Searching for Answers to the Macedonian Question: Identity Politics in the Balkans

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The Balkans have often been described as the "powder keg of Europe," an explosive mix of ethnic rivalries and ancient hatreds. For many twentieth century observers it was the Macedonian question, and not the issue of Bosnia-Hercegovina, which seemed most likely to provide the spark which would ignite the entire region. Following the break-up of Yugoslavia, a UN Preventive Deployment Force was dispatched to Macedonia, not to contain a conflict, but to prevent one from occurring. The newly independent Macedonia suffered from internal instability and troubled relations with its neighbors, especially Greece. Western observers have tended to portray the Macedonian question, like the terrible Bosnian war, as a product of immature states and blood feuds between tribal ethnic groups. This perspective contrasts the perennially troubled Balkans with a peaceful and civilized Europe. Adopting a different view, this essay examines the process of identity politics in the region and finds a classic example of contending claims to national self-determination and absolute state sovereignty. Given

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Western Europe's bloody experience with na-
tional rivalry, suppressed only by the exigencies of
the Cold War, the Balkans do not appear to be
either abnormally violent nor dysfunctional. It is
suggested that peace in Europe has been accom-
panied by a move away from state sovereignty and
the adoption of a new sense of European commu-
nity. Western observers require a sort of selective
amnesia in order to sustain the idea of a peaceful
Europe and a warlike Balkan region. This muddled
thinking only serves to obscure the possibilities for
lasting peace in the region; a goal that may only be
obtained as the Balkan peoples discover a means
to transcend the logic of national identity based on
territorial sovereignty.

Introduction

The troubled course of Macedonia's first few years as an independent state
has been overshadowed by the tragic conflict in nearby Bosnia-Hercegovina.
Occasional Western news reports chart the fluctuations of the tense
relationship between Skopje and Athens. Less frequently do references
appear to the UN Preventive Deployment Force (UNPREDEP) in Macedonia
that currently involves 1161 troops from the United States, the Nordic
countries, and a handful of other states (*Peacekeeping and International
Relations* 1995, 12–13). UNPREDEP is unlikely to get any increased
attention given the recent surge in NATO and IFOR activity in Bosnia that
began in late 1995. The Macedonian experience, however, can offer
important lessons that have implications for the success of the Dayton
accord on Bosnia. Conflicts throughout the region can be viewed, at least
in part, as an outcome of the politics of identity; a combination of ethnicity,
international relations, and a search for stable political communities.

This paper examines a particular aspect of identity politics in the
Balkans—the contentious issue of Macedonia's political and cultural
status. Often referred to as the "Macedonian question," this issue has been
a recurrent theme in Balkan politics for at least a century. The violence
associated with this conflict has been variously ascribed to the pernicious
effects of ethnic nationalism or to inherent antipathies among the Balkan

peoples. In either case, solutions to the problem generally involve attempts to redraw Balkan maps in a way that will permit the formation of mature, modern, and peaceful states.[1] The sovereignty of states and peoples, either as a principle to be upheld or as a rule that must be compromised, has been central to most understandings of this process. This paper argues that sovereignty, and other modern political ideas, cannot provide a lasting solution to the Macedonian question. Therefore, critical and post-modern accounts of international relations are examined for their relevance to the Balkan experience. This paper concludes with some tentative suggestions for new thinking on the possibility of peace in the so-called powder keg of Europe and the strategies for achieving it. Although these conclusions are drawn from the Macedonian situation, there is reason to believe that they also may be relevant to the political dynamics of Bosnia-Hercegovina.[2]

At present, the outlines of geographic Macedonia are not a matter of serious dispute.[3] What is under contention are the political, ethnic, and cultural boundaries of Macedonia and its neighbors. Serbian, Bulgarian, and Greek policies and politics all offer different versions of what Macedonia is.[4] In the past, these conceptions have been used to secure and sometimes extend the boundaries of the nation-states involved, often resulting in violence. Many observers, especially in the West, believe this violence to be the result of deeply ingrained hatred between Balkan peoples.[5] Others reduce Balkan nationalisms to dreams of resurrecting ancient empires like greater Bulgaria or greater Serbia.[6] This paper suggests that this violence, and hatred where it exists, is not something inherent to Balkan peoples, nor does it stem entirely from simple dreams of empire. The Macedonian situation can be better understood as an illustration of the defects of modern conceptions of political community; especially the idea of an international system of sovereign nation-states.

Since the mid-1980s cherished ideals in international relations have come increasingly under attack. Sovereignty, for so long the building-block of international affairs, has been singled out for criticism even by mainstream commentators such as Jessica Tuchman Matthews. Some have questioned the ability of the state to make sovereign decisions about vital issues like the environment, trade, or finances. These are seen to be a part of an international or global pattern that is beyond the control of any single state (Taylor 1994). The dizzying multiplication of the number of peoples in the world and the negative connotations attached to nationalism have

helped to undermine traditional devotion to the ideal of the nation-state. But not only key elements of international relations have come under fire. Some authors, writing from critical and post-modern perspectives, have suggested that modern notions about political community in general may be fundamentally unsound (Walker 1993, Campbell 1992). Adopting a perspective supplied by these commentators brings into question the thesis that Balkan nations are simply immature states which can become peaceful only after they begin to resemble the mature states of the international community.

Post-modern Critiques of International Relations

Long cherished ideals of political community like national self-determination and national sovereignty have been undermined by what Eric Hobsbawm calls the "murderous *reductio ad absurdum* of nationalism in its territorial version" (Hobsbawm 1990, 133). Nonetheless, national sovereignty remains a building-block of international relations, even if narrow ethnic nationalism is increasingly frowned upon in the West. Post-modern theorists suggest that violence is inherent in any form of sovereign state, even when it is not based on ethnic or nationalist principles. R.B.J. Walker feels that sovereignty is an ontological trap. In his 1990 article, Walker illustrates how the idea of sovereign states has come to define all political possibilities in modern life. Inside sovereign states, citizens build rational, peaceful, and secure communities. Outside of these states exist only foreigners who by definition are people with different values and interests who therefore cannot be completely trusted. Consequently, justice is possible inside states, but violence is always a threat in relations between them. This perspective leads to familiar notions of national security as the supreme concern of states and is typical of the realist school of international relations.

Yet Walker would not have us wholeheartedly embrace a liberal-internationalist vision of a more peaceful world through integration between states. The desire to ensure peace by expanding feelings of community usually does not overcome the artificial division of the world into domestic and foreign. Walker holds that liberal-internationalists simply want to extend one form of domestic identity to other countries. This accepts the realist notion that peace is only possible inside a homogenous community similar to the state. At the same time, liberals

may ignore a realist insight that people are different and that they value their uniqueness. Walker's book *Inside/Outside* is largely dedicated to exposing this contradiction in modern political thinking. "Universalism, to put it bluntly and heretically, can be understood as the problem, not the solution" (Walker 1993, 77). For Walker, both traditional schools of international relations assume that a common identity is a prerequisite for political community and security. Examples of this in practice are the North Atlantic Community and the (former) European Community that are commonly described as zones of common values and shared identity.

Themes of "inside/outside" and "us/them" dominate the studies undertaken by David Campbell as well. While Walker concentrates on the deficiencies of international relations theory, in *Writing Security*, Campbell focuses almost entirely on the effect of these theories (and practices) on domestic life. Like Walker, Campbell sees the "inside/outside" dichotomy as the source of insecurity in the modern world. Campbell analyses how this dichotomy is perpetuated by a need for states to define themselves in relation to other states. Once the domestic sphere is seen as safe, the external sphere becomes almost automatically dangerous. For this reason, Campbell has labelled foreign policy a "discourse of danger."

For Campbell, notions of national security function primarily to forge a common identity inside states by highlighting differences in the international arena and by denying or repressing differences within the domestic community. In fact, the constant attention to foreign threats is portrayed as a means to marginalize dissident groups inside the state. The natural diversity of outlook and interests that exists in any sizable group of humans requires constant suppression if the ideal of a sovereign (national) identity is to be maintained. Hence the Cold War preoccupation with the Soviet threat also (or primarily) served to deny American identity to anyone who did not fit the dominant discourse about Americans as liberal, capitalist members of heterosexual, Christian families. The defenders of the Free World identified not only the external threat from the USSR but also internal threats from Communists, trade unionists, civil rights activists, Jews, and homosexuals hauled before the House Committee on Un-American Affairs or otherwise monitored and suppressed for the sake of national security. What was really being made secure was a single, homogenous identity for the nation itself (Campbell 1990, 276).

For both Walker and Campbell, sovereign identity requires this style of thinking which understands identity in terms of difference. Something

which is sovereign is by definition complete and sufficient in itself. This is the classic inside/outside dichotomy. Sovereign entities, either national or personal, imply unitary identities of some kind. This dichotomy produces an understanding of us and them which leads inevitably to the discourse of danger whenever identity is tied to sovereign sites such as modern states. When read from this perspective, Macedonia's recent history seems less a tale of ancient tribal hatreds and more a reflection of the pernicious effects of an international system of sovereign nations; an all or nothing game between "us" and "them."

The Macedonian Problem

In a 1991 article Robert Kaplan tells a revealing story about the different conceptions of Macedonian identity. On a visit to Skopje, the capital of the Republic, Kaplan is presented with three different books on the history of Macedonia. Each comes from an official of either the FYROM (Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia), Bulgarian, or Greek governments. Depending on the authorship of the book, geographic Macedonia is described as historically and culturally an integral part of either the Bulgarian, Greek, or Macedonian nations. If one of these books is accepted as representing the truth, the other two must be completely false. All three nations adopt a perspective on history that effectively excludes all other perspectives.

Kaplan's story makes a revealing point. Despite general agreement on the territorial boundaries, there are clearly identifiable Greek, FYROM, and Bulgarian perceptions of Macedonia. These three conceptions include mutually exclusive versions of history, culture, and national identity. To these three competing views we can add, at least, a Serbian position and, in general terms, a Western one. These standpoints have been, and continue to be, used to promote identity politics in a variety of ways. All are based on the modern conceptions of the nation-state and national sovereignty. The proposed solutions to these conflicts are themselves generally based on national sovereignty. As such they presuppose and help perpetuate a way of looking at the world that assumes peace and community inside a state and anarchy and violence outside it. The combination of identity politics and the concepts of national states and national sovereignty have proved everywhere to be a deadly combination.

While the Balkan states are often held to be immature or backward members of the international community, their relations in Macedonia

mirror the logic of nation-state formation all over the world. Each state's Macedonia policy (including that of FYROM itself) supports the definition of external borders and the formation of communal identity inside them. This analysis has its roots in the inside/outside dichotomy outlined above. Writing of the modern concept of sovereign states, Walker asserts that:

> Within states, the possibility of universalist claims to the good, the true, and the beautiful is opened up to actualization . . . Between states, however, the lack of community can be taken to imply the impossibility of history as a progressive teleology, and thus the possibility merely of recurrence and repetition (Walker 1993, 63).

Given the lack of community between states, it is generally assumed that it is anarchy and violence that will "recur and repeat." This is because modern political philosophy tends to be dichotomous. Therefore, if safety and community characterize one half of the dichotomy, threat and evil must describe the other half. If progress is only possible inside a community then outside it history will merely repeat itself again and again. In Macedonia, as elsewhere, this dualistic vision has had violent and tragic consequences.

Historical Background

Macedonia entered modern world politics in 1878 when the Treaty of San Stefano created the Bulgarian state. Carved from Ottoman territory, this state included the northern half of present day Bulgaria and extended east to Albania and south into Greece. Thus Bulgaria included all of geographic Macedonia. The new state, however, was short-lived. Fearing that this greater Bulgaria would act as an agent of Russian influence in south eastern Europe, Great Britain and Austria-Hungary demanded that it be reduced in size. In the same year, at the Congress of Berlin, it was decided that Bulgaria would lose all of the lands it had acquired west of the Pirin mountains, that is most of geographic Macedonia. These lands were returned to Ottoman control under which they remained until the Balkan Wars of the early twentieth century. Over the following 65 years Greece, Bulgaria, and Serbia struggled directly and indirectly to gain control of geographic Macedonia.

From the perspective of FYROM, Macedonians themselves represented one of the key actors in this period of national struggle. Much of this

conflict represented a competition for the identity of Macedonians of rival church officials, school teachers, journalists, and publicists. Nonetheless, as Kaplan notes, these cultural/political struggles often turned bloody, involving armed uprisings against the Turks, numerous terrorist activities, and four wars.[7] These Serbian, Bulgarian, and Greek "guerillas" fought not only against the Turks (for national liberation) but also against one another (for national identity), a pattern that would be repeated after 1912 in the first and second Balkan Wars.

After the swift rise and fall of greater Bulgaria, many uprisings occurred against Turkish rule. They were all crushed, but they remain as powerful memories of nationalist struggle. Except for the Turks, all sides continue to see the casualties of these suppressed revolts as martyrs for national liberation. Even if we are discussing the same group of people, present day Bulgarians see these martyrs as Bulgarian, while for FYROM they are obviously Macedonian heroes.

In 1912 Greece, Serbia, and Bulgaria united forces to drive Turkey out of Europe in what became the first Balkan War. They were almost completely successful. But, while Bulgaria was fighting the Turks in Thrace near the present day Turkish border, Greece and Serbia occupied most of Macedonia and immediately set about securing not only their military, but also their cultural hold on these areas. Whole villages were ordered to convert to the religious denomination, and to adopt the language, of the national forces that occupied them. What followed were forced conversions to either the Serbian or Greek Orthodox Church, and the mass expulsion of those who refused. At times the penalty for refusal was considerably more severe than mere expulsion (Carnegie Endowment 1993, 72–107). Most of the territory that now makes up FYROM was absorbed by an expansionist Serbia under the titles South Serbia and Old Serbia (Pettifer 1992, 477).

Bulgaria felt betrayed by its former allies and the Bulgarian military launched an attack on Serbian and then Greek forces to "liberate" Macedonia in the Second Balkan War. Bulgaria was defeated and lost almost all of its newly acquired territory in Thrace as well. In Macedonia, Bulgaria retained only the Pirin mountain region. The desire to reverse this situation was one factor that led Bulgaria to side with Germany in both world wars. Bulgaria's primary objective in both cases was the return of Macedonia. Bulgarian occupation of Macedonia during World War II is said to have been heavy-handed at best, thereby contributing to a growing sense of a separate Macedonian identity (Kaplan 1991, 102).

During 1943, as Tito's partisans fought the Germans and Bulgarians, Macedonians were promised their own republic in a future Yugoslav Federation. After the War, a separate Macedonian nation formed an important part of the design for the new Yugoslavia. As a separate nation, Macedonia neutralized any Bulgarian claims to Yugoslav territory by asserting that Macedonians were a separate people.[8] It also diminished the relative size of Serbia, in comparison with the other constituent elements of the new republic. With the creation of a Macedonian nation came the creation of Macedonian minorities in Bulgaria and Greece (Perry 1992a, 36). Both of these countries have tended to strenuously deny the existence of any Macedonian minorities within their territory. Bulgaria refuses to recognize Macedonians as a separate people while the Greeks maintain that their minority population is in reality made up of slavophone Greeks. The Greek Civil War (1946–49) resulted in an exodus of between 80,000–100,000 Slavs from northern Greece. Most of them settled across the border in Yugoslav Macedonia. The possible desire of these slavophone Greeks to return to their original homes is one factor which aggravates Greek-FYROM relations today (Perry 1992a, 36).

Current Politics

At present, Greece accepts the existence of a separate people and state on its northern border, but it rejects that they are Macedonian. Macedonia, as a concept, seems to be integral to modern Greek identity. As such there can be no separate (non-Greek) Macedonian state or people. An example of this can be seen in the following quotation from the introduction to a book financed by the Chamber of Commerce of Thessaloniki:

> The systematic counterfeiting of the history of Macedonia by the Skopjans since 1944 [and] the fact that in recent years Skopje appropriated part of the history of the Greek people . . . caused the Greeks to react and defend their cultural heritage. Throughout history the name Macedonia was used in Greece as a geographic term in order to refer to the inhabitants of Greek Macedonia (Institute for Balkan Studies 1992, preface).

Greece's primary objection has been the very use of the name Macedonia by FYROM.[9] A Macedonian state is also perceived as a threat to the contiguous Greek province of the same name (Greece—With Closed

Eyes? 1992). In part this is because of the presence in Macedonia of the aging slavophone Greek refugees of 1946–49. The Greeks can accept (perhaps they actually need) the existence of a different people beyond their northern border. What the Greeks contest is the idea that these people are Macedonian. It is assumed that a national state for Macedonians would naturally incorporate all of geographic Macedonia. Greek identity politics presently work to preserve their northern border, and their national self-image, by ascribing otherness to FYROM.

For its part, Bulgaria accepts the existence of a Macedonian state, but rejects that of a Macedonian people. Bulgarian identity is intimately bound to Macedonia as an area inhabited by Bulgarians. Evidence of the depth of this sentiment is contained in one of the books to which Kaplan refers in his article. Published by the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, *Macedonia: Documents and Material* contains over 900 pages of references purporting to trace Bulgarian history in Macedonia from before 681 A.D. until the present (Bulgarian Academy of Sciences 1978). As such, a separate state can exist in FYROM, but there can be no Macedonian people. If there were, Bulgarians would lose much of their historical self-image, and part of their (potential) territory. The idea of a Macedonian state, inhabited by ethnic Bulgarians, allows them to retain their history and the prospect of extending their western border, by denying the otherness of FYROM.

Serbia officially recognizes the Macedonian people although they do not recognize the legitimacy of the newly independent FYROM (Karaosmanoglu 1993, 8). Serbia was once part of the same Yugoslav Federation as Macedonia. It was within this federation that Macedonian nationality was first recognized. It is now difficult for the Serbs to renounce this position officially. The nonofficial position is a bit more complicated, although it can be reduced to simple terms which reflect the Bulgarian standpoint. In nonofficial dialogue Macedonia is sometimes remembered as South Serbia and its people are understood to speak Old Serbian (Perry 1992a, 43). Thus, the official line rejects the legitimacy of the FYROM state and the popular conception rejects the idea of a separate Macedonian people. Both the official and popular positions can be used to justify Serbian expansion to incorporate FYROM, by denying Macedonian otherness.

It is this constellation of pressures that determines the outer limits of the FYROM position. FYROM Macedonians assert an independent history, culture, language, and identity that differentiates them from all of their neighbors. Therefore they also claim that Bulgaria contains a small

Macedonian minority within its borders, mostly in the Pirin region.[10] They make a variety of usually muted claims to (Greek) Aegean Macedonia as well (Perry 1992b, 15). To enhance their status they have sought, since independence, to gain recognition from the international community for their sovereign state and their separate identity.

Identity Politics and Territoriality in the Balkans

As noted above, each of these national perspectives on Macedonian identity requires a negation of the others. The official FYROM identity requires a clear cultural and territorial boundary between themselves and the Bulgarians, Greeks, and Serbs. To support their claims to a sovereign identity, Macedonians must speak a different language than their neighbors. This negates the Bulgarian and Serb perspectives on the identity of the people living in Macedonia. Furthermore, if a truly Macedonian national culture exists in FYROM, it also negates the idea that Macedonia is a purely Greek identity.

FYROM finds itself in a double or triple bind as it seeks to meet and deflect the perspectives of all of its neighbors simultaneously. To secure itself from Greece and Albania, all it requires is a separate language. Since the most prevalent language is Slavic, however, this difference is not enough to separate FYROM from Serbia and Bulgaria. To completely set itself apart, FYROM must stress both its "slav-ness" and its "Macedonian-ness." The FYROM Foreign Minister has asserted that:

> We have used that name [Macedonia] for centuries to try to draw a distinction between us as a people and the surrounding people, the Bulgarians, the Serbs, the Greeks and the Albanians . . . It is very important to our identity. So if we eliminated the word "Macedonia" from our name we would in fact create a crisis of identity, we would sterilize the region where we live and we would reopen a century-long debate about who the people who live here are (Perry 1992b, 15).

All of these qualities outlined above seek to maintain a homogeneous sense of community within FYROM. This suggests that FYROM's identity politics are directed inward at least as much as they are a defense against purely external pressures. FYROM must convince not only the world but also itself that it exists. Such an analysis is in keeping with what David Campbell has called "Foreign Policy" (as distinct from foreign policy as

normally understood). According to Campbell, Foreign Policy is a process of ascribing difference to foreigners in order to support a domestic identity (Campbell 1992, 76). For Campbell, all identity is understood in terms of difference. Therefore it does not matter if a specific identity politics is explicitly a matter of foreign or domestic policy. In terms of identity the two are inseparable. Campbell asserts that the state supports its own identity by treating everything foreign as a threat, turning traditional foreign policy and identity politics in general into a "discourse of danger" (Campbell 1992, 77). This is necessary for Macedonia as all of the Balkan states accept the traditional ideal of a nation-state as the sovereign container of political community (Taylor 1994). Returning to Walker's description of modern conceptions of political community, we find Balkan states fitting perfectly into traditional patterns of international relations. Inside the nation-state there is assumed to be a common culture, identity, and purpose. Outside the state can exist only others who by definition do not partake of the common domestic culture, identity, or purpose. It is this understanding that leads international relations theorists all over the world (and not just the Balkans) to assert that nothing but anarchy and the threat of violence can exist beyond the level of individual states.[11]

In their most extreme forms these communities are not complete until they incorporate all of their people. Members of other ethno-national groups are seen as foreign to the state, and therefore as possible traitors or sources of foreign interference. As such FYROM Macedonians must be different from Serbian and Bulgarian Slavs. Otherwise they would find it hard to resist pressures to join Serbia or Bulgaria. This conception also explains the forced language and religious conversions, and exchanges of nationals which followed the first and second Balkan Wars.

Identity Politics: The Balkans and The West

Western perspectives tend to place Macedonia at the center of the Balkan powder keg.[12] The positions of the various regional actors are taken as evidence that Balkan peoples cannot live peacefully together. They are assumed to harbor innate and mutual hostilities which make cooperation and peaceful coexistence impossible. This conception underlies the western idea of balkanization.

In this century, Western observers have tended to highlight the animosity and violence which are easily discerned in Macedonian and Balkan relations. As Todorova notes, "'Balkanization' not only had come

to denote the parcelization of large and viable political units but also had become a synonym for a reversion to the tribal, the backward, the primitive, the barbarian" (1994, 453). Indeed Todorova has suggested that the Balkans serve as a kind of internal "other" for Europe, allowing Western Europe to define itself as stable and civilized compared to the volatile and barbarous Balkan states to the East. She argues that the Balkans are "geographically inextricable from Europe, yet culturally constructed as the 'other' " (1994, 455). Of course the Balkans occupy that part of the world that the West defines itself as "west of." Her analysis points out that the concepts we use to identify modern Europeans are relative. There could be no Western Europe without an Eastern counterpart. Todorova argues that we need an Eastern "other" in order to see ourselves as a distinct and coherent community in the West. In this reading, the Balkans were invented by the West, and simultaneously imbued with negative connotations. If political community was possible inside the West then modern thinking demanded a polar opposite outside Europe where such community was not possible. Thus, many in the West came to see the Balkans as located outside of Europe altogether.

Yet, we cannot blame all of the region's troubles on Western prejudice. While it is difficult to deny Western complicity in Balkan strife, dating to the Congress of Berlin and before, it is not clear that all conflict in the region can be traced to the past and present machinations of the Great Powers. In the current context, the West may have bungled early decisions about recognition for the new Balkan states. Nevertheless, to directly trace all Croat, Serb, and Bosnian Muslim violence to these decisions (or earlier ones by the Great Powers) would mean acceptance of the Balkan "other" as a simple, tribal people who can only follow the instructions and example of their Western superiors. Thus, Balkan troubles cannot have been caused simply by Western prejudice or interference. It is easier to accept, however, that Western perspectives affect the way that the UN, NATO, the EU, and the Contact Group members define the Balkan crisis and respond to it.

Like Kaplan, most Western understandings of the Balkans assume that they are inhabited by peoples with a timeless antipathy for all their neighbors. Even sympathetic observers, like John Fraser, describe the Balkans as "tumultuous" and "grudge-bearing areas" (Fraser 1994, 301). Fraser wonders what the international community can do to bring peace to the region since "history shows that the peoples of this tormented region are extraordinarily stubborn and single-minded" (Fraser 1994,

302). Kennan, for his part, recognizes Balkan nationalism as the source of bloodshed in the region. Yet he believes that there is something peculiar to the Balkans which makes their nationalism so deadly.

> The strongest motivating factor for the Balkan wars was . . . aggressive nationalism. But that nationalism...drew on deeper traits of character inherited, presumably from a distant tribal past: a tendency to view the outsider, generally, with dark suspicion, and to see the political military opponent, in particular, as a fearful and implacable enemy to be rendered harmless only by total and unpitying destruction (Kennan 1993, 11).

Thus it is the extraordinarily violent nature of the Balkan peoples, and not of the modern nation-state, which is understood to cause conflict in the region.

In a later book, Campbell applies his ideas to the Allied conduct during the Gulf War, in part to determine why the American public seemed remarkably unmoved by the scale of death and destruction wrought by coalition forces in Iraq. In Campbell's reading, the U.S. reaction to Iraq's invasion of Kuwait was dominated by a tendency to view the "other" as evil incarnate, and an enemy to be utterly destroyed (Campbell 1993, 2). Given Campbell's perspective, is it possible that Kennan, and others like him, are missing the point in their commentaries on the "tribal" nature of ex-Yugoslavia and its neighbors?

Kennan assumes that Balkan tribalism pre-dates nationalism. It would be interesting to have Kennan's views on the source of the American demand for the unconditional surrender of Germany and Japan during the Second World War—or the U.S. world view during the Cold War which portrayed the Soviet Union as a constant menace to civilization and an "evil empire." What Kennan ascribes to Balkan tribalism, Campbell and others attribute to the nation-state and the dictates of modern political thought in general. It is instructive in this regard that Western Europe has surpassed the Balkans this century in terms of violent, nationalist warfare and genocide. Barbara Tuchman, no post-modern theorist, has painted a portrait of Europe before World War One that rivals the Bosnian conflict for national rivalry and prejudice leading to war. Despite the despicable and horrific nature of ethnic cleansing in Bosnia, it will not result in as many deliberate civilian deaths as did the Nazi holocaust or even the Allied

air campaign against Germany and Japan. After the war, the Potsdam conference of 1945 sanctioned the mass expulsion of German citizens from Czechoslovakia, Poland, and Hungary. Up to 40,000 Germans may have perished during these population transfers—a process that some have labelled ethnic-cleansing (Oxford Analytica 1996, A11). This ethnic-cleansing cannot be solely attributed to the extreme emotions of the immediate post-War period. In February 1996 the U.S., British, and Russian governments all made statements defending their decision at Potsdam. The U.S. State Department declared that the decisions taken at Potsdam were "soundly based on international law" (Wartime Allies Back Expulsion Pact 1996, A10). The world wars are not the only examples of ethnic nationalism that modern European history witnessed. Balkan atrocities today have their terrible reflection in Western memories of the horrors inflicted on civilians by both sides during for instance the Spanish Civil War. And while the West fears the spread of nationalist strife from the Balkans it should remember that this has tended to flow the other way in this century. Winston Churchill chose to back Tito's partisans during the Second World War because they were "killing more Germans" (Fraser 1994, 306). Immediately following the war, the British government knowingly repatriated thousands of Croatian citizens to Communist Yugoslavia where it was widely understood that they would be executed (Fraser 1994, 306). These examples show that it requires a highly selective memory to be able to portray the Balkan peoples as unusually warlike or to suggest that their mutual hostilities stem from some tribal nature that we in the West outgrew long ago. Indeed this brief historical sketch shows that the West is neither less violent than the Balkans, nor necessarily uninvolved in atrocities which have been committed there. This analysis is not intended to show that the West is the sole cause of Balkan troubles but merely to break down the self-satisfying illusion of "us" as entirely separate and distinct from "them."[13]

It is only after the horror of two world wars, and under the peculiar constraints of the Cold War, that Western Europe has come to enjoy the longest period of peace in its history. Exceptions still persist, even in the West. Is the (as yet unresolved) conflict in Northern Ireland any less tribal than Serb-Croat enmity? The Irish "troubles" have certainly been more violent than the current Greek-Macedonian tension. Peace in Western Europe is not so much a virtue of the maturity of its nation-states as a result of the hegemonic role played by the US and the desire for unity in the face of the perceived Soviet threat. Post-war Germany was divided and

occupied, its sovereign powers limited by its Constitution. The other Cold War allies were similarly, though less explicitly, under the American wing. Beginning with the Marshall Plan, the West Europeans were encouraged to build a new, expanded notion of political community. In the process leading to the current European Union (EU) these states forged an identity that transcends the autonomous political community of the mature nation-state. The (bloody) habits of modern, sovereign nation-states better describe Europe at the beginning, rather than the end, of the twentieth century. Satisfactory answers to the tensions in the Balkans may also require, not a transition to mature nation-states, but a reappraisal of the ideal of a system of sovereign states.

Yet western responses to the Balkan conflict seem to betray a remarkable absence of memory. When radical Balkan groups demand a single state for their people, western observers tend to look for ways to (yet again) redraw the map of the region to accommodate various incompatible nationalisms. This began with the Badinter Commission which drew up *Guidelines on the Recognition of New States in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union* which was adopted by the EC Council in December 1991 (Gow 1994, 471). Similar concerns informed the subsequent Western initiatives including the Vance Owen peace plan, the Contact Group proposal, and the recent Dayton accord to end the Bosnian conflict and create a new, viable Bosnian state.[14] While the Vance Owen plan would have maintained a unified Bosnia with ten provinces (based partly on ethnic lines) the newest agreement creates a nominal Bosnian state composed of a Bosnian Serb Republic and a somewhat looser Muslim-Croat Confederation. What all of these plans sought to create was a sovereign Bosnia which would not fracture into smaller, ethnic states nor be absorbed into Serbia and Croatia.

A critical reading of these Balkan perspectives highlights the fact that states and sovereignty remain central to most of them. Two basic explanations for Balkan conflict can be discerned. The first, following Todorova, could imply that the Balkans are the victims of Western prejudice and interference. A second approach is highlighted by Kennan who contends that the Balkans must be administered by more civilized states until they learn to act like mature members of the international community (Kennan 1993, 14). He sees them as tribal societies which need to catch up to Western Europe. Not all Western perspectives are as condescending as that suggested by Kennan. But, as we have seen, Western observers tend to assume that the Balkans are an improperly

functioning part of the machinery of the modern international system. James Gow, for example, traces conflicts in the Balkans to fundamental misunderstandings about the meaning of sovereignty, self-determination, statehood, and security. The answer, for Gow, requires a correct understanding of these terms, so that competing claims to sovereignty and self-determination can be resolved (Gow 1994, 457). This, more or less, has been the end-goal of the series of international peace plans for the area, including the most recent Dayton accord.

Alternative Perspectives

None of the perspectives examined so far seem capable of supplying answers to the Macedonian question. Another reading, built on the discussion in this paper, is that Macedonia actually may be an example of the logic of mature nation-states. Therefore the answer may not be to force the Balkans into the black boxes of the modern state system. It is possible that peace will come to the Balkans only when they find a way to transcend the modern state.

The policy implications to be drawn from this analysis are admittedly vague. The preceding section suggested that some insight might be gained from a more self-conscious analysis of recent developments leading to the EU. Very little in depth work has been done to date, however, to examine Western European identity and the decline of absolute state sovereignty from a critical perspective. John Gerard Ruggie has written about the practice of "extraterritoriality" whereby foreign envoys are present in the heart of a sovereign state, yet are theoretically outside of its jurisdiction. This leads Ruggie to suggest that some means of decoupling identity and territory has always been necessary in international relations when the demands of collective coexistence cannot be resolved inside a rigid system of absolute state sovereignty. In Ruggie's view, this process is most advanced in the EU, where sovereignty is both shared and divided between a number of national, regional, and functional identities (Ruggie 1993, 172). A similar analysis has been developed by Daniel Deudney, who has traced the development of the United States before the Civil War when, according to Deudney, the country was both more and less than a homogeneous nation-state. Identity and sovereignty are seen as dispersed between federal, state, and popular levels in something that resembles but does not equal an international community. These conflicting, decentered sovereignties balance one another, allowing various

combinations which prevent any one source from dominating the others. He refers to this situation as "negarchy" and while it has disappeared from the American scene Deudney believes that it can help illuminate the situation in the EU, which can be viewed as neither an international alliance nor a European super-state. The perspective supplied by Ruggie and Deudney seems to suggest that lasting peace in Western Europe has been accomplished not by mature, sovereign nation-states but by an erosion of traditional concepts like national sovereignty. Why should we expect the opposite outcome in Balkan politics?

In any event, membership in the EU is not offered here as a haven for Balkan nations. Nor should the EU be considered as a model for (another) Balkan Confederation. Following Walker and Campbell, this analysis must reject these options as well. Based as they are on the idea that political community is an expression of common traits and a shared identity either of these options would merely replicate the inside/outside dichotomy on a larger scale. Alternatives which offer bigger or smaller political communities miss the point. This approach simply repeats the logic of nation-states (identity/safety inside and difference/danger outside) on a different scale. Indeed, there is always a danger that this will be the outcome of the current experiment with the EU. If the Germans, French, and other nationalities merely exchange nationalism for a sovereign identity based on Europeanism, then the EU will become nothing more than a super-state. The challenge therefore is to find a process which allows for multiple, shared sources of identity which undermines the distinction between us and them. Such a decentered identity is not located in allegiance to any single source (like *the* people or *the* state). Within the context of the EU Ruggie and Deudney believe that this may be happening. If this is true, then what is needed is to broaden this sense in Western Europe and to encourage it elsewhere.

Walker reminds us that current understandings of political community, which we take as timeless truths, are really only historical constructs. The current system of state sovereignty arose out of the social, economic and political upheavals in Europe during the collapse of the feudal order. Before the rise of nations and nationalism, popular identity had many different sources at the same time. Allegiance might be felt for the Pope as a religious leader, the king as a nominal political leader, and the local feudal lord for more immediate and practical concerns. Thu,s a serf might have found himself or herself identifying with different groups for different elements of identity. There was no sovereign, all-defining group

to which a person could belong. Consequently it was difficult to fall into the black and white categories of us and them. According to this perspective, we have no reason, other than amnesia, to believe that political communities must reflect current understandings of sovereignty.

This conclusion will not be popular with those in the West who are seeking to devise concrete solutions to the Balkan crisis. To the policy analyst, it is frustrating to discover that the Balkans are less of a foreign problem which we can attempt to fix and more of a reflection of what is wrong with our own community.

Although the discussion here has centered on Macedonia, the lessons to be learned may have more immediate application in Bosnia. Bosnia, like Macedonia, is plagued by conflicting definitions of what Bosnia-Hercegovina is and who are the peoples who live there. This is reflected in its internal strife and by the positions and actions of its neighbors, Serbia and Croatia. Fortunately, the Dayton accord may be the best framework yet devised for Bosnian peace. Although still concerned with maintaining a sovereign Bosnian state, there appear to be opportunities to foster cross-cutting allegiances among and between its constituent parts (Bosnian-Serb Republic and the Muslim-Croat Confederation) and with Serbia and Croatia (Bosnia's Peace 1995, 56). As the agreement is worked out in practice over the next months and years it may be useful to worry less about state sovereignty and give more attention to decentered identities which can allow the region's residents to feel like members of several different communities simultaneously. This perspective could be applied to other efforts at promoting peace and cooperation in the region, including the ongoing negotiations over an acceptable name for FYROM. What will be most important is the need to overcome political concepts which stress absolute sovereignty and imply that communal identity is an all or nothing condition.

Conclusion

The preceding analysis suggests a starting point, rather than an end-goal, for the resolution of current problems in the Balkans. It suggests that Macedonia's troubled relations with its neighbors are not merely a reflection of ancient hatred or tribal behavior, but something more complex. If the assumption of mature nation-state status did not bring peace to Western Europe we are foolish to ascribe Balkan problems to the immaturity of its nations.

The implications of the Macedonian question should be considered when addressing the even more pressing Bosnian question as they arise from many of the same issues. At the very least, it may be more than a bit naive or disingenuous to suggest that the proper future for the Balkans is full membership in the modern international community. Indeed it may be the attempt to create traditional, sovereign, nation-states which underlies much of the violence in Balkan politics. Inter-ethnic relations in the region reflect a logical outcome of modern ideas about nations and political community, rather than an aberration of them. Therefore, conflicts in the region are not likely to be resolved through a fixation on current standards like state sovereignty and inviolable national territory. As in Western Europe the solution is more likely to be found in an attempt to transcend the confines of sovereign nation-states.

Before the we in the outside world can attempt to mediate and help resolve the Balkan conflict, we must first make sure that we understand it. We must also be more aware of our own history and experience. The kind of selective amnesia which permits us to view the Balkans as unusually violent and tribal, while comforting for those in the West, can hardly supply any useful insights into the real problems of the Balkan peoples. It also blinds us to the fact that the Balkan condition is not a separate case clearly distinguishable from our own. The stark inside/ outside process clearly visible in Balkan politics should be seen for what it is—a reflection of our own ideas about political community. We will not be able to help solve their problems until we realize that, to a certain extent, we are them.

Notes

[1]See Glenny and the Macedonian Question, 1992.

[2]John Fraser's examination of the current Balkan crisis draws important parallels between the situation in Bosnia, Macedonia and the other former Yugoslav Republics. The Bosnian war also involves conflicting versions of what Bosnia-Hercegovina is and who are the people who live there.

[3]In general terms, this includes all of the contiguous areas bearing the name Macedonia; including the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, the south-western corner of Bulgaria around the Pirin Mountains (Pirin Macedonia) and the Greek province of Macedonia centered on Thessaloniki (Salonika).

[4]To speak of national policies and other trends is necessarily to speak in generalizations. It is not the author's intention to suggest that all members of any national group share or support the perceptions and beliefs which are described in this paper as Macedonian, Greek, Serbian etc.

[5]See especially George Kennan's introduction to *The Other Balkan Wars*.

[6]An example of this view is found in Kaplan, 1991. See also Macedonia—Next on the List?, 1992.

[7]See (Kaplan 1991, 94–104) Control over Macedonia was a key issue in the first and second Balkan Wars and it can explain Bulgaria's motivations in both World Wars as well.

[8]Andrew Rossos traces Macedonian national identity back to at least half a century before 1946 (Rossos 1994, 369). The point here is not that Tito created Macedonian nationalism but that he gave it formal legal and institutional expression.

[9]At issue has also been the use of the Star of Vergina in the Macedonian flag and certain articles of FYROM's constitution which could imply designs on Greek territory. However, as of October 1995, Macedonia had taken steps to reword the contentious articles and redesign its flag. In response to these gestures Greece lifted its trade embargo on FYROM, although relations are still strained pending resolution of the main issue—the use of the term Macedonia in FYROM's name (Krause 1995).

[10]FYROM's insistence on a separate Macedonian identity and Bulgaria's rejection of it are exhibited in the language controversy which has marred relations between them. Macedonian representatives insist that they cannot properly understand Bulgarian and that they must speak through translators. With equal vehemence, their Bulgarian counterparts claim this is unnecessary as they are all speaking the same language: Bulgarian. As the Bulgarians rarely wait for the translation before replying, there must be a fairly high level of understanding on their part. However, even private individuals and groups in Macedonia sometimes correspond with Bulgarians in a second (or third) language on the grounds that Bulgarian and Macedonian are mutually incomprehensible.

[11]This conception of anarchy at the international level is fundamental to the dominant Realist school of international relations. It assumes that there are three levels of political relations: the individual, the state, and the international. Political community is possible at the first and second level only. A classic description of this hierarchy is offered in Waltz 1959.

[12]Both Kaplan and Kennan exemplify this trend.

[13] It has been suggested that Balkan violence differs from Western violence less in its severity and more in its source; with Western conflicts described as the result of cold political calculation while violence in the Balkans is perceived as a result of ethnic tension. This accusation overlooks both the fairly obvious ethnic nationalism in recent European history and the extent to which "ethnic" nationalism in the Balkans is just that: national. The current conflict in Bosnia, and the Greek-Macedonian dispute (to take only two examples) reflect the extent to which emotionally-laden "inside/outside" rhetoric is used to advance calculated political interests. What has been termed ethnic conflict by others is called "the politics of identity" in this paper with the intention of demonstrating the logical relationship between sovereign identities of any kind; ethnic or otherwise. The "rational" calculations made by the Great Powers at Potsdam, for example, are equally an example of "us/them" and the "politics of identity."

[14] For a comparison of these plans and their accompanying maps see "Peace at last, at least for now" (Peace at Last 1995, 56).

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