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**THE EUROPEAN UNION AS A PEACEMAKER IN THE WESTERN BALKANS: THE
CASE OF ETHNIC CONFLICT IN THE REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA**

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INTRODUCTION

As a background to this case-study of Macedonia, the history of the EU as a force for reconciliation is briefly recapitulated. There are four distinct stages in this evolution: first we can see the original EEC as a mechanism for reconciliation between Germany and France after a century of hostility. Second, the EU oversees and successfully completes the reintegration of a democratic western Europe with a communist eastern Europe. Third, the EU has been pre-occupied with its 'neighbourhood' and, in particular, with creating conditions that will stabilise the 'frontiers' of the EU and set agreed limits to its expansion. Fourthly, most currently, the EU is attributed with a normative role in global affairs where it attempts by a 'demonstration effect' to enhance human rights, foster economic development, and pre-empt potential conflicts in places as far apart as China, East Timor and Latin America. This latter phase is far from uncontroversial involving as it does a 'soft power' that sometimes borders on old-fashioned (neo-) colonialism.

Our Macedonia case-study belongs to the third of these four phases. The Western Balkans lie geographically in the neighbourhood of the EU but as 'candidates' for eventual EU membership they can be distinguished from countries such as Georgia and the Ukraine. However, the strategies adopted towards both groups of countries are broadly similar. The Macedonian case-study is presented in four stages: firstly, we outline the implications of the ethnic cleavage that lies at the heart of the Macedonian state. Secondly, the outworking of the Ohrid Agreement (2001) is linked to the role of the EU in the region. Thirdly, sporadic violence in Macedonia and other obstacles in the path towards EU membership are set in the context of the 'roadmap' drawn up for the Western Balkans by the EU. Finally, the current crisis in Macedonian relations with the EU is assessed as part of a diminishing capability on the part of the EU to play a peacemaking role in Macedonia's internal politics.

The implications of Macedonia's status as a candidate for EU accession, announced in December 2005, were far-reaching¹. On the one hand, it reflected internal political developments in Macedonia itself; on the other, it sent a signal to neighbouring countries in the Balkan region. Sporadically negative reactions to Macedonia's new found role as an EU candidate state were not indicative of any antipathy towards Macedonia itself, but only of a broader ambivalence² about further enlargement. The Macedonian case-study, presented here, however, illustrates a continuing role on the part of the EU that goes beyond mere economic evolution, and towards a political mission as peacemaker in regions of instability.

However, what we are mainly concerned with here is the way in which the European Union continues to assume a role of *projecting stabilisation and democratisation beyond its boundaries*. The recently initiated 'Neighbourhood Policy'³ of the EU is designed precisely to support, develop and consolidate the forces of economic and political stabilisation in countries

¹ Macedonia had presented its application to join the EU during the Irish Presidency in 2004.

² France had been rather resistant to Macedonia's candidature, possibly seeing it as the thin end of a large Balkan wedge.

³ See *Wider Europe Neighbourhood: a new framework for relations with our eastern and southern neighbours* [COM (2003) 104 final]

that lie (predominantly) to the east and south of the EU27. Although a formal distinction is made between countries that are *candidates* for EU membership and those that are not, similar policies of 'projected stabilisation' are being pursued in all cases. The only difference is that candidates for membership can be more easily influenced since, for most of them, EU membership has become an overriding foreign policy goal to which virtually all domestic policies are being subordinated.⁴ In Macedonia's case the fact that about 60% of its trade is with the EU makes conformity with the EU *acquis* a necessity not a luxury. We also consider the implications of the EU for Macedonia's internal political stabilisation. In 2001 the fragility of the Macedonian body politic was amply demonstrated when Kosovar Albanians infiltrated Macedonia in an effort to fan the flames of a smouldering Albanian nationalism amongst the ethnic minority. Sporadic but fierce fighting near Tetovo (Macedonia's largest ethnic Albanian city) brought Macedonia to the brink of civil war. The ensuing peace agreement allowed a greater participation for ethnic Albanians in Macedonia; and the prospect of EU membership is currently seen as perhaps the only way for this uneasy peace to be consolidated. EU membership implies both economic and political stability underwritten by external guarantors (since lapses into anti-democratic conduct could see Skopje sanctioned by other EU member states). Public opinion in Macedonia is strongly supportive of EU membership. Levels of support are strong enough to demonstrate that EU membership is a goal for ethnic Albanians (28% of the population) as much as for the Macedonian majority. Ten years ago, out of the total population, 88% say they would vote yes in a hypothetical referendum "if one were held next week" (December 2004).

Although it became fashionable to speculate about the European Union's 'mid-life' crisis in the wake of the negative referendums in France and the Netherlands, and to wonder aloud whether the prospects for further expansion are now doomed to stagnate in a mood of what is commonly referred to as 'enlargement fatigue', it is equally valid to argue that the longevity of the integration project in Europe is in fact taken too much for granted; that it is remarkable, and that it testifies to the Union's resilience and flexibility in the face of a fundamentally changed global environment. It is often assumed that international organisations have a 'shelf life' that is either conscientiously observed when the organisation concerned dissolves itself, or is dissolved. The League of Nations, the Western European Union, and EFTA are all examples of organisations whose shelf life was, or is being, respected by a timely demise. Other organisations try to evade the implications of their shelf life by seeking new goals to replace those rendered obsolete by an altered external environment: here NATO and the British Commonwealth readily spring to mind.

The success of the European Union in surviving for more than fifty years and in not needing overtly to seek 'new games to play' may be attributed to its almost effortless adaptability to changing circumstances, many of which were unforeseen in 1957. It is possible to identify at least five roles or 'stages of development' that have characterised the evolution of the EU since. Firstly, we can conceptualise the original EEC as being primarily a tool for *reconciliation* between France and Germany, two countries that had a long history of enmity stretching back for the best part of a century. Secondly, however, that role of 'the Six' evolved fairly quickly into one of generating prosperity for its membership around the core of a German *wirtschaftswunder*; and a later version of the same role was seen in the '1992 project' largely in response to external competition from both the USA and Japan⁵. Thirdly, the EU (as it was now officially titled)

⁴ As the EU expands, the number of countries, to whom the lure of membership can be offered, decreases.

⁵ W Sandholtz and J Zysman '1992 Recasting the European Bargain' *World Politics* 42:95-128

assumed a different role - that of reconciling, or more accurately re-combining, the two parts of the European continent that had been split apart by the outcome of World War Two. This phase was so driven by political imperatives that the economic costs of the 2004 enlargement were always subordinated to the overriding desire in both parts of Europe for re-integration to take place.⁶ Fourthly, since 2000, and in the context of needing to define its own outer limits, the EU has taken on the task of policing a 'neighbourhood'. The motives are not altruistic: the more the neighbourhood can be pacified and its needs satisfied, the less likely it is that the neighbours will clamour to enter the EU 'club' which is now widely regarded as approaching 'saturation'. This neighbourhood policy, coupled with a rather ambiguous position taken towards further enlargement, enables the EU to wield quite disproportionate influence outside its own boundaries, arguably more (in relative terms) than ever before in its history. Moreover, the EU can now be seen as a 'peacemaker' and source of conflict resolution, not only on its own doorstep, but also much further afield. This current phase provokes considerable debate not only because of the intricate and novel policies of 'conditionality' used in specific conflict resolution episodes, but also because it raises broader questions about the motives of the EU as an 'actor' in international relations. What is it trying to achieve? What are its motives? If the tasks of the EU have come full circle from reconciliation between France and Germany to reconciliation in a variety of conflict situations, we might not seem to have moved very far. In fact, the context is now very different. The focus is external and the EU uses its accumulated influence, and rewards of closer association with itself, to create benign scenarios that effectively replace actual or potential conflict situations.

Before discussing the Macedonian case in some detail, it may be useful to outline the methods and motivations that characterise the EU role in conflict prevention and conflict resolution, beyond its borders. That sets the scene for our consideration of the relationship between the EU and the 'Western Balkans'. Why and how is the EU involved in this region? We can then focus on our case-study: the EU and Macedonia. As noted above, the case study itself is presented in four phases: the contours of this 'frozen conflict'⁷ are explained; the background and consequences of the Ohrid Agreement (2001) are linked to the role played by the EU and other international organisations; the recurrence of sporadic violence in 2003 is then cited as evidence of not only the inherent volatility of the situation but also the continuing role of the EU in dissipating conflict; and 'the umbilical cord' that ties inter-ethnic tension in Macedonia to other unresolved questions of ethno-national self-determination. Fourthly, we hope to demonstrate that, as the potential attractions of EU membership have diminished due to the economic crisis in the Eurozone, and as public opinion in the EU has hardened against enlargement, the ability of the EU to influence the economic and political evolution of candidate countries has also declined. This 'enlargement fatigue' is now mirrored by an 'accession fatigue' in the aspirant member-states that has reduced motivation to carry out necessary reforms. Thus we conclude that the peace-making role of the EU is largely dependent on its success, or otherwise, in presenting itself, and being perceived, as a model for reconciliation beyond its own borders.

THE EU AS PEACEMAKER

It is now accepted wisdom that the EU should be involved in conflict resolution. Although this is

⁶ See J.O'Brennan, *The Eastern Enlargement of the European Union* London:Routledge (2006)

⁷ G.Nodia, 'Europeanisation and not resolving secessionist conflicts' ECMI (2004)

new in the sense that the rhetoric of the new neighbourhood policy, the declared objectives of further enlargement, and the mandates of EU policing missions, all make overt references to the EU as peacemaker, the role is also, in another sense, as old as the Community itself. What clearly lay behind the *economic* methods of the Rome Treaty and the earlier Coal and Steel Community was a *political* purpose of conflict prevention.

One key strategy for the EU is the process of Europeanisation⁸, a term that is conceptually diffuse but which can be applied in specific contexts with appropriate definition. For our purposes here, in a context of conflict resolution, Europeanisation can be usefully defined as:

A mechanism and a process at the same time which is activated and encouraged by European institutions by linking the final outcome of the conflict with the degree of integration or association of conflict parties with European structures. This link is made operational by means of specific conditionality and socialisation mechanisms which are built into the ethnic cleavage process of Europeanisation⁹

The EU has a number of assets which make it a fertile source of conflict resolution mechanisms: it provides a 'layer' of governance above national or ethnic divisions which if left to their own devices may engage in a zero-sum 'war of attrition'. By offering a layer of authority, and fount of resources, that appear neutral or 'disinterested', the severity of an ethnic or bi-national division can be mitigated. EU tactics with regard to the Cyprus issue, or Serbia-Montenegro, or Moldova-Transdnister, or the Kurds in Turkey, can succeed only in the context of offering a formula that is acceptable to both parties in the dispute: sometimes this favours a *modus vivendi* within one state; sometimes it favours secession, or regional autonomy. Although the EU has displayed a preference for maintaining (e.g. Serbia-Montenegro) or reconstituting (e.g. Cyprus)¹⁰, the territorial integrity of 'political entities', tactics are flexible in the face of changing circumstances. In the case of Cyprus, the EU was forced to react quickly to the negative vote of Greek Cypriots to the Annan Plan and in the case of Serbia-Montenegro, the referendum outcome saw the EU backing Montenegro's independence. In the cases of Macedonia and Kosovo, EU policy continues to be to reinforce the *de jure* territorial integrity of the former, and has encouraged the *de facto* territorial separation of the latter.

THE EU AND THE WESTERN BALKANS

In many respects the Western Balkans¹¹ provide an excellent 'laboratory' for any scholar wishing to monitor or analyse the process of Europeanisation at work. There are probably at least two explanations for the intensity of EU involvement in this region. Firstly, there is the obvious geopolitical point that if the EU is concerned to ensure that its neighbourhood in general is secure and politically stable, the proximity of the Western Balkans makes this concern especially acute. Secondly, there is the moral argument that the EU needs to demonstrate leadership in the

⁸ For a useful summary of its meanings see, J.P. Olsen 'Europeanisation' in M. Cini (ed) *European Union Politics*. Oxford: OUP (2003). Other important perspectives are in: C. Radaelli 'Whither Europeanization? Concept Stretching and Substantive Change' at <http://eiop.or.at/eiop/texte/2000-008.htm>. For our purposes here, see B. Coppieters et al *Europeanization and Conflict Resolution: Case Studies from the European Periphery*. Ghent: Academia Press (2004)

⁹ M. Emerson, 'Europeanisation and Conflict Resolution: Testing an Analytical Framework' *CEPS Policy Brief 59* (December 2004) p.2

¹⁰ See J. Asmussen, 'Cyprus After the Failure of the Annan Plan' ECMI Issue Briefs (July 2004)

¹¹ A term used primarily by the EU to denote Croatia, Macedonia, Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Serbia-Montenegro and Kosovo.

region almost *faute de mieux*: in the absence of EU leadership, there is a distinct prospect of the region turning in on itself, and becoming a power vacuum whose consequences the EU would find it difficult to ignore. This latter sense of moral imperative is reinforced by a sense of guilt stemming from its inability to intervene decisively in the conflicts of the early 1990s. What might have been 'Europe's finest hour' was in fact marked by vacillation, disagreement and inaction. Against that background, the involvement of the EU in the Western Balkans today can be seen as a belated attempt to make amends for the past.

Although one of the key themes in EU policy is to treat the Western Balkans as a region, and indeed to encourage measures that enhance intra-regional cooperation, there is a clear tension between this goal and the reality on the ground. On the one hand, economic conditions vary enormously and this is reflected in the very different rates of progress made towards the final objective of EU membership: Croatia has recently joined the EU¹²; Macedonia and Montenegro have been granted candidate status;¹³ Other Western Balkan countries have concluded a Stability and Association Agreement (SAA)¹⁴; while Kosovo awaits its SAA but hosts EU rule-of-law and policing missions. On the other hand, political conditions vary too, with most, if not all, governments struggling against corruption, failings in the judiciary, and weak administrative capacity. If one adds to this, mutual suspicions among newly-created states and simmering ethnic tensions, the notion of a 'region' goes little beyond a minimal geographical interpretation. A further complication is that of borders between states: while these remain formally undecided (e.g. Kosovo and, until recently, Serbia-Montenegro) any task of applying the Copenhagen criteria to sovereign governments remains tricky, at best. The Thessaloniki Summit of 2003¹⁵ has been a convenient yardstick by which one could assess EU policies towards the Western Balkans in general. Reviewing progress three years later (January 2006) the Commission noted that trade between the area and the EU was expanding at a rate of 8% per year; that joint projects between the EU and individual governments to deal with problems such as money laundering, smuggling, trafficking, and border control, were working well. Visa policy is another weapon in the armoury of the EU: in exchange for tighter control over borders, fake travel documents and so on, the EU has granted visa-free status to Western Balkan countries, but in a recent reversal of policy, reflective of 'enlargement fatigue, visa free status may be revoked by individual EU states if conditions warrant it. Visa-free status is valued by aspirant candidate countries because it clearly contributes to greater mutual awareness and the adoption of more favourable attitudes on both sides. This is particularly relevant in the case of student-exchanges and research collaboration. Administrative 'capacity' has been enhanced through the TAIEX scheme whereby thousands of officials have undergone training in special 'twinning' programmes with EU member states. Joint Parliamentary Committees were set up between the EU and specific Western Balkan countries, and these have played an important socialising role in both directions: the EP becomes better informed about the problems and aspirations of candidate countries, and the Western Balkans become more familiar with parliamentary democratic norms inside the EU.¹⁶ In the wake of the decisions to open negotiations with Turkey and Croatia in late 2005,

¹² Croatia joined the EU as 28th member in July 2013.

¹³ For a cautious view as to when negotiations would start, see S Regout, 'Macedonia:improving democracy' *European Voice* 27 April 2006, p.21. For an argument (seven years later) that negotiations should begin as soon as possible, see E.Fouere, Macedonia – A Country in Crisis *CEPS Policy Brief* No. 299 (September 2013).

¹⁴ 'Albania leaps ahead' *European Voice* 27 April 2006 p.21

¹⁵ For a summary, see www.uni-graz.at/sudosteuroopa/media/Thessaloniki2

¹⁶ This point is made in the context of eastern Europe by J. O'Brennan, *The Eastern Enlargement of the European Union* London:Routledge (2006) p,104, but it is equally true in the Western Balkans.

there was a prescient anxiety in the Western Balkans generally that the path to membership for other countries might be made increasingly difficult, if only to appease a public opinion in existing EU states that was becoming lukewarm, at best, about further enlargement. At the Salzburg Meeting, held under the Austrian Presidency in March 2006, the rhetoric of the final communiqué was not reassuring: there was mention for the first time of the EU's 'absorption capacity' and earlier promises of visa restrictions being removed, were now somewhat diluted.¹⁶

MACEDONIA AND THE EU

Macedonia, with a population of 2 million, became an independent state in November 1991. The country has had contractual relations with the EU since 1996. In 1997, it signed a Cooperation Agreement, and trade and textile agreements that came into force in 1998. The bedrock of its relationship with the EU has been the Stabilisation and Association Agreement (SAA) which was signed in 2001 and came into force in 2004. Like other SAAs in the region, and not unlike the Europe Agreements concluded with central and eastern Europe in the 1990s, the Agreement with Macedonia provides a legal framework for relations between the EU and Macedonia for the entire period leading up to a future accession to the EU. It covers key areas such as: a political dialogue; regional integration; the four freedoms and a planned free trade area by 2011; approximation of legislation in Macedonia to the EU *acquis*: and a wide range of sectors for cooperation including justice and home affairs. Trade provisions in the SAA are asymmetrically weighted in favour of Macedonia where almost all exports from Macedonia enter the EU duty free¹⁷, with exceptions such as baby beef and wine for which quotas remain. By way of reciprocity, Macedonia is reducing its tariffs on most industrial products but with varying timetables according to the sensitivity of the products involved. Full implementation of the SAA is intended to assist Macedonia prepare for EU membership. Conversely, progress regarding EU integration will depend in part on Macedonia's ability to fulfil its obligations under the SAA. The Commission on its part offers technical advice and financial assistance to facilitate a smooth adaptation to EU norms. Joint institutions administer, monitor and develop the workings of the SAA: the SA Council, various subcommittees, and the Joint Parliamentary Committee are important not only for exchanges of information, but also for the process of mutual socialisation that they foster among participants. Alongside, and underpinning the objectives of the SAA has been the CARDS programme. In 2003 this provided 43.5m euro much of it related to the need to implement the Ohrid Framework Agreement in fields such inter-ethnic relations, administrative capacity enhancement, and local government decentralisation.

Although Macedonia was spared most of the violence that marked the disintegration of the former Yugoslavia in the early 1990s, inter-ethnic violence erupted a decade later between the predominantly Macedonian and Christian majority (about 65% of the population) and the Albanian Muslim minority (about 28%). The ethnic Albanian population is territorially concentrated in the west of Macedonia close to the borders with both Kosovo and Albania. This uneven demographic distribution obviously increases the potential for irredentist agitation in neighbouring countries. The remaining 10% of Macedonia's population comprises several smaller ethnicities, among them Turkish, Roma, Serb and other smaller minorities. At independence in 1991, the Macedonian Constitution described the country as 'the national state of the Macedonian people' which in hindsight could be seen as provocative to the ethnic

¹⁶ www.esiweb.org (accessed on 8 May)

¹⁷ http://europa.eu.int/comm/enlargement/fyrom/eu_relations.htm

Albanian and other minorities. As Catholics in Northern Ireland felt alienated within an overtly British state after 1920, so ethnic Albanians felt marginalised by the moncephalous ethno-nationalist identity of the new Macedonian state after 1991. In both cases, this alienation was cemented by discrimination: despite being 28% of the population, ethnic Albanians occupied only 7% of positions in the civil service and 3% of the police force in 2001. In that year, feeling 'trapped' in the new polity, ethnic Albanians began an armed rebellion which was quickly quelled by external intervention on the part of the EU and NATO. The government and ethnic rebel factions concluded a peace agreement at the lakeside resort of Ohrid in August 2001. The resulting peace agreement recognised other ethnic minorities as constituent peoples of the Macedonian state; it granted important rights to the ethnic minorities over legislation affecting their basic rights; it increased recognition of the Albanian language; and it made provision for a proportionate representation of ethnic Albanians in the civil service and police force. These power-sharing arrangements, reminiscent of the earlier 'Good Friday Agreement' in Northern Ireland, have displayed remarkable durability up to the present time, although in recent years (see below) the 'spirit' of Ohrid has been severely challenged. It is worth pointing out something that is also common to Macedonia and Northern Ireland, namely the potential for entrenching the ethnic cleavage in each case that is inherent in the procedures for passing legislation. In Macedonia, the ethnic Albanian minority is protected vis a vis the Macedonian majority, but the interests of smaller ethnic minorities are not protected vis a vis the ethnic Albanian minority unless their interests happen to coincide.¹⁸

EU involvement in Macedonia has not been restricted to economic actions. Under the European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP) an intentionally complementary policing function was instigated under the title EUPOL-Proxima. Although ESDP missions are second pillar activities of the EU, policing functions can be undertaken by any of the three pillars, as well as by the member states themselves. From 2002 onwards, the EU Commission advised the Ministry of the Interior in Macedonia about police reform (an issue that has loomed large in the Commission's own regular assessments of the situation in Macedonia, and a key issue in interethnic relations within the country). This advice is part, therefore, of the long term commitment to prepare Macedonia for eventual membership of the EU. ESDP missions operate in full coordination with other actors in the field: the EU Commission is a key actor; but the OSCE provides training, and Proxima itself mentors and advises the police in their daily work. The mission fell into three parts: border policing; public law and order; and tackling organised crime. Each of these parts is led by a Branch composed of personnel seconded to, or contracted by, the EU. These personnel may include some from non-EU countries that have candidate status. The border policing function is a key one since it cross-cuts with other aspects of the policing function in Macedonia. Proxima personnel tend to 'mirror' the senior echelons of the internal structures to ensure that the Mission has a "grip on the Host Country chain of command" and to identify shortcomings, as well as tracking flows of information, the delegation of tasks and so forth. On occasion, Mission personnel will "co-locate" on the ground i.e they work alongside local police, at border crossings for example. The overall objectives of the new Border Police are to make it independent; to remove border surveillance from the Army; and to foster more cooperation with analogous police functions in adjacent jurisdictions. In this latter respect, there have started professional exchanges with Greek border authorities (in the south); with Bulgarian border police in the east, and with UNMIK and KFOR personnel in the north (on the

¹⁸ S Kelleher, 'Minority Veto Rights in Power-Sharing Systems: Lessons from Macedonia, Northern Ireland and Belgium' *Adalah's Newsletter* 13 May 2005 p.4

border with Kosovo). Among training priorities from which border police benefit under Proxima are: detection of forged documents; investigation techniques relating to the trafficking of human beings; and liaison with diplomatic missions to keep abreast of best practice regarding visa regulations. All in all, the purpose of Proxima is to create a modern, professional, equitably representative, police service, trained and equipped to uphold law and order according to the level of EU best practice.

The Proxima mission has, however, not been without its problems. Among these one can cite the delays in delivering necessary equipment to field offices, some of whom had not received computers and other necessary equipment three months into the mission. Another problem concerns co-location (the deployment of Proxima personnel alongside indigenous police). In the absence of agreed guidelines, and unusually good personal relationships there is a danger that co-location may actually inflame already tense security situations. Even if one agrees that 'European best practice' informs the lessons to be learnt, there is great divergence among the policing traditions of EU countries expressing themselves, amongst other things, 'in different public security governance structures, police-society relations and policing cultures.'¹⁹ More broadly, however, even if a synthesis of European policing practices can be achieved, a question remains as to whether these are appropriate, or whether they will be ineffective, or even counter-productive if transposed to countries in transition that differ substantially from the EU itself.²⁰

Despite the boost to national morale that has resulted from the EU decision to grant candidate status to Macedonia, the internal position in the country remains fragile, and the EU decision not to specify a date for a start of entry negotiations reflects a caution on its part and a desire to keep up pressure on the government in Skopje to continue with the reforms initiated in the Ohrid agreement. Reform of the police, and especially of the judiciary, are of as much concern to Macedonian citizens as they are to the EU. Police reforms have progressed with respect to the recruitment of ethnic Albanians, but more needs to be done 'on the ground' to decentralise authority, and to establish promotion by merit, so that the police service can become truly community-based, and accountable. The judiciary is still unreformed and there are over one million cases waiting to be heard (in a country of two million people). The judiciary needs to be freed from executive branch influence, and corrupt and incompetent judges need to be replaced by the newly trained, the capable and the qualified.²¹ Although the threat of armed insurrection that surfaced briefly in November 2004 seems now to be a thing of the past, Macedonia is still a young democracy and its survival depends crucially on holding at bay the potential ethnic fault line that runs across the body politic. It is only if both of the principal ethnic communities can continue to be made to feel that they are primary stakeholders in the integrity of the state, and can share in its definition of citizenship, that the temptation for 'spoilers' to wreck the historic compromise will be thwarted. The EU holds the key to the future: the road to membership of the EU depends on the survival of the power-sharing enshrined formula at Ohrid, but this formula in turn depends on the EU providing sufficient incentives for politicians to commit themselves to making it work.

In recent years, Macedonia's reputation as the model candidate country in the region has

¹⁹ M. Merlingen and R. Ostraukaite, 'ESDP Police Missions: Meaning, Context and Operational Challenges', *European Foreign Affairs Review* 10:227 (2005)

²⁰ *ibid*

²¹ 'Macedonia: Wobbling Towards Europe' International Crisis Group, *Europe Briefing* no. 41 (12 January 2006) pp.1-2

suffered some setbacks. Following the general election of July 2006, the new prime minister Nikola Gruevski chose the smaller of two ethnic Albanian parties as his coalition partner: the DPA instead of the DUI. The latter party, having won 60 per cent of the ethnic Albanian vote is now in opposition and argues that its exclusion from power – although not unconstitutional – runs counter to the spirit of the Ohrid Agreement. The election campaign itself had already been marred by incidents of violence and the overall turnout of 55 per cent reflects a still less than enthusiastic commitment to a fragile democracy. Previously positive sentiments expressed by Brussels towards Macedonia have been replaced by more guarded comments. Enlargement Commissioner Olli Rehn, on a high profile visit to Skopje in early 2007, emphasised that EU membership was ‘not automatic’ for Macedonia and, meeting all the party leaders and the prime minister (five times) in a single day, urged political forces in the country to live up to their obligations under Ohrid. Specific concerns had been raised about the politicisation of public employees following the election when a whole swathe of public servants from motorway toll collectors to ambassadors were summarily replaced. Although the EU Commission, in its annual reports, has called for a better quality of dialogue between political parties in Macedonia, the situation deteriorated at the end of 2012 when the opposition was forcibly evicted from Parliament following violent scuffles in the chamber. In the absence of opposition politicians, the government then proceeded to approve a number of measures designed to limit debate. In the spring of 2013, in the face of a possible boycott of local elections by the opposition, the EU sent a high level delegation to Skopje that succeeded in defusing the issue sufficiently for the opposition to take part in the elections. However, mistrust has continued to damage the political atmosphere, and the EU commission has expressed concern about the quality of democracy in Macedonia. Political divisions have been exacerbated by increasing tension between the two main ethnic communities. This has been brought about by the government’s church-building programme which in turn has incited the ethnic Albanian community to build more mosques.. Insensitive legislation has further sharpened antagonisms. An anti-discrimination law was passed in 2010 but by excluding ‘sexual orientation’ as a basis for discrimination, the law is (uniquely in the Western Balkans) incompatible with EU norms, EU Commission Reports continue to express concern about corruption which ‘remains prevalent in many areas and continues to be a serious problem’ (2012). The judiciary is still dominated by government-appointed candidates as opposed to the graduates of the EU funded Academy of Judges and Public Prosecutors. The EU has taken a rather cautious line against these glaring infringements of the desired accession criteria. The accession process itself, involving as it should not only politicians, but the media, academia, business, and civil society is a good way of ensuring that citizens feel included, and therefore persuaded that the sacrifices are necessary and possible.

The extent to which the Ohrid Agreement dominates discourse between the EU and Macedonia is perhaps emblematic of a broader problem, touched upon elsewhere in this paper: that of denying to national elites ownership of political progress, and thereby dissipating their fragile legitimacy. This is noticeable most acutely in the pressure exerted by the EU on governments to apprehend army leaders as evidence of a willingness to cooperate with the ICTY. Such pressure, while understandable from the outside, always courts the danger of alienating or antagonising chauvinistic elements in national politics. This was a problem in Croatia regarding the arrest of Gotovina, and subsequently the pressure to arrest General Mladic in Serbia. These are extreme cases: but in a milder form, the efforts of national elites to placate EU and international opinion can run the risk of weakening the legitimacy of embryonic democracies in the Western Balkans. The Ohrid Agreement is a case in point. It can be argued that because

Ohrid is not a 'home grown' product, efforts to appease international opinion on foot of its requirements lack legitimacy. The whole "ethnic analysis" of Macedonia's political and economic problems can be seen as a construction of convenience, and that it masks a more complex reality. In some ways, Macedonia displays characteristics of a 'protectorate' whose political system is largely based on bargaining between two ethnic blocs whose legitimacy stems to some extent from outside the country. The existence of the Ohrid Agreement could be said to devalue normal political processes in Macedonia because politicians (inside and outside the country) talk about the priority of 'implementing Ohrid' and not about implementing the Constitution or the rule of law. In this respect, Macedonia is not unique. Other ethnically divided societies have been 'saved from themselves' by external intervention; but the price that is often paid is a crude attribution of electoral power to ethnic 'blocs' and a willingness of local politicians to dance to tunes emanating from the international community.

The issue of 'national identity' is especially fragile in newly-created states, and more so in those where evident ethnic divisions exist. Creating a national identity is seen as an important task in new states since it can promote social cohesion across divisions of social class, ethnicity, religion and language. Such an enterprise is more likely to succeed when it incorporates key elements in national society such as the Francophone and Anglophone in Canadian identity, or the French, Italian and German speaking populations in Swiss identity. To emphasise one tradition at the expense of another, leads to resentment and conflict as happened in Northern Ireland which originally identified itself as a 'protestant state for a protestant people' (ignoring the 35% Catholic minority) or, as may happen in Macedonia, if it seeks a 'national identity that excludes the sizeable Albanian minority (28%)'. Nonetheless, the Macedonian government has embarked on a policy that risks creating a nationalism with which only the ethnic Macedonian majority can identify. This has consisted of adopting symbolic nomenclature e.g. naming the airport after Alexander the Great and, since 2010, launching the 'Skopje 2014' project involving the erection of scores of statues, fountains, arches, and museums. Leaving aside the question of whether such a poor country can afford such expenditure, the project has caused irritation on several fronts: the population of Skopje feels it has not been consulted; the ethnic Albanian minority feels excluded and overshadowed (literally in the case of some of the monuments), and externally the project has alienated both Greece and (to a lesser extent) Bulgaria who feel that 'their' history is being expropriated to create a 'national identity'. On top of this, some have questioned the rationale behind such extravagance: is it going to help attract foreign direct investment (as the government argues) and will tourists be attracted to such an *ersatz* panorama?

The ability of the EU to play its role as 'peacemaker' in such a scenario is dependent upon the extent to which it can deploy the promise and prospect of eventual EU membership as a 'carrot' to persuade national elites to re-orient national policies according to the template offered by Brussels. Today, the twin phenomena of *enlargement fatigue* and *accession fatigue* have significantly reduced the capacity of the EU to exercise normative power in the Western Balkans. Although it is not a new concept, the impact of enlargement fatigue is now closely associated with the sluggish progress of the Western Balkans towards EU membership. The reluctance of the EU to fulfil commitments made at the Thessaloniki Summit in 2003 is based not solely on the perceived inadequacies of preparations in the region for membership, but also on the capacity of the EU to absorb any new members. This reluctance has been accentuated since 2008 by the Eurozone crisis which has diverted attention away from enlargement towards

an intense preoccupation with the actual survival of the current level of monetary integration. This reluctance has been reinforced by retrospective doubts regarding the adaptation to membership of recent entrants such as Bulgaria, Romania and Hungary. These doubts have undermined former assumptions about the 'transformative' effects of EU membership and the 'locking in' of democratic norms that obligations of membership imply. Within the institutional landscape of the EU, we have witnessed a transfer of competence from the Commission to the Council, and a more intergovernmental approach to the enlargement process. The process itself has become more politicised as Eurosceptic currents run through the domestic political discourse forcing governments to make unilateral demands on the applicant countries. In this context, the Western Balkans are an easy target combining, as they do, the prospect of relatively poor immigrants, new economic challenges, and simmering ethnic disputes that would potentially overload an already crowded EU agenda. More than hitherto, EU governments have felt able to stipulate unilaterally conditions that cumulatively thwart the enlargement process: the Cypriot refusal to facilitate Turkish accession negotiations, or the Greek veto on accession negotiations for FYROM until the country's 'name dispute' has been settled.

Enlargement fatigue is easily tracked by reference to opinion polls. In 2012, a majority of the EU-27 population was opposed to enlargement (52% against, 38% in favour). This EU-wide average, however, conceals significant differences: in ten member-states a majority favoured enlargement, in Sweden and Slovakia it was 50%-50%, and in the remainder of the EU the majority was against. Support for enlargement was greatest in Poland (69%-22%) and least in Austria (23% in favour and 72% against). Over the past ten years there has been a shared, substantial and general decline in support for future EU enlargement. Thus the term 'enlargement fatigue' is not the sole property of elites; it also applies to the broader public. The visibility of accession countries is also a problem: in 2007 a Eurobarometer poll found that 34% of the EU public knew that Turkey was a candidate country, but only 5% that FYROM was.

If enlargement fatigue dominates the discourse on enlargement within the EU, it is equally true that 'accession fatigue' is endemic in the candidate countries. The two phenomena are clearly connected in that the diminishing attractiveness of EU membership coupled to the perceived reluctance of the EU to fulfil promises of EU membership has produced frustration, scepticism and popular disenchantment in the Western Balkans. The leverage that the EU has been able to exert in the region is primarily in the pre-accession phase. The prospect of EU membership has been a powerful 'driver' towards implementing reforms, and engaging with the *acquis* in aspirant member-states. Progression towards the Holy Grail of full membership has been carefully calibrated along a series of 'milestones': signing a Special Association Agreement (SAA); entry into force of the SAA; visa liberalisation; recognition as a 'candidate'; a date for negotiations to begin; and the negotiation process itself involving numerous 'chapters' that need to be opened and closed. For this process to be effective, the EU promise of eventual membership needs to be credible. The domestic costs of compliance (political and economic) with the demands of the *acquis* can only be 'sold' to the electorates in Western Balkan countries if the 'rewards' are seen to be reasonably imminent, and tangible. The reluctance of governments to implement reforms is linked to the apparent sluggishness of the EU in observing the timetable implicit in the various 'milestones'. FYROM, to take one example was granted candidate status in 2006 but is still waiting for its 'date' to open negotiations. An obvious consequence (and cause) of the FYROM government 'dragging its feet' is the decline in popular support for EU membership in FYROM. In 2006 76% of FYROM public opinion agreed that EU membership would be 'a good thing' but this had fallen to 57% in 2012. The FYROM government's Secretariat for European Affairs

conducts regular polls and although the levels of support are higher, there has been an equivalent falling off of support for EU membership: from 93% in 2002 to 84% in 2012. This decline in FYROM can be attributed variously to: the strongly ethno-nationalist stance of the ruling coalition; the name dispute with Greece; and the long-delayed announcement by the EU of a date for accession negotiations to begin. These factors are inter-linked but their respective explanatory weight is a matter for debate.

CONCLUSION

Although the award of the Nobel Peace Prize to the EU in 2012 may have raised eyebrows in some quarters, I have argued here that the EU has, since its inception, been a peace project *par excellence*. This has been true in a variety of contexts, both within and beyond its borders. This peace-making role stems from what the EU is, what it represents, and what it does. It is clear however that the success of this peacemaking role is contingent upon the credibility of the EU as a template for reconciliation and stability. This credibility has been called into question by the recent Eurozone crisis. Our Macedonian case-study serves to underline both the strength and the weakness of the EU role in peacemaking. The dormant ethnic cleavage that lies embedded in the Macedonian body politic could be effectively mitigated by the transformative and unifying forces of Europeanisation. When these forces fail or falter, the danger of ethnic divisions may overwhelm the supervening layer of a Eurocentric identity.
