Balkan Borders: The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly

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The phrase, *The Good, the Bad and the Ugly*, entered the language as a result of the Sergio Leone film of that name released in 1966. But its origins lie in a song, from the city of Rome when it was ruled over by the Popes about a Cardinal who did bad things well and good things badly.[1] Ugly was a frequent outcome. I take this as my leitmotif for a general overview of what international borders can and cannot do. We often tend to views of borders either as good and necessary or as bad and mischievous. In my view borders are much more equivocal or ugly rather than simply good or bad. Increasing the good and minimizing the bad should be our goal. In practice though, some borders are "better" than others, as I hope to show in describing three Balkan borders.

Most accounts of borders can be divided into two schools. At one level the differences between them are ethical, relating to what borders should and should not do. For some, borders serve vital practical purposes that can be justified; for others borders are (or have become) barriers to human achievement. At another level the two schools are about conceptions of power, pitting a broadly modernist view that sees power as primarily contained by borders against those various views which see borders as less and less capable of doing so. In the end, they represent border maintaining versus border

opening perspectives. So divided, however, can we begin to rethink borders beyond this elementary opposition? Academics love sharp dichotomies, so it is difficult to move thinking beyond them.

Interstate borders have recently become the focus of renewed interest in the aftermath of the collapse of the Soviet empire, the terrorist attacks of 9/11, and the increased political fervor about immigration across the entire world. There are two very different but prevalent ways in which we tend to think about borders. These are primarily normative rather than simply empirical in orientation. Today, we find groups of scholars ensconced in theoretical camps that reflect the two competing conceptions of borders and why they matter. From one viewpoint, borders are simple "facts on the ground" (or, more radically, lines on the map). Borders exist for a variety of practical reasons and can be classified according to the purposes they serve and how they serve them. They enable a whole host of important political, social, and economic activities. Think of the film *Frozen River* as exemplary of this logic.

From a very different perspective, borders are seen as artefacts of dominant discursive processes that have led to the fencing off of chunks of territory and people from one another. Such processes can change and, as they do, borders live on as residual phenomena that may still capture our imagination but no longer serve any essential purpose. Borders, therefore, are not simply practical phenomena that can be taken as given. They are complex human creations that are perpetually open to question. At an extreme, perhaps, existing borders are the result of processes in the past that are either no longer operative or are increasingly eclipsed by transnational or global pressures. In other words, borders are increasingly redundant and thinking constrained by them

restricts thinking about alternative political, social, and economic possibilities. Borders are disabling. Think of the film *Traffic* as exemplary of this viewpoint.

Yet, what if, although still necessary for all sorts of reasons, borders are also inherently problematic? What I have in mind is not so much defining a *via media* between the two sides, in the sense that both are right up to a point, but reframing the border question in practical and ethical terms in such a way that moves beyond the simple either/or stipulation of the current debate. I think we need to change the way in which we think about borders to openly acknowledge their equivocal character.[2] In other words, we need to see a border not as that which is either (a) fixed or (b) that as such must be overcome but as an evolving construction that has both merits and problems that must be constantly reweighed. My main normative commitment is to the idea that the answer to what borders do should always be related to the overriding ethical concern that they serve and not undermine human dignity and what Jonathan Seglow has called "the right to a decent life."[3]

From this viewpoint, rather than reflecting an unambiguous sovereignty that ends/begins at a border or that must be overcome as such, border thinking should open up to consider (a) territorial spaces as "dwelling" rather than national spaces and (b) political responsibility for pursuit of a decent life as extending beyond the borders of any particular state. Borders matter, then, both because they have real effects *and* because they trap thinking about and acting in the world in territorial terms. They not only *limit* movements of things, money, and people but they also *limit* the exercise of intellect, imagination, and political will. The challenge is to think and then act beyond their present limitations.

I cannot possibly give chapter and verse to the dominant perspectives. I have written about them elsewhere. My purpose is to lay out my perspective on "equivocal borders" and briefly illustrate it in relation to three Balkan borders: between Italy and Slovenia (and the former Yugoslavia), within Bosnia between the Bosniak-Croat Federation and the Republika Srpska, and between Greece and Macedonia. These constitute, respectively, the good, the bad, and the ugly from my title.

Equivocal Borders

In my view, borders have always been more equivocal practically and ethically in their origins and in their effects than the two dominant types of story allow. I would suggest that the overarching normative question in re-framing understanding of borders is how much borders enhance or restrict the pursuit of a decent life. They have always been open to question, if not to all who would cross them. The paths they follow are often quite arbitrary and without any sort of "natural" justification.   Their socio-political significance is very recent and this relates perhaps as much to the increased infrastructural power of some states and lack of it in others, increased gradients of economic development across borders around the world, and improved ease of travel as to the identity functions they perform and that are emphasized so much in both of the stories. In moving beyond the either/or perspective we need recourse to some concepts that aid in understanding the ambiguity of borders.

What I have in mind about the practical and ethical equivocality of borders can be related to four points. First off, the security functions of borders are part of what can be called "territorial regimes" constituting a wide range of state-based inclusionary and exclusionary practices that are more and less discriminatory and effective in given areas,

compare financial transactions and container traffic across borders, for example, with eligibility for certain social and political rights by people that follow from establishing legal territorial residence.[4] With respect to human border crossing, which country's passport (and associated paperwork) you happen to hold and where it stands in the global pecking-order becomes the crucial variable determining the experience of passing from one territory to another, be it at an airport gate, a ship's gangplank, or a land-border crossing. In other words, the possibilities of transversal practice or transgression and "global citizenship" should not be exaggerated. They are available, if at all, to relatively few, above all to the privileged employees of multinational companies and skilled immigrants of one sort or another. In addition, these days border controls extend well beyond borders per se into workplaces and neighborhoods in the interior of the state.[5] This not only makes the whole national territory into a border zone but also potentially criminalizes the entire population in the face of enforcement of identity checks and so on. Immigration checks at foreign airports extend the reach of some authorities well beyond their own putative borders.[6]

In addition, as is clear from the American media rhetoric about "broken borders," the fanatical TV commentator Lou Dobbs once used this phrase regularly to refer specifically to the US-Mexico border, and my second point, the map image of the borders of the state still exercises a major influence on the territorial imagination of whose identity is at stake and who most threatens it.[7] Many of us still live in a world where political borders are the most important signs on a world map. Even though airports, for example, may well be major sites for the arrival of contested migrants and possible terrorists, the most popular idea is that of the former running, swimming, or otherwise

penetrating land and sea borders. This powerful image of the border as a guardian of personal security akin to a security perimeter or fence around one's home underwrites much of the hardening of border controls around the US and the European Union in recent years.[8] Yet, of course, this is totally misleading; not only in the fact that most undocumented aliens/those without papers/*clandestini* are not security threats (at least not in the sense frequently considered as involved in terrorist plots) and once they arrive fulfill a variety of economic functions that would otherwise go unfulfilled but that the overwhelming majority of terrorist attacks around the world have involved legal visitors from "friendly" countries or local citizens. The notion of trespass or unregulated violation appears to provide the primary ethical basis to the imaginative emphasis on the physical border per se as "the face of the nation to the world," so to speak. Rarely is it immigrants tout court who are openly in question it is those without legal recognition. Of course, it is their very illegality that is attractive to employers and consumers because of the lack of qualification for public services and the ever-present threat of deportation as a disciplinary measure. No one talks much about how difficult it usually is to be a legal immigrant. Yet, the discourse frequently is more ambiguous in simultaneously always seeming to worry about the cultural threat that foreign immigrants of whatever legal status pose to the national identity because blood and family ties often count so much (either officially or unofficially) in most definitions of who "really belongs" within the national territory.[9] Even in countries which officially claim more "open" definitions of citizenship than is typically the norm, such as France and the US, nativist movements have little doubt about who is more and who is less deserving of recognition as French or

American. Debates about who does and who does not belong draw attention to both the fluid and the contested character of national identities.[10]

Perhaps even more importantly, however, borders, serve vital economic functions. A third point, therefore, is that though borders are about classifying identities, they are also about sorting and sifting goods and people to enhance or maintain unequal cross-border exchanges.[11] They are not simply about a security-identity nexus as both dominant stories about borders tend to allege. Cheap labor or one side facilitates cheaper products for more affluent consumers on the other. Though the idea of a global economy has become widely accepted, in fact much economic activity is still overwhelmingly within national borders and most firms are still effectively reliant on national models of business structure and spatial organization.[12] There are very few truly global companies and they are mostly Swiss (or from other small countries). More particularly, borders still stand guard over massive differences in standards of living that though shrinking somewhat as within-nation differences have grown in recent years are still largely defined precisely at national borders. The US-Mexico border – "the tortilla curtain" -- is emblematic in this regard. The extreme income gradient that it marks invites people to cross it whatever the barriers they encounter on the way.

Fourthly, and finally, policing borders still has a powerful normative justification in the defense of that territorial sovereignty which serves to underpin both liberal and democratic claims to (Lockean) popular rule. Now such claims may frequently be empirically fictive, particularly in the case of imperial and large nation-states, but the logic of the argument is that absent effective worldwide government the highest authority available is that of existing states.[13] How such states police their borders, of course,

should be subject to transparent and open regulation. But why it is popularly legitimate to engage in policing functions in the way they are carried out cannot simply be put down to mass docility in the face of an omnipotent (because it is omniscient) state apparatus. National populations do worry about their borders because their democracy (or other, familiar, politics) depends on it. The border is a continuing marker of a national (or supranational) political order even as people, in Europe at least, can now cross it for lunch.[14] The problem here is that democratic theory and practice is not yet up to dealing with the complexities of a world in which territories and flows must *necessarily* co-exist. If one can argue, as does Arash Abizadeh, that "the demos of democratic theory is in principle unbounded," this still begs the question of who is "foreigner" and who is "citizen" in a world that is still practically divided by borders.[15] As Silvia Nässtrom puts the problem succinctly: "it is one thing to argue that globalization has opened the door to a problem within modern political thought, quite another to argue that globalization is the origin of this problem."[16] Until political community is redefined in some way as not being co-extensive with nation-state or some facsimile thereof we will be stuck with much of business as usual.

Currently then, given the strong arguments about what borders do and the problems that they also entail, a more productive ethic than thinking either just with or just against them would be to re-frame the discussion in terms of the impacts that borders have; what they do both for and to people. From this perspective, we can both recognize the necessary roles of borders and the barriers to improved welfare that they create. In the first place, however, this requires re-framing thinking about borders away from the emphasis on national citizenship towards a model of what Dora Kostakopoulou calls

"civic registration."[17] Under this model the only condition for residence would be demonstrated willingness to live according to democratic rule plus some set requirements for residency and the absence of a serious criminal record. Such a citizenship model requires a reconceptualization of territorial space as a "dwelling space" for residents and, thus, a move away from the nationalist narratives which cultivate, in Kostakopoulou's words, "the belief that territory is a form of property to be owned by a particular national group, either because the latter has established a 'first occupancy' claim or because it regards this territory as a formative part of its identity."[18] Julie Mostov's recent call for "soft borders" that delink nationalism from democratic citizenship is in a similar register.[19] In a world in which wars and systematic violations of human rights push millions to seek asylum across borders every year this rethinking is imperative.[20]

In the second place, and by way of example, from this viewpoint, and to quote Jonathan Seglow, it is often reasonable "to prefer global redistributive justice to open borders. To put it bluntly, it is better to shift resources to people rather than permitting people to shift themselves towards resources."[21] Currently much migration from country-to-country is the result of the desire to improve economic wellbeing and enhance the life-chances of offspring. Yet, people often prefer to stay put, for familial, social, and political reasons, if they can. There seems no good basis, therefore, to eulogize and institutionalize movement as inherently preferable to staying put. If adequate mechanisms were developed to stimulate development in situ many people who currently move would not. Not only people in destination countries associate their identities with territory.

Using the standard of a decent life, therefore, can lead beyond the present impasse between the two dominant views of borders towards a perspective that rethinks borders as having both negative and positive effects and that focuses on how people can both benefit from borders *and* avoid their most harmful effects. To return finally to the Sergio Leone refrain with which I began, borders are usually ugly: but they can be made do good things better and bad things poorly. In political vision as in everyday practice, therefore, borders remain as ambiguously relevant as ever, even as we should work to enhance their positive and limit their negative effects.

Three Cases

From this perspective, I briefly consider three Balkan borders.

(1) Italy-Slovenia (former Yugoslavia)

Since Unification the Italian version of the discourse about threats national identity has had a number of dimensions to it. One concerned the historic situating of Italy in the Mediterranean and the openings/limits that this provided for a greater as opposed to a lesser Italy. At various moments from the 1890s down until the collapse of Fascism in 1943 the dream of a Fourth Shore or expanded Italy excited various political leaders and movements. Whatever the outcome of this, the maritime identity of Italy has been an inherent part of the national imaginary.[22] This reappears today in the crisis over the arrival of refugees by boat from North Africa and in the sense of vulnerability to political instability in and around the Mediterranean.[23] The second has been how the geographical expression "Italy" has been converted through the making of Italian statehood into a seemingly culturally-politically coherent territorial nation. Partly this has relied on creating a literary-cultural genealogy and the spread of a vernacular Italian language that

ties the distant past to the present, however geographically distant much of that past was to parts of the current territory (from Dante's Florence to Calabria, for example).[24] Partly the process has been about creating a stereotypical Italian (helped on by foreigners) and a "national character" to go with it.[25] But more importantly in my view has been the mapping of "Italy" as a cartographic entity that we simply take for granted that has given the discourse of cultural homogeneity its basic currency. Even though we know that all kinds of material and cultural "flows" move backwards and forwards across this space and its borders, we persist in uniting the map of the state with that of the putative nation to give it a figurative unity as a nation-state.[26] Mapping "Italy" has been crucial to the entire process of "unification." This was needed to make Italy become a real actor in a world of so-called nation-states. As Mark Neocleous makes this final point: "the map is crucial to the recognition of the state as an international subject, for an unmapped state is an unrecognized one and vice versa. A 'state' without an internationally recognized territory is no state at all; like the pirate, the mercenary and the terrorist, it is 'off the map'."[27]

In terms of bordering the Italian nation-state, it was to the north and east that the most problematic borders were emplaced. From unification until 1945 these were central to the unfinished character of Italy. Partly this was a question of how well the other borders were defined. As Mark Thompson says, "Think of Italy: the clearest borders in mainland Europe. From Sicily by the toe, past Naples and Rome, up to Florence and Genoa, that long limb looks like nothing else on the globe. Further north, the situation is less distinct."[28] This was where, in striving for an Alpine watershed and to redeem pockets of Italian speakers, most of all during the First World War and in its aftermath,

Italian national identity would be forged. Thompson's 2008 book, *The White War*, is a brilliant narrative account of how a minority of Italians had long focused on these lands, the Südtirol, Istria, and the Dalmatian coast, as vital to completing the Italian project and how the First World War provided a pretext for turning this goal into a collective purpose by mobilizing a national army and giving a rallying cry to those for whom local, regional, social, and religious attachments were more significant. So, just as Italian unification to date had been an accretion of territories from 1860 on, so the war would finish the project.

This was successful up to a point. But as is well known some territories remained unredeemed in the treaties negotiated after the war and were important in underpinning the bitterness of some Italians, particularly those who had fought in the First World War, that the task remained unfinished.[29] From one viewpoint, the rise of Fascism as a movement had one of its origins in the irredentist imperative of post-First World War Italy. The so-called Dalmatian Question, particularly the position of Italian speakers in Istria and on the islands and towns of the eastern Adriatic, was an important focus of Fascist attempts to reclaim populations for Italy and to demonize local Slavs as interlopers in a historically "Italian" realm. The picture on the ground was often much more complicated with ethnicity and language not always good guides to political identities. In pre-First World War Venezia Giulia (without Fiume), Italian speakers were a bare majority of the population. During Fascism, however, efforts were made to Italianize the newly acquired territories by, among other measures, Italianizing place names and family names.[30]

The disastrous outcome of the Second World War, from a Fascist perspective, left a large number of Italians stranded on the wrong side of the border with a now-expanded Yugoslavia once the border was adjusted around Trieste and down the Dalmatian Coast in the late 1940s. Going into exile in Italy and elsewhere in the late 1940s and early 1950s this population of around 150,000 to 200,000[31] provided a source of stories about victimization by the victorious Yugoslavs and a sense of loss to the homeland that has continued to elicit considerable public sympathy, albeit intermittently and mainly on the far-right of the Italian political spectrum, down to the present day.[32] The end of the Cold War in the early 1990s, allied to the arrival in Italian government of those political forces on the far right sidelined during the First Republic, particularly Gianfranco Fini's *Alleanza Nazionale*, brought into focus once more borders whose lines had been frozen since Yalta, thus reviving what had seemed outside exile circles at least the settled question of Italy's eastern border. Even in the 1990s, MSI (the precursor party to *Alleanza Nazionale*) militants in Rome sold t-shirts with maps emblazoned on them showing the pre-Second World War borders around Trieste and the Dalmatian Coast. The burst of revisionist publication questioning the role of popular Resistance in liberating Italy from Fascism in the late 1990s and early 2000s also involved "rediscovering" the crimes committed against Italians at the end of the Second World War at the eastern border.[33] This brought back memory of the historic border dispute to those well outside the borderland and with no personal connection to it. In and around Trieste, stories about past violations and expropriations came alive at the time in the early 2000s when Slovenia (now split from the former Yugoslavia) was a candidate for entry

into the European Union. Though this did not disrupt the process, it did serve to prompt memories of the border and its significance in defining Italian national identity.

Perhaps most importantly, the intermittently politicized border issue serves to elevate the question of national identity above all other potential identities. As Pamela Ballinger has said with reference to local Italians and exiles in and around Trieste, "the legacies of World War II and the Cold War are increasingly read through a narrative of genocide privileging ethno-national identities over other identifications (like those of class or other political ideologies)."[34] As long as these memories are alive and framed in this way, the border question, however weakened in its hold nationwide, nevertheless has scope for revival. Cartographic anxiety such as that inherent in the entire history of the Italian national project is not easily assuaged even if today immigration from non-neighboring countries and the internal geographical divisions within the country are much more important elements in disputes over Italian national identity. The eastern border has lost its transcendental significance.

(2) Within Bosnia-Herzegovina

A very different and as of today much more malignant border, even though not recognized by that word in the Agreement that established it, is that within the former Yugoslav Republic of Bosnia. Effectively partitioned administratively if not in terms of international legal sovereignty since the Dayton Peace Accords in 1995, Bosnia-Herzegovina illustrates how much a "border," even one without international legal sanction, can become the focal point for a claim to national exclusivity within a territory, in this case that of the Bosnian Serbs, that effectively reproduces the very process of "national self-determination" that the Dayton Accords were widely advertised to the

outside world as refusing to endorse. The best that can be said of it is, as Toal and

Maksic say: "Bosnian Serb ethnonationalists were … deprived of their goal of seceding

from Bosnia and uniting with neighboring Serbia and Montenegro. Nonetheless, [they

continue] the affirmation and legitimation of Republika Srpska, an entity created by

widespread and flagrant human rights abuses, was their major achievement.

Approximately 48 percent of the pre-war population of the territories that became

Republika Srpska was non-Serb; the post-war population was estimated as nearly 100

percent Serb."[35] The so-called ethnic cleansing of 1991-1995 is essentially enshrined in

the "inter-entity boundary line" (IEBL) or internal border within Bosnia.

The initial 1995 recognition of what was really a partition, whatever the hopes for

a gradual strengthening of a central government that could hold sway across the whole of

the former Republic of Bosnia-Herzegovina, is clearly central to the emergence of the

border as a mobilizing line for nationalists (on both sides, but primarily on the Serb one).

Two other features of post-Dayton Bosnia have reinforced and even elevated its role

according to many commentators. One has been the way in which one of the main

political leaders within Republika Srpska, Milorad Dodik, has used his position as a US

sponsored "moderate" since 1998 to consolidate his role as the dominant political figure

within the Serb territory to undermine the prospects for a stronger central government,

precisely the reason why he received US sponsorship in the first place. This was partly a

response to the unredeemed irredentism towards Serbia on the part of the local Serb

population but also the result of overreaching by Bosnian Moslem politicians, particularly

Haris Silajdzic, who in 2006 attempted to engineer an abolition of the Republika Srpska

even as others were engaged in more gingerly attempting to bring the Serbs into the fold

(the so-called April package of 2006). A second has been the declining power of the UN Office of the High Representative (OHR) throughout the entire territory of Bosnia-Herzegovina since 2006. Not only has Dodik used threats of holding independence referenda to consolidate his political position, something arguably less likely in the face of more forceful international leadership, the lack of an effective "third" outside force reduces the likelihood of ever removing or minimizing the importance of the internal border.[36]

Ethnocratic and polarized politics are, of course, also the outcome of a recent experience of violent conflict between groups who had for many years managed to live intermingled with one another without recourse to ethnic or sectarian violence. How that happened is another entire story. In the long term, however, there are pressures to live together in order to live better. First of all, the internal border of Bosnia, while it serves to separate out the bulk of Bosnia's Serbs, bears little if any relationship to the economic and infrastructural realities of Bosnia. Absent incorporation into Serbia proper, and this would require significant reorientation and massive subsidy of the Bosnian Serb economy, it remains a hostage to fortune. How long can concerns with identity trump economic and infrastructural dilemmas raised by the current border? Second, the injustices meted out by ethnic cleansing have not been significantly addressed, above the question of the return and restoral of property to refugees in places currently within Republika Srpska. Until this happens, the prospects of Bosnian membership in the European Union seem remote. Third, and finally, smuggling and other criminal activities continue to underpin some of the functionality associated with the border in the eyes of those who identify with it. Some of this relates to the generally low incomes and high

unemployment levels in Bosnia, particularly within the Republika Srpska, but it also speaks to the fact that in many ways the Dayton Accords legitimized what had been in many respects a criminal as much as a nationalist revolt among Bosnian Serbs, particularly on the part of those elements from Serbia proper who joined the war in 1992 to fulfill desires for loot as much as for the dream of Greater Serbia.

(3) Greece-Macedonia

The Ottoman and Austrian empires that long ruled in Southeastern Europe never insisted on cultural and linguistic unification. Their rule also varied in its directness and effectiveness from place to place. If in Western Europe the quintessential states such as France and England pre-existed their respective nations, in Southeastern Europe the idea of the national sovereign state was imported from the west by the growing middle classes born in the empires. The coming of the modern territorial state in this region (as in most of the world beyond Western Europe), therefore, has always involved drawing borders across complex ethnic settlement patterns and sometimes using anachronistic arguments about the present-day national affiliations of long-gone polities (such as the ancient Macedonian Empire, an ancient Hindustan or the ancient Israelites) to justify who should control a given territory and the naming rights to it. A chronological narrative of the role of Macedonia in the making of a Modern Greek nation-state provides a vivid example of the way in which borders crucially enter into the very definition of nationhood.[37]

In the Greek case, the desire to construct a state came initially from the Greek commercial diaspora scattered around the Mediterranean and Black Seas and in the cities of Central and Western Europe allied to the romantic aspiration, shared with "philo-hellenic" western intellectuals (most famously England's Lord Byron), to liberate Balkan

Christians from the Ottoman Turks and, hopefully, to re-establish the glory of ancient Greece. If there was a concentration of identifiably Greek people living in the southern part of the Balkan Peninsula, many if not most Greeks (of either linguistic or religious qualification) lived scattered well beyond this territory. Of course, quite what constituted a "Greek" as opposed to a Balkan Christian or even a Turkish Christian remained very much in doubt. As Greece was made, so were the Greeks.

It was precisely the *fluidity* of ethnicity and its complex relationship to kinship, class, trading, religion, and attachment to place in a region where many people were multilingual (if just as frequently illiterate in any language) and national preference had hitherto not been of primary significance that made the conflicts so bloody. The heterogeneity of the region, not just with respect to the distribution of discrete ethnicities but, more importantly, with respect to shared social practices and linguistic hybridity, as represented by the fruit salad that has become a well-known trope of Macedonia in a number of languages, worked against the drawing of clear borderlines. In this context, local people had to be forced by politically dominant nationalist activists into choosing sides. Violence-enforcing organizations are absolutely vital to bring people who as neighbors or indifferent strangers have no reason to kill one another into violent confrontation. On the Greek side, a Hellenic ideal of past cultural greatness in need of discovery and revival was the overwhelming thrust of the cultural redefinition involved in the process of popular recruitment to the national cause. From this viewpoint, Byzantine and Ottoman influences had corrupted the ancient mores. Local folklore studies (dances, music, clothing, etc.) were used to both reveal and teach how the masses belonged to the nation or *ethnos*. In the Greek language nation and ethnos mean the same thing.

Capturing Macedonia was particularly important in recreating the Greek nation. Not only would this bring together ancient and Byzantine conceptions of the Greek nation, thus reconciling the Church and the modern nation, it also justified a popular imperialism in which modern Greece was tied historically to Alexander the Great through the potential occupation of his homeland. Out of this confluence developed a romantic Hellenism in which Macedonia was defined as the "lung of Greece" and its possible "loss" as a mutilation. In this construction, Macedonia was potentially a repository of ancient Greek ideals as well as a pocket of cultural pollution. Paradoxically, therefore, it was at one and the same time both vital to the nation and a threat to its integrity.

Macedonia is the historic name for a large area that was shared following the border delimitations after the First World War between Bulgaria, Greece, and Yugoslavia. It comprises the watershed of the Vardar River with the two main cities of Salonica in northeastern Greece and Skopje in Yugoslavia providing the communication and transportation axis through the region. The region was populated predominantly with Slavo-Macedonians and Bulgarians at the time of the Balkan Wars (1912-1913), although the cosmopolitan city of Salonica, with its large Jewish, Muslim, and Greek populations was exceptional. Macedonia's division, into Pirin (Bulgarian), Vardar (Serbian), and Aegean (Greek) segments, left a significant Slav-Macedonian population in Greek Macedonia, particularly in rural areas and in and around Florina in the west. The fervently held nationalist goal of incorporating the whole of Macedonia into Greece came up against a complex local reality that long seemed to challenge the ideal. The border now ran through a potential zone of expansion rather than simply delimited the limit of a territorial claim.

Uncertainty about the Greek status of Macedonia, however, did not disappear. Indeed, if anything, with the incorporation of only one part of the historic region into Greece, Macedonia became even more central to the self-definition of the nation. The Modern Greek historical experience in Macedonia, therefore, continued to have a negatively charged valence in postwar Greece, even as the symbolism of ancient Macedonia as integral to Greece retained its hold on Greek nationalism. Continuing nationalist anxiety about the border became crystal clear at the end of the Cold War. Rather than the euphoria that greeted the collapse of the Soviet Union and its sphere of influence in the US and Western Europe, in Greece there was a sense of foreboding. The worry was that as its northern neighbors lost their geopolitical anchorage, Greece would be drawn into the ensuing instability. Above all, the 1980s had seen the emergence in Yugoslav Macedonia and in the Macedonian Diaspora (particularly in Australia and Canada) of a "Macedonism" or Macedonian nationalism that drew exactly opposite conclusions about the "ethnicity" of ancient Macedonia and Alexander the Great than did Greek nationalism. The Greek Diaspora around the world as well as Greeks at home felt compelled to respond both in public and in their newspapers. This controversy would not have achieved much of a critical juncture but for the breakup of Yugoslavia in 1991-1992. The declaration of an independent Republic of Macedonia, replete with symbols redolent of ancient Macedonia -- such as the "Vergina Sun" and the head of Alexander the Great in profile – was widely seen in Greece as a provocation and threat to the established geopolitical order as well as to Greek nationalist aspirations.

The following four years saw a rising tide of rhetoric on both sides of the border. The slogan "*I Makedonia einai elliniki*" (Macedonia is Greek) was adopted by many

Greeks. Its ambiguity given the fact that the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYROM) had freely used the word Macedonia and that Greek Macedonia did not seem to face any sort of immediate military threat points more to the degree to which Greek nationalism was at best ambiguous about the border rather than to the malign foreign interpretations of Greek motives. Be this as it may, what became clear was that to the majority of Greek public opinion, and across the political spectrum, no other people, apart from the Greeks, were entitled to use the Macedonian name either as a cultural-ethnic or a geographic-regional appellation. Many Greek intellectuals were particularly active in providing archeological, textual, and historical arguments for why this should be the case.

At the same time, though hardly yet passing into history, the Macedonian border of Greece is one of many whose cultural logic of exclusion may seem less obvious today than at any time since the eighteenth century. This is why I have designated it as the ugliest one of the three. For one thing, Greece is now part of the supranational European Union that increasingly has come to superintend many of the regulatory activities once monopolized by the government in Athens. For another, the Greek economy is ever more tied into the global economy through its reliance on tourism, shipping, and financial services. These are undoubtedly powerful trends that portend diminished material pressures for the imposition of rigid national borders. In particular, with globalization the scope for the flowering of local complex identities has expanded considerably.

Conclusion

National identities are never given; they are produced historically under particular geographical conditions. So, as those conditions change, so, even after some lag, should

the continuing pressures towards reproducing national identities at borders. In Europe it has become common to ask if the nation-state is not facing a political crisis with the end of the Cold War, economic globalization, and the increased ambiguity of political identities, defined across geographical scales (European, national, local, etc.) and social groups (class, religious, ethnic, etc.). This seems particularly acute in the periphery of Europe, not least because it is here that the state has been most hollowed out by globalization since states such as Greece never did have much of the welfare orientation or history of bureaucratic development found to the north. In other words, there has been less to hollow out. With the end of the Cold War states such as Greece have also lost the political leverage they once had over their geopolitical sponsors such as Britain and the United States. Yet the European Union does not seem to have provided even the beginning of much of an alternative to the nation-state in the construction of a Europe-wide "nationalism."

European integration has hardly deprived EU member states of their sovereignty, as a fashionable argument would have it. Rather, the member states still successfully claim a sovereign status vis-à-vis other states and international organizations and still enjoy the rights and powers related to that status. The sovereignty debate has shifted, however, in two respects: to the issue of the borders of the EU and thus away from the continuing importance of national borders in themselves and to the position of the respective states within the institutional apparatus of the EU and other international organizations. It is the former that concerns us here. As the liberalization of trade and finance has made borders more permeable, anxieties about crime, terrorism, illegal immigration, and trafficking in women and children have increased commensurately.

To conclude, and with respect to the three cases, if in Italy the northeastern border has been displaced by a more popular nationwide worry about immigration and if in Bosnia the de facto border within the country has begun to take on the character of an ethnic exclusion barrier, in Greece we see a border with Macedonia long past its sell-by date but which still in its very equivocal way reminds us of the ugliness of all borders: that while we might despise them we also can't seem to live without them.

Notes

[1] Christopher Frayling, *Once Upon a Time in Italy: The Westerns of Sergio Leone* (New York: Abrams, 2005), p. 51.

[2] Ėtienne Balibar, *Politics and the Other Scene* (London: Verso, 2002), p. 76.

[3] Jonathan Seglow, "The Ethics of Immigration," *Political Studies Review* 3 (2005), p. 329.

[4] On "territorial regimes" see, e.g. Miles Kahler, "Territoriality and Conflict in an Era of Globalization," in *Territoriality and Conflict in an Era of Globalization*, eds. Miles Kahler and Barbara F. Walter (NewYork: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

[5] Didier Bigo, "Frontier Controls in the European Union: Who is in Control?" in *Controlling Frontiers: Free Movement into and Within Europe*, eds. Didier Bigo and Elspeth Guild (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005) and Mathew Coleman, "A Geopolitics of Engagement: Neo-liberalism, the War on Terrorism, and the Reconfiguration of US Immigration Enforcement," *Geopolitics* 12 (2007), 607-34.

[6] Alison Kesby, "The Shifting and Multiple Border and International Law," *Oxford Journal of Legal Studies,* 27 (2007), 101-119.

[7] Mark Neocleous, "Off the Map: On Violence and Cartography," *European Journal of Social Theory* 6 (2003), 409-25.

[8] William Walters, "Rethinking Borders Beyond the State," *Comparative European Politics* 4 (2006), 141-59.

[9] Giovanna Zincone, ed. *Familismo legale. Come (non) diventare italiani* (Bari/Rome: Laterza, 2006).

[10] Bambi Ceuppens and Peter Geschiere, "Autochthony: Local or Global? New Modes in the Struggle over Citizenship and Belonging in Africa and Europe," *Annual Review of Anthropology* 34 (2005), 385-407.

[11] E.g., Michael Kearney, "The Classifying and Value-Filtering Missions of Borders," *Anthropological Theory* 4 (2004), 131-56.

[12] Peter Dicken, "'Placing' firms: grounding the debate on the "global" corporation," in *Remaking the Global Economy*: *Economic-Geographical Perspectives*, eds. Jamie Peck and Henry Wai-Chung Yeung (London: Sage, 2003).

[13] Omar Dahbour, "Advocating Sovereignty in an Age of Globalization," *Journal of Social Philosophy*, 37 (2003), 108-26.

[14] Thomas Diez, "The Paradoxes of Europe's Borders," *Comparative European Politics* 4 (2006), 238.

[15] Arash Abizadeh, "Democratic Theory and Border Coercion: No Right to Unilaterally Control Your Own Borders," *Political Theory*, 36 (2008), p. 38.

[16] Silvia Näsström, "What Globalization Overshadows," *Political Theory*, 31(2004), p. 818.

[17] Dora Kostakopoulou, "Thick, Thin and Thinner Patriotisms," *Oxford Journal of Legal Studies*, 26 (2006), 73-106.

[18] Dora Kostakopoulou and Robert Thomas, "Unweaving the Threads: Territoriality, National Ownership of Land and Asylum Policy," *European Journal of Migration and Law*, 6 (2004), 17.

[19] Julie Mostov, *Soft Borders: Rethinking Sovereignty and Democracy* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008).

[20] António Guterres, "Millions Uprooted: Saving Refugees and the Displaced," *Foreign Affairs* 87, 5 (2008), 90-99.

[21] Jonathan Seglow, "The Ethics of Immigration," p. 229.

[22] Paolo Frascani, *Il mare* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2008).

[23] G. Lusso and P. Coppola, "Profili geopolitici; tra squilibri interni e proiezioni esterne," in Pasquale Coppola (ed.) *Geografia politica delle regioni italiane* (Turin: Einaudi, 1997).

[24] Francesco Bruni, *Italia. Vita e avventure di un'idea* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2010); Francesco Sberlati, *Filogia e identità nazionale. Una tradizione per l'Italia unita (1840-1940)* (Palermo: Sellerio, 2011): and Gian Luigi Beccaria, *Mia lingua italiana* (Turin: Einaudi, 2011).

[25] Silvana Patriarca, *Italianità. La costruzione del carattere nazionale* (Rome: Laterza, 2010).

[26] Franco Farinelli, "L'immagine dell'Italia," in Pasquale Coppola (ed.) *Geografia politica delle regioni italiane* (Turin: Einaudi, 1997).

[27] Mark Neocleous, "Off the map," p. 422.

[28] Mark Thompson, *The White War: Life and Death on the Italian Front, 1915-1919* (New York: Basic Books, 2008), p. 3.

[29] Marina Cattaruzza, *L'Italia e il confine orientale, 1866-2006* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2007).

[30] Maura Hametz, "Naming Italians in the Borderland, 1926-1943," *Journal of Modern Italian Studies*, 15 (2010): 410-30.

[31] Giorgio Valussi, *Il confine nordorientale d'Italia*. Nuova Edizione a cura di Pio Nodari (Gorizia: Istituto di Sociologia Internazionale Gorizia), pp. 172-3.

[32] E.g. Glenda Sluga, *The Problem of Trieste and the Italo-Yugoslav Border: Difference, Identity, and Sovereignty in Twentieth-Century Europe* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2001): Pamela Ballinger, *History in Exile: Memory and Identity at the Borders of the Balkans* (Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press).

[33] Andrea Mammone, "A Daily Revision of the Past: Fascism, Anti-Fascism, and Memory in Contemporary Italy," *Modern Italy*, 11 (2006): 211-26.

[34] Pamela Ballinger, *History in Exile*, p. 272

[35] Gerard Toal and Adis Maksic, "Is Bosnia-Herzegovina Unsustainable? Republika Srpska Referendum Rhetoric and its Implications for the Balkans and European Union," *Eurasian Geography and Economics*, 52 (2011), pp. 281-2..

[36] Gerard Toal and Maksic, "Is Bosnia-Herzegovina Unsustainable?;" Gerard Toal and Carl Dahlman, *Bosnia Remade: Ethnic Cleansing and its Reversal* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011).

[37] Part of the narrative in the following paragraphs is drawn from the following sources: Artemis Leontis, *Topographies of Hellenism: Mapping the Homeland.* (Ithaca NY: Cornell University Press, 1995); Dimitris Livianos, "'Conquering the Souls:' Nationalism and Greek Guerrilla Warfare in Ottoman Macedonia, 1904-1908," *Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies*, 23 (1999), 195-221; Evangelos Kofos, "National Heritage and National Identity in Nineteenth and Twentieth-Century Macedonia," in Martin Blinkhorn and Thanos Veremis (eds.) *Modern Greece: Nationalism and Nationality*, (London: Sage, 1990); Howard Jones,*'A New Kind of War:' America's Global Strategy and the Truman Doctrine in Greece*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989); Anastasia N. Karakasidou, *Fields of Wheat, Hills of Blood: Passages to Nationhood in Greek Macedonia, 1870-1990*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999); Loring M. Danforth, *The Macedonian Conflict: Ethnic Nationalism in a Transnational World* (Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 1995); Michael Herzfeld, *Ours Once More: Folklore, Ideology and the Making of Modern Greece,* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1982); and Basil C. Gounaris, "Bonds Made Power: Clientelism, Nationalism, and Party Strategies in Greek Macedonia (1900-1950)," in Michael Mazower (ed.) *Networks of Power in Modern Greece: Essays in Honour of John Campbell* (London: Hurst, 2008).

July 2012. The phrase, The Good, the Bad and the Ugly, entered the language as a result of the Sergio Leone film of that name released in 1966. But its origins lie in a song, from the city of Rome when it was ruled over by the Popes about a Cardinal who did bad things well and good things badly.1 Ugly was a frequent outcome. I take this as my leitmotif for a general overview of what international borders can and cannot do. We often tend to views of borders either as good and necessary or as bad and mischievous. In my view borders are much more equivocal or ugly rather than simply good or bad. Ribbons is the ninth track from The Good, The Bad & The Queen's sophomore album, Merrie Land. Produced by. The Good, The Bad and The Queen & Tony Visconti. Â Merrie Land (2018). The Good, The Bad and The Queen. Â John Davis (Mastering Engineer). Mixed By. Stephen Sedgwick.