

shape in the communist states of Europe: In the East a turn towards nationalism and new chauvinistic divisions started earlier, however, with a paradoxical post-Stalinist disenchantment with Leninist enlightenment. From 1956 on, Eastern European communist leaders started to play the nationalist card. (Ibid.: p. 48)

The “national question” was constantly analysed theoretically and broadly discussed in public. Communism – especially in the case of the former Yugoslavia – claimed to represent a space of true equality of its federated “nations” (or ethnicities), and in reality this claim could have withstood the benefit of the doubt. Of course, speaking about all communist systems in the abstract omits many modifications. In the communist world there were cases in which larger nations ruled over smaller ones, minorities were repressed and excluded, and so on, which after all represented a continuation of many cultural patterns acquired in the “imperialist” past. However, in all cases the category of the national (or ethnic) was observed one way or another.

There is another aspect that should be taken into account, one that involves culture in a relation with notions of modernity and tradition. During modernism, broadly speaking, traditions were threatened or thoroughly changed. However, globalization unexpectedly brought about renewed interest in all kinds of traditions. As I mentioned before in the Part II of this book, this led Anthony Giddens to develop the notion of post-traditional society. Giddens found out that state socialism “paradoxically” in effect preserved traditions better than capitalism. (See: Giddens, 1996: p. 51). What is further interesting in Giddens’ theory of de-traditionalization processes is his assertion that “.../ in the post-traditional order. . . traditions do not wholly disappear; indeed in some respects, and in some contexts, they flourish” (Giddens, 1996: 56). Therefore, he finds important the way traditions enter into the context of post-traditional society, and so he emphasizes “preparedness to enter into dialogue while suspending the threat of violence.” He goes on to say: “Otherwise, tradition becomes fundamentalism” (Giddens, 1996: p. 56). At the core of the “paradox”, concerning communist societies there was culture, which was the realm of the construction of identity. How it happened that cultural tradition, also enveloping ethnicity, became fundamentalist in some parts of the world in transition is difficult to explain. This is particularly true in the case of the former communist Yugoslavia, which was constituted on the principle of “equality of nations” (i.e., ethnicities).