and inflexible characterizations of a social group’ (Giddens 2017: 668).

Czechoslovakia on January 1<sup>st</sup>, 1993 happened out of political will, the majority of inhabitants wished to stay together in the common state. The “self-evident” nature of the independence (Vlachová and Řeháková 2009: 258), when the Czech Republic “just happened”, is documented by the celebration of a national holiday. The anniversary falls on 1<sup>st</sup> January, the day after the New Year celebration, and nearly any Czech celebrates it as national holiday. Instead, 28<sup>th</sup> October, the day of the birth of Czechoslovakia, is widely celebrated as the Independence Day.<sup>26</sup>

### **3. NEGOTIATING GEOPOLITICAL AREA WITHIN EUROPE**

The preceding introductory comparison is followed by the analysis of spatial self-identification. Based on the literature, these are the two areas: Negotiating spatiality within Europe and negotiating names of countries. The former is addressed in this passage. This section focuses on several geopolitical spatial terms, which are related to both Czechs and to former Yugoslav national groups and are connected to the search for identity, which has been under way since the colossal change of the fall of the Communist regimes.

#### **Western, Central or Eastern Europe?**

Historically, the Czech territory was evangelized both from the East by Cyril and Methodius, and from the West by Latin monks (Neil 1986: 72). The 20<sup>th</sup> century witnessed both Western (German Nazis) and Eastern occupations (USSR-led Warsaw Pact armies). The division after World War Two was situational and conditioned politically<sup>27</sup>, and the forty years of Communism, when the country’s orientation was towards the East, is considered by Czechs as an exceptional time in history. The historian Kenney stresses that due to the experience of the past, especially with the Soviets, “Eastern” is considered backward by Czechs (Kenney 2006:

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<sup>26</sup> Interestingly, the 28<sup>th</sup> October, 2018 that marked the 100-year anniversary of the independent Czechoslovak Republic was in the Czech Republic celebrated by a whole spectrum of celebrations and was advertised as “The Past Century Together – national celebrations of 100 years of the Republic” (Available at: <http://100.spolecnesteleti.cz/en>, Accessed 3 Jan 2020), without explicitly claiming the “Czechness” of the event as it focused on the Czecho-Slovak common history.

<sup>27</sup> Osamu Ieda from Slavic-Eurasian Research Centre of Hokkaido University concludes that the division of Europe between East and West was artificial: ‘The East-West division of Europe was constructed by the imperialist view of politics in the Cold War. Geographically or historically we have no categorical reasons to separate’ (Ieda 2004: 65).

1). The term “Europe” in its usage appears to function almost as a synonym with the European West and alternatively with the European Union. The Polish scholar Jerzy Kłoczowski has noted that the history of Europe is characterized by the fact that ‘it has sometimes been treated as the true “European Europe” in opposition to the European East’<sup>28</sup>. In connection with this, the view of the Czech Republic as part of Eastern Europe is near to non-existent at Czech scholarship<sup>29</sup>. “Eastern Europe” has a political connotation. West-East geopolitical spatiality still points to the legacy of the Cold War period and therefore has its limitations (Todorova 2004: 15). Along with that, the term “Post-Communist” Europe does not seem fitting either, since a historical period of time is to be labelled as “post” only temporarily (Zrinščak 2006: 69). Instead, two prevailing views are present: the Czech Republic as part of the West and the Czech Republic as part of Central Europe – the self-perception of Czechs is often linked to its supposedly balanced central location between the cultural spheres of East and West (Vlachová & Řeháková 2009: 258).

The term “Mitteleuropa”<sup>30</sup> was reintroduced by Czechoslovak, Polish and Hungarian intellectuals as a tool of “return to Europe”, i.e. escaping Eastern Europe (Holý 1996: 151, Teponen 2014: 23). According to the political scientist Ondřej Slačálek, the Czech Republic is clearly Western. In his fierce argumentation he says that it is not a “bridge” between East and West. It represents a West that was merely “kidnapped” (Slačálek 2016: 41). In other words, the Czech Republic can be considered in a certain way ‘no more Eastern, but not yet Western’ (Ieda 2004: 62). The reflection of a similar in-between position can be observed with scholars from other countries in the region, e.g. by the Polish writer Czesław Miłosz, who in his autobiography, “Native Realm: A Search for Self-Definition”, delineates the complexity of the relationship of Poles towards East and West.<sup>31</sup>

The positionality of the Czech Republic, in-between North and South, is related to the East-West discussion. Even though Czechoslovakia was not directly involved in colonial

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<sup>28</sup> Kłoczowski 2004: 13. My translation; original: ‘*On la traitait parfois comme une vraie “Europe européenne” opposée à “l’Est” européen.*’

<sup>29</sup> Anthropologist Ladislav Holý concludes that Czechs detest ‘being classified as Eastern Europeans and are quick to point out that Prague is west of Vienna’ (Holý 1996: 151).

<sup>30</sup> This term was first introduced by the German politician Friedrich Naumann (1860–1919) in 1915 as the endeavour for an economic federation in the German speaking lands and was later adopted by Hitler. Owing to its ideological poisoning and to the division of Europe by the Iron Curtain into the West and the East, the term was dormant for decades (Teponen 2014: 22-23).

<sup>31</sup> The Polish author from today’s Lithuania meditates on his homeland and its areal specifics, depicting the mutual hatred of Poles and Russians and the uneasy interrelation of contempt for Germans (Miłosz 1997: 118-121). He considers himself as someone who ‘cannot be fitted into stereotypes like the German *Ordnung* or the Russian *âme slave*’ (Ibid: 7).

history, a form of Czech colonialism could be the “development” of the Balkans in the time of Austro-Hungary (.....) and first of all the administration of Sub-Carpathian Ruthenia between 1919 and 1939’.<sup>32</sup> Albeit not being a Western country – a former coloniser – the present-day Czech Republic by its import and export politics shares an indirect responsibility for unequal trade conditions. By admitting that and by meeting the criterion of belonging to donors of international development aid, and not to receivers, it confirms its belonging to the global North (Horký-Hlucháň & Profant 2015: 17-18, 27).

### **The Balkans or South Eastern Europe?**

The historical-geographical term “the Balkans” tends to evoke a similar notion for the local people as the term “Eastern Europe” for the Czechs; it is connected with backwardness (Slačálek 2016: 40-41). The history of the usage of the term “the Balkans” and its etymology<sup>33</sup> point towards diversified approaches, which are present. The disunity is displayed on differing views of the Balkan<sup>34</sup> Peninsula boundaries (Foteva 2014: 5, Hatzopoulos 2008: 5); it is disputable which countries do belong to the Balkans, or perhaps more to the Mediterranean or Central Europe (Zrinščak 2006: 67). The main debate, nevertheless, is between those who embrace the term and those who disassociate themselves from it, preferring the term “South Eastern Europe”.

The former stance is represented by the classic work of the Bulgarian historian Maria Todorova, “Imagining the Balkans” (Todorova 2009) who applied Edward Said’s notion of orientalism (Said 2003) in the West’s treatment of the Balkans. It needs to be stated, to be fair, that placing others into the Orient is not exclusive to Westerners, and as Milica Bakić-Hayden concludes in her, “Nesting Orientalisms: The Case of Former Yugoslavia” (Bakić-Hayden 1995), there is a tendency of individual nations in the region to orientalise their eastern and southern neighbours.<sup>35</sup> Todorova considers that labelling the Balkans “South

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<sup>32</sup> Horký-Hlucháň & Profant 2015: 19. My translation; original: “*Rozvoj*” *Balkánu v době Rakousko-Uherska (.....) a zejména správu českými a slovenskými guvernéry Podkarpatské Rusi mezi lety 1919 a 1939*. Cf. Holubec 2015: 249.

<sup>33</sup> The word “*Balkan*” comes from Turkish and it means a mountain range, formerly Haemus in Greek and presently Stara Planina in Bulgaria (Todorova 2009: 26). It was first used to refer to the peninsula by the German geographer August Zeune who ‘was convinced that the mountain of Balkan was spread all over the region’ (Švob-Dokić 2001: 35).

<sup>34</sup> “*Balkan*” is used in English as an adjective. In most Slavic languages, it is the singular name referring to the peninsula and its political formations, as opposed to the English plural form “the Balkans” (Todorova 2009: 31).

<sup>35</sup> Bakić-Hayden 1995: 917-931. ‘Within the Balkans that means that Slovenians and Croats look at Serbs as oriental, Serbs look at Albanians and Bosniaks, Albanians and Bulgarians look at Turks, etc.’ My translation;

Eastern Europe” is an initiative “from above”, i.e. from Western Europe, to create a neutral name fitting the region, and she argues that its usage is not appropriate for the reason that, similarly to *Mitteleuropa*, the term *Südosteuropa* witnessed a discrediting when becoming ‘an important concept in the geopolitical view of the Nazis’ (Todorova 2009: 28).

The “South Eastern Europeanist” Nada Švob-Đokić from the Zagreb Institute for International Relations acknowledges that the term was indeed used first by German historians in the 19<sup>th</sup> century<sup>36</sup> and in the 1990s was reintroduced ‘through the direct political, diplomatic and military involvement of European countries and the USA’,<sup>37</sup> and opts for usage of this term. “South Eastern Europe” (SEE) is a preferred term particularly in the countries of Slovenia (EU member since 2004) and Croatia (EU member since 2013) with strong links to the West and the EU institutions and the desire to delineate from the Balkan “other” in order to modernize what is considered a periphery of Europe<sup>38</sup>. “The Balkans” is critiqued for its meaning of the region looked at as a “unified entity” (Švob-Đokić 2001: 38, cf. Hatzopoulos 2008: 156). Todorova acknowledges that ‘there has never been a common Balkan identity’ (Todorova 2004: 9), yet does not see it an obstacle for the terminology and usage of “the Balkans”. It can be anticipated, with regard to the internal fragmentation of the region, that the disunity in terminology will prevail.

#### 4. NEGOTIATING COUNTRIES’ NAMES

##### The Czech Republic or Czechia

The discussion of terminological referring to the region can be deepened by the debate on terms used for the particular countries’ name. The Czechs’ homeland is the focus of this passage, and several remarks on former Yugoslav countries’ names follow.

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original: ‘*V rámci Balkánu to znamená, že Slovinci a Chorvati pohlížejí jako na orientálce na Srby, Srbové na Albánce a Bosňáky, Albánci a Bulhaři na Turky atd.*’ (Holubec 2015: 21).

<sup>36</sup> The term *Südosteuropa* was coined at the Berlin Congress in 1878 by the German geographer Theobald Fischer (Švob-Đokić 2001: 36).

<sup>37</sup> Švob-Đokić 2001: 40. This term was supposed to ‘make people forget the ethnic, national and religious wars on distribution and deployment of economic means in the 1990’s’ (Komlosy & Hofbauer 2011: 12).

<sup>38</sup> Cf. Švob-Đokić 2001: 38. Croatia especially finds itself in the geo-historical crossroads of the regions of Central Europe, Mediterranean, and former Ottoman Turk dominated lands (Skoko 2010: 188). SEE proponents aspire to unite all these differences in a neutral way where the parts can function as a not clearly defined whole.

The territory of the present-day Czech Republic has had different names throughout history: Dukedom of Bohemia, Great Moravian Empire, Kingdom of Bohemia, Lands of the Bohemian crown, Czech lands under the Austrian Habsburg empire, Czechoslovak Republic, Nazi-ruled Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia, Czechoslovak Republic, Czechoslovak Socialist Republic, Czechoslovak Federal Republic, Czech and Slovak Federal Republic, and the separate Czech Republic and Slovakia (since 1993). Recently, in 2016, another name change took place when “Czechia” was added to the UN database.<sup>39</sup> Czechia is not a new name for the country, rather an addition to an already existing one, a short version, as is the case with e.g. Slovak Republic – Slovakia. The popularity of “Czechia” has grown in recent years, particularly in the public sphere, trade, and the academy.<sup>40</sup>

“The Czech Republic”, with the connection to the republican constitutional arrangement, and the shorter version “Czechia”, both have the goal to incorporate all the three historical regions: Bohemia (*Čechy*), Moravia (*Morava*) and Silesia (*Slezsko*). Even though it might seem to be a sensitive matter as it points to the western majority part of the country, Bohemia (*Čechy*), it is not that much of a problem<sup>41</sup>. Czechs are rather divided on the issue of country’s name subjectively: they have been used to using one name for long time (“the Czech Republic”) and they want to stick with it, or they prefer Czechia for its shortness, or one or the other simply sounds better to their ears. The roots of today’s ambivalence could be seen as the aftermath of “the Hyphen war” and the split with Slovakia when ‘almost nobody was preparing for the state’s birth, almost nobody wished it and, consequently, nobody was engaged in essential and responsible reflection on its name’ (Krejčí, P. 2008: 32).

### **Negotiating former Yugoslav countries’ names**

In former Yugoslavia, similarly, there has been an ongoing discussion on names of particular countries. Due to the limited space for deeper introduction, only a few examples can be given: Macedonia, after a long phase of the official name FYROM (Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia), an agreement with Greece was reached and since February 2019 the country uses the new official name Northern Macedonia. Bosnia and Herzegovina is one country with two

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<sup>39</sup> ‘On 17 May 2016 the Permanent Mission of the Czech Republic to the United Nations informed the UN that the short name to be used for the country is Czechia.’ Available at <http://www.un.org/en/member-states/> [Accessed 3 Jan 2020].

<sup>40</sup> Compare to Čižmarová 2015, Krejčí, P. 2008, Pabian 2015, Drbohlav 2009.

<sup>41</sup> Nevertheless, it is quite common in Europe that a country’s name is derived from one of its regions, e.g. Austria (Lower and Upper Österreich), Switzerland (the canton of Schwyz), Poland (Greater and Lesser Poland).

names in the title, these are geographical-historical parts of Bosnia (north) and Herzegovina (south), yet these are not strictly delineated. Instead, the country consists of two political entities: The Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina (FBiH) and the Republic of Srpska (RS) which is not to be confused with the Republic of Serbia. Next, the name of the Republic of Kosovo is derived from the Serbian word *Kosovo polje* (“field of blackbirds”), and even though it is nowadays inhabited by a majority of Albanians, the Serbian word is used for the country’s name, and specifically the ending -o in the English version.<sup>42</sup> , in Albanian it is *Kosova*. Another example of when the English version uses a non-native language is *Montenegro*, which is the Italian “Black Mountain” version of the local *Crna Gora*.

Certain complications of geopolitical terms are not limited only to the names of countries, but to how nations themselves are labelled. While in the Czech context, Czechs (*Češi*) is the only word existing with no seeming complications, there is a difference of e.g. Serbs and Serbians and Croats and Croatians. Even though these might get used interchangeably, a more precise usage is to use “Serbians” for people in proper Serbia<sup>43</sup>, and “Serbs” for the Serbian ethnic group members; the same is valid for Croats. It gets more complicated when it comes to Bosnian Muslims – Bosniaks. The word “Bosniak” (*Bošnjak*) was coined under the Austro-Hungarian administration in 19<sup>th</sup> century, originally aspiring to include all three ethnic groups in the occupied country. It did not take root, yet the term was resurrected in the 1990s<sup>44</sup>. The difference between “Bosniaks” (“*Bošnjaci*”) and “Bosnians” (“*Bosanci*”) remains a hot topic, since some Bosniaks often claim their nationality as Bosnians, while on the other hand, Bosnian Serbs and Bosnian Croats do also refer to themselves, or are labelled as such when they come to Serbia or Croatia, as Bosnians (Žeželj & Pratto 2017: 176). Added to that, Bosniaks call their language Bosnian (*bosanski*), which is critiqued by Serbs and Croats of Bosnia, who would prefer that they call it Bosniak (*bošnjački*). All this contributes to certain, until now unresolved, tension.

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<sup>42</sup> The Albanian version is *Kosova*. Available at: <https://www.britannica.com/place/Kosovo> [Accessed 3 Jan 2020].

<sup>43</sup> It gets further complicated when Serbian language distinguishes between *Srbijanci* (those in Serbia proper) and *prečanski Srbi* (Serbs from “*preko*” – from “across” Danube and Sava rivers).

<sup>44</sup> “Bosniaks” include Muslim Slavs in the territory of the former Ottoman empire, apart from Bosnia and Herzegovina, this is especially the region of Sandžak (on the border of Serbia and Montenegro). Cf. Greenberg 2004: 140.

## 5. CONCLUSION

This article aimed to bring attention to the continuing fragile process of redefinition of Slavs within Europe, even after approximately forty years since the fall of the Communist regime. The literature-based study of spatial identification of both Czechs and former Yugoslavs demonstrates that both consider the reference to their country's name and their spatiality in Europe as significant. This concise comparison exposes the two as different, yet similar. Even though it might seem that the Czech Republic would not be as loaded with elements of nationalism and provincial particularism as the states in the south-eastern part of Europe, it rather seems that there are more commonalities – the self-identification is being constantly negotiated in both contexts, even though its temporal intensity and expressions of it might differ.

Czechs and former Yugoslavs, in spite of their differences, find similar traits in self-identification in spatiality – in (a.) negotiation of establishing themselves geopolitically within Europe and in (b.) negotiation of naming their countries, as laid out in the preceding two passages. These findings are limited, but they could nevertheless allow for a deeper consulting of this self-identification linked to spatiality, when crossing the boundaries from one Slavic context to another, or in other nationals' involvement in the given countries – political, economic, religious, or other. This cross-case study exemplifies the possible overlap where a similar spatial self-identification needs to be learned and properly differentiated, and more studies in other corresponding and not dissimilar contexts could appear. This could perhaps also provide an impulse to research the self-identification of Czechs and former Yugoslavs in their relation to the European Union. Next, to complete the image of the identification, it might seem useful to focus in the future also on mutual perception and spatial identification, instead of self-identification. Additionally, more field-based studies of Czechs and former Yugoslavs could emerge.

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